GEARING TOWARDS DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN THE NEW NORMAL

by:

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"Certain events occur unexpectedly, and we will not see them coming until they strike us." It is precisely what occurred when the COVID-19 epidemic spread like wildfire over the globe, prompting governments to take extreme measures to flatten the infection curve. These measures include the closure of industrial and recreational businesses, physical isolation, and, at the most powerful, the imposition of a community quarantine, which forces residents of affected areas to segregate themselves in their houses away from others.

On the edge of physical separation from others, we turned to the only thing that could bridge the divide – technology. We have gradually introduced technology into their daily lives since the first community quarantine. Gadgets once dismissed as worthless now play a crucial role in completing duties at work, remaining physically present amid the assault of online meetings in offices, and coping with the mountains of work that everyone must cope with due to the pandemic's changes. Almost two years after the initial infection was identified, we are still adjusting to the so-called "new normal" way of life. On a personal level, the pandemic has already profoundly impacted our daily routines. On a larger scale, the implications are staggering, particularly for the Philippine Educational System.

In general, the Philippine Educational System has been characterized by its traditional classroom format, in which the teacher promotes learning within a four-walled physical classroom environment. While more innovative, technology-driven teaching approaches have emerged, such as flipped classrooms and 21st-century science laboratories.
schools' most advanced classroom technology is primarily limited to non-virtual, low-bandwidth technologies, such as television screens that double as LED screens for presentations and discussions.

At the outbreak of the pandemic, public school classrooms were forced to suspend classes prematurely. Everything was in limbo until the Department of Education gradually re-established its position. With Secretary Briones' declaration that education must continue during the epidemic, all functional units kicked into high gear to ensure the new normal's continuity. All of the country's bright minds were gathered to brainstorm ways to educate learners without relying on face-to-face encounters. We conceptualized and built distance learning modalities and materials. These distance learning modes of instruction were primarily focused on synchronous and asynchronous online, modular, and blended learning.

To distribute instructions, online tools such as Google Classroom, Quipper School, and Schoology can assist science professors significantly in managing their classrooms by distributing and retrieving assignments, providing reminders and instructions, and broadcasting class discussions.

Additionally, learning resources can be generated and customized for online learning through software and online tools such as Kotobee, Articulate Studio 13, and Canva. Additionally, learning can be made more enjoyable, engaging, and competitive through evaluation tools such as Quizlet, Padlet, and Mentimeter.

Apart from the common problems faced by all subjects, the intricacies of some abilities a variety of skills in Science and TLE, including laboratory and manipulative skills., made Science education particularly tough, as it necessitates the use of standard laboratory settings. When physical experiments are not feasible, computer simulations enable learners to completely grasp the concepts and processes without the need to do the investigation in a real-world situation.
However, teachers should consider their students' restrictions, such as limited internet connectivity, the availability of gadgets, and understanding of how to operate online programs. Additionally, many applications demand high-speed internet connectivity, which is unavailable in diverse and rural areas around Bataan.

Considering these factors, teachers may opt for low-bandwidth technologies such as Facebook and Messenger chat groups where they can instruct students via posts and forums, create video playlists that students can access via Youtube, and allow students to respond to worksheets via Google Forms. These technologies may be more readily available to the vast majority of children who hold an Android phone.

There is no single successful strategy to integrate technology into the teaching and learning process in the new normal learning landscape. Teachers and school administrators must constantly investigate the potential for incorporating these technologies into the diverse situations in which students operate. What is effective for one learner may not be effective for another, which is why a teacher's educational delivery must be reflective. One should provide learners with various pathways to follow, depending on what is most suitable to their situation and ability. Whether using low- or high-bandwidth technology, the success of the learning experience is still heavily dependent on the teacher's inventiveness in providing instruction and the parents' and learners' full collaboration to maximize learning effectiveness.

Whatever technology is employed, the teacher must never lose sight of the most crucial component of instruction delivery, which is the personal connection between learner and teacher—this is the one thing that even the most advanced technology cannot replicate. Tender loving care, frequent follow-up, inspiring words, and open communication on the teacher's part will go a long way, even more so during these trying times for the learners.
Reference: