

## BRIDGING GAPS AND RECOVERING LOSSES IN EDUCATION THROUGH RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

*by:*

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As the Department of Education reopened the doors of schools for in-person classes in 2022, it also uncovered the real situation of the learners because of COVID-19 pandemic. Education, definitely, continued through distance learning modality but still, spaces were left that only face-to-face classes can fill. This is not to say that distance education failed. It still has done its job of making the students learn while keeping them safe from the virus. Nevertheless, it reaffirmed the belief that the teachers in a real classroom setting remains irreplaceable.

Results of assessment and other data showed the presence of learning gaps and learning losses in majority of our students. In general, learning gaps refer to the relative performance of individual students, for example, the disparity between what a student has actually learned and what he or she was expected to learn at a particular grade level. Meanwhile, learning losses refer to any specific or general loss of knowledge and skills or to reversals in academic progress, most commonly due to extended gaps or discontinuities in student's education. (Glossary of Education Reform, 2013) . These learning gaps are often compounding, which means that if they are not addressed promptly, learners are likely to fall further and further behind because of the skills and knowledge they have missed.

Although learning gaps or learning losses may be prevalent among students, the degree may vary depending on the modality they used; ability to cope up with changes; attitudes and behaviors; and other personal and social factors. Hence, teachers must be able to identify these gaps to be able to determine the appropriate ways to address them.

Center for Teaching Innovation (2023) states the importance of identifying gaps and normalizing getting help. Acknowledging the existence and extent of learning gaps and assuring the learners that they are not alone and they can get support from teachers and peers are some vital steps in addressing these gaps.

One way of identifying learning gaps and learning losses is through research. Research is an organized and systematic way of finding answers to questions (Understanding Research). Hence, it can be considered as an endeavor to deal with intellectual and practical problems. With research, a teacher would have a better understanding of the situation leading to discovery of the best possible solutions to problems.

Moreover, if the solution determined through research is an entirely new idea, method or process; or it is an adaptation of strategies modified to suit the needs of the learners, that solution can be considered as innovation. Innovation is generally defined as the implementation of new or improved ideas, knowledge, and practices for the purpose of bringing about change or desired outcomes.

According to Unicef, innovation in education means solving a real problem in a new, simple way to promote equitable learning. It is more than the use of new technology. It also refers to the process of translating new idea in the improvement of existing materials, devices, methodologies, procedures, processes, and service delivery. It involves discovering and implementing new ways to do things to get better results.

Specifically, in terms of curriculum, innovation is a response to the fact that the world is constantly changing, and education has to change if we want to avoid preparing students for a world that no longer exists. Curriculum innovation can be defined as a process of updating or renewing the current curriculum, either new techniques or implementing new value-enhancing education/ schooling ideas in terms of structure, content and process. (Gumi and Company, 2022)

For these reasons, if teachers will just continue to use the approaches they employed before pandemic, how can learners catch up with their learning gaps? Learning must be accelerated to close the gap and keep up with the demands of new normal. New strategies are necessary to ensure that learners are provided with interventions based on their identified needs. Hence, there is a strong and urgent need for research and innovation to bridge learning gaps and recover learning losses.

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