ABSTRACT

This chapter submits that conventional learning assessment models used in traditional classrooms cannot be employed in blended programs at the secondary education level. The tendency of high school students in online education is to adopt the path of least resistance or to cheat thinking that they cannot be caught. Constructing authentic assessment measures for online education should be crafted for teachers to ensure that students who graduate through this learning mode are competent. While examinations are to be conducted, test construction should differ. Online learners would prefer to apply what they have learned instead of the conventional assessments. This contribution aims to develop authentic assessment procedure for the Open High School Program of the Philippines (OHSP), a blended program offered by private high schools in the Philippines, funded by the Department of Education. The program aims to mainstream out-of-school youth, high school dropouts, or regular students who cannot afford to study on their own given their unfortunate circumstances in life. As adult learners, they have rich experiences that can be used in problem-based learning to understand the lessons more effectively. Hence, this study is anchored on the assumption that teachers in blended learning mode should employ a different learning assessment or unique to conditions of OSHP students.
INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education of the Philippines (DepEd) topped the list of 10 agencies with the highest budget allocation for the 2013 fiscal year at 13%. While the budget for basic education (elementary and high school) may appear to be large, access to schools for both levels of education is still difficult due to lack of classrooms, teachers, textbooks, and even schools. Poverty complicates the problem despite access to basic education being free in the Philippines. Sending children to school requires ancillary costs especially transportation, uniforms, school supplies, notebooks, pens, telephone load, daily allowances, etc.

In 2013, the total number of students who were enrolled in an educational institution reached 20.6 million. Of this, 1.7M are in kindergarten; 13.3M in elementary; and 5.7M in high school (Dacanay, 2013. With 5.7M secondary school students in 7,917 public secondary schools (http://www.deped.gov.ph/index.php/resources/facts-figures), one can surmise that schools cannot accommodate this current enrolment. This trend, however, is not new; it has always been the case. Since not everyone can be accommodated in public schools, in 1998, DepEd embarked on an alternative delivery mode dubbed as the “Education Service Contracting Scheme.” This was expanded in 2011 to the ESC-Open High School Program (OHSP) through distance learning offered by Level 1-accredited private high schools.

Department Order No. 35, s. 2011, states that anyone can be eligible to enroll in OHSP provided that he or she is: a) a Filipino citizen; b) has capacity for independent learning; c) has completed the prerequisite grade or year level; and d) must pass the Independence Learning Readiness Test (ILRT) and the Informal Reading Inventory (IRI).

OHSP is being managed by the Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE). After two years of implementation, FAPE commissioned a group to gauge its effectiveness. Among other things, the study provided evidence that students were not ready for a blended learning delivery mode. However, while the delivery mode was changed, assessment formats remained the same. The usual identification, true or false, essay, enumeration type, and other forms of lower order thinking skills were the dominant forms of assessment, not because of the small class size (which was 50 or less), but because teachers did not have enough time to implement KPUP (Knowledge, Process, Understanding, and Performance) assessments. KPUP is the approach used in OHSP implementation. Knowledge refers to the first level of learning outcomes to be assessed; this level requires students to memorize basic facts and information to be acquired. The Process level refers to the skills or cognitive operations that students perform on facts and information in order to give meaning to it. Understanding relates to big ideas, principles, and generalizations that are inherent to the discipline. The last level, Performance, refers to application of facts and information to real life situations. However, implementation of KPUP requires retooling of teachers and more time for engaging with students. Hence, teachers resort to conventional methods of rote learning which gives a tendency for students to ask their parents or their neighbors and friends to help them with their take-home assignments. In effect, learning being rote does not provide a venue to develop higher order thinking skills. Considering the innovativeness of the blended learning approach to secondary education, as well as the novelty of the K-12 curriculum, there is a need to critically examine how students are assessed to become independent learners and critical thinkers. Assessment tools can make or break performance of students. As Anderson (2003) points out, assessment formats largely rests on teachers’ decision-making. The teacher has the liberty of selecting what to ask, how to ask, or what students should do in a classroom assessment. As well, in conventional classrooms, numerical grades are mostly provided on the basis to rate a student’s performance. But how valid are examination items as bases of performance? One might say using the “Table of Specifications” can guarantee the learning
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