

BRIDGING THE LEARNING GAPS BROUGHT BY THE PANDEMIC

by:
Cyrene N. Soterio
LPT

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) has introduced a distance learning modality to confirm continuity of learning. However, DepEd recognizes the challenges in providing alternative learning modalities to 27.7 million grade school students. Underperforming and marginalized students may fall further behind when faced with the challenges of distance learning and unequal access to resources. Before the pandemic, the Philippines ranked lowest in recent regional and international learning assessments, thus raising questions about the standard of basic education. DepEd is searching for innovative strategies to handle educational challenges during the pandemic and help students achieve learning outcomes as they transition to in-person classes.

While it is undeniable that the pandemic has had a profound impact on students of all ages, students studying in primary and secondary schools have been hit the hardest. Although we have worked hard to mitigate inequalities in access to quality education, disadvantaged educators struggle with how to deliver quality education amid complex challenges. Many teachers lacked the appropriate digital skills, and the home environment of many overlooked communities was uncondusive to learning.

To effectively bridge gaps in student learning outcomes, here are some of the helpful ways to at least create a wide bridge to address the problems and challenges brought by the pandemic: undertaking an assessment of learning outcomes to understand learning gaps; developing expert-led bridge courses and accelerated learning programs to address learning gaps; instituting personalized remedial classes for students with

learning gaps; encouraging parental engagement and collaborative learning through peers, and creating communication channels.

Resilient education systems have the capacity to respond to the wants of all learners, including the foremost vulnerable. Such responsiveness may entail timely and effective personalized interventions, additional instruction or resources, or a more targeted allocation of resources. Successful policy experiences from the pre-pandemic period show that interventions can get pleasure from the synergies between these policy components for responsiveness and levers for resilience, especially when initiatives specialize in adaptation to the local context and meaningful relationship building. More modern related policy efforts introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic show a willingness among policy makers to dedicate additional resources to students in greater need of support, and to create capacity among educators to produce this support. However, it is also necessary to leverage parental support and ensure long-term involvement in intervention programs.

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