Communication Technologies: Its Impact to the Students during the COVID-19 in Sulu

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Abstract: *This study focuses on the impact of the technology amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in the field of education. It tackles how the technology helps the worldwide communication and connection, mostly in the province of Sulu. This study provides other information like the trend apps during the pandemic as a media of communications. Lastly, it also shows some challenges and benefits of the technology to the students not just in Sulu but most of the affected students.*

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, computer technologies, information technology

1. Introduction

Since last 2020, Covid-19 pandemic causes disruption not just on the economic field of a country but also in the education sector. Schools were shutdown. Face-to-face classes were cancelled, mass gathering wasprohibited, and any other policies were implemented to avoid the contagious of the Covid-19 virus including in the archipelago of Sulu. These cases affected nearly 1.6 billion of learners in more than 20 countries. Furthermore, it impacted more than 94% of the world student population (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). The pandemic has brought to us extraordinary challenges, make us more creative and specially in internalizing our faith to God. Everyone has no clue on where this pandemic would stop. Implication on the academic sector arises when the school year 2020 – 2021 were set to open. There were opinions either to have academic freeze or continue the academic year. Not just in Sulu but also worldwide, government tried to balance the academe and health safety of both students and teachers. Accordingly, in the Philippines, enrolment in the year 2020 was 3 million lower than 2019's 27.7 million students. Majority were from private schools, while over 400,000 of them transferred to public schools. Education Secretary Leonor Briones attributed the low enrolment in the private schools to the economic downturn brought by the pandemic (Magsambol, 2020). Educators in Sulu had a different opinion on these challenges, either the teachers and learners can cope with what might be the changes in the mode of teaching or not. Until this sudden time, Covid-19 is still spreading in the province of Sulu with different variant. On June 2021, the number of positive cases is still adding. The pandemic was just something that brought everyone into another mode of living, not just economically but also in the academic mode of learning. And by this, technologies have brought to us the new mode of living.

Technology is now taking part on the society, in which every individual is considered to have it. Thus, it is now considered to be as one of the necessities at this 21st century age. As the years goes, technology has been more hi- tech, from its features, processing and storage. This aims to satisfy the needs of the usersand to meet their requirements. The rapid growing of technology has evolved and reached till the province of Sulu. With the use of these technologies,

it provides us convenience and efficiency in data processing. It has a widely spread of purpose in different profession like in health care service, bank transactions, and even in education. Systematize enrolment, automated billing systems, I.D. Systems, Human Resource Management systems were just some example of the contribution of technologies in the field of education. With the existence of the Covid-19 pandemic Technology takes place and it is known to be the umbrella of information technology called *Communication Technology*. Communication technologies, also known as information technology, refers to all equipment and programs that are used to process and communicate information. It includes any communication devices, encompassing radio, television, cellular phones, computer, networking, and internet etc. to locate, save edit, and store data or information (Regisjoyce, 2019). These devices seem to contribute in delivering the information to the learners, these devices serve as the medium of contributing information. Communication technologies are not merely for fun and entertainment anymore, it is now heavily used by the education sector, because of the idea of having the technological convergence. Technological convergence is defined as the synergy of technological advancements to work on a similar goal or task. The developers expand the features of a device, like for example the computer and the cell phone, wherein cell phone nowadays can do what computers can, like word processing. The use of computer, mobile devices, and the internet is at highest level to date and expected to continue to increase as technology becomes more accessible, particularly for users in developing countries (Poushter, 2016).This technology is in fact tagged as the ''the silver lining of our educational system'' in a virtual round table called ''education during trying times'' last October 2020. ''we are in an era of technology and digitalization. Let us maximize all of these and continue to help each other and find solutions to the challenges being faced by the education sector,'' said Dr. Ethel Agnes P. Valenzuela SEAMEO secretariat director (ChildHope, 2021).

Accordingly, the integration of technology to teaching is not anymore new challenge for university. Since 1900s, administrators and faculty have grappled with how to effectively use technical innovations such as video and audio recordings, email, and teleconferencing to augment or

replace traditional instructional delivery methods (Kaware&Sain, 2015; Westera, 2015). This means that since then, educators were trying to improve the teaching strategies and methods with the used of technologies. Until now, the educators did not stop exploring on how the modes should be developed most specially in this pandemic era. Most likely in the said province, the education sector is trying to develop the learning strategies brought both in face to face classes and in modular or online classes. Head department were closely monitoring the effectiveness of teachers despite of the challenges that the province are facing.In this pandemic era online education were depend on the expertise of the leaners and the teachers, there are applications used by the different teachers in delivering the lessons and topics, the learners must take also the responsibility to cope up and learn the different platforms used such as:

1) Google Meet
It is a video – communication service developed by Google for up to 30 participants. This was formally launched in March 2017 (Scott, 2017). During the 2020 Covid -19 pandemic, the use of Meet grew by a factor of 30 between January and April 2020, with 100 million users a day accessing meet, compared to 200 million daily uses for zoom ad of the last week of April 2020 (Hannah, Frederic&Rachel, 2020). It has a feature of two- way and multi- way audio and video calls with a resolution up to 720p, an accompanying chat, call encryption between all users (gsuite.google.com, 2020), noise cancelling audio filter, low- light mode for video, ability, to join meetings through web browser or through android or iOS apps, integration with google calendar and google contacts for one- click meeting calls, screen- sharing to present documents, spreadsheets, presentations, or other browser tabs(Hannah, 2020), ability to call into meetings using dial- in number in the US and, hosts being able to deny entry and remove users during calls (Videocentric, 2018). This google are now widely used application for meetings and even class interaction because of the said features, and accordingly it also a user – friendly application which enables that user to use the apps as easier as it is.

2) Zoom
It is a video proprietary software program developed by zoom video communications. The free plan provides a video chatting service that allows up to 100 concurrent participants, with a 40- minute time restriction. Users have the option to upgrade by subscribing to a paid plan. The highest plan supports up to 1,000 concurrent participants for meeting lasting up to 30 hours (zoom.us., 2020). During the covid- 19 pandemic, there was a major increase in the use of Zoom for remote work, distance education and online social relation (Forbes, 2021). Zoom security features include password- protected meetings, user authentication, waiting rooms, locked meetings, disabling participants screen sharing, randomly generated IDs, and the ability for the host to remove disruptive attendees (Charlie, 2021). This application helps large amount of user or member to have forums and meetings with secure broadcasting because of its security features. This application would also secure the private conversation of groups and organizations.

3) Facebook Live
It is a feature for live broadcast of use videos from the Facebook mobile app. Allowing users to broadcast live videos is Facebook's response to competing services like youtube, meerkat, and periscope. Facebook live leverages the website's existing audience, the largest audience in the world, tom compete with the similar live service. This was implemented since 2015 which is for VIP only, in late 2016, iOS users were given the chance to get this feature until then it was publicized. This feature has brought the people into new environment in business opportunities and also with the seminars both national and international.

These were just few platforms that have been used by the teachers and students from Sulu as the media for learning. There are also implemented television station by the Department of Education in which there were educators who explains the lectures to the students, this is a nationwide T.V. station. In line with that, are the Tausug tribes able to deal with the technologies used for education? Some says that they didn't because of the poor signal access, some didn't have the devices, some didn't know how to work with the device. There are lot of pros and cons in terms of integrating these technologies in the new normal mode of education.

Some benefits and challenges of technology to teachers and students based from research and most likely experienced by the Tausug teachers and learners:
1) Equips students for their future career
Through the help of the different technologies or tools, it will help the learners to exercise their abilities and skills. There would be thousands of information can be reached with the used of these technologies. It will help them explore on the things that they want to do, things that might boost their interest and things that will bring them to a better future. These will lead them to be fully equipped in the future. Even today, you can see how technology affects the living of the Tausug tribe in Sulu.

2) Personalize learning and teaching approach
In every student, they have different style of learning. Students would be much interested if it will fit with the learning styles they want. The technologies that we have right now will let the teachers change their learning and teaching approach. In this 21st generation, multimedia is more interesting than the traditional method of teaching. Thus, teacher can now explore, formulate and create a better learning and teaching methods to have a better learning environment that will give interest to the learners. This will lead the Tausug to be globally competitive.

3) Drives down costs in the long run, and brings more learning opportunities
Having a quality device and putting up facility for online classes might be expensive for a certain students and teachers, but in the long run, it would be beneficial both for students and teachers. It would be cost- effective because of the advantages brought by these technologies.

4) Boost teamwork and communication
Despite of losing vicinity at school, teachers and students can remain in touch to each other with those technologies. It

can improve or implement their communication skill. Even they are apart, they can still work together and communicate to accomplish tasks. Accordingly, online lessons and games encourage them to work together even apart. Not only does it promote productivity; it also encourages responsibilities on both parties. It will keep the relationship among constituents and colleagues of different agencies and groups here in the said province.

Despite of the benefits listed above, there is always another side of the coin which the challenges in are using the technologies, like:

1) A lot of distractions for students
Mobile technologies and applications are helpful, but using the internet creates lot of distraction such as social media apps like Facebook and twitter. Unstable internet connection is also a challenge most especially in the province of Sulu. It really hinders learners from learning online and surfing for the updated information shared on different web pages.

2) Being free all the time
This is one of the biggest challenges that the teachers are facing in the said province, because there are times caused by the fluctuated internet connection were delays or sometime subject to cancel the consultation time. With these, faculty members must have to be patient and expand wisely the time for the students' welfare. Students are also having a hard time for these online classes mostly those from rural areas.

3) Not all students have access to digital tools.
Students from different area have also different state of living, one of the factors that hinders or put burden to the parents are the digital tools that is needed for the online classes. some students take the courage to borrow the devices from their neighbours just to cope up with this new normal, some don't have any other choice but to sacrifice their source for food just to buy the devices, but sadly there are some that has no something to sacrifice with. There are actions from government and any other agencies, but the question is it is enough? There are individuals who are extending the help to address these issues. These were just some of the problem faced by the learners from Sulu.

In line with the issues and concerns above, according to a survey conducted by Pearson Foundation in the United States found that more than six in 10 college students and high school seniors agree that they study more efficiently by using tablets. Furthermore, a study conducted by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in California also showed that students using iPads perform better in math compared to students using textbooks. Those data were just some of the basis that using the gadgets can really improve the learning of the students despite of its disadvantages especially in this time of crisis.

2. Conclusion

COVID-19 pandemic has been a big challenge to the education sector here in Sulu up to this moment. Regardless of this challenge Tausug people are trying to deal with the situation and still pursue the education in all levels. Technology devices specifically mobile devices had created

a big impact in the Tausug youth, it really open the eyes of Tausug on how the world goes with these rapid growths of technologies and how bounty of knowledge can be collected through these technologies.This era of Pandemic teaches both learners and teachers of Sulu to be more creative, responsible, have the initiatives, and have an up to date learnings. It also widens the ability of everyone. Therefore, even this crisis will end, the learning, skills, development of the Tausug learners and teachers must continue and will not end. This era serves as the training ground for the Tausug People to be globally competitive and for them not to be left behind with the other countries.

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