

DIGITAL DIVIDE: GAP BETWEEN THOSE WITH INTERNET ACCESS AND UNDERPRIVILEGED

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The coronavirus infection primarily started on December 2019, affecting individuals in Wuhan, China. This virus began to spread like a wildfire causing ruckus around the continent and eventually, around the globe. This worldwide predicament did not just affect the economy and the health institutions, but the educational institutions is also highly severed. The dilemma that the educational institution is facing made the government create a resolution and continuity plan to avoid academic freeze.

Students have been learning through different learning modalities for almost two years. They have been having a hard time understanding the lessons in their own even though learning materials such modules, supplementary learning materials and books are provided by the school. There are different instances that they experienced struggles and challenges coping form this new normal such as errors in the learning materials, lacking of gadgets, lacking of knowledge in manipulating the devices during online classes, weak internet connection and support system from the parents or guardians.

The ever-changing of modality of learning, from face to face to online, blended and modular learning is too sudden. The quality of education is being compromised which is why most of the people from educational institutions is doubting the effectiveness of today's new normal. According to a nationwide online survey conducted by the Movement for Safe, Equitable, Quality, and Relevant Education, 90% of the teachers are not self-assured and self-reliant that the most essential learning competencies set by the Department of Education under distance learning are actually being developed and acquired.

Alternative delivery modes are being mandated, considered and implemented in the new normal. In these modality, learning materials (modules) and devices are considered as necessity. But according to Social Weather Stations or SWS, 58% of students use devices and 42% of students use modules in distance learning.

Further, Digital Divide is very evident nowadays. According to Investopedia, Digital Divide refers to the gap between demographics and regions that have access to modern information and communications technology and those that don't. Personally, the government must find a solution or effective way to surmount the digital divide in the educational institutions. The students and teachers are not prepared enough for this transition which is why the effectiveness of learning is being gambled.

As stated by John Lazaro, the spokesperson for activist group Samahan ng Progresibong Kabataan, "The way that things are being done is just so rushed. We need more time to prepare." This agrees to the idea that our country is unprepared for the distance learning. Philippines is a third-world country so it is too ambitious to assume that most of the households have the capacity to engage in online learning. Filipinos are praised for being resilient but during these trying times, the government must access every factor and risk in order to come up for a better solution. The government must learn to listen to its constituents and the experts and not just mandate any resolution which is not applicable to the underprivileged.

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