SETTING TRENDS IN THE “NEW NORMAL”  
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Many people are dealing with the new way of living amidst the pandemic crisis brought by coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). There is a strict maintenance of social distancing, health protocols, limited capacities of establishments, and many other transactions and services that changed due to the effect of pandemic. One of the greatly affected sectors is education because face-to-face class interaction is prohibited not until the vaccine for the disease will be available, as DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones stated during a press conference. Different alternative modes of learning were suggested by the Department of Education, which posed a great challenge on the part of the teachers, students, and even parents.

According to an article of Obana (2020) published on The Manila Times, in the Philippines, the crisis has affected about 27 million learners, 1 million teachers and non-teaching staff, as well as the families of learners. Since there is no vaccine yet, Deped came up to an idea to offer schools a menu of alternative learning methods that includes online learning and offline methods, such as take-home readings and activities. Online classes will only be feasible to those who live in areas with internet connectivity and those who are capable of shouldering Internet bills monthly. Hence, online classes are more feasible in some private schools.

On the other hand, while trying to push through education amidst pandemic could sound good, the process is quite burdensome. Teachers have to adjust their modules, modify teaching methodologies, be equipped in using technology, and look for the most possible ways to reach out students who do not have an access to mobile phones and gadgets. The situation also jeopardizes the mandate of DepEd which is the “Education for All.” Given the living condition of millions of students most especially those who are in far-flung areas, it would be more challenging for teachers to assure that no students will be left behind.

The role of the parents in their children’s education will come into picture. The UNICEF gave tips on how parents could help assist their children with their school works which was shared by Angara (2020) wherein it was stated that parents can be the ones to set a routine that integrates time for studies and education through online and media sources, while balancing it with other social and play activities that a child also needs. Also, parents and
teachers should communicate with one another—just as the teacher is now the one who creates the learning modules that students will use on a local level, so it is that parents should also be aware of how to maximize learning from these educational packages.

During these trying times, millions of teachers, students, and parents are doing their best to keep on looking for the best possible ways to survive a school year that is completely different from the set up that they were used to. The good thing is DepEd and the dedicated teachers are doing everything that they can do to make learning possible while the country is in the pandemic crisis. Perhaps, to make this trial more successful, schools must be considerate to those who do not have a technological access, as well as those students whose families are not that capable to guide them in studying. With this situation that we are into, empathy is the best thing that we could ever give.

References: