

PRIMARY EDUCATION TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES IN CARRYING OUT FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT DURING COVID-19 IN RURAL MONGOLIA

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Formative assessment is one of the important elements of facilitating students' learning and ensuring their progress, thus it has to be conducted regularly. The Mongolian government provided primary school children with TV lessons during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the poor infrastructure in remote herder campsites, school children were more likely to miss TV lessons than other groups of Mongolian students. This paper discusses primary education classroom teachers' experiences in carrying out formative assessment during the COVID-19 school closures when herder students practised TV learning in their remote campsites. We collected qualitative data through teacher interviews and document analysis in order to gain greater insights into understanding teachers' experiences in carrying out formative assessment during this new TV learning method. We employed an interpretative phenomenological analysis for the purpose of the study. The interviewed teachers had 8-19 herder children in their classes, of these between 2-6 students in each class completely missed TV lessons during the pandemic in the 2020-2021 school year. The findings suggested that TV lessons were not easily followed due to the inadequate frequency of transmission and a lack of TV access. To address these issues, teachers developed supplemental paper-based learning materials following TV lessons and distributed these materials to their herder students. Additionally, the teachers taught online classes via Facebook messenger. However, some students were not able to participate online due to a shortage of mobile phone data credits or absence of access to the internet. The teachers worked hard to provide their students with paper-based or printed learning materials for those students who did not have access to the internet or missed TV lessons. Moreover, the teachers used different strategies for gathering evidence of student learning including online tests, paper-based homework assignments delivered in-person, and photos of completed assignments sent via Facebook messenger. The findings, however, show that the teachers found it hard to gather evidence on students learning as some students completely missed TV lessons and some were not available for regular contact. We believe COVID-19 shows that Mongolia needs a solid policy on distance and e-learning, including digital tools of assessment, to enhance the flexibility of education for the herder population taking into consideration their remote lifestyle.