

## WHEN DISASTER STRIKES: ENSURING TEACHING AND LEARNING CONTINUITY"

*by:*

**ROGELIO M. OLEGARIO**

*Teacher II, Mariveles Senior High School – Sitio Mabuhay*

The Philippine education sector faces the perennial challenge of learning continuity as the country remains highly vulnerable to natural and human-induced disasters. Frequent typhoons, earthquakes, and extreme weather events, which are exacerbated by the climate crisis, consistently lead to the suspension of face-to-face classes and the destruction of school infrastructure. The sheer scale of the disruption is a major concern, with recent reports indicating that significant numbers of school days are lost annually and billions of pesos are required to repair or reconstruct damaged classrooms. The core issue transcends mere structural damage; it is the learning loss that follows, especially for vulnerable students whose access to alternative learning resources is limited, creating an urgent need for robust, proactive, and flexible disaster management strategies within the Department of Education (DepEd).

Recognizing this acute vulnerability, the DepEd has institutionalized policies to safeguard educational rights and investments, as evidenced by its commitment to Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) and the continuous revision of class suspension guidelines. Key to this strategy is DepEd Order No. 022, s. 2024, which outlines the Revised Guidelines on Class and Work Suspension during Disasters and Emergencies, explicitly mandating a shift to Alternative Delivery Modes (ADMs) – such as modular or online distance learning – whenever in-person classes are suspended due to hazards. Furthermore, the DepEd has been actively promoting the development of Learning and Service Continuity Plans (LSCPs) at the school level, ensuring that contingency measures, including the pre-identification of temporary learning spaces and

the safeguarding of learning materials, are in place to maintain educational services even immediately after a calamity strikes. This proactive approach aims to balance the primary goal of ensuring the safety and well-being of learners and personnel with the imperative of uninterrupted learning.

However, the implementation of these policies presents ongoing challenges that require sustained, human-centric efforts from the ground up. One key strategy being deployed is the Dynamic Learning Program (DLP), as recently piloted in disaster-affected regions, which emphasizes independent, resource-efficient learning through activity sheets to mitigate learning loss when regular classes are infeasible. Yet, the success of any contingency plan hinges on local capacity: the ability of school heads and School DRRM Teams to execute localized plans, secure resources, and provide crucial psychosocial support for those affected, as stipulated in various DepEd memoranda. Ultimately, a truly resilient education system requires not only formal mandates from the central office but also the continuous training of teachers for emergency contexts ("learning first aid") and strong coordination with local communities to ensure that when disaster strikes, the immediate response upholds education not as a luxury, but as an indispensable part of recovery.

#### *References:*

(Department of Education [DepEd], 2024)

(Dynamic Learning Program, n.d.)

(Learning and Service Continuity Plans, n.d.)

(Department of Education, n.d.)