

Effects of the ‘ABOVE’ Method in Improving Academic Performance of Grade-11 Online Learners

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Abstract

Online learning became one of the modalities of delivering education when the Pandemic hit us and affected more than 1.4 billion learners around the world. Now that schools are opening, some learners opted to continue their schooling through online distance learning. Thus, Online Learning for high schoolers must provide opportunities for young learners to access the basic skills and knowledge that they can acquire in a normal school setting. The Researcher wanted to know if there are differences between conducting an online class with structured or fixed parts and conducting a normal online class. The study was conducted to determine and analyze the effects of the ABOVE (Activating Schema/Analyzing situation, Buddy-up, Objective-setting, Visualizing concepts and ideas and Evaluating the cognitive and affective domain) method in the academic performance of Grade 11 Online Learners. Twenty-five (25) learners served as respondents in the Qualitative-descriptive study. Data gathered from the pre and post intervention survey was analyzed by computing the mean. Results of the study revealed that the ABOVE method was effective in the academic performance of the learners, for it encourages learners to think critically, collaborate with fellow learner and reflect at the end of the lesson. The study then recommends all school heads, supervisors, and other school administrators to encourage teachers to use the ABOVE method in conducting online classes because the intervention being used helps learners develop their 21st century skills.

Key Words: Innovations, Pedagogy, Online Learning, Teaching Practices, Distance Learning ABOVE - Activating Schema/Analyzing situation, Buddy-up, Objective-setting, Visualizing concepts and ideas and Evaluating the cognitive and affective domain

I. Context and Rationale

The Pandemic has immensely changed the way we live, and education is no exception as it caused a lot of anxiety to students and teachers alike. Stress that is caused by the new normal education practices like staying at home and inability to substitute classroom opportunities during the covid-19 crisis. The pandemic caused 1.4 billion learners across the globe to stay at home (Cluver et al. 2020) and this set up denied all the learners basic support and opportunities to learn better than the schools provide.

The opening of classes in the Philippines last October have forced some schools to offer different modalities in learning-- one of which is the Online Distance Learning (DepEd Order No. 12, s 2020). Synchronous learning is one of the strategies in ODL where learners are participating simultaneously using a live online lesson, often aiming to replicate ‘in classroom’ teaching where both teacher and students are together at the

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same place and time (Kokoulina, 2020). However, Orlando and Attard (2015) stated that “teaching with technology is not a one size fits all approach as it depends on the types of technology in use at the time and also the curriculum content being taught”. This means that the incorporation of technology provides additional factors for consideration in terms of teaching pedagogy and construction of learning experiences. However, connectivity and accessibility problems arise because access to the internet connection and learning devices continued to be a privilege up to this day, placing those with poor internet access at a disadvantage when it comes to online classes.” For a better picture, 45% of Filipino citizens (46 million) and 74% (34,500) of public schools do not have access to the internet (Jones, 2019) .

Aside from the lack of tangible technology to be used, an additional limitation to consider is that ODL learners require expert supervision and, therefore, adult availability and involvement is very vital (Schroeder and Kelley 2010; Youn et al. 2012). Moreover, online learning may not give sufficient or appropriate opportunities to involve learners who need more interactions and hands-on activities to focus and learn compared to adult learners. In addition, a study commissioned by Microsoft in 2015 and discussed in Time magazine found that the average attention span was in fact only 8 minutes (seconds) way shorter from the 10-15 minutes period claimed by Harley and Davies in 1978.

Oh and Jonassen (2007); Ward et al. (2010) stated that students find online classes insufficient as many have difficulties in comprehension and learning online. Muilenburg and Berge (2005) noted that students who do not learn from traditional classes reported a lot of challenges in online learning. Wang and Woo (2007) as cited by Ward et al.

In addition, studies show that the students are unable to successfully integrate, or contrast memorized facts and formulate with real life applications because of the lack of supervision of a physical teacher on the other side of the screen.

Because of this, practical knowledge and school knowledge are becoming mutually elusive; many students see little connection between what they learn in the classroom with real life. Additionally, the traditional teaching method of teachers as information- giver to passive students appears to be outdated. Obviously, the traditional teacher-as-information- giver and textbook guided classroom that is now being applied in online classes has failed to bring about desired outcome of producing thinking students.

The K-12 curriculum is learner-centered. As such, teachers have to give prior attention to the characteristics of the students. For instance, to provide optimum instruction, it is important to know the appropriate teaching-learning approaches and strategies applicable to a certain group of online learners. This knowledge will help the teachers design and tailor the activities to be conducted in the virtual classroom.

The administrators and teachers must then be guided by relevant strategies in teaching in order to achieve their goals. Hooser (2010) stressed in his study that teaching strategies are used by teachers to facilitate effective teaching and better quality of learning by pupils. These are devised to suit the different ways that pupils learn. While some pupils learn and retain pieces of information that are fed to them through a lecture, others learn better by interpreting or acting out certain situations. Other pupils, however, absorb information with the aid of visual cues in addition to the lecture and reading. The use of different teaching strategies assures and provides the pupils with different learning exposures to maximize learning and retain the information given to them.

In the present situation of the Philippine Educational System, the primary goal of teaching is to provide appropriate and effective instruction to students (Salvieto, 2014) Thus, a teacher is responsible to devise and provide the necessary materials for use in classes (Dy, 2011). Developing instructional materials or devising strategies used in classes play an integral role in the teaching – learning process. Use of instructional materials has a strong relationship with academic performance at the secondary students as mentioned in Dahar (2011).

There is a tendency that Online Distance Learners may not develop critical thinking. Oh and Jonassen (2007); Ward et al. (2010) pointed out one of the setbacks of ODL when argued that students find online classes insufficient as many have difficulties in comprehension and learning online. Muilenburg and Berge (2005) noted that students who do not learn from traditional classes reported a lot of challenges in online learning. Wang and Woo (2007) as cited by Ward et al.

Collaboration is a very vital 21st century skill, Because of ODL the culture of camaraderie, unity and teamwork is hindered. The other concerns, however, have already been noted by experts in the field of distance education, there is the issue of social integration and peer culture, and the possibility of transmission of values in a “virtual” classroom. Since there is a lack of human interaction in the learning process, students may learn less in such a set-up as opposed to those in the traditional classroom (Edge and Loegering, 2000; Gamage et al., 2020). Second, there is also an issue on the unnaturalness and the results of online learning, since it goes against how natural teaching and learning supposedly take place (Larreamendy-Joerns and Leinhardt, 2006; Adnan and Anwar, 2020). The lack of face-to-face human interaction in the online learning space and process appears disconcerting to both educators and learners alike.

Therefore, there is a genuine need to examine and study the effect of the new format of online class or Innovative online teaching strategy titled ABOVE method in the academic performance of Grade 11 Online Distance Learners.

II. Action Research Questions

This study determined whether the ABOVE method is an effective strategy to improve students' performance on Grade 11 Online Distance Learning Learners of Cadaratan National High School for the School Year 2020-2021.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

How effective is the ABOVE method in improving academic performance of learners in Grade 11?

III. Proposed Innovations/Interventions and Strategy

Based on the observations of the Researcher, most of the learners have difficulty in staying engaged in the online class and tend to be passive most of the time.

According to John Dewey (1938), students learn better when they are engaged in the learning process and knowledge has to be discovered by the individuals to have a significant meaning to them. Thus, the Researcher will implement the ABOVE Method which restructures the format of an online class.

Ultimately, this Research will test the effectivity of the said strategy as a platform for the teachers and learning facilitators to follow the structure of online class and rise above the adversities of teaching during the

pandemic. With or without crisis, learners must always develop 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and such can be achieved by following the new ODL learning structure or format. The structure of the class will be Activating Schema/ Analyzing situation, Buddy-up, Objective-setting, Visualizing concepts and ideas and Evaluating the cognitive and affective domain ABOVE. Specifically, this research aims to achieve the following desired results:

- a. Activate the schema of learners and let them be engaged in the class at the beginning of the class. With this activity the learners will seek to correlate prior knowledge with new learning in order to construct meaning that serve to guide, interpret and clarify content;
- b. Develop collaboration among and between learners even if separated by space. Buddying-up or collaborative learning activities help learners to find explanations of their understanding that assists them elaborate and reorganize their knowledge (Van Boxtel, Van der Linden, and Kanselaar, 2000)
- c. Guide the direction of students towards academic success through objective-setting. In support of this, Barry (2007) stated that young people will work harder, longer and will commit more willingly to tasks where accomplishment is certain to be an outcome
- d. Let the learners understand the lesson better by analyzing infographics and other visual media. Unlike traditional data visualization, infographics incorporate text and images together to convey a complex idea in a creative, easy-to-understand way (Darling, 2017; Pritchard, 2016); and
- e. Evaluate the learners holistically. Being able to use cognitive and affective domains in higher educational experience can improve learning opportunities for students (Quinlan, 2016).

IV. Action Research Method

a. Sources of Data

The main respondents of the study will be 25 Grade 11 online learners who will learn some SHS subjects such as Practical Research and Oral Communication through the ABOVE Method.

b. Data-Gathering Procedure

The Researcher asked permission from the School Principal to conduct the proposed action research. Upon the approval of the request, the Researcher immediately started the following:

- a. The School Principal approved the parts or format of the online class.
- b. The Researcher administered the pre-intervention survey
- c. The Researcher recorded and analyzed the survey results.
- d. ABOVE method was used in conducting online class.
- e. The post-intervention survey was administered.
- f. Analysis of results was done to check if the performances of students improved.

c. Research Instrument

A survey questionnaire was developed by the Researcher. It is composed of 10 survey questions validated and checked by the school principal.

Another instrument used was the Interview Protocol consisting of questions which focused to elicit qualitative data that verified the respondents' answers in the questionnaire.

This rating scale was accomplished by the teachers. Their responses were scored by using the four-point scoring system developed by Tuckman written as follows:

Scale	Range Interval	Descriptive Interpretation
4	3.51-4.50	Strongly Agree (SA)
3	2.51-3.50	Agree (A)
2	1.51-2.50	Disagree (D)
1	1.00-1.50	Strongly Disagree (SD)

d. Statistical Tool

The following statistical tools were used in the study:

The data from the responses of respondents was collated, tabulated, categorized, analyzed, and interpreted and provided significant answers to the specific problems of the study. Weighted mean was used in the analysis of the data collected.

V. Time Table/Gantt Chart

Deliverable	Activity	Time Frame
Work Plan	Planning 1. Identification of the respondents of the study 2. Selection of research design and tools for the study	December 2020
Data Gathering Activities	Development of Data-Gathering tools 1. Gathering of Data 2. Deepening of responses provided through interview and dialogue.	January to May 2021
Initial Findings and Analysis	1. Collect the data 2. Analyzed the data gathered 3. Report Writing	June 2021
Final Report Writing	Finalization of the Written Report	July 2021
Proposed Action Plan based on the results of Action Research.	Dissemination of Result.	July 2021

VI. Discussion of Results and Reflection

This section deals with the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data gathered to answer the problems posed in this study.

The discussion in this section is arranged according to two major concerns of the study: first, the identification of the effects of the ABOVE method in the academic performance of Grade 11 Online Learners, and second, the recommendations the Researcher provides for their improvement of the conduct of online distance learning.

Table 1 Mean Rating on the perceptions of learners before the implementation of the ABOVE method		
Indicators	Mean	DI
1. The pre-lesson activities are very engaging	2.44	D
2. I can see relationship between my prior knowledge with the new lesson	2.78	A
3. I collaborate with my classmates during class	2.35	D
4. I learn from the input of my classmates through group work	1.73	SD
5. The objectives of the lesson were clear	2.42	D
6. The teacher sets goals and expected output from students	2.47	D
7. The visual aids are very much appealing	3.20	A
8. PowerPoint presentations help us understand the concepts better	2.50	D
9. The teacher gives us tasks to check if we have understood the lesson	3.21	A
10. I was given the opportunity to reflect on lesson I have learned	1.67	SD
Overall Mean	2.48	D

Legend:	Range of Means	Descriptive Interpretation
	3.27-4.00	Strongly Agree (SA)
	2.51-3.26	Agree (A)
	1.76-2.50	Disagree (D)
	1.00-1.75	Strongly Disagree (SD)

Before the implementation of the ABOVE method, it is evidently manifested in Table -1 that most of the Grade- 11 learners are not engaged during the beginning of the lesson, do not collaborate with others, learners have no clear goals or directions at the beginning of the lesson and are not given the opportunity to reflect on the learnings and challenges they have encountered during the lesson. The learners Disagree (2.48) that the strategy used by the teacher was effective

Students' comments were given to support the findings.

Hindi ko naintindihan yung topic, parang ang bilis matapos ng lecture. (I wasn't able to understand the lesson, it was so quick.)

Awan unay inubrami, nagsao lang ni teacher tapos nagdinggeg kam lang (We did nothing but to listen to our teacher's lecture.)

Table 2 Mean Rating on the perceptions of learners after the implementation of the ABOVE method		
Indicators	Mean	DI
1. The pre-lesson activities are very engaging	3.28	SA
2. I can see relationship between my prior knowledge with the new lesson	3.54	SA
3. I collaborate with my classmates during class	3.77	SA
4. I learn from the input of my classmates through group work	3.31	SA
5. The objectives of the lesson are clear	3.75	SA
6. The teacher sets goals and expected output from students	3.67	SA
7. The visual aids are very much appealing	3.44	SA
8. PowerPoint presentations help us to understand the concepts better	3.50	SA
9. The teacher gives us tasks to check if we have understood the lesson	3.86	SA
10. I was given the opportunity to reflect on lesson I have learned	3.65	SA
Overall Mean	3.58	SA

Legend:	Range of Means	Descriptive Interpretation
	3.27-4.00	Strongly Agree (SA)
	2.51-3.26	Agree (A)
	1.76-2.50	Disagree (D)
	1.00-1.75	Strongly Disagree (SD)

It can be gleaned from Table-2 that the respondents strongly agreed on all the indicators along the effectiveness of the strategy being used during online class. It obtained an overall mean rating of 3.58 which fell under *Strongly Agree* category. This implies that the ABOVE method has a positive effect to all the Grade- 11 online learners.

Indicators 1 and 2 with respective mean score of 3.28 and 3.54 (SA) prove that a well-thought-out preliminary activities such as letting learners analyze and activate their prior knowledge could contribute in the success of the delivery of the lesson and formation of concepts and ideas. Hammond et. Al (2021) highlight the importance of the systematic and sequential building of background knowledge for an increased ability to comprehend. As educators, we have to bear in mind that the relevance of the prior knowledge only becomes important when this knowledge is activated (Brod, 2021).

With 3.77 and 3.31 as mean score, the ABOVE method highlights the importance of collaboration amongst learners. The mean scores corroborate with the findings of Higley (2018) that a successful collaborative group activity allows learners to feel a sense of community and provides learners with an active role and responsibility, which is shared among his or her established groups. Online learners in well-designed learning environments experience meaningful learning, develop higher order thinking, and begin to develop an e-Learning community where collaborative group activities are encouraged.

Some respondents expressed:

I like being in a group for I feel like I'm not alone and I have someone whom I can learn with and learn from.

Kayatko nu ag gro-group kami kase ada kadwak mangubra dagitay activities.

(I like being in a group for I have groupmates to accomplish every task given to us.)

It can also be gleaned from the Table-2 that learners are more productive and more focused when more organized goals are set and objectives of the lesson were clear as manifested in indicators 5 and 6 with a 3.75 and 3.67 mean rating which conveys strong agreement. This result can also be gleaned from the study of Stronge & Grant (2014) which states that effective goal-setting practices help students focus on specific outcomes, encourage them to seek academic challenges, and make clear the connection between immediate tasks and future accomplishments.

The ODL learners respond well with pictures, charts and infographics as manifested by the mean rating of 3.44 and 3.50 at indicators 7 and 8 respectively. Anu_V (2021) proves that Visuals have a significant impact on the brain as they help to retain information for a longer period of time. Moreover, Visuals can turn complex topics into a simpler form. By just looking at the visual information, the complex topic can be understood for better learning outcomes.

Respondents stressed that:

Nu picture lang makitkitami ket agpanununot kami haan nga agbasbasa latta ubra min. (Pictures and graphics enable us to think not just merely reading what is on the slides)

When our teacher uses only visuals, we have no choice but to listen attentively.

The last two indicators in Table-2 suggest that relevant tasks and reflecting on the topic have a positive impact on the learners. The mean rating of 3.86 and 3.85 confirms that holistic assessment such as paper and pencil tests, performance tasks and reflection play an important role in the academic success of the learners. Recurring reflection activities encourage students to think critically about their writing practices and to make sense of and reimagine their experiences for future benefit (Dyment et. al, 2010). In addition, Finlay, (2008) agreed that reflective practice is ‘learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and practice.

Some respondents expressed:

Magustwak no agsurat kam reflection in a paper or in our freedom wall, kase ma voice out mi nu naawatanmi or haan tay lesson.

I like it when we have reflective writing on paper or on our digital freedom wall for it gives us assessment if we have understood the lesson or not.

VII. Conclusion, Recommendations and Reflections

A. Conclusion

In the light of the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Learners exposed to ABOVE method have an improvement on their level of performance which is evidently manifested in the study.
2. Respondents have a positive perception on the use of the ABOVE method as shown by their comments and positive feedbacks about the intervention.

B. Recommendations

The findings and conclusions of the study suggest relevant implications and recommendations:

1. Continue the use of the ABOVE method in conducting online classes.
2. Encourage administrators, supervisors and teachers to use same intervention in all subject- areas.
3. Teachers shall be provided with more seminars, workshops on the principles of the ABOVE method

C. Reflections

UNESCO recommends distance learning programs and open educational applications during school closure caused by COVID-19 so that schools and teachers continue to teach their pupils and limit the interruption in education. Therefore, many institutes continued to go for the online classes (Shehzadi et al., 2020). The Educational system in our country adapted to the changes brought by the pandemic. Different modalities were offered, however many difficulties sprang due to the limited resources teachers and learners had. Education landscapes became a ground to experiment new ways of delivering basic education.

Although a number of setbacks were presented we cannot deny the fact that the new normal in learning could enable educators to think of innovative and more relevant teaching strategies that could help learners learn better.

Results of the studies show that the students perform much better in online learning than in traditional learning. Henriksen et al. (2020) highlighted the problems faced by educators while shifting from offline to online mode of teaching. In the past, several research studies had been carried out on online learning to explore student satisfaction, acceptance of e-learning, distance learning success factors, and learning efficiency (Sher, 2009; Lee, 2014; Yen et al., 2018).

As Educators we should be open to possibilities and propel ourselves to adapt and rise above the challenges the pandemic is bringing us. Delivering quality basic education should be our first priority despite the constraints we currently have.

The pandemic made us realize that we can cater to all of our learner's needs if we plan and create better solutions not for a new normal but for a better normal in the field of education.

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