

BRIDGING THE LEARNING GAPS BROUGHT BY COVID-19

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The pandemic has caused damage to Philippine Education (Alvarez, 2020). The long and succeeding community restriction prohibiting face-to-face classes nationwide has crippled the education sector. It is not to mention the private schools both in the rural and urban areas that were forced to close because of the gradual and unprecedented decline of enrolment. Though the Department of Education (DepEd) nationwide implemented modular instruction to plaster the closure of the school, this effort is not enough to provide quality education to the pupils.

The classroom is the common ground for learning; hence, the best avenue to learn is inside the classroom (Pennington & Heeh, 2006). As schools' operation is becoming normal and some schools are courageously opening its gate for face-to-face instruction, the battle cry of the department "to provide quality education to all" is little by little being realized amidst the pandemic. Now, as the teachers can practice a more reliable assessment, the learning gaps become evident. There is an enormous learning problem that teachers are facing. But how teachers can overcome these problems?

Use Real Data. "The truth will set you free." This cliché underpins the importance of real data. In the past, specifically in education, real data is hidden. It is tantamount to say that school performance is synonymous with student achievement. Therefore, if there are pupils who are not performing well, their schools are not performing well. This self-serving mentality hinders improvement. It is because only real data can provide good school programs. In this time of learning recovery. The teachers need to cling and base only their decision and their action on the real data. It is important to cleanse the mindset

that bridging learning gaps is not an egoistically driven action but an altruistic-positive reaction to the real situation of the pupils. Therefore, helping pupils to recover from the learning losses benefits learners and the future of the nation.

Think Outside the Box. It is hard to go against what has been a habit. The application of traditional teaching practices that somehow benefit the pupils cannot be considered infallible. It is because society is fast changing so as with the pupils entering in the school. Thus, the best practices of yesterday may not be effective today. Especially having a series of lockdowns and community restrictions wherein pupils are forced to stay at home. Many of them have become dependent on technology specifically their gadgets. Their context is clear evidence that teaching practices have to be in unison with their situation. These concepts do not disregard the possible utility of traditional teaching practices. However, if it will not complement technology, it will not be responsive and not motivating to the learners. Thinking outside the box is acting out of the usual and habitual practices. It is exploring other avenues in teaching. Even with the use of ICT, traditional usage (PowerPoint presentation, and video clips) is longer attractive. However, usage of Zzish, Game-based teaching, and other educational android and computer applications, become interesting and engaging.

Learn From Others. One of the characteristics of 21st-century learning is collaboration. It is not just simply cooperation but the involvement of one person to complete the task. The prime principle of this practice is “learning from others”. This mentality is not just simply saying that someone lacks knowledge but a manifestation that through others one can learn and even enrich others' ideas. In teaching, especially in bridging the gaps, one has to acknowledge that one can learn from others. It is simply benchmarking on the best practices in teaching. Every learner in every classroom indeed has a specific situation; hence, there is no such thing as one strategy fits all. However, it is the duty and creativity of the teacher. It is his responsibility to evaluate and to come up

with an adaption of what is best for his class. He can recontextualize, revise, and enrich others' teaching strategies or practices to suit the learning situation of his pupils.

The learning gaps that the whole school community is facing require radical action. Radicality in thinking means trying to understand the situation by digging up the root cause of the problem. It is also about seeking to provide alternative action from a principle and foundation. A radical thinker is also data-driven wherein a scientific way of addressing the problem is meticulously followed. From this point of view, there are five ways to address learning gaps in the classroom. These are the use of real data, thinking outside the box, and learning from others.

References:

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