

BRIDGING LEARNING GAPS BROUGHT BY PANDEMIC

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It should come as no surprise that the pandemic has dramatically modified education. Since face-to-face classes were stopped due to the risk of Covid 19, modular and online classes have become the students' mode of learning for the past years. Although academic institutions and educators did their best to uphold students' learning rights and offer appropriate assistance for distance learning, students still find it hard to adapt to these drastic transitions of rotating between blended and online learning approaches. Consequently, students have encountered severe curriculum delays due to scheduling adjustments, financial concerns, problematic technology, and home distractions hence the emergence of the education system's enemy – learning gaps.

We are now aware of the lingering effects that learning gaps have had on the students as we confront the second half of the 2022-2023 academic year. A learning gap is the discrepancy between what a student has learned – for instance, the intellectual development they have made – and what they were supposed to know at a particular stage in their education. Simply put, learning gaps are caused when a student does not thoroughly learn concepts at the foundation level, and they continue to struggle as new ideas are taught on top of previous ones. We must address these gaps early on when a student starts to fall behind.

One of the more critical aspects of learning gaps is that if neglected, students will experience academic setbacks and social difficulties, which can lead them to quit school. According to a study conducted by Islam and Siddik (2020), these learning inadequacies mainly were brought on by ineffective teaching methods, issues with the use of course

resources, inattentive engagement on the side of the students, a propensity for memorizing, improper evaluation, inexperienced educators, and a lack of parental support.

It is relevant to pinpoint that fixing learning gaps might become more complicated as learners progress through their studies. Learning gaps are frequently identified as the leading cause of a student's difficulty mastering the subject. For instance, if a student cannot read texts at this grade by the prescribed age, we may infer that there is a reading and comprehension learning gap.

Assessing a student's learning gaps may seem challenging. Still, there are practical, systematic ways to overcome this, such as examining the results of standardized tests taken by a student throughout a particular school. Moreover, since every student has a different learning style and pace, one-on-one tutoring is another excellent option. Teachers and educators can also help address learning gaps by building a sense of connection with the students to prevent feelings of isolation in online classes, giving collaborative activities, and alerting students early about their progress in the course, among others.

The discourse is still unresolved. Educators must keep paying severe consideration to reduce this learning gap and prevent more academic setbacks that worsen educational disparities. Being resourceful with the materials we already have is one possible option, and remember that learning gaps need to be recognized, evaluated, and addressed dutifully because, after all, every student has different strengths and paces. After being disrupted by the learning gaps brought about by the pandemic, it is expected that face-to-face sessions will soon take place to improve the learning potential of every student better.

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