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Schoolbook: DLSUD's Online Platform for eLearning

#cypherlearning #lms

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This article presents the online platform for eLearning of De La Salle University-Dasmariñas, which has been branded as Schoolbook. The article highlights the features and benefits of NEO LMS and how the Schoolbook can help educators create engaging and interactive eLearning courses.

01

Introduction

The rapid advancements in technology have led to a significant shift in the way people learn and access educational materials. Online learning platforms have become increasingly popular due to their convenience and flexibility, making it possible for learners to access learning resources from anywhere, at any time. One of the most robust eLearning platforms available today is NEO LMS by Cypher Learning. This article will explore the features and benefits of NEO LMS and how it can help educators create engaging and interactive eLearning courses.

► Overview of NEO LMS

NEO LMS is a cloud-based platform designed to cater to the needs of both educators and learners in the eLearning environment. The platform offers an intuitive interface, robust features, and customization options that make it suitable for various types of eLearning courses, from K-12 and higher education to corporate training and development.

One of the most significant advantages of using NEO LMS is its versatility. The platform is accessible from any device with an internet connection, making it an ideal choice for distance learning and hybrid learning models. It supports a wide range of file types, including multimedia files, quizzes, and assessments, making it easy to create engaging and interactive learning experiences.

NEO LMS is the platform that De La Salle University - Dasmariñas has been using since 2010. We branded it as Schoolbook, a name that is easy to remember.



Features and Benefits of NEO LMS

► Automated Grading and Feedback

NEO LMS allows instructors to set up automated grading and feedback system, which can save a significant amount of time and effort. Instructors can create discrete types of assessments and quizzes that are automatically graded, allowing them to focus on providing personalized feedback to learners.

There was a time when quizzes were given onsite, students used yellow pad papers to write on their answers and the teacher collected them, graded them, and encoded the scores in their class records. Sometimes, teachers returned graded quizzes and reviewed the results with students. We also had problems with missing papers and ungraded papers. With automated grading and feedback system, students receive instant feedback and see their scores at once after taking the quiz.

The Automated Grading and Feedback feature of the Schoolbook makes the grading process efficient, correct, and objective.

► Analytics

NEO LMS comes with robust analytics features that help educators track the progress of individual students, identify areas where they need help, and tailor their teaching to students' needs. The platform provides detailed reports on student performance, making it easy for instructors to identify trends and make data-driven decisions.

There is analytics feature on the lessons page. It records the first and last time a student visits a specific lesson, as well as the total number of times they have visited the lesson on a given day and the amount of time they spent there.

Figure 1 shows the number of students who visited each lesson and the amount of time they spent there.

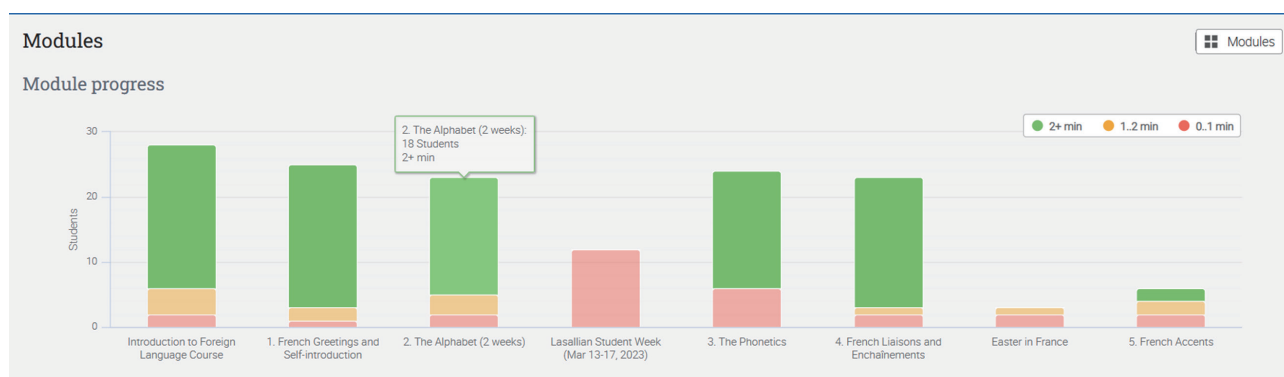


Figure 1. Graph of lesson analytics

Name	Progress	Scores	Grade	Due	Awards	Portfolio	Mastery	Time	Enrolled
Blackmore, Jeremy	100%	100%	B- 75%	7	7	+	+	00:09:30	Jan 4, 2019 28 days ago
Demo, Admin	100%	100%	D- 40%	13	7	+	+	00:01:14	May 13, 2020 about 20 hours ago
Ollon, James	100%	100%	A- 80%	5	20	+	+	00:01:14	Aug 5, 2018 20 days ago
Douan, Tom	100%	100%	B+ 85%	6	17	+	+	00:00:41	Aug 6, 2018 19 days ago
Hopper, James	100%	100%	B- 75%	6	13	+	+	00:00:23	Aug 6, 2018 19 days ago
Jackson, Phil	100%	100%	C+ 60%	6	12	+	+	00:00:12	Aug 6, 2018 19 days ago
Jefferson, Tom	100%	100%	B 70%	7	16	+	+	00:00:27	Aug 6, 2018 19 days ago
Johnson, Sally	100%	100%	B+ 85%	4	16	1	+	126:11:52	Aug 6, 2018 about 20 hours ago
Karol, Samy	100%	100%	B+ 85%	3	17	+	+	00:00:26	Aug 6, 2018 19 days ago
McDreggo, Tom	100%	100%	C+ 60%	9	9	+	+	00:00:16	Aug 6, 2018 19 days ago
Multon, Tracy	100%	100%	F 20%	13	6	+	+	00:00:53	Apr 29, 2020 16 days ago
Phillips, Jeremy	100%	100%	B 75%	5	15	+	+	00:00:48	Aug 6, 2018 19 days ago

Figure 2. The Time column in the students' tab

When teachers click on the student's time, they will see a detailed chart of the time spent on each lesson. Aside from the lessons page, there is also the analytics in the Gradebook where teachers can see a graphical representation of student's progress on all their assignment as shown in the figure 3.

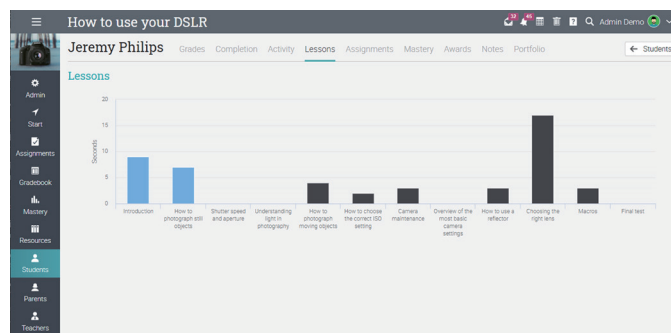


Figure 3. Student's individual chart on lesson engagement

For the individual performance of student, there is analytics that show the grade distribution of the student's performance in all his/her assignment like figure 4 below.

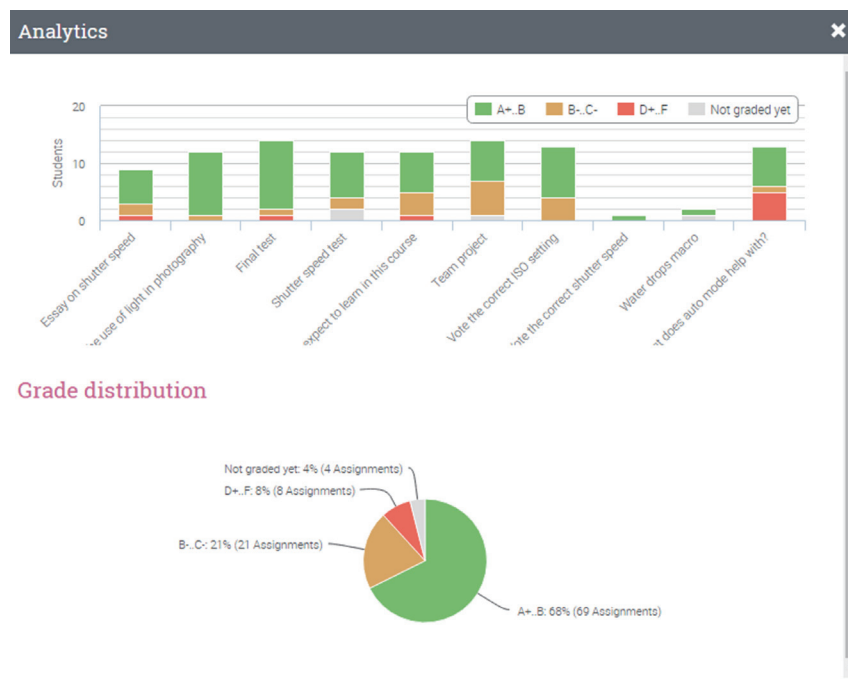


Figure 4. Analytics chart in the Gradebook

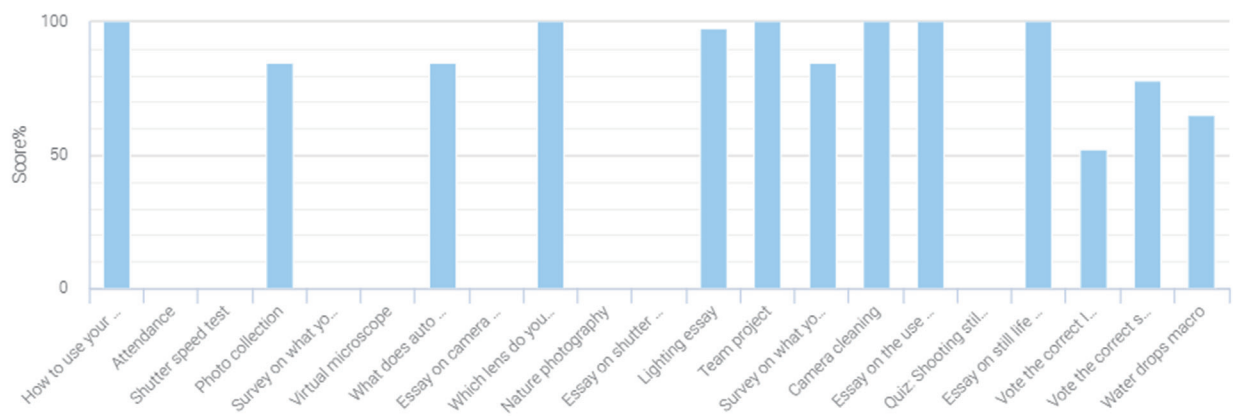


Figure 5. The student's grade distribution analytics

The analytics features help instructors assess the effectiveness of their teaching and help them figure out how to improve their courses continually.

The use of learning analytics can help teachers understand the broader learning environment and uncover ways to improve overall learning outcomes. The collection and analysis of teaching and learning data allows higher education institutions to remain competitive and effective in the development of high quality, rapidly changing education. LMS analytics can also show patterns in learners' data and empower teachers to make data-driven decisions to improve their strategy; thus, deliver exceptional training experiences.

► Customization

NEO LMS offers a wide range of customization options, such as the ability to create custom themes and templates, to personalize the learning experience. Instructors can add their branding and logos, making the platform feel like an extension of their organization.

DLSUD has customized the platform and branded it as Schoolbook. The school colors and images have been infused (Figure 6).

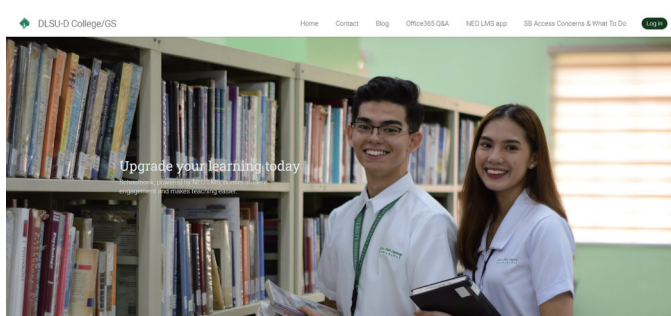


Figure 6. The Schoolbook login page

The platform also integrates a variety of external tools, such as Google Apps, Microsoft Office, and Zoom, making it easy to add new features and functionality as needed.

In most cases, teachers are the original content creators. It has only been in the last 30 years that teachers have begun to rely on pre-made content for their classes. These content sources have been frequently created from purchased class materials from book publishers. However, as teachers discover the need for content that is specific to their classroom/project context, they start to create their own content. This then leads many educators down the path of learning to create higher quality content for new online learning environments. Lastly, the platform's customization options help instructors create courses that meet the needs of their learners, making the learning experience engaging and interactive.

► Security

Security is a critical aspect of any LMS. Learning Management Systems equipped with anti-virus software safeguard user data and e-learning content. Backup data storage is an important part of an LMS.

NEO LMS has a robust security framework, ensuring that data is kept safe and secure. The platform complies with various international data protection standards, such as GDPR, COPPA, and FERPA. Best practices for securing the platform include using strong passwords, keeping software up-to-date and using firewalls. The Schoolbook offers features such as two-factor authentication and user permissions to prevent unauthorized access to stored data. The security features help instructors and learners feel safe and secure while using the platform.

► Collaboration

Collaboration is a critical 21st-century skill that students must learn. While some students may naturally be better at collaborating than others, collaboration as a skill is something that must be learned. The 21st Century Learning Design framework identifies six dimensions of 21st-century skills that learners need for life and work. One of these dimensions is collaboration.

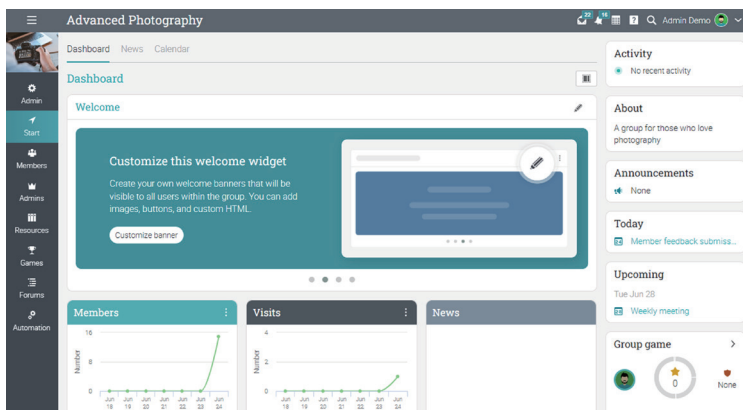


Figure 7. The dashboard of the group's page

NEO LMS encourages collaboration and interaction between learners and instructors. The platform allows instructors to create discussion forums, chat rooms, and group projects, making it easy for learners to engage with one another and work together. Group pages where members can communicate with each other, share resources and work together are created with team assignments. Each group has its own dashboard, a news feed, a calendar, a resources area, forums, wikis, blogs, chat rooms, and RSS feeds (Figure 7).

Finally, collaboration features help learners develop essential skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

03

Conclusion

NEO LMS by Cypher Learning is an excellent choice for educators looking to create engaging and interactive eLearning courses. Its versatility, flexibility, and security features make it a robust platform for a wide range of use cases, from K-12 and higher education to corporate training and development. The platform's robust analytics features, and automated grading and feedback systems help teachers identify areas where learners need help and provide personalized feedback. The customization options allow instructors to create a personalized learning experience that meets the needs of their learners, and the platform's collaboration features encourage interaction and engagement.

Implications

Educational institutions' decision to shift to online learning is noble indeed. But for the shift to result in a remarkable success, a methodic approach for the choice of the right LMS is indispensable. DLSUD's choice of NEO LMS and its decision to brand it as Schoolbook with a variety of features to ensure engaging and productive learning environment have facilitated DLSUD's success in offering online learning.

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Assessments and the Learning Management System of De La Salle University–Dasmariñas

#cypherlearning #lms #onlineassessments



Roland Lorenzo M. Ruben and Constantino T. Ballena / De La Salle University – Dasmariñas: Ms. Hyojae Choi / KERIS

This paper focuses on online assessments, which are conducted remotely on the internet, a modality that provides flexibility, scalability, and convenience. Online assessments save time and costs through automated grading, elimination of physical materials, and efficient administration. However, challenges in their administration include technical issues, security concerns, cheating risks, and potential lack of student engagement. Overcoming these challenges requires careful planning, appropriate assessment tools, addressing security measures, promoting academic integrity, and fostering student engagement. Tips for successful implementation include planning ahead, choosing the right tools, ensuring security, fostering engagement, and providing timely feedback. By following these tips, educators can create effective and reliable online assessment environments.

01

Introduction

Online assessments are digital evaluations conducted remotely via the internet. They assess knowledge, skills, or other attributes using web-based platforms, in the case of De La Salle University–Dasmariñas (DLSU-D), the Schoolbook. Quiz type assessments such as discrete (multiple-choice questions, matching type, etc.) and non-discrete (essays, discussion, team assessments, etc.) are a common format. Online assessments offer flexibility, scalability, and convenience. Students can complete them at their own pace and location. They enable simultaneous evaluation of large numbers of individuals, with automated grading and immediate feedback. Time limits, adaptive questioning, and multimedia elements enhance the assessment experience.

Online assessments have become popular due to their convenience, scalability, efficiency, data analysis capabilities, and customization options. They provide convenience by allowing students to take assessments remotely at their preferred time and location. The scalability feature enables the evaluation of a large number of students simultaneously. Online assessments streamline the evaluation process, saving time and resources through automated grading and immediate results. They also offer enhanced data collection and analysis, including adaptive questioning and multimedia elements. Lastly, the customization options allow teachers to tailor assessments to specific objectives, ensuring effective evaluation. These factors have contributed to the increasing popularity of online assessments in various fields.

► Benefits of Online Assessments

Since DLSU-D has started using the Schoolbook, the way of giving assessments has changed. The traditional pen and paper tests have given way to online assessments. Below are some benefits of online assessments in Schoolbook.

1. Increased accessibility and flexibility



Figure 1. Online assessments provide the advantage of enhanced accessibility and flexibility than traditional assessments

Online assessments provide the advantage of enhanced accessibility and flexibility than traditional assessments, enabling students to conveniently complete assessments in any place and at their preferred time. This eliminates the constraints of physical presence and scheduling conflicts, making assessments accessible to a wider audience.

In the past, pre-tests were given in the classroom using pen and paper, and students would only have one chance to take it. If they miss it, then they would have to take it at another time in the faculty room or in the classroom. With online assessments, the students are given at least a day to a week to accomplish it. With this enhanced accessibility and flexibility, students can take assessments at their own pace, accommodating individual learning styles and preferences.

2. Reduced time and cost

The Schoolbook does everything for us. Gone are the days when students would wait for days, even weeks, for their test results to be given to them. Automated grading in online assessments reduces time and cost by eliminating the need for manual grading and providing instant results especially for discrete type of assessments. They eliminate or reduce the use of physical materials (Khan et al. 2019), saving on printing, and storage costs. DLSUD was able to reduce our carbon footprint when it stopped printing our major exams. Immediate feedback reduces the need for additional assessments and supports continuous learning. This is also a great opportunity to guide the students in the learning process.

3. Enhanced accuracy and consistency

Standardized assessments, automated grading systems, clear rubrics and scoring guidelines, data validation techniques, real-time analytics, and consistent delivery of questions and instructions enhance accuracy and consistency in online assessments. Standardization ensures all students receive the same assessment conditions, minimizing biases. Automated grading reduces human errors and ensures consistent evaluation. Rubrics and scoring guidelines provide clear criteria for assessing subjective questions consistently (Rahman, et al., 2022).

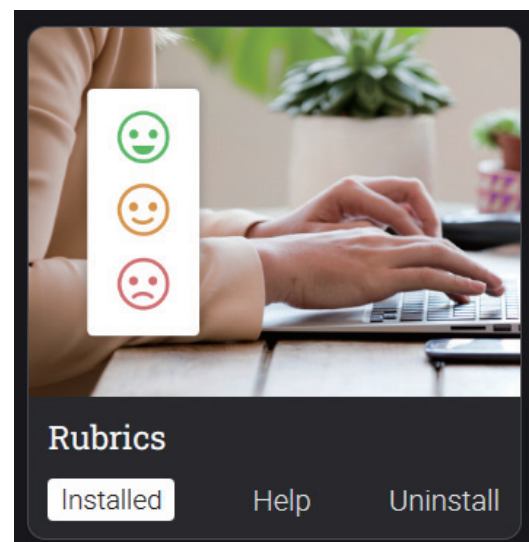


Figure 2.
Rubrics and scoring guidelines provide a clear criteria for assessing subjective questions consistently

DLSU-D has institutionalized the use of rubrics for non-discrete online assessments like essay, discussion, dropbox and team assessments, among others. Real-time analytics in learning management systems (LMS) are tools that provide instant feedback and insights on learners' performance and progress. The Gradebook of DLSU-D's LMS has three analytic features, namely, the student's individual performance, the students' performance in an assessment, and the students' overall performance in all the assessments. It has helped teachers identify strengths and weaknesses, monitor student engagement and motivation, and adjust learning strategies and goals accordingly. Consistent delivery ensures fairness in the assessment experience.

► Challenges of Online Assessments

Online assessments come with a set of challenges that include technical issues, security and privacy concerns, cheating and plagiarism risks, and potential lack of student engagement.

1. Technical Issues

Technical glitches, network connectivity problems, or compatibility issues with different devices or browsers can disrupt the assessment process in online assessments, which rely heavily on technology. These issues can cause frustration and potential loss of data. DLSU-D has encountered a lot of concerns like this during the pandemic. Some students were not able to submit their assessments on time; some had difficulties in posting their answers because of technical difficulties. In some assessments, students are given two to three attempts when they submit their outputs in order to mitigate this issue. Whenever they encounter a technical problem, they still have another attempt to submit their answers.

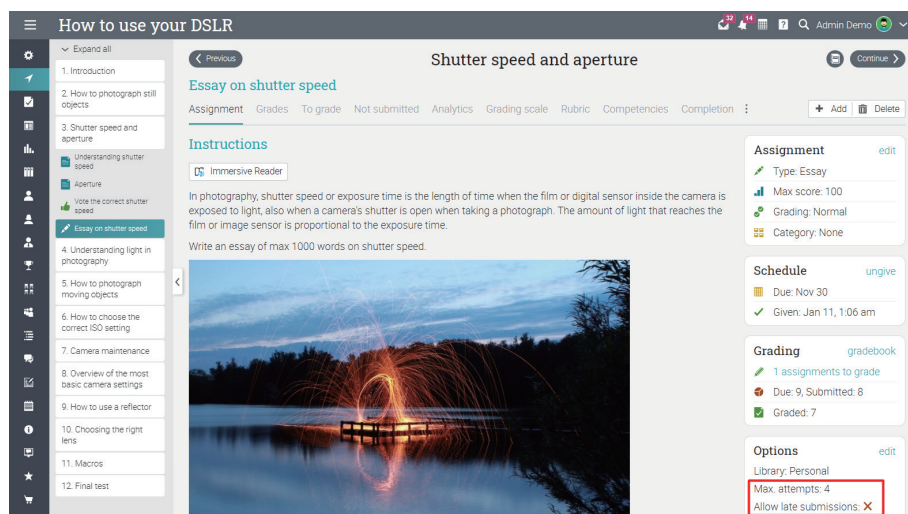


Figure 3. Giving multiple attempts mitigates the issue on technical issues

2. Security and privacy concerns

Security and privacy concerns are raised in online assessments due to the transfer and storage of sensitive data. Measures must be in place to protect the integrity of the assessment, prevent unauthorized access to questions or answers, and ensure the confidentiality of students' personal information. Students need to learn the fundamentals of online security best practices. Cybersecurity is mostly handled by skilled techs and professionals, but students can also take steps to protect their online data effectively. They need to use strong passwords, install antivirus software on all their devices, and avoid public Wi-Fi in favor of more secure channels. These are simple security tools that every student should have. The Schoolbook security features encrypted personal passwords, encrypted URLs to prevent unauthorized sharing, all web pages and videos are served over HTTPS, and

there is also a two-factor user authentication. NEO has secure storage. They store all files in the Amazon storage system (S3), which is secure as it allows authorized access only to those files. We store all data in the Amazon relational database system (RDS) which is secure, and password protected. NEO has a secure server. All its software runs on the Amazon Elastic Computing cloud (EC2), which is secure, and password protected. The servers are constantly monitored by DLSU-D's staff and Amazon's own management software.

3. Cheating and plagiarism



Figure 4. Academic integrity is essential for maintaining the quality and credibility of your education and your future career

Cheating or plagiarism is another concern vis-a-vis online assessments. Students can search for answers or collaborate with others during the assessment; such act compromises the integrity of the evaluation (Holden et al. 2021). This is the greatest concern of professors. To mitigate these risks, effective proctoring measures and plagiarism detection tools must be implemented. In DLSU-D's Schoolbook, the following features have been installed: Turnitin, a plagiarism tool; Safe Exam Browser, for secure online exams; and Proctored Assessments, a feature that allows the teacher to restrict students' access to assignments. Cypher Learning, DLSU-D's Schoolbook provider, and Turnitin have been collaborating with each other since 2015 to provide a more seamless experience for users of

NEO LMS and Turnitin. This integration allows users to access the features of Turnitin Feedback Studio directly from within NEO, without having to log in on different portals or use different credentials. This integration helps to support academic integrity by making it easier for instructors to identify potential plagiarism in student work.

4. Lack of student engagement

Engaging students during online assessments can be challenging. Without the physical presence and interaction found in traditional assessments, students may feel disengaged or unmotivated, resulting in a reduced effort or performance. Strategies such as incorporating interactive elements, clear instructions, and varied question formats can help enhance student engagement in online assessments.

To cope with these difficulties, it is necessary to try out some creative online assessments. Some examples of alternative assessment techniques that can be done on Schoolbook include:

- Portfolios: Students collect work over the course of a semester or year and submit these to their instructor for assessment. These include essays, projects, or other evidence of learning. Portfolios can be a great way for students to showcase their skills and knowledge, and they can help students reflect on their own learning.
- Live stream performance tests: Students are individually tested on their skills and knowledge in real time. This can be done through Microsoft Teams, Zoom or other online platforms. Live stream performance tests can be a great way to assess students' ability to apply what they have learned in a real-world setting.

- Multiple-choice questions with explanatory responses: Students are asked multiple-choice questions, but they are also required to explain their answers. This allows instructors to assess students' understanding of the material, not just their ability to memorize facts. Multiple-choice questions with explanatory responses can be a great way to assess students' critical thinking skills.

These are just a few examples of alternative assessment techniques. There are many other possibilities, and the best approach will vary depending on the subject matter and the learning goals of the course.

► Tips for Successful Implementation

Here are some tips for a successful implementation of online assessments:

1. Plan

Take time to carefully plan and structure online assessments, including defining objectives, determining assessment format and duration, and considering the level of difficulty. This helps ensure a well-organized and purposeful assessment process.

2. Choose the Right Assessment Tools

Select reliable and user-friendly online assessment platforms or tools that offer features such as question variety, automated grading, security measures, and data analysis capabilities. Familiarize yourself with the platform and provide clear instructions to students.

3. Ensure Security and Academic Integrity

Implement measures to maintain security and prevent cheating by utilizing proctoring tools, securing browsers, and randomizing question order. Communicate expectations and guidelines very clearly to students to promote academic honesty and integrity.

4. Foster Student Engagement

Design assessments that promote student engagement by using varied question formats, interactive elements, and real-world scenarios. Encourage student questions, feedback, and discussions related to the assessments to enhance their interest and participation.

5. Provide Timely Feedback

Aim to provide prompt and meaningful feedback to students. Utilize automated grading features when possible and offer personalized feedback for open-ended questions or essays. Timely feedback helps students understand their performance, identify areas for improvement, and stay motivated.

By following these five tips, you can create a successful online assessment environment that supports effective learning, accurate evaluation, and student engagement.



Conclusion

Online assessments have become a powerful tool in education, offering flexibility, scalability, and efficient evaluation processes. While challenges exist, they can be overcome with careful planning, the right tools, and security measures. The benefits of online assessments are undeniable, from time and cost savings to enhanced accuracy, consistency, and student engagement. By incorporating online assessments, educators can unlock the potential for more inclusive and accessible evaluations tailored to individual student needs. Embracing the digital transformation of education prepares students for the demands of the modern world and fosters their growth and success.

Implications

Educators should embrace the infinite possibilities that online assessments bring. Educators should adapt to the ever-changing educational landscape and shape a future where assessments are not just tests to be answered by students but are venues for transformative experiences that empower students. Educators should explore available platforms, equip themselves with necessary knowledge, and integrate online assessments into their teaching practices. Embracing the opportunities they provide for personalized learning, real-time feedback, and data-driven decision-making can make a difference in the lives of their students; thus, paving the way for a brighter future of education.

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Disaster-Proofing Education with Blended Learning: Benefits and Strategies

#blendedlearning #disaster-proofeducation #asynchronouslearning

Roland Lorenzo M. Ruben and Constantino T. Ballena/ De La Salle University - Dasmariñas: Ms. Hyojae Choi/KERIS

This paper focuses on blended learning, adoption of which ensures inevitably the delivery of disaster-proof education. It highlights particularly the benefits of and strategies for adopting blended learning modality.

01

Introduction:

In a world that is increasingly challenged by disasters – be they natural, health-related, or unforeseen crises – ensuring continuity in education has never been more crucial. Disasters can disrupt education and cause long-term negative impacts on students' learning outcomes. Disaster-proofing education (Glass, 2023) is a proactive measure that ensures teaching and learning continue amidst calamities, both natural and man-made. The traditional model of education, which is centered around physical classrooms and face-to-face interactions, is vulnerable to disruptions. However, an innovative approach, known as blended learning, offers a promising solution to disaster-proof education (Padernal, 2020). Blended learning is a teaching approach that combines traditional face-to-face instructional time and online or computer-mediated activities. This article explores the benefits of blended learning in disaster-proofing education and provides strategies for its effective implementation.

► What is Blended Learning?

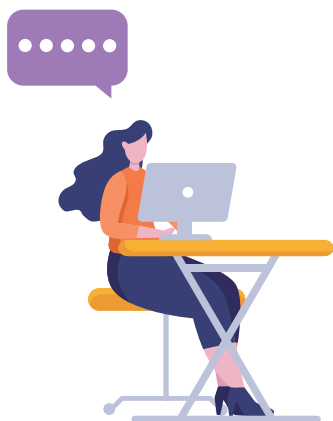
Blended learning is an educational strategy that seamlessly combines traditional in-person instruction with online components (Johnson, 2023). It offers a flexible approach whereby students could engage with course materials and resources both in a physical classroom and on digital platforms. This fusion of traditional and digital learning creates a resilient system that can adapt to various challenges, including disasters.

► Benefits of Blended Learning in Disaster-Proofing Education:

Blended learning offers several benefits in disaster-proofing education, including:

(1) Continuity of Learning and Flexibility

One of the primary advantages of blended learning is its ability to ensure the continuity of learning during crises. Blended learning enables students to access learning content anytime, anywhere, and at their own pace. This flexibility is particularly crucial during



disasters when students may not be able to attend school physically. When schools or universities face probable suspension of classes due to disasters, especially natural disasters, which include volcanic smog (vog) or political turmoil or conflict, the online component of blended learning allows students to continue their studies from home. This adaptability minimizes the impact of interruptions on the educational process.

(2) Personalization / Personalized Learning

Blended learning offers a personalized learning experience that tailors the learning experience to each student's needs, strengths, and weaknesses. This tailoring of content can be especially beneficial during times of stress or uncertainty.

(3) Engagement

The digital elements within blended learning cultivate interaction and cooperation among students, as well as between students and educators. This becomes exceptionally valuable in times of crises when in-person gatherings are either restricted or discouraged.

Blended learning amplifies student engagement by providing interactive materials that infuse a sense of enjoyment into the learning process. This method can effectively sustain students' motivation and enthusiasm for learning, even amid disasters.

(4) Cost-effective

Blended learning is less expensive to deliver, more affordable, and saves time. In the face of unexpected disruptions like natural disasters, health emergencies, or political unrest, blended learning allows education to continue, minimizing the financial impact of extended suspensions of onsite classes. This approach can help schools save costs while ensuring students continue learning during disasters.

► Strategies for Implementing Blended Learning in Disaster-Proofing Education:

Effective implementation of blended learning in disaster-proofing education requires the following strategies:

(1) Good Learning Management System

A good LMS is essential for delivering blended learning effectively. The LMS should be user-friendly accessible, and provide a range of interactive materials that engage students. It should have various features that will allow teachers to design varying asynchronous activities to ensure active and non-monotonous engagement of students. De La Salle University - Dasmariñas has been using Cypher Learning (NEO LMS) as its learning management system for more than 10 years, and it facilitated the creation of virtual classes where teachers upload their modules, assign activities, monitor their progress, and compute their grades.

(2) Pedagogy

A good pedagogical framework is crucial for delivering effective blended learning. The framework should be student-centered, interactive, and provide expanded opportunities for collaboration and feedback.

(3) Human Capital Structures

Effective blended learning requires skilled teachers who can deliver content online and in person. Schools and institutions should invest in training teachers to deliver blended learning effectively. Training includes not only technical skills but also strategies for engaging students online, providing support, and managing virtual classrooms.

(4) Data Integration

Effective blended learning requires data integration to track student progress and provide feedback. Schools should invest in data integration tools that enable teachers to monitor student progress and provide feedback.

(5) Effective Monitoring and Assessment

Monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the blended learning that education institutions adopt are crucial in ensuring that quality education is sustained. Appropriate monitoring schemes and assessment tools should be designed. A comprehensive assessment entails the active participation of all stakeholders involved in blended learning. Results derived from monitoring schemes and assessments are indispensable in any effort to improve the implementation of blended learning.

02

Conclusion

Blended learning offers several benefits in disaster-proofing education, including flexibility, personalization, engagement, and cost-effectiveness. Effective implementation of blended learning requires a good LMS, good pedagogy, skilled teachers, data integration tools, and effective monitoring and assessment. By adopting blended learning, schools can ensure that students continue to learn during disasters and minimize the negative impacts of disasters on students' learning outcomes.

Implications

Given the foregoing benefits that blended learning offers, educational institutions which adopt this modality ensure the delivery of quality education amid disasters, especially natural disasters or political turmoil or unrest. Adopting blended learning is both indispensable and inevitable in ensuring disaster-proof education.

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