

EDUCATION IN TRANSITION: FACILITATING MISSION-DRIVEN FACE-TO-FACE LEARNING

by:

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Education is the core foundation of our everyday lives. Knowledge is what allows our economy to grow. We are all taught, since childhood, that learning is a way to empower oneself, which is why our school systems are an essential part of our society. The knowledge we gain over the course of our lives determines what our futures will be like. For students and educators around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic brought several unforeseen difficulties and quick adjustments. More than two years later, its influence is still felt strongly in important parts of teaching and learning. According to Snape (2010), a transition is a continuous process that encompasses changes in interpersonal connections as well as adjustments to various environments.

Students are still stuck at home a year after the COVID-19 outbreak put the Philippines on a months-long lockdown, and classrooms in several nations are still empty. Most students used to participate in class via Zoom or Google Meet while sitting in front of laptops, cellphones, and other devices in their homes. Most of the students' classmates have not been seen, and others have not even been heard from in more than two years due to their limited online activity. These radically divergent educational experiences were happening all throughout the world. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as of March 17, 2021, over 171 million learners enrolled in primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education were disrupted due to school and institution closures.

A blended learning program was started, involving online classes, printed materials, and lessons broadcast on television and social media. Surveyed respondents

expressed varied concerns regarding online learning, including money for phone load, a lack of gadgets, poor internet, difficulty understanding lessons taught online, parents' lack of time to spend with children on schoolwork, the inability for children to focus on online classes, and parents' lack of familiarity with lessons. Furthermore, more children, youth, and adults can't get a leg up and are left behind due to inadequate access to learning. Numerous schools have chosen to shut their doors after a year of offering online education. As a result of their struggles, students either failed or received passing grades. Platforms for module learning and asynchronous online learning were unsuccessful. According to a World Bank report, due to students' poor competency in the language of instruction, which is primarily English, most 15-year-olds do not understand fractions, and just 10% of Filipino fifth graders met global norms.

Nevertheless, students must not take learning for granted. In times of crisis and abrupt change, having access to education should be valued. But students shouldn't take education for granted.

The transition and facilitation of mission-driven face-to-face education may be a desirable solution, reducing complications associated with time zones and access to technology and providing everyone with maximum flexibility during this unstable period. Teachers aspired to go beyond simply imparting their knowledge in their area of expertise. Numerous learning opportunities that will be provided in classrooms will promote interest by facilitating dynamic dialogues, offering thought-provoking essay topics, and encouraging fresh and creative approaches to applying content. Watching their students light up builds their enthusiasm and regenerates their commitment to education.

However, the approach also poses challenges and possibly new opportunities that aren't just changing the field for students; they're shaking up the role of educators, creating philosophical changes in approaches to teaching, and transforming the classroom. Over the past few months, teachers have prepared classroom activities based

on the new normal approach to teaching. The Philippine educational system has a lot of room for improvement, and the ongoing learning setup is far from ideal. Even individuals who have access to technical tools have many concerns about the current system and how to mitigate the pain points of studying in the country.

As we all adjust to a new normal of education, wherein we live with uncertainty about our own security, institutions have the ultimate opportunity to walk their talk about equity, access, inclusion, and community engagement. Many have committed to these goals, and while teaching and learning as we knew them have been significantly disrupted, this historic moment emphasizes the necessity of being responsive to each student's unique experience.

With the transition to face-to-face teaching, it is essential that schools disseminate academic knowledge in more ways than merely electronic files. The Philippine education system will need to change in order to be relevant in the post-COVID world and produce learners that are employable and globally competitive. The Department of Education's full support, as well as proper guideline implementation, will be critical in this dramatic change. More than ever, students need the help of their learning communities, and it is incumbent upon educators and administrators to find ways to continue to support the whole student. Most significantly, educational institutions must not lose sight of their commitments to offer an educational experience that promotes both character development and academic learning.

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