PANDEMIC OUTBREAK:
ITS IMPACT TO THE CURRENT PHILIPPINE EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

by:
Michelle Lyne E. Buensuceso
Teacher II Paraiso Elementary School

“In just a wink of an eye, everything has changed”. No one could ever imagine how this pandemic outbreak could change everything in a short period of time. Every wrong move and decision could change the present situations. Policies, programs, interventions, and actions proposed by the authorities must be deeply planned and analyzed before the implementation to effectively address this crisis.

As we all witnessed, with the rising cases of coronavirus disease in the country, the declaration of the president in placing Luzon and other places in the country under enhanced community quarantine had created great impacts specially in the world of education. Consequently, numbers of educational institutions in the country had closed in an attempt to contain the global pandemic and to stop the transmission of the virus to protect the learners, teachers, and families. The actions made by the government to address the existing problem brought great challenges and urge to the Department of Education to do something to continue providing quality education despite the situation. We cannot deny the fact that classes are not yet over when the pandemic outbreak had placed the country into critical situation. This critical situation had placed the higher authorities to make a quick smart decision to choose for the most important things to consider. “It’s between life and death, education or health, family or community, self or others.”

Considering this critical scenario our country is facing nowadays, how will this impact the current Philippine educational landscape in terms of school management and
administration, program delivery, educational technology, faculty preparedness, and students’ access to quality education?

As the president delivered his public announcement, he ordered the educational institutions to observe time on task while staying at home. Likewise, this is to continue serving the learners in providing quality learnings in the absence of the formal teaching and learning process. This set-up would surely test not just the effectiveness of the teachers but most specially the effectiveness of the school administrators in handling the schools amidst the crisis. The big questions are: Do they still function competently and effectively considering the fact that they are just human beings who are also impuissant when difficult situations transpired?

Do they still accomplish reports commendably and on time despite being burdened physically, emotionally, and spiritually? Do they still disseminate information clearly and on time to their fellow servants in school despite the limitations brought by the crisis? Lastly, do they still have ample time to monitor the progress of the learners under distant learning set-up through the guidance of their teachers? The answers to these questions will show us the impacts of the present situation to our school administrators. As we all perceived, every school administrator has own leadership style and abilities. For sure, despite this hard situation, the desire, the zeal and zest are there to continue serving the school for the betterment of the pupils. But their abilities to serve the schools competently and effectively are being hindered by the limitations brought by the precautions that must be observed and followed during this adversity. Furthermore, the schedules and plans made for the schools’ activities and programs must be changed and planned again to fit the needs of the present situation. Hence, their abilities to implement intelligently planned policies and instructions amidst the crisis will be tested to address the issues and challenges encountered by their respective schools. Though their actions were anchored and based on the national policies, programs and mandates, still, our school administrators need to create contingency plans, programs, and school
policies to ensure that schools’ functions, students’ learnings, and teachers’ duties and responsibilities will be observed even in times of crisis like this.

Moreover, when it comes to program delivery, it has been a blessing in disguise that when this pandemic transpired, we are now living in an advanced world, where Information and Communication Technology has already evolved. The existence of internet connections, gadgets, social medias and the like have contributed a lot to continue the process of program delivery, even curriculum delivery amidst the crisis. This only proves that program delivery can be intensified despite the limitations brought by the crisis through the use of the Educational Technology. Transaction and communications became easier and faster through this means. Additionally, the Department of Education is doing its best to continuously serve the educational institutions and extend their support by all means. Apparently, internet connections, signals and the availability of laptops or computers at home are the common hindrances that may be encountered.

In line with this, we all perceived that Educational Technology has enormous potentials to address educational needs more efficiently. Likewise, this could improve the teachers’ performance, the program delivery and curriculum delivery of the educational institutions, and most importantly enrich and individualize student learning. The Department of Education has already initiated and implemented a policy to continue offering quality learnings to pupils at home through the use of Educational Technology. Thus, a platform called Deped Commons was already implemented. This is an online platform for public school teachers to support distance learning modalities. Obviously, it is a commendable step of the Department of Education to help learners acquire learnings despite disruptions of classes. The ideas, and the purpose are ideal, but in reality, there will always be issues and challenges. We all want quality education for our learners but it may seem impossible to give them the access to quality education when crisis like this arises. Also, not all learners have the means to be engaged in this kind of platform.
Majority of the public-schools’ students/pupils do not have gadgets, internet connections, and signals at home to access this modality. So, how could the educational institutions give support to the learners to acquire quality learnings amidst the crisis? These challenges can be addressed by providing the most suited intervention that could benefit not just a number of learners, but instead ALL LEARNERS. Online learning platform may not be enough to address the present situation. It’s about time for the Department of Education to have a plan in producing offline application modules, and printed modules to help the learners learn continuously when crisis forces everyone to stay at home then.

Furthermore, faculty preparedness has also became an issue when this pandemic outbreak occurred. We cannot deny the fact that this is our first time to have these experiences brought by the crisis. Decisions by the government commanding everyone to stay at home for community quarantine had made and implemented quickly to address the present issue. Consequently, this gave us no choice but to stay at home. As faculty members, are we truly prepared to do our duties and responsibilities as the crisis limits us to function effectively? Most of the teachers are having hard times accomplishing school reports and other responsibilities in schools since the enhanced community quarantine policy has been implemented. They are not able to go to school freely to retrieve pertinent documents of pupils since every Barangay has strictly imposed the said policy. Working at home would be limited, resulting to unfinished reports, late compliance, and hanging schedules of activities for the year end accomplishment reports. This scenario will serve as an eye opener to every member of the faculty to have individual contingency plans and actions to consider in the midst of crisis to at least coping with the situation positively and be able to function effectively even in a challenging situation.

This pandemic outbreak might contribute negative effects to the current Philippine educational landscape in terms of school management and administration, program
delivery, educational technology, faculty preparedness, and students’ access to quality education.

But as the catalysts of change, we must work as one, unite as one, and be someone who has the power to turn negative situations into opportunities. Special problems require special solutions, special solutions require analytic and smart decision-making to be able to address the existing problem effectively.

References:
