LEARNING THROUGH THE PANDEMIC: BLENDED LEARNING MODEL

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The year 2020 brought about one of the most challenging year in the 21st century. The coronavirus ravaged the whole world. It became so much bigger and problematic than anyone ever expected when it first came about in the end of 2019.

Due to the global pandemic, many aspects of our daily lives were put on hold. Common activities like going outside freely, going to work, or even school became challenging due to the restrictions. Covid-19 is virus spread through respiratory droplets, which makes crowded and enclosed spaces at high risk for transmission. To combat the upward trend of the inspection the IATF released guidelines that the people must follow and consider all of the time.

But by the mid of 2020, it became apparent that the situation will not get better anytime in the near future, thus, the Department of Education (DepEd) began to strategize as to how the school year 2020-2021 will commence. Normal face to face set up is definitely out of the table given that it is against the IATF guidelines on preventing mass gathering. Opening normal classes will put both the teachers and the students at risk of contracting the dreaded virus.

The option of online learning is one of safest bet, however, the Philippine education system is under equipped and not ready to make a full transition to online platforms. Schools do not have the proper materials and equipment to operate fully via online. In addition, the problem with the poor internet services, especially in rural communities and the lack of devices of majority of students is also highly apparent. There
are remote areas as well that totally do not have access to mobile services, let alone the internet.

This where the idea of the blended learning strategy became the favored solution. The blended learning model is one of the basic concept in online learning. Blended learning, is a combination of online study and modular method. It is a ‘between’ phase in which students are introduced to fully online studies. It is where normal classrooms were replaced by online classrooms and group meeting application. In the Philippines, blended learning is already used by the Higher Education sector. Professors in Colleges and Universities use this method to take full advantage of the time for learning. They syllabus and similar materials lessons then use online submissions. It is a common practice that most College students are familiar with. On the Elementary and High school levels, however, the practice is not yet common.

It is a huge leap of faith on the part of the education sector to implement this approach to all public schools by October of 2020. It not only proved to be challenging for teachers, but for the parents who were guiding the students at home. It highlighted the lack of facilities, like computers and printers in some schools. It brought to attention the overload of work and the shortage in manpower in the education sector.

But with a year under the belt, and a new school year just beginning, it is safe to assume that the sector is adapting with the changes and challenges. It only further proves that the Philippines is a resilient and irrepressible nation. The blended learning model of education showed the system what are lacking and needs to focus on. The dire situations made teachers even more resourceful. Most of all, the learning approach made parents be more involved with their children’s’ education.

The approach still needs some polishing and amending but given that it could take a few more years for things to fully go back to normal, the system has a lot more time to develop and improve.
References:

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