

BEYOND LESSON PLANS: DEPED'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING TEACHERS' MENTAL HEALTH

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Teachers deal with a diverse range of students on a daily basis, each of whom has their own personality and set of difficulties. This can frequently result in tension and worry on top of the everyday demands of the job. Teachers are likely to face stress, particularly if they work longer hours and don't have the resources or work-life balance they need. A teacher's mental health may suffer from excessive stress, although some stress can be healthy and keep one motivated.

Although teachers' mental health is frequently disregarded in the educational system, it is becoming more and more clear that they need strong support in order to handle the demands of their jobs. In the Philippines, where the Department of Education (DepEd) has launched a number of programs to address the psychosocial needs of teachers, this is particularly true.

Workload management, student conduct, and juggling personal obligations are just a few of the many stressors that teachers deal with. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these difficulties become more severe as teachers had to balance their mental health with the sudden switch to online instruction. DepEd started a number of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) programs in recognition of this. During the pandemic, these initiatives provided workshops, counseling, and training to help teachers deal with stress-related problems and build resilience (DepEd, 2020).

Furthermore, DepEd has incorporated mental health guidelines into its more comprehensive curriculum. Promoting mental health awareness and services is the

department's duty under Republic Act No. 11036, the Mental Health Act of 2018. The creation of helplines and frequent training sessions for school staff that focus on stress management, mindfulness, and peer support techniques are among the initiatives (Philippine Mental Health Law, 2018). The DepEd's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Service (DRRMS) has also played a pivotal role in providing psychosocial support. For instance, in 2021, the DRRMS rolled out various programs targeting the well-being of teachers and students, including virtual wellness activities and guidance for coping with emotional distress (DepEd, 2021).

Collaboration is still essential when it comes to mental health. These programs' efficacy have been increased through collaborations with groups like the Psychological Association of the Philippines and mental health advocates. These initiatives seek to foster a culture of wellbeing in the education sector in addition to helping teachers deal with current difficulties.

In the end, the entire educational community gains by supporting teachers' mental health. A healthy teaching staff is better able to encourage and support students, which fosters a more encouraging learning environment. The proactive actions taken by DepEd are a step in the right direction toward realizing the significance of mental health in accomplishing comprehensive educational reform.

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