

Webinar Technology: Developing Teacher Training Programs for Emergency Remote Teaching amid COVID-19

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Received: 10-06-2020

Revised: 25-06-2020

Accepted: 05-07-2020

Please cite this paper as:

Toquero CM, Talidong

KJ. Webinar Technology:

Developing Teacher Training

Programs for Emergency

Remote Teaching amid

COVID-19. Interdiscip J

Virtual Learn Med Sci.

2020;11(3):200-203.

doi: 10.30476/

ijvlms.2020.86889.1044.

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Dear Editor,

In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools worldwide are compelled to find new ways of providing education to their students. Educational institutions are shifting to emergency E-learning, while their underprepared teachers find themselves confronted with numerous unexpected challenges of emergency remote teaching (ERT). Teachers are not fully prepared and professionally trained to teach through ERT, while they also struggle with the challenges that arise from the lack of readiness for an abrupt transition from conventional curriculum to online-based curriculum.

To mitigate the dilemma that the teachers experience in delivering instruction amid COVID-19, educational institutions switched to digital technologies to empower the teachers as frontline workers during the pandemic. As a result, the teachers in most countries throughout the world are undergoing training through webinar technology. Holding

webinars to train the teachers can pave the way to address the challenges in remote teaching while simultaneously preventing the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Webinar-based training can supplement the educators' competencies and enhance their virtual teaching strategies in the absence of face-to-face seminars and workshops during a time when social distancing and home quarantine are enforced globally. Enhancing the theoretical knowledge and practical skills of the teachers can be done through the application of series of webinars. Since this modern method of professional development can provide teachers with updated training through a virtual space, they can continue learning even in quarantine and develop responsive pedagogical skills that are relevant for emergency e-learning. Moreover, numerous professional development courses worldwide are made possible through webinars. The teachers are then given electronic certificates with time credits after

the completion of a specific training course. Regardless of where the teachers are located, webinars can guarantee synchronous distance learning so that the teachers can join and share their best remote teaching practices and pedagogical innovations during this crisis.

There is little evidence on the impact of webinars on the quality of pedagogical instruction. For example, the innovative ways of e-learning through webinars have yielded some promising results in the field of education. The benefits of conducting webinars among teachers include improved understanding of e-learning and creating constructive e-portfolios that help students learn productively (1). Many teachers and trainers have expressed satisfaction with webinars as a means of imparting concepts or knowledge. It promotes different methods of learning engagement as well as social and technological presence relative to internationalization (2). Moreover, webinars are not only useful in the field of education, they are also effective in training sales agents or business-minded individuals in the marketing industry (3). In the marketing sectors, they serve as a tool for disseminating information and reaching out to wider markets. The webinar has been a means of communication among employers and sales agents.

In the medical realm, webinars are utilized by medical practitioners to facilitate the exploration and dissemination of scientific knowledge about numerous aspects of medicine. In fact, a webinar was held by medical instructors to lecture residents on the clinical ideas concerning medical competencies (4, 5). They implied that using webinar enables participants to actively participate in seminars, give feedback, establish better interaction, and acquire information efficiently. Another positive aspect in using webinars as an effective tool in training is the flexibility in acquiring knowledge anywhere and easy access to training materials (6, 7). Aside from flexibility and accessibility of course materials, webinars promote social networking or connections among a group of lecturers and participants

or students as they interact through e-learning courses or online conferences (8). Studies using secondary data and meta-analysis have also reported positive results in using webinars. These results are supported by the findings related to the efficiency of webinars in fostering students' academic performance as well as developing their knowledge and skills (9).

Given the benefits of webinars as a tool for imparting knowledge to different groups in education and industry, a progressive future is inevitable. This is due to the rise of technology and ubiquitous online learning materials (10, 11). Webinars emerged as one of the alternative ways for academics and marketing trainers in providing learners with the necessary skills for any career (12, 13). Nowadays, considering the risks of face to face training and seminars, webinars are used to address the need for empowering teachers as education transitions to emergency remote teaching (14, 15). It is uncertain when the usual face-to-face training, conferences, and seminars will recommence—during or after the pandemic. One thing for certain is that the future of webinars is promising as they can supplement any method of providing knowledge through flexible learning and accessibility (6). Technological breakthroughs will further underscore the role of webinars in modern education. As technology continues to evolve, the future of webinars is more firmly established.

Hence, webinar technology presents opportunities to expand teacher training programs amid the pandemic. Professionals worldwide especially educators are making use of artificial intelligence through webinar technology as a way to develop teachers' theoretical knowledge and pedagogical skills, and to expand their virtual strategies for emergency remote teaching. Despite the promising training opportunities, and potential virtual strategies offered by webinars, their effect on learning retention among teachers is not well-documented. There is a lack of sufficient evidence-based scientific research that highlights the effectiveness of

webinar-based training on the development of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills. More research is required to evaluate factors like quality, significance, and responsiveness in using webinars, especially during the current emergency situation. The obtained data-driven evidence can facilitate the teacher training process and prepare teachers for delivering virtual instruction. The use of webinars can expand the online-based training for teachers and other professionals in potential future outbreaks.

Funding

No funding or support was provided by sponsoring organizations for this work.

Conflict of interests

The author declares that they have no conflict of interests.

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