

Case Study

CYPHER Learning



Paul Anthony Notorio

Director, Center for Innovative Learning Programs at De La Salle University – Dasmariñas

- ✓ Review by a Real User
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What is our primary use case?

We use it for asynchronous learning across our institution.

How has it helped my organization?

First, use of CYPHER Learning was able to save us from the effects of the pandemic. There are many schools in the Philippines that have downsized, where student enrollment became lower compared to previous years. And some schools have closed down. We actually trained other education institutions on how to deliver online and blended learning, because we had done it so much.

Even before the pandemic, 75 percent of our faculty was already using CYPHER Learning, so

we just had to target the other 25 percent. We formed a committee of our experts in using CYPHER Learning to help influence that 25 percent, so that ultimately we did not have to cancel or cut our education programs. Everything continued despite the pandemic. We finished our academic calendar, as planned, but in the new modality. Without CYPHER Learning, I don't think we would have been able to do that.

Our university, De La Salle University – Dasmariñas, is the greenest campus in the Philippines and has been for many years now. One of the ways we have been able to achieve that is thanks to CYPHER Learning, through paperless transactions. For example, many teachers upload exams. And we are not required to print a syllabus. It's already uploaded online. Previously, the university would spend between 50,000 to 100,000 Philippine pesos on printing it, so we are already saving that much



on the syllabus alone. When adding in not having to print out all of our exams, we are saving hundreds of thousands of pesos on printing costs.

In addition, we save a lot in terms of office costs such as electricity for air conditioning because we can work from home. A given department has three days onsite and another three days online when they are not required to go to the school. That alone saves a lot of costs related to the environment, such as greenhouse gasses resulting from transportation. We save millions of pesos on electricity alone because we're not required to be onsite as much as we used to be.

Our former director had a study done, in partnership with our environmental management center, and they were able to track how much carbon footprint and how much paper we have saved by using CYPHER Learning. Per student, we're saving a lot, financially, thanks to CYPHER Learning.

Competency-based learning is very important for our institution. There is a commission of higher education that manages and monitors all higher education modalities. We can continue delivering online learning or blended learning for as long as we're able to prove that it's effective. We need to be able to prove that the modality, whether synchronous or asynchronous, is effective, and one way to do that is to measure how well students are able to achieve the learning outcomes. So it's actually a must. It's not optional. We have an upcoming accreditation next year and we are already

preparing the documents to prove that this type of modality influences learning outcomes. We have some data and we're still generating more.

The platform has helped to reduce administrative work. We can easily produce the reports required for accreditation, using the reporting features in CYPHER Learning, like the utilization and active accounts. We have also just started integrating it with our SIS (student information system). It's not yet perfect, but we're getting close to where we envisioned ourselves. That integration has also helped to reduce administrative costs a lot.

In terms of the amount of time saved on administrative work, my team is solely in charge of adding and dropping students. It would take us months to do that manually, as we have 12,000 to 14,000 students. Because of the SIS integration, it's automated. We just troubleshoot any problems that may arise. The integration is saving us 90 percent of the time it would take us for that alone. Also, only those with active Office 365 accounts can log in to our learning management system. There is a way to create the accounts in bulk, but it would take several days to complete thousands of accounts. Thanks to SSO we don't have to do that. We just let the system do its work. That also saves a lot of time.

What is most valuable?

For me, one of the most valuable features is the grade book. Before, we were using Excel to



manually encode formulas. But now, we can directly export the grades from the LMS and link them to the submission to our university portal. It makes things easier and everything is automated. Aside from a tutorial, provided by CYPHER Learning, our office also organized a learning program on how to utilize the grade book efficiently.

Another feature that is great for me, but that is not adopted institutionally because it's a bit difficult, and because we're a higher education institution with varying disciplines, is the learning outcomes feature. We changed the name. In CYPHER Learning, it's called the Mastery feature. The learning outcomes feature allows us to measure whether students have achieved competency, based on the encoded learning outcomes.

Universities like ours have to prove that their modality is effective, and learning outcomes are one way to do that. Because not all our faculties are using this feature, they are still conducting manual surveys to determine whether the students have achieved learning outcomes. But for those who are already using it, it's a very easy process. Instead of rigorous research to know whether students are achieving the learning outcomes, the LMS can do it for you.

We are trying our best to mobilize this feature so that faculties will adopt it on an institutional level. However, our faculties have 18 units of workload and some of them have up to 24 units. That's a lot of teaching units.

And I have done a study on the use of CYPHER

Learning's gamification feature. It's a correlation study. While there is a low correlation, but positive, between time spent in the LMS and a student's grades, there is a high correlation between gamification and a student's grades. Those who are performing well in the games in class tend to perform well in their grades as well, although we have not proven that on an institutional level. These are just some limited cases. But the data so far shows that gamification works.

Creating games for classes or learning paths is easy for me, but it depends on the type of user. We also have a learning path for teachers such that before they can teach in our institution, they need to pass level three. But gamification is actually not required at that level. It's part of level four. For those who are just starting out, creating games is quite difficult. On a scale of one to 10, where 10 is "difficult," it's a seven or eight. But once you have used gamification, you can recycle the games that you created and then it becomes a two or three on the difficulty scale.

CYPHER Learning's gamified learning environment for helping with teaching and learning is very helpful and it's a must. It's included in the syllabus that all who are teaching this subject should have a gamified class, but again, it has not been adopted across the institution.

All my classes are gamified. There are levels and badges; they get points awarded and there are certificates. We have two departments



where all their e-classes are gamified. One is our religious education and the other is our civic welfare training service, which is a required subject. They realized the importance of gamifying e-class content.

In our course, we have synchronous and asynchronous classes. If we don't gamify our asynchronous sessions, there's a very low level of student engagement. Some students are not even attending lessons at all if these are not gamified. By gamifying them, they get rewards. That means they really watch the video or they really read the lesson. We have metrics to show that they're really reading the modules once the classes are gamified.

In terms of automating assignments, they should be able to measure the intended learning outcomes. We have rubrics that are connected directly to the learning outcomes, so we don't have to retype everything. We can link the learning outcomes to the assessments in the rubrics.

There's no platform, other than CYPHER Learning, that is used for assessments. It's the most used feature.

What needs improvement?

The gamification feature's automation for triggering actions for completed tasks, such as awarding badges and points to students, is one of the difficult areas, especially for teachers who are late adopters of education technology. It's a challenge because it's like you're programming

the actions. The language is quite tricky. Our office does have a training unit if a teacher wants to gamify their class. We can give them a hands-on tutorial on how to do that. But some of our staff is not really used to this kind of "programming" language.

Creating competencies and then tagging them in class content and assignments, is a six or seven in terms of difficulty, where 10 is "difficult." That's on your first try. Once you've created competencies, you can just recycle them.

Also, right now, there is a problem with tagging assessments and competencies. We have reported it. Technically, you can tag each question to a certain competency but we're not doing it right now, because if we do so there's a problem. It's one of the weaknesses. I'm not sure if it has already been resolved. The issue is that if you tag your assessment question with a competency, the grade will be zero regardless of whether it's correct or incorrect. When that is resolved, it will provide a much deeper sense of, or data on, how students achieve learning outcomes. It can even count the examination or question bank in terms of the achievement of certain learning outcomes.

In addition, as an administrator of our CYPHER Learning, there are a lot of things that could be improved, but these are not seen by students or professors. One is the admin features for adding students. These features could be separated and we have requested that several times, but I think their programming team is finding it hard to do that.



In another LMS—I think it is Moodle—there is a summary overview of how many attempts students made, and whether they left the browser. You can see if the students have left the browser or stopped midway, and you can see the percentage in particular learning outcomes. Currently, in CYPHER Learning, you can only view this for individual students. There's no way to see the overall average attempt score. You have to do it individually for each student before you can see that.

For how long have I used the solution?

We've been using CYPHER Learning as a university since 2015, but some of the faculty have been using it since as early as 2010. Personally, I started using it in 2012. I was one of the early adopters of CYPHER Learning.

What do I think about the stability of the solution?

It's very stable with the exception of very few, periodic downtimes for maintenance, which usually happens on a Sunday. There are usually very few students logged on Sundays. The stability is not perfect, but it's a nine out of 10.

What do I think about the scalability of the solution?

The first time we had to scale it was during the pandemic, which started in March, because in April our activity doubles. We have examination week and 10,000 students are logged in at one time, and we did not experience any downtime during that time. CYPHER LEARNING understood the situation when the pandemic started and sensed there could be a problem. Every school, all over the world, resorted to online learning and many started using CYPHER Learning. The vendor increased its capacity and the problem was resolved in April or May of that year.

One hundred percent of our faculty, from our high school, to undergraduate, up to graduate school, including masters and PhD programs, are using CYPHER Learning. It is even used in our short courses. And when we have institutional webinars, access is via an e-class. It's also used by non-academics, such as our support programs, like wellness and guidance counseling. They have modules in our learning management system. Our library is also linked to our learning management system.

Our unit, the Center for Innovative Learning Programs, monitors the utilization of our LMS. We score them on how they use the LMS. Some are using it to the fullest extent, some just for minor uploading, but I can definitely say everyone is using it.

Right now, in our college and graduate school



portal, we have 13,000 students, 1,000 professors, and 500 parents in CYPHER Learning. The senior high school has 2,300 students and 130 teachers.

How are customer service and support?

Their technical support is very fast. On a scale of one to 10, it's a 10. Our team is usually the first line of technical support for our university. If we cannot handle certain things, that's when we ask CYPHER Learning. They're very quick to respond, even during the wee hours.

How would you rate customer service and support?

Positive

Which solution did I use previously and why did I switch?

At our college and graduate schools, CYPHER Learning was the first and only LMS. However, our high school used another LMS. They just finished their two-year contract with that solution and they switched to CYPHER Learning. We did a survey and everyone in our high school rated the CYPHER Learning really highly, compared to the previous LMS.

How was the initial setup?

I was not involved in the initial setup but the LMS is on the cloud, while our internal systems are onsite. Because we are in the Philippines, we experience a lot of blackouts, but we're not affected by them because the servers are located in the US.

What was our ROI?

The LMS alone cannot guarantee a return on investment. If used effectively and supported by policies, with the right LMS and with the right operations, there will definitely be a return on investment. You can see a return on investment as early as after one semester.

We are adopting an e-learning maturity model. That's how we run our office. We train, we monitor, and we provide technical support. Those are the three areas that help us to be successful.

In our case, because we were the first institution to adopt CYPHER Learning in the Philippines, we may have the cheapest LMS. I don't think we're switching anytime soon, just due to that factor alone.

What's my experience with pricing, setup cost, and licensing?

Our satisfaction with the pricing is a 10 out of 10. None of our administrators or anyone else is



changing our LMS. Even if all other De La Salle schools are using Canvas, we're not shifting because we're deeply rooted in this LMS.

In our school, CYPHER Learning is part of our culture already. It is deeply ingrained in terms of its use by students and faculty.

Which other solutions did I evaluate?

I was not part of the office when our institution evaluated solutions, one of which was Moodle, but I saw the process. They looked for certain criteria and compared all the features, aside from price. Back then, CYPHER Learning had all the features, even though it did not have all the features it has now. That was the basis on which the decision was made to purchase CYPHER Learning.

We did an institutional survey about six months ago and CYPHER Learning got a very high score. Everyone loves it. Even those who have used other LMSs, like BigSky and Moodle, say that we have a superior LMS compared to what they were using. We have faculty who were also administrators at other universities and they are really impressed with the design, layout, and advanced nature of the features of CYPHER Learning. We're blessed to have CYPHER Learning.

What other advice do I have?

Technology is just one component of

teaching/learning. Pedagogy is another that is very important. That's why we have a unit that is solely responsible for bridging the gap between technology and pedagogy. It's very important because some teachers are very apprehensive about using a new LMS because they think it's not effective. They have no choice because we have a policy that they have to use it. So we have experts in our office in charge of convincing them that it's about tweaking pedagogy.

That means we can't just directly "translate" everything from face-to-face to online. That would not produce any learning. We have to modify it so that it suits the delivery method. That's why our office is in charge of periodically providing training and webinars for our faculty. We do targeted training, because e-learning in the context of mathematics, for example, is very different from religious education. And training staff on the use of an effective pedagogy will further solidify for them why they should use gamification, why they should use the learning outcomes feature and all other features of our LMS.

The curriculum has to be carefully modeled and translated into assessments which should achieve the learning outcomes. As for our students' career paths, based on tracer studies, we're pretty successful in that field, although we cannot attribute that entirely to CYPHER Learning.

When it comes to intervention strategies for students who need guidance, CYPHER Learning



doesn't help save time because you have to configure things. But once you have done that, the easier part begins. The next time you're using the same modules, everything is going to be easy, especially with adaptive learning. When a student's score goes lower than the passing grade, they will be forced to read the lesson again before they're able to continue to the next part of the module. Automation really helps. We can even provide kind messages for passing and for achieving certain scores, giving automated feedback.

Also, we used to have a team of checkers who checked if teachers were teaching in their classrooms. Because of our learning management system, we have analytics and we can see our teachers' digital activity. We would also hire temporary workers for faculty evaluation, workers who would go to classrooms and distribute the surveys. We now use our LMS to announce the faculty evaluation, which is done online as well. We haven't had to hire a single temporary worker as a result. The LMS has made some of our staff obsolete.

I have tried four LMSs aside from CYPHER Learning. Before I became part of De La Salle, I tried several LMSs, and I'm also enrolled at another university right now taking my PhD. Nothing compares to CYPHER Learning.



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