

Mrs Minh Anh – Vietnam –

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Teaching online during COVID-19

Purpose and context of the presentation

The presentation provides an overview of the transition to online education at a university in Ho Chi Minh City during COVID-19.

- One week's notice that education was moving online
- No LMS at that university
- One training session on how to use Zoom

Educators had to be creative, flexible and adaptable. Overall, the transition has been good.

Below, some challenges identified from the lecturer's classes on finance and entrepreneurship are discussed.

Challenges with online education

Three challenges were identified: student engagement, entrepreneurship (course content), and feedback.

Challenge # 1: Student engagement

- When doing online lectures, students don't turn on their cameras and many struggle with their devices and internet access. Unlike with face-to-face mode, the teacher cannot call for attention and call out students individually, as they may not respond.
- Students don't do the required readings, and so the lecturer cannot ask them to read and then come back online to discuss.
- Language barrier: many online resources and tools are not Vietnamese-friendly and the students do not have good English skills.

One solution identified by the lecturer: a third-party LMS app called S-Hub which students can use as an app. It allows the lecturer to send notifications, monitor engagement, set time-restricted tests and access statistics, all with the free version.

Challenge # 2: Entrepreneurship (course content)

- The entrepreneurship unit is project based, requiring students to complete a project every week. In face-to-face mode, this would take the form of facilitated weekly workshops. Converting this online has been difficult, with the need to ensure that students are receiving constant feedback for their group projects which lead towards the final idea pitch.

A solution found has been the use of the Zalo app, a Vietnamese equivalent to WhatsApp, through which each project group communicates through texts and group calls, and the lecturer can monitor and engage with the group texts to provide support as needed.

Challenge # 3: Feedback

- The downside to the app is that there are many groups, and to give good feedback requires reading the group texts from the beginning, so it is time-intensive for the lecturer. This also means that if a group needs help, they might have to wait rather than receive help quickly.
- It also causes problems with individual assessment, as it is difficult to identify which members of a group are doing the most work and which are not pulling their weight.

Conclusions

More support is needed to improve teaching and learning online. Institution education plans need to be developed. Student circumstances need to be taken into account, including home and personal life and distractions, and schools need to be proactive and flexible.

Infrastructure and logistics also need to be taken into account, including IT expertise, equipment, teaching and learning capacity, and the ability to operate and control teaching of each school and each region. Individual lecturer motivation, responsibility and enthusiasm are limited by the absence of an institution-wide strategy. Lecturers need to be encouraged and given opportunities for training and skills improvement, and to be recognised for their efforts. The trauma of COVID-19 and its impacts on humans also needs to be considered.

Question for consideration

1. How might digital teaching evolve in the future?
2. What changes are occurring in the perception of digital teaching and learning?
3. Do we want things to go back as they used to be?
4. What are the boundaries to digital teaching and learning?