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Addressing teachers' remote teaching needs during the COVID-19 pandemic: Key lessons learned

Purpose and context of the presentation

The presentation discusses a study at a teacher training university in Malaysia. When COVID-19 hit, people in rural areas were most severely affected in terms of education, due to a lack of infrastructure to support online learning. Teachers also struggled to adapt their teaching to the online environment and to compensate for students with limited internet and device access.

A small study was conducted to see if the teacher trainee students felt prepared to teach online, what tools and resources they could use, and the challenges they faced when engaging with students from remote communities. The survey was administered to 34 teacher trainees who had just completed a 16-week practicum. There were four sections in the survey: job scope; readiness for remote teaching; tools and resources used; and challenges.

Section 1: Job scope

Most respondents (90%) confirmed that online education would remain in place until the end of the year.

Section 2: Readiness for remote teaching

70% of respondents confirmed that they had the know-how and tools to deliver effective remote teaching and felt reasonably confident in their ability to teach online. 15.2% felt that they were extremely competent at online teaching.

Respondents identified the main benefits of online teaching to be:

- Students learn from each other as well as the teacher.
- Students can ask questions in real time.
- The teacher can better assess student understanding.

Section 3: Tools and resources used

When asked how often teachers would use a real white board prior to online education, over 50% answered that they would use one in every lesson.

When asked what tools and resources the teacher trainees were already using to prepare and deliver their lessons, the most common resources mentioned were Google Meet; Google classroom; Zoom; Microsoft Teams; WebEx (other resources were also mentioned).

When asked which online resources they found to be most helpful, participants listed the following:

Quizziz; Padlet; WordWall; JamBoard; Google Meet; LiveWorksheet; Blooket; YouTube; Canva; Kahoot!; Pinterest and Google searches; Zoom; Telegram; Google Slides; Google Forms

Section 4: Challenges

Participants were asked how well their students were coping with online education. Responses were mixed, with 48.5% saying that it was a mix, but the majority were doing very well, and 36.4% saying that it was mixed but the majority were having problems. 18.2% thought that most students were really struggling with online education.

The challenges for teacher trainees included:

- 93.9% of respondents felt that the biggest challenge was getting students engaged in learning.
- 42.4% of respondents felt that their lesson plans needed to be modified for online teaching.
- 27.3% of respondents felt that they had not had enough time to get used to online teaching.

Participants were also asked what advice they would give new teacher trainees to cope with online education. Responses included:

- Be prepared to learn about a diverse range of teaching tools.
- Make lessons simple and expectations realistic, give students extra time to complete work and activities.
- Be adaptable and acknowledge students' differences and personal challenges.
- Maintain the passion for teaching.
- Be mentally prepared and well prepared for each lesson.
- Know the students and use their names.

Conclusions

Discusses the acronym VUCA, or volatility, uncertainties, complexities and ambiguities. The ongoing VUCA situation gives rise to many issues and challenges and these have all left many teachers, many students and many lecturers plunged into uncharted waters.

Nonetheless, teaching and learning does not stop with COVID-19. We need to focus on student engagement, setting realistic goals, being flexible and taking the opportunity to rethink the roles of educators in the modern era.