Assessment Changes to Support Learning During Pandemic Crisis

May Maeh V. Tobato-Camlian, MAED, LPT
Master of Arts in Education major in School Administration
Mindanao State University Graduate School
General Santos City

Abstract:- This study is conducted to determine the assessment changes needed to support learning at Cronasia Foundation College, Inc. during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study employed a qualitative and quantitative approach to determine the assessment changes and also the concerns and issues about the effect of the changes and the changes that need to be continued to support learning during the pandemic crisis. This research surveyed 1 administrator, 38 teachers, 5 program heads, 2 program coordinators, and 186 students of Cronasia Foundation College, Inc. for the academic year 2020–2021. It aims to investigate the assessment changes, the possible drivers behind the assessment-related changes made, the concerns and issues about the effect of the changes, and also the changes that need to be continued to support learning. For this purpose, an adopted and modified questionnaire from Jankowski (2020) was utilized, and guide questions were also created for focused-group discussion. In this paper, quantitative analysis and qualitative response analysis were used. Based on the results of the study, there were 94.83% changes made in the assessment of learning in response to COVID-19. The respondents stated that the most frequent changes made were modifications of assignments or assessments and acceptance of alternative assignments. The respondents also agree that concerns about students' differential access to technology (including reliable internet) were determining factors in making changes. There were also concerns and issues that focused on four main areas: differentiated access to technology; concerns about teacher-student interaction; reliability of assessment; and students' learning behavior. In response to the specific outcomes and conclusions of this study, it was recommended that teachers be considerate when giving deadlines on students' assignments and assessments, but make sure that the assessment can promote analysis, comprehension, application, and reasoning to develop students' higher-order thinking skills. The input of this paper derives as an outcome of data analysis obtained from a survey conducted at Cronasia Foundation College, Inc.

Keywords:- Assessment Changes, COVID-19 Pandemic, Support Learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought drastic changes to the lifestyles of people all over the world. It really affects the health, economy, society, and most of all, the education sectors. In response to the situation and to protect the people, especially the students, from the virus, various educational institutions have opted to close. They were forced to adopt distance learning to continue the students' learning. Because of this, education institutions are now facing drastic changes, especially in learning assessment, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The administrators, faculty, staff, and students are having difficulties coping with these changes. Schools need to navigate guidelines and structures that will ensure the learning success of their students. Among the most common assessment changes that have been made due to this pandemic are adjusting assignments and assessments, making deadlines flexible, moving to pass/fail grades, and accepting alternative assessments.

The purpose of this study is to determine the assessment changes made by Cronasia Foundation College, Inc. to support learning during the pandemic crisis. It will also determine the concerns and issues about the effect of the changes and the changes that need to be continued to support learning.

Jankowski (2020) stated in her study that assessment changes to support learning were made in response to the abrupt change after shifting into online classes. She added that there were many institutions that reported making assessment changes in response to COVID-19. Most of these institutions made three to four changes, and unexpectedly, there was no consistency in the combinations of changes made, no grouping or clustering of responses, and no relationship between the types of changes made and answers on perceptions of those changes and/or how those changes were made. Amobi (2020) also stated that the great effect of the COVID-19 pandemic is the unexpected change of instruction modalities that leads to the need for improving assessment practices that can help to lighten student stress and worry, emphasize learning, and amend biases in student success.

Even prior to the spread of this coronavirus that forced all educational institutions to have it, it was already an option for the educational institutions to offer distance learning instructions. There are already some educational institutions that have already offered this kind of distance learning in order to keep teaching while taking precautions to avoid the spread of this deadly virus. Young (2020) stated that due to this unexpected event, the educational leaders are now working hand in hand to create resources online, share best practices, and also try to train the teachers for the adaptation of this rapidly changing environment.

Due to these changes, as educators, there are many educational practices that cannot be applied in the present day. There is a need to examine the purposes, establish priorities, and even decide what is really most important for the students' learning. DeWitt (2020) posits that in terms of assessment and grading decisions, they are influenced by two needs: the need to motivate and provide students' learning and the need to document and measure students' learning. In the need to encourage and provide for students' learning, it is important that educational institutions provide the best learning experiences to the students in spite of these inevitable and very challenging situations. It is still important to attain academic goals and be able to continue students' learning development. In the need to document and measure student learning for purposes of responsibility, the success of alternative instructional programs should be verified by the educational institutions.

Assessment is a learning instrument that plays an essential part in the learning progression rather than an evaluation tool that is used to measure the students' learning after the end of the class. It is important to focus on feedback rather than giving a score or grade in support of a student's learning. The students must understand that assessment is being done to validate what they have learned and also to recognize learning problems in order to come up with a remedy for such problems. Identifying learning problems is needed to come up with a plan for learning alternatives to help students.

The pandemic brought rapid changes not only to the learning instructions but also in terms of learning assessment. There is a need to adjust instructions as well as learning assessments to meet the student's needs and be able to cope with the student's learning difficulties (Shafer, 2020).

II. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted to determine the assessment changes needed to support learning during the pandemic crisis. Specifically, it sought to determine the changes in the assessment of learning during the pandemic, the possible drivers behind the assessment-related changes made, the concerns and issues about the effect of the changes, and the changes that need to be continued to support learning.

This study employed a qualitative and quantitative approach to determine the assessment changes and also the concerns and issues about the effect of the changes and the changes that need to be continued to support learning during the pandemic crisis. quantitative approach since it exactly included numerical and quantifiable data in a systematic way of investigating phenomena, and a qualitative approach was also employed because the researcher conducted focused group discussions with some respondents.
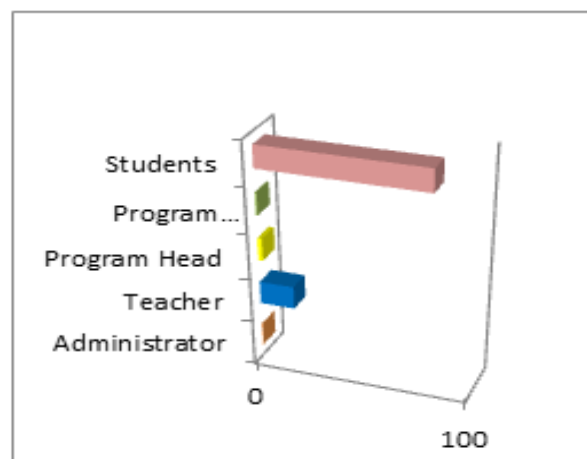

Fig 1 Distribution of Respondents

The respondents of this study were one (0.43%) administrator, thirty-eight (16.38%) teachers, five (2.16%) program heads, two (0.86%) program coordinators, and one hundred eighty-six (80.17%) students of Cronasia Foundation College, Inc. for the academic year 2020-2021. There was a total of two hundred thirty-two respondents in this study. The respondents were chosen through simple random sampling. This study was conducted at Cronasia Foundation College, Inc., located at Andres-Dizon Building, Pioneer Avenue, General Santos City.

The researchers employed an adopted and modified questionnaire from Jankowski (2020) to determine the assessment changes made during the pandemic and the possible drivers behind the assessment-related changes made. The researcher used a yes-or-no question and a five-point Likert scale to interpret the data for this part of the questionnaire. For the focused group discussion, the researcher prepared guide questions to determine the concerns and issues about the effect of the changes and the changes that need to be continued to support learning during the pandemic crisis. This was used for further discussions that would support the study.

Before the study was conducted, there were a series of procedures that the researcher followed. At first, the researcher read some related literature to get some information that could be used in the study. Then, the researcher presented the data gathered and consulted the professor for the final title and statement of the problem based on the gathered data.

After the consultation, the researcher started the draft of the study, which was then presented again to the professor. The researcher also submitted the research instrument to the professor for checking and corrections. After the draft and the research instrument were approved, the researcher sent a letter to the school administrator of Cronasia Foundation College, Inc. for the conduct of the study.Upon approval, the researcher conducted the study with the respective respondents. The questionnaire was administered online, and then there was a scheduled focused group discussion for the teachers for further discussions of the study.

After the data was gathered, the researcher organized, tallied, analyzed, and interpreted the data.

To determine the changes in the assessment of learning during the pandemic, frequency counts and percentages were used. To determine the possible drivers behind the assessment-related changes made, the mean was used. To determine the concerns and issues about the effect of the changes and the changes that need to be continued to support learning, qualitative response analysis was used.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Cronasia Foundation College, Inc., like other institutions in General Santos City, decided to shift from face-to-face to distance learning due to the spread of the coronavirus. All institutions adopted distance learning to ensure the continuity of students' learning. The changes made in learning modalities also brought about changes in learning assessment. There were fifteen identified changes in the assessment of learning in this study (see figure 2). The changes made were modification of assignments or assessments, flexibility in assignments or assessment deadlines, shift to pass/fail, acceptance of alternative assignments, modification of course evaluations, modifications of assessment report deadlines, changes of assessment roles and responsibilities, no more timed written examinations, reduced number of assessments, from learning journals to blog posts, from podcasts to client reports, re-establish feedback, from short-answer type questions to theories and themes-based queries, virtual presentations, and periodic online multiple-choice questionnaires and quizzes.
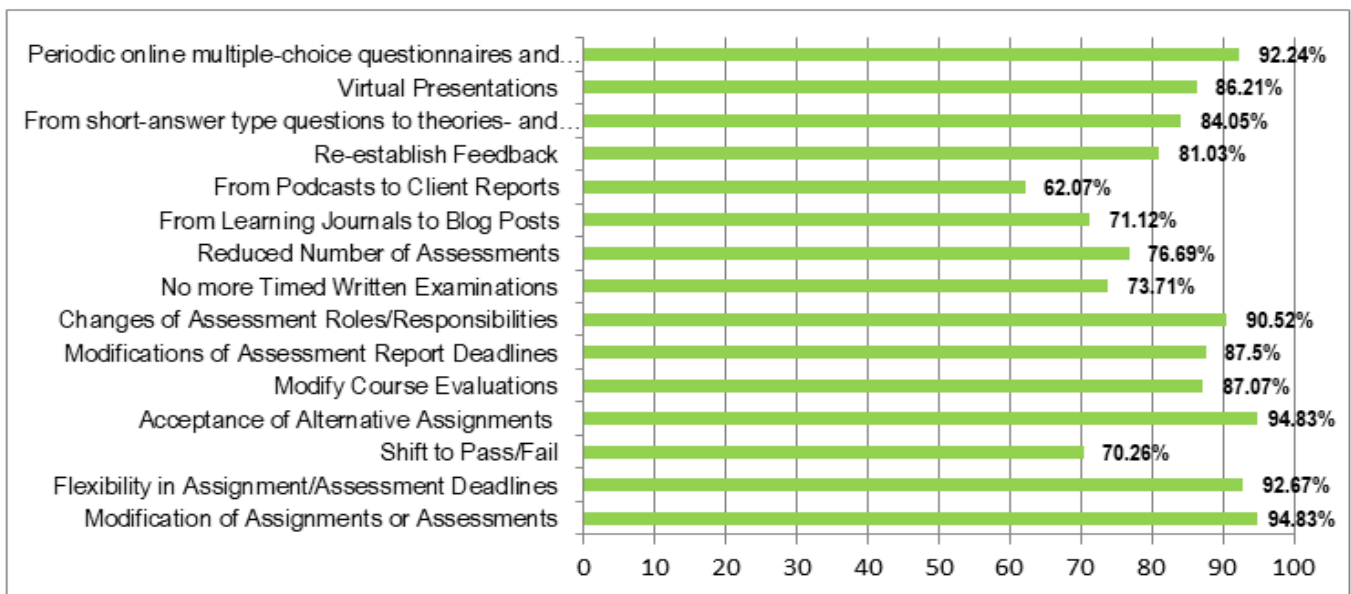

Fig 2 Changes in the Assessment in Learning

In response to COVID-19, there were 94.83% changes made in the assessment of learning based on the results of the study. It is not far from the result of the study conducted by the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), which reported that 97% of the respondents made some adjustment in their assessment activities due to the pandemic. Based on the changes listed, the most often mentioned changes were modification of assignments or assessments and acceptance of alternative assignments. Modification of assignments or assessments means altering the standard of measurement by changing the task or expected results and also includes changes in courses, test arrangement, location, timing, scheduling, student responses, and expectations considered to provide access to the students to increase their participation. Acceptance of alternative assignments means permitting students to use multimedia, technology, and other resources in order to encourage student engagement and better attention to detail, boost creativity, and embrace challenge. It was followed by flexibility in assignments or assessment deadlines. Providing flexibility with deadlines is one way that we can promote more sensible classrooms. It is also finding ways to provide flexibility that can benefit all the students, especially those who live more complicated lives. Another is the periodic online multiple-choice questionnaires and quizzes, which means that in many multiple-choice tests, the questions do nothing more than measure whether students have learned certain facts and details. But well-written questions can move students to higher-order thinking, such as application, integration, and evaluation. Next are the changes in assessment roles and responsibilities. It is only one of many roles that assessment plays in education: to determine

student learning, but assessments must offer on-going measures of student performance using more than one method, be aligned with student learning outcomes, and allow students to demonstrate competency in a variety of ways. Lastly, the most significant change made is the modification of assessment report deadlines. Since we give flexibility in assignments or assessment deadlines, there is also a need to modify assessment report deadlines to cater to those students who extended their submission of their tasks. So, these are the most significant changes made in the assessment of learning during this pandemic. It also showed that there was more than one assessment-related change made, and there was no consistency in the combinations of changes made.

Table 1 Possible Drivers behind the Assessment-Related Changes Made

S no.	Possible Drivers behind the Assessment-Related Changes Made	Mean	Description
1	Assessment-related changes were undertaken to address the needs of the students.	4.22	Agree
2	Equity concerns drove the decisions to make changes.	4.13	Agree
3	Concerns about students' differential access to technology (including reliable Internet) were determining factors in making changes.	4.32	Agree
4	Concerns about students' ability to learn in their remote environments facilitated the decisions to make changes.	4.19	Agree
5	Students were invited to identify needs (via survey, focus group, phone calls, etc.) prior to decisions being made.	4.16	Agree
6	Information gathered from students influenced decisions on what to change.	4.14	Agree
7	Changes were made due to the increasing use of online and virtual platforms.	4.14	Agree
8	Economic status was considered in the changes made.	4.22	Agree
9	Able to select appropriate assessment measures and achieve learning outcomes.	4.12	Agree
10	Ensure continuity of education and protection of the students.	4.25	Agree
11	Teachers and students' capability in using technology.	4.18	Agree
12	Change assessment that would reveal a lot of essential information about student learning.	4.12	Agree
13	Students' unavailability to meet deadlines.	4.02	Agree
14	Adopting remote learning practices.	4.05	Agree
15	Lack of off-campus access to required software.	4.00	Agree
	Weighted Mean	**4.15**	**Agree**

➢ *Legend: 4.50-5.00 (Strongly Agree); 3.50-4.49 (Agree); 2.50-3.49 (Moderately Agree); 1.50-2.49 (Disagree); 0.50-1.49 (Strongly Disagree)*

Table 1 shows that the respondents agree that there were possible drivers behind the assessment-related changes made, with a weighted mean of **4.15**. The results revealed that the respondents agreed that concerns about students' differential access to technology (including reliable internet) were determining factors in making changes, with a mean of **4.32**. The assessment-related changes were also made to ensure the continuity of education and the protection of the students. It was also undertaken to address the needs of the students, their economic status, and their ability to learn. They also agree that there was a lack of off-campus access to required software, with a mean of **4.00.**
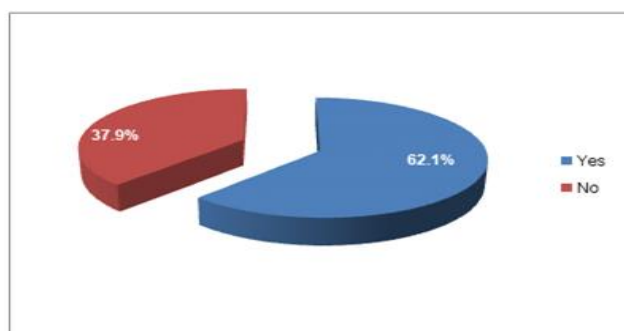

Fig 3 With the Changes Made in Response to COVID-19, do you Think it Will Arise Negative Impact to the Culture of Assessment in the Institution?

Figure 3 shows that 62.1% of the respondents were concerned that the changes made due to this pandemic could significantly have a negative impact on the culture of assessment in the institution, and only 37.9% were not concerned.

There were concerns and issues about the effect of the changes mentioned by the respondents, which focused on four main areas: differentiated access to technology; concerns about teacher-student interaction; reliability of assessment; and students' learning behavior.

➢ *Access to Technology*
Due to the rapid change brought by the pandemic, teachers and students faced difficulties in the early phase of the implementation of distance learning. Poor internet connections are the most challenging at this time, especially for those who actually live in far-flung areas. There are also some who cannot afford to buy gadgets, and some are using outdated devices and software. This was supported by the Study International Staff (2019), who noted that many of the problems with online learning are due to access to a stable internet connection, finances to buy gadgets, and others. This problem is not something that teachers can resolve. Administrators also recognize this as a major concern.

➢ *Teacher-Student Interaction*
They stated that these changes had a negative effect on the interaction between the teachers and the students. The flow of learning was literally hindered due to unavoidable barriers in communication. There were also instances where

the students had difficulties understanding their lessons, which led them to not be responsive in doing their tasks. Unstable internet connections can also cause some misunderstandings, especially during synchronous classes. The teachers will have difficulties identifying the needs of their students, and they will not be able to address them properly. This was confirmed by the study of Terzi and Çelik (2005), which found that in an online learning setting, teachers lack direct access to verbal and nonverbal feedback from their students. This feedback allows the teachers in a traditional learning setting to use verbal and nonverbal gestures to change the teaching strategy in order to meet the needs of the students.

➤ *Reliability of Assessment*

The teachers have difficulties with the assessment of learning because they cannot assess the students properly if they have learned in their lessons. The teachers wouldn't know if the students did not rely on their answers from the internet or if they answered it without cheating. There are some students who are assisted by their parents in answering their activities or exams. Some also just copied their answers from the internet. This was corroborated by the study of Arnold (2012), which found that in an online class where the students and teacher do not meet, it is more difficult to acquire reliable assessments of learning than in traditional face-to-face classes.

➤ *Student's Focus and Attention*

Nowadays, using technology makes students lazy in terms of studying and learning. During online classes, there are some who do not follow the online class protocols. There are also some students who cannot concentrate on their schoolwork at home due to responsibilities. They keep doing other tasks while attending online classes. The environment at home can really affect the student's learning behavior. This was paralleled with the study of Paiz (2020), which found that online learning does not provide any assurance that students will really pay attention or do any work at all.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

As had been noted, based on the data that was collected and evaluated, it was found out that most of the respondents agreed to the modification of the assessments, specifically the multiple-choice type of tests, and teachers need to be flexible in giving deadlines for the submission of these assessments. It also revealed that most of the respondents agreed to accept alternative assignments such as the use of multimedia, technology, and other resources to promote student engagement. Generally, stakeholders have different access to technology and reliable internet results that hinder student-teacher interaction, reliability of assessment, and student focus and attention.

In response to the specific outcomes and conclusions of this study, the study recommends that teachers need to be considerate when giving deadlines for students' assignments and assessments. Teachers also encourage students to

develop higher-order thinking skills by giving an assessment that promotes analysis, comprehension, application, and reasoning. It is also important to promote academic honesty by encouraging paraphrasing and providing proper citations.

REFERENCES

[1]. Abbang, Cynthia C. (2020). Finding ways to continue education during the pandemic. Business Mirror

[2]. Amadora, Mikaela G. (2020). Common Problems that Occur during Online Classes. Technology News. Manila Bulletin

[3]. Amobi, Funmi (2020). Reimagining Assessment in the Pandemic Era: Comprehensive Assessment of Student Learning. Advancing Teacher Excellence. OSU Center for Teaching and Learning.

[4]. Daniel, Sir John (2020). Education and the COVID-19 pandemic. Prospects (2020) 49:91–96 https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09464-3

[5]. DeWitt, Peter (2020). Assessments and Grading in the Midst of a Pandemic. Education Week.

[6]. Elfirdoussi, Selwa et al (2020). Assessing Distance Learning in Higher Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Hindawi. Education Research International. Volume 2020, Article ID 8890633, 13 pages. https://doi.org/10.1155/2020/8890633

[7]. Fernandez, Alex & Pavelonis, Janice (2021). Why Assessments Are Still Useful — and Accurate — in a Pandemic Year

[8]. Jankowski, Natasha A. (2020). Assessment during a Crisis: Responding to a Global Pandemic. National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment.

[9]. Jasi, Amanda (2021). Carry on Teaching: Higher Education During a Pandemic. The Chemical Engineering.

[10]. Jimenez, Laura (2020). Student Assessment during COVID-19. Center for American Progress.

[11]. Malipot, Merlina Hernando (2020). DepEd's adaptive learning methods amid COVID-19 pandemic gets support. Manila Bulletin.

[12]. Paiz, Wilber (2020). Student Loss of Focus During Online Classes. Taft Tribune

[13]. Sano, Michael (2018). How Can Alternative Assignments Effectively Assess Students Learning? Digital Learning in Higher Ed.

[14]. Sarif, Nawaz (2020). Teaching Crisis and Teachers' Role in Times of Covid-19 Pandemic. CounterCurrents.org.

[15]. Shafer, Stephanie (2020). Teaching and Learning in the Pandemic. Education Week

[16]. Spector, Carrie (2021). Reading skills of young students stalled during the pandemic. Phys.org

[17]. Study International Staff (2019). Lack of access to technology at home impedes student learning – study. Study International

[18]. Supiano, Beckie (2020). Teaching: Assessment in a Continuing Pandemic. The Chronicle of Higher Education

[19]. Terzi, Serdal & Çelik, Abdurrahman (2005). Teacher-Student Interactions In Distance Learning. The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology – TOJET January 2005 ISSN: 1303-6521 volume 4 Issue 1 Article 7

[20]. Thomas, Brenda (2019). Rethinking Deadline and Late Penalty Policies…Again. Faculty Focus. Higher Ed Teaching Strategies from Magna Publication. Effective Classroom Management.

[21]. Weimer, Maryellen, PhD (2018). Multiple-Choice Tests: Revisiting the Pros and Cons. Faculty Focus. Higher Ed Teaching Strategies from Magna Publication. Educational Assessment.

[22]. Young, Jeff (2020). Sustaining Higher Education in the Coronavirus Crisis. ISTE EdSurge