GEAR UP: ELEVATING LEARNING IN A PANDEMIC

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ARE WE READY FOR THIS?

“Are you ready, learners?”

“No, no, Captain!”

“I can't hear you!”

“No, no, Captain!”

The world has been experiencing a contagious virus that ultimately changed the way we live. It has infected not only the weak but the careless, as well. In the Philippines, the first reported case of Corona Virus Disease, also known as COVID-19, was reported last January 30, 2020, while the first local transmission was confirmed last March 07, 2020 as reported by the World Health Organization on May 09, 2020. The spread has continued until then which has alarmed the government, resorting to a nationwide precautionary to lessen the spread of the virus. Enhanced Community Quarantine was imposed throughout the country; restricting mass gathering, limiting face-to-face transactions and implementing more strict curfews.

Despite the safety measures enforced by the government, COVID-19 cases continue to intensify; jobs were put on hold, business revenues decreased, employees were laid-off, classes were suspended abruptly. Government agencies needed to cope with these changes to provide better services amidst the pandemic—along with these
agencies is the Department of Education which is one of the most affected agencies in the country, aside from the Department of Health.

Suspension of classes were implemented starting March this year to ensure every student’s safety. Though the school year did not properly end due to the unexpected situation, students were all eager to enroll for the upcoming school year 2020-2021 which proves their burning desire to learn and continuously hone their skills for the betterment of our society. The dilemma that is being faced by the department in this pandemic is how will they be able to provide quality education amidst the current situation. Should school year 2020-2021 take an academic freeze? Or should classes be resumed despite the threat of the virus?

Fortunately, the Department of Education responded to those questions with the alternative delivery modalities, distance learning as others call it, to ensure that learning will still continue but without risking the safety of students, teachers and other personnel. Safety precautions will still be observed and guidelines from the Department of Health (DOH), the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases in the Philippines and the Office of the President will be followed at all times.

The Department of Education is set to shift into online classes for the upcoming school year. This is to comply with a distance learning approach as President Duterte had a directive to postpone face-to-face classes until there is an available Corona Virus vaccine. The school year is set to open on August 24 despite criticism regarding the readiness of our government for implementing distance learning. It will be implemented in 3 different ways – online classes, printed modules, and broadcasted lessons through television or radio. According to the Learner Enrollment and Survey Form that was conducted by DepEd, the most preferred options of students for distance learning are online classes or printed modules. According to Abad (2020), 3.8 million students prefer printed materials as their mode of instruction, while around 2 million
enrollees chose online lessons. However, this survey only reflects 27.7 million enrollees of the last school year which is only about 59%. There are more unheard opinions and preferences from students throughout the country.

As the famous saying of Hellen Keller goes, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." We can never do much change if we will only rely on the actions of the government agencies involved. Each one must partake in continuing education for our learners which will be the future of our country. This pandemic must not be allowed to hinder the learnings of students, instead, it must be dealt through the efforts of the government, the Department of Education, the parents, and especially, the learners themselves.

References: