

## COPING WITH THE PANDEMIC: PHILIPPINES SHIFTS TO FACE-TO-FACE APPROACH

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The world was caught off guard by the abrupt spread of Covid-19 and was forced to adopt to a new way of life. Countries that were hit by the virus suffered difficulties on their economic, health and education status especially those countries with lower economic power and Philippines is one of them.

One of the most affected aspect of human life is education. Due to threat of the virus, the mode of education in the Philippines changed from Face-To-Face approach to Distance Learning approach. (Journal of Public Health, 2021). Teachers, parents and students had to adjust to the new norm and faced challenges to cope with the situation.

According to a study conducted by Bautista et al (June, 2021), 6 out of 10 professional teachers had no experience in distance learning. They were not prepared on this sudden change. Although educators received adequate support from their respective schools, they had problems in terms of class management, educational facilities and ITC related issues. They also had to solve some of these issues on their own. In addition to these, house distractions contributed to difficulties experienced by teachers. Since their working space was in their home, noises or family issues would take away their focus.

Aside from these, looking into the point of view of students and parents, this change came as a culture shock. Parents' support was essential since they were physically present during class hours. They filled the gap imposed by distance learning. Parents literally became teachers at home while simultaneously doing their usual routine whether working or doing household chores. Learning was limited depending on the depth of

knowledge and experience of parents. Students on the other hand had hard time focusing because of their environment. Since they were always on their gadgets, social media and gaming applications activities were inevitable. They also had fewer social interactions which is essential for their development. Families with little means took a big blow especially those who lived in remote places. Some families couldn't provide themselves with basic needs. Providing internet connection or smart phone was out of the picture.

Education became challenging around the world. In the past two years since the outbreak, students faced learning crisis (Journal of Public Health, 2021). Though distance learning prevented the interruption to teaching, the fast transition from one mode to another wasn't that effective. Based from the study conducted by Chung-Foo et al (2021), students who underwent distance learning had lower learning proficiency compared to students who underwent face-to-face approach.

Now that the world is moving on, the education in the Philippines is now transitioning back to face-to-face approach. Preparations of schools included sanitation and building of additional infrastructures. Since cases are still high, safety protocols should be observed. These protocols should be backed by truthful data. It should also be planned and executed properly for the safety of our students. We still have a long way to go in adjusting to this pandemic while hoping to end education crisis. Education is important but health is essential.

### *References:*

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