

DEVELOPING COMPREHENSIVE MENTAL HEALTH POLICIES FOR DIGITAL EDUCATION

by:

Gina T. Fontillas, EdD

Head Teacher VI, Bataan School of Fisheries

The digitalization of education has introduced significant challenges, particularly concerning the mental well-being of students. The rapid integration of digital tools into classrooms has created not only new learning opportunities but also highlighted the need for comprehensive mental health policies to support students in this evolving landscape.

The development of a comprehensive mental health policy within schools is of utmost importance. This policy must adopt a multifaceted approach that includes key elements. Firstly, prioritizing digital competency and literacy to ensure that all students can navigate the digital realm with confidence and responsibility. This encompasses not just technical skills but also critical thinking about the impact of digital content on mental health (WHO, 2021).

Secondly, integrating a balanced approach to screen time management into the curriculum, teaching effective device usage while advocating for breaks and offline activities to maintain mental well-being. This screen time management may be applied not only in schools which have a lavish supply of tablets or computers but also at home when assignments that need gadget usage are given. Thirdly, providing resources and support systems to help students manage the stress and anxiety associated with digital learning. This could include counseling services, mindfulness programs, and initiatives promoting healthy work-life balance (DepEd, 2026; WHO, 2023).

An inclusive mental health policy must be attuned to the diverse needs of students from various backgrounds, necessitating culturally appropriate approaches to ensure

accessibility and relevance for all. By addressing these critical issues, educators and policymakers can work together to create a supportive and inclusive digital learning environment that prioritizes the mental health of all students.

In this era characterized by digitalization in education, a holistic mental health policy represents both an imperative and an opportunity. It should address the intertwined challenges of digitalization and the digital divide, emphasizing inclusivity and equity to ensure that all students can access the benefits of digital learning while also safeguarding their mental well-being.

References:

Department of Education Philippines. (2026, January 12). Expanded mental health services sa mga paaralan, kaagapay ang mga magulang sa pagsuporta sa mga mag-aaral (DepEd Memorandum No. 002, s. 2026).

<https://www.deped.gov.ph/2026/01/12/expanded-mental-health-services-sa-mga-paaralan-kaagapay-ang-mga-magulang-sa-pagsuporta-sa-mga-mag-aaral/>

World Health Organization. (2021). WHO special initiative for mental health:

Philippines. <https://www.who.int/initiatives/who-special-initiative-for-mental-health/philippines>

World Health Organization. (2023, October 12). DOH, WHO launch Philippine Council for Mental Health Strategic Framework 2024–2028.

<https://www.who.int/philippines/news/detail/12-10-2023-doh--who-launch-philippine-council-for-mental-health-strategic-framework-2024-2028>