Australia-ASEAN Academics Forum:
Online Education during COVID-19 and Beyond

AAAF Mrs Minh Anh talk 16th 2021

Transcript

So, my name is Minh Anh. First of all, thank you very much for having me in this conference. So today, I'm going to share my own experience from my teaching online for the last two years. It's not, nothing big, but it's just, I want to share my own struggle. And some precis on practicing teaching in online during pandemic.
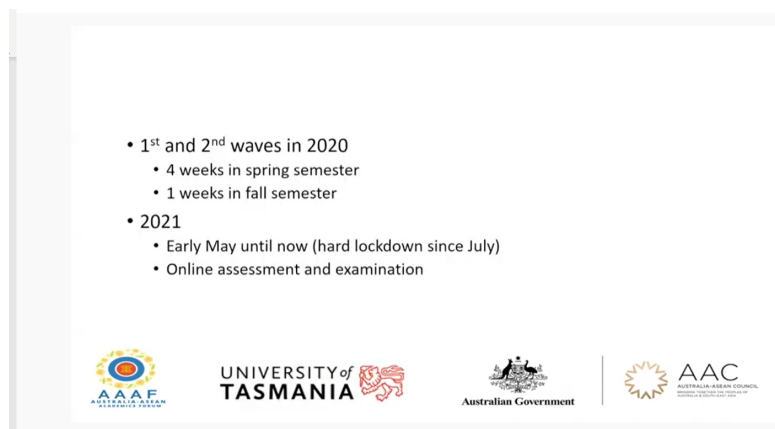

So, this is the agenda. So, I'll introduce my school, quick one. I'll walk you through what I've got during the pandemic in term of infrastructures, some example for my classes in terms of the challenge facing student engagement, their collaboration and how I can give feedback. Moving forward is the next one. Once all said and done, what can we expect for the future of digital education, I would say. And lastly, I have a few questions that I would like to discuss with you all here.

Okay, so second technology university is located in Ho Chi Minh city which is the biggest city in Vietnam. But we are just a small private school and founded in 1997 as a vocational college. So we upgraded in 2006 as a university. We have seven faculties and more than six thousand students.

mostly we have technology faculties but ironically business administration faculty is the biggest one in terms of the number of students. We dominate in the school.

A quick context between last year and this year. Last year, the spring semester, we have four weeks moving online. It's just a flick of like this, just going to say we're going online and they have, we prepared nothing, but that's the first four weeks of the beginning of the spring semester. Then they moved back to normal and another week in the fall semester. And that's it, it just passed by really quick. We just moving online using zoom. And then, it's like temporary. Everyone knows it. And actually, the local government did a really good job suppressing the COVID. We didn't feel it last year, so moving into this year, we were very positive. That is, okay, we have one, two weeks and then we're good. But unfortunately, it lasts for four months already. And I still don't see the end of it for this year. At the moment, we are rolling out the online examination for last semester, like final examination for last semester. Because we off since May, so we didn't have a chance to do it offline. So, for last week, our university decided to do it online. And to be honest, it's a mess. So, but I won't mention it here.

So, last year and this year as well, when we received a notice like we're moving online, starting next week, what we got, you have to. That's it. Be creative. So, everyone trying to hang in there. Everyone has their own struggle here. I'll just mention my own, so we don't have LMS. Like, can you imagine teaching online without LMS? That's one factor, not to mention lack of training of technology literacy, not just students but lecturer as well. We have one session with zoom training and that's it.

So, I'll be bold to say that we're doing fine.

So, I have a few challenges to share with you guys. It sound similar to what you've been listening for the last two weeks. But it's actually quite different without LMS. And I'm not teaching language, I'm not teaching English. Most of you here, I've seen lots of your presentation. Mostly, you for language teaching background. But I'm not teaching English. I teach finance, entrepreneurship, all sort of different field, I would say. So, for student engagement, I picked international payment unit because the class, always 60 plus student per class. And I have to do a lot of lectures. In class, like offline, I can stop at any moment, call their name to get their attention, to get them constantly be there with me. But online, as Dr Andriyani said, you can't force them to turn on camera. And not to mention, they have their own struggle with device. Most of them use smartphone. It's not ideal for online learning. They don't do reading. If I tell them to read the material and then come back to answer a few questions, it's just off. I get no feedback or interaction from there. So I have to be, there has to be a solution, I would say, and it has to be.

Another problem is my student is not good at English. So there's a lot of things out there that I can use but it has to be Vietnamese friendly for them to use so they don't have to guess. The first barrier is language.

So, luckily I found this, oh my god, I was so happy. I found a third-party platform which called SHub classroom. So basically, it's an LMS. So, it's allowed me to create classes. I'm sorry I didn't translate it but yeah, we have, I can create a class. And then I asked students to download the app to their phone, gave them their class code and their access to it to do all sorts of things.
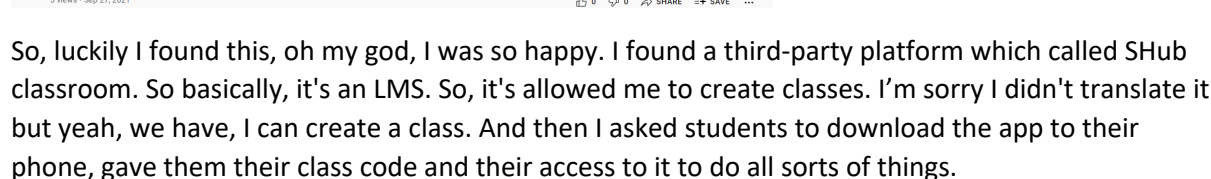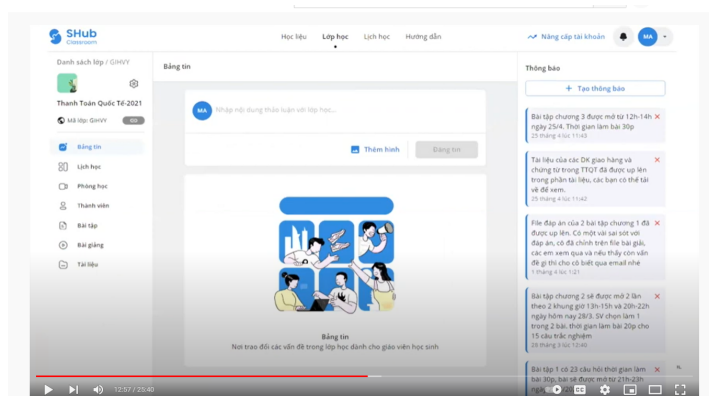
So, I can create notification. Whenever I create one and there's a push notification to their phone, so they know that this is the time to do the test, it's the time to answer the question. And I like to surprise them. I'll stop at any time and I'll go there and do the test.
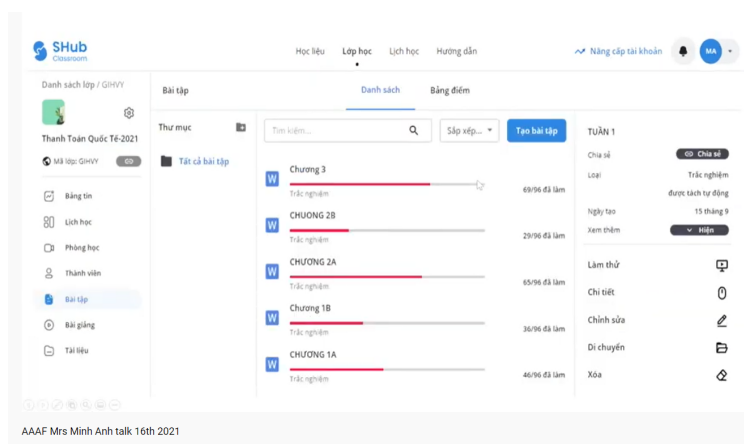
And, so basically, that is helping me control the class, seeing how they're doing, do they pay attention to what I just said.
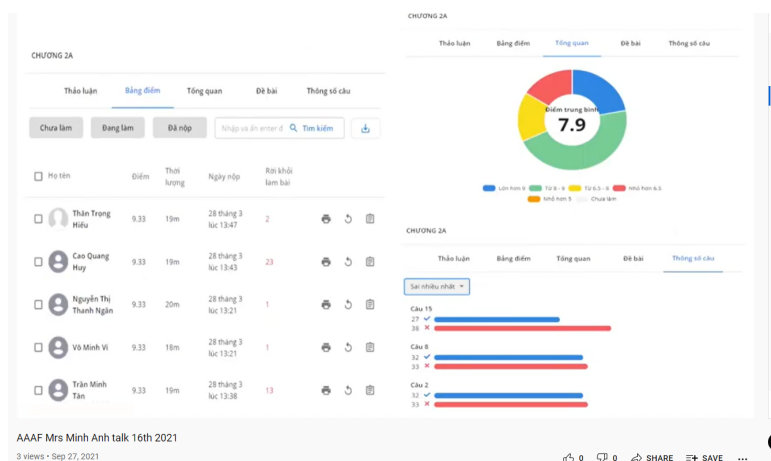
And with this one, I can set the time as well. When it expire, they can't, they will no longer be able to do the test anymore. So they have to concentrate. So I said that if you have 15 minutes to finish this test, that's all they got. And I got all the stuff that I need, like even that it gave me the data, how many times this student have left the test to look for material somewhere else. So it's good, and I got the average score for the test, what's the question they did worst, what is the question they did

best. So what I've been using, it's free. Of course, they charge for premium features but I'm happy with the free stuff that I got from this application, and all of this will power toward their final assessment.

 So, we move on to the second challenge which I have to deal with, with the entrepreneurship unit. This is a project-based unit which student will group to do a project every week. So, basically, if I do it offline, I would organize it as a series of workshops and I'll be the facilitator. They have to do their project on their own. I would just be there to help them. But to bring it online for just five weeks, the tutorial at the very end of their project, which is the key moment when they have to complete everything and preparing for pitching, which is very important skill for this one. Unfortunately, we have to do it online as well and with this unit, with this one, it's required lots of group work. And I have to give them constant feedback.

So, I would just use what I can, which is this one, a Zalo one. It's a WhatsApp kind of Vietnamese thing. So they create their group project, they text in there, they group call there and I jump into their group text anytime to input my opinion if I see fit.

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But there's a lot, like, I have 20 groups last semester to follow up and it's a constant texting. And if I jump from one group to another, I have to read it all from the beginning, so it's hard to keep track of what they've been going on, and they can't reach me at the time of the problem arise. They have to wait for me. And it's hard for me to do the individual assessment at the end of the semester because they will plan it into a group. One, two or three people would do for the rest of the group, and it's really hard to do the individual assessment because it's, the end of the semester is, this will score individually.

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So that was my challenge that I faced for the last two, three semester collectively. And the new semester has started. This is, these photos went viral in the last year, when we begin, we start a new semester and see the school, empty school, with the director gave the opening speech with no one there, and students have to stay home during term. Everything have to be at home. And I think I have no hope that we're going back to classroom this semester.

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So, what should I do differently, because I don't think I did good for the last two semester, because it was just like react more than, rather than plan it. I react to it. So, it is in every lectures, my, is it temporary or is the long-term strategy, it's, are we going to have this in long term or just two, three weeks? In the school education plans, it has to calculate it in detail. If teaching in person, or how many weeks we're going to have online and how to switch between these two.

And the weakness that we were common in our education now, that students are less able to self-study. The combination of family and schooling, education, student is still lose. They have to do everything on their own. And this, the school has to be very proactive and flexible, is another problem. And how effective online teaching is depends heavily on the condition for implementation, including IT background, equipment, teaching and learning capacity, the ability to operate and control teaching of each school and each region as well. We're living in a bubble between city, and in a city we have our own bubble between houses as well.

And how about the human? I feel like we don't have the motivation to make more effort, since if this is not the strategy of the school, who will make the effort, the responsibility, enthusiasm. And, if we don't, then we fall behind. The environment for teachers, lecturers to be encouraged, that require an environment to allow teacher to self-study, receive regular training and share and be recognized. The recognition now, I would say, not about reward or anything, but we have to experience more with the education system here in Vietnam.

And the last thing is, I believe each of us have experienced the COVID-19 trauma in some certain extent, and that would need more notice from every, from the government, from school, from the lecturer as well. Because I heard a lot of stories for the last few months and I have to cut it out at some point. And for the coming semester, we changed the timeline. Now I'm going to have for each, for every section, it would last for four hours. It's stressful thinking I have to deliver in four-hour-long online classes. So, it's another thing I think we need to think about. It's concerning.

So, the last thing for today presentation is I have a few questions I would love to discuss with all of you, if you mind, like how digital teaching might evolve in the future. I would say digital because it's not just online. I believe in the future we can use any means of digital technologies to learn. And what are changes in the perception of digital teaching, learning from you and from your students? And will everything be back to it was? And do you want things to go back as it used to be? And the

last question is where's the boundaries of digital teaching, learning? Where is the AI or where do we see ourselves in the future? Thank you very much.