

Phase to Face: Anchoring Now Normal Activities in Consensus to Evaluation and Assessment (PANACEA)

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Abstract

This study highlighted the impact of ‘Now Normal’ to the learners facing learning gaps, and to teachers facing challenges on their teaching directions. Moreover, it underscores teacher’s perception on challenges faced by learners with assessment and evaluation tasks of the now normal and the adjustments undertaken by teachers in anchoring evaluation and assessment strategies for better learning outcome. Qualitative Research Design using Narratology as strategy for inquiry was utilized. The eight (8) informants were public school teachers teaching grade schoolers during the SY 2022-2023. Employing the Narrative Analysis of Qualitative Research design, narratives were gathered and validated through Audit Trail, and analyzed thematically. The responses centered on procrastination on completing learning tasks, technological divide, and remembering and retention emerged as challenges of grade school learners to evaluation and assessment as perceived by grade school teachers. On the other hand, time bounded activities, user friendly educational application, authentic assessment, and monitoring and feedbacking emerged as the alternative solution undertaken to anchor the ‘Now Normal’ activities to their existing evaluation and assessment strategies. Intensifying the desire to augment learning outcome through innovative and interactive evaluation and assessment strategies and remedies is a manifestation of attained goal in conducting this study.

Keywords: Assessment, Now normal, Panacea, Technology—immerse, Technology native

1. Introduction

We are on the cusp of a completely “new era”, and changes must be made in education to ensure that all students leave school prepared to face the challenges of a redefined world. (Thornburg, 2000).

The suddenness, uncertainty, and volatility of the reopening of face-to-face classes left education system in a rush of coping with and addressing the changing learning landscape (Dayagbi et al., 2021). The post pandemic has challenged the delivery of quality education which caused teachers to look for significant alternatives and solutions to augment the achievement of learners for better learning outcomes.

Both change and adaptation to change are inevitable—educational state on the ‘now normal’ has brought this scenario into light. As a response, DepEd has grounded its construct to streamlining of K to 12 Curriculum into the Most Essential Learning Competencies (www.deped.gov.ph). It will enable the program to focus more on the learning activities and resources, while having sufficient time for coverage and mastery by streamlining the learning competencies to the most essential.

Aptly, teachers indulged in quest for better learning opportunities to mitigate the gap between theory and practice. This in turn guide their choice of assessment and evaluation strategies which are aligned to the needs of the tech-immersed learners. With the advent of educational technology, teachers were provided with opportunities to retool and upscale to match the existing demands on education—attendance to workshops and seminars and participation to research forums and conventions.

Designing ways to further enhance teaching and learning in schools requires gathering data on students' current levels of learning and the progress they have made. To meet information needs and support decision-making in classrooms, schools, and education systems, sharing such information with stakeholders across the system is crucial. The development of consensus on educational objectives, benchmarks, and performance standards can also be facilitated by well-designed student assessments. By emphasizing the type of learning that is valued, they can promote innovation in education.

With this, grade school teachers from a public school were identified as the research informants of the existing study. They are teaching varied subjects and are from different grade

levels. Moreover, they all undergone seminars and workshops on technology in teaching and learning prior to the reopening of face-to-face class—a significant component for them to become key informants of this study. The locale of the study intensifies the impact of technology and other related interventions on the learning path and teaching directions under the radar of the ‘now normal’ education setting.

1.1. Objectives

This study aims to reflect the ‘Now Normal’ teaching and learning interventions of the respondents in consensus to evaluation and assessment strategies in a Public Elementary School in the Philippines.

Specifically, it helps in the realization of the following:

1. Determine the challenges of grade school learners to evaluation and assessment as perceived by grade school teachers; and
2. Identify the alternative solution undertaken by grade school teachers to anchor the ‘Now Normal’ activities to their existing evaluation and assessment strategies

1.2. Framework of the Study

For decades, researchers and experts have been examining how the data returns conveyed to students on their learning outcomes on a task may affect their learning. The term assessment and evaluation was appropriated into instructional contexts, where they emphasize the procedure for gathering, analyzing, and utilizing data in order to make progress on the present assessment (Yambi, 2018). Further, it is a process of presenting judgment in accordance with defined standards and evidences centered on the learners’ achievement. Over the years, theories and definitions of evaluation and assessment evolved, and experts in this context continue to gather evidences validating to evaluation and assessment as a key component in student learning path.

To provide a theoretical overview, an adept understanding on Thorndike’s Law of Effect to be at the very inception of evaluation and assessment sheds light to this study (Thorndike, 1927). Additionally, Benjamin Bloom's important 1968 article, which discussed the advantages of providing students with regular feedback on their learning through formative assessments in the classroom, is where the value of formative assessment, as it is currently known, was first explained. In order to increase student learning, close achievement disparities between groups of students, and support teachers in modifying their training, Bloom provided specific ways that

teachers may employ to incorporate formative assessments into routine classroom instruction (Bloom, 1971). Thus, Bloom deserves credit for intensifying the concept of formative assessment by building on the concepts of Scriven (1967), who articulated the dichotomy of formative and summative evaluation (Guskey, 2018).

Researchers were developing feedback models to characterize processes and mechanisms from the standpoint of learning outcomes as the area of formative assessment and feedback developed. These models have generally become more thorough and specialized, illustrating more particular cognitive processes. (Narciss and Huth, 2004). In contrast to the earlier conception where “feedback was done” to the student, in the most current models the learner is not only at the center of the feedback process, but is now an active agent that does not only process feedback, but responds to it, can generate it, and acquires feedback expertise to engage with it in more advanced ways (Shute, 2008; Stobart, 2018).

Eventually, it may be crucial to consider how to tie present practices to the evaluation and assessment models and theories that researchers and educators are currently using in light of the continual growth of models, theories, and research strands.

2. Research Methodology

This study employed the Qualitative Research Design using Narratology as strategy for inquiry. The informants of this study, where the qualitative data were gathered, were the public school teachers who are teaching grade school pupils during the SY 2022-2023: eight (8) public school teachers signify interest to join the researcher as informants. The informants explained their experiences including a configural mode of understanding and principles – the meanings of their stories and experiences as part of an identity development (Hoshmand, 2005). They are teaching varied subjects and are from different grade levels. Moreover, they all undergone seminars and workshops on technology in teaching and learning prior to the reopening of face-to-face class—a significant component for them to become key informants of this study.

The researcher personally interviewed the informants to infer and gather the significant data in the study. Upon the conduct of the interview, the researcher briefed the informants that their significant participation in the interview is voluntary and they can terminate it anytime.

Transcriptions were meticulously transcribed and coded which were eventually validated by a credible researcher.

An audit trail was used to deliver the interview transcripts to the informants in order to verify the accuracy of the data collected. An audit trail, also known as an audit log, is a chronological record, collection of records, destination, and/or source of records that pertains to security and that offers documentary proof of the series of actions that have ever been taken in relation to a certain operation, method, incident, or equipment. An extensive method of demonstrating that the transcripts are based on the participants' narratives is the audit trail. It also included a description of the data collection and analysis process (Malterud, 2001). The informants also concurred with the transcriptions and attested to the accuracy of the content given therein as being comparable to what they intended to convey. The information is now regarded as valid and validated.

The collected data were further subjected to a thematic analysis. This method of analyzing qualitative data involves carefully and methodically compiling qualitative data into curated conclusions that are then presented and discussed within a theme framework (Houghton et al., 2016). Accordingly, familiarization and organization, coding and recoding, and summarizing and interpreting are all parts of the research's analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

Both the learner and the teacher have faced difficulties with the educational process in the post-pandemic educational environment. The abrupt shift to online learning, self-paced learning, and distance learning has brought about changes in the way instruction is delivered, which are reflected in the learning outcomes on the teachers' evaluation and assessment strategies. Unprecedented excitement was generated by DepEd's decision to resume classes, although moving to the 'Now Normal' program necessitates some adjustment.

With this new dimension on the educational landscape, teachers were challenged to retool and upscale to meet the uncontrollable circumstances specifically on the learning outcome of learners from the different evaluation and assessment strategies employed by them. The study identified two significant factors namely: (a) Challenges of grade school learners to evaluation

and assessment as perceived by grade school teachers and (b) Alternative solution undertaken by grade school teachers to anchor the ‘Now Normal’ activities to their existing evaluation and assessment strategies along the following themes:

3.1. Challenges of grade school learners to evaluation and assessment as perceived by grade school teachers

Theme 1 Procrastination in completing learning tasks.

Academic procrastination is one of the challenges that educators face as they approach the ‘Now Normal’. Academic procrastination is the deliberate postponement of task completion, which has a detrimental effect on a learners’ academic success (Muarifah A et al., 2022).

The following transcripts from the informants qualify the claim of this study which intensifies procrastination as a contributory factor on the challenges faced by learners to evaluation and assessment as perceived by grade school teachers.

Learners often ask for extension of deadlines on learning tasks despite the simplicity of the evaluation tool. ‘Ningas—kugon’ has been the name of the game to most of them because even the elders in the family get used to this practice during the pandemic. I2

They get used to dealing with self-paced modules which are not time-bounded. The adjustment on the abrupt shift from distance learning to face-to-face can be reflected from their approach to assessment tools and evaluations given to them. I5

Learners cling to the idea ‘If it’s going to be, it’s up to me’. They firmly believe that teachers will always give due consideration. I8

Theme 2 Technological divide. The offset of COVID-19 and the onset of the ‘Now Normal’ IN schools has sparked a global trend for schooling supported by technology. Concerns concerning new kinds of learning disparities have been raised due to the pervasive poverty in developing nations like the Philippines (Asadullah, 2022).

While we are trying to augment the delivery of quality education through the infusion of technology, factors on the socio-economic status of learners have to be given consideration. Hence, the following transcripts from the informants intensify the claim of the study which

highlights the factor on technological divide as an intervening factor to the achievement of better learning outcome.

Not all learners do have gadgets which can support all requirements on a given learning task. With the advent of technology in the educational construct, teachers need to include the use and practice of technology in all aspects of learning. I1

Mobile phone, being the common gadget for all learners, isn't their sole ownership. When tasked to indulge in technological pursuit, learners who borrow their gadget from a family member tend to not finish the task because the owner can't entrust their gadget to them. I3

Gadgets used by learners in finishing requirements doesn't have same specifications and storage capacity. Applications used in assessing student's learning like kahoot, google meet, and the likes are not easily accessed. I7

Theme 3 **Remembering and retention**. While we do not yet fully understand the effects, we do know that throughout the pandemic, children's academic performance is declining, along with their advancement on other developmental abilities. We also know that educational imbalances are escalating due to the different ways in which the crisis has exacerbated already-existing socioeconomic gaps and how these gaps affect learning and educational outcomes (García and Weiss, 2020).

The following transcripts from the informants support the claim of the study confirming that cognitive processes along assessment and evaluation tasks was greatly affected by the sudden shift to the 'Now Normal'.

When giving formative assessment, there is a huge disparity on their scores when giving assessment which calls for remembering. Learners have become more invested in application of learning though hands-on activities and exploration. I4

During lectures and discussions, learners have short attention span. Nobody ask questions or raise queries; they are inactive and not focusing much attention. During quizzes, most of them has low score but, when asked to perform they do better. I5

Learners don't focus on details, they focus on the general thought. Memorization of specific information is a challenge for them as a means of committing learning to memory. I6

3.2. Alternative solution undertaken by grade school teachers to anchor the ‘Now Normal’ activities to their existing evaluation and assessment strategies

Theme 1 **Time bounded activities.** According to the time on-task theory, how much time a person spends on an educational endeavor impacts how much learning takes place (Godwina et al., 2021).

The following transcripts from the informants redefine the essence of setting time bound as a trigger for learners to approach an assessment or evaluation tool without considering procrastination on these tasks.

To augment their usual learning state, I give assessment on a time bounded frame. I set my classroom rules prior to the start of the lesson to set their preparation on the activities of the day. I1

Discipline works wonders in helping learners process their learning outcome. When giving assessment and evaluation tasks, they should feel accountable of finishing it for their grade at a given time. I4

Theme 2 **User friendly educational application.** Researchers have been looking for innovative ways to improve students' educational experiences, especially in this technologically advanced age. Educational applications and games are one of those tactics (Cheung SY and Ng KY, 2021). It is then significant for teachers to orient learners on the use of technology-driven tools which can contribute to better learning outcomes without overshadowing the significance of teacher-learner contact in the equation.

The following transcripts from the informants puts premium on the significant contribution of educational applications in anchoring the ‘Now Normal’ activities as platform for better learning outcome.

We teach to express and not to impress. We’re given lots of options to choose from so the consideration lies on addressing the needs of our learners. Social media applications like Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, Twitter, Tiktok, YouTube, and the likes which are widely used could be a learning platform. Orientation on the utilization of the said platforms must be given on both the learners and an immediate family member for assistance. I3

Introduction of the tech-immersed learners in the realities of the technology world to breach the gap between theory and practice is a leap on augmenting the learners' performance. This doesn't discredit the use of usual assessment and evaluation strategy. Introducing the use of kahoot, survey monkey, vocabulary spelling city, scratchjr, jcreator and the likes which supplements teaching delivery encourages eagerness and active participation of learners. I5

Theme 3 **Authentic assessment**. To make it effective, assessment must be active and authentic in education. When students are given authentic assessment, the emphasis is on the process as well as the product. Authentic assessment allows the instructor to assess higher-order thinking, unlike traditional assessments which focus on memory facts (E Sutadji et al., 2021).

The following transcripts from the informants further defines the impact of authentic assessment to heighten better learning opportunity.

Learning by Doing pose a great impact on the learning outcome of learners. Differentiated learning opportunity brings out the best in them. Instead of the usual classroom activities, giving them routines to boost their strength is better. I1

Explore the Montessori Method. Evaluation and assessment activities which give freedom for learners to explore their tenets bring out better outcome. We shouldn't confine our learners on the four corners of the room--let them work on their own learning. I8

Theme 4 **Monitoring and Feedbacking**. Providing feedback and monitoring their learning progress provides a clear view on their trajectory. Further, this will enable the teachers and the family to have a clear view on their impact to the child's development.

The following transcripts from the informants further underscore the impact of monitoring and feedbacking in the assessment and evaluation turnouts reflecting the learner's learning outcome.

Feedback on the learning outcome of the learners is immediately provided for them to keep abreast of their growth. Periodic feedback is also undertaken to let parents monitor the learning direction of their children. I2

Open-communication between and among teachers, learners, and parents is significant on determining the learning gaps of learners and on designing teaching direction of teachers to meet the ‘now normal’ needs of the tech-immersed learners. I8

4. Conclusions and Future Works

Based on the parameters and results of the study, the following are concluded:

1. The responses of the informants highlight two significant factors: the challenges of grade school learners to evaluation and assessment as perceived by grade school teachers; and the alternative solution undertaken by grade school teachers to anchor the ‘Now Normal’ activities to their existing evaluation and assessment strategies.
2. The responses centered on the themes procrastination on completing learning tasks, technological divide, and remembering and retention emerged as the identified challenges of grade school learners to evaluation and assessment as perceived by grade school teachers. On the other hand, time bounded activities, user friendly educational application, authentic assessment, and monitoring and feedbacking emerged as the alternative solution undertaken by grade school teachers to anchor the ‘Now Normal’ activities to their existing evaluation and assessment strategies.
3. Intensifying the desire to augment the learning outcome of learners through innovative and interactive evaluation and assessment strategies and remedies is a manifestation of attained goal in conducting the study.

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