SOME OBSTACLES CONQUERED IN THE “NEW NORMAL”

by:
Jethro M. Nocom
Teacher III, Hermosa National High School

Before the actual opening of classes, the continuation of education in the new normal had been posting a lot of challenges and anxiety from the different stakeholders in the teaching-learning process. Upon the actual implementation and start of classes, the following are the three most pressing issues in the Philippine Educational System today, based on my opinion and observations: (a) lack of training and readiness of teachers and educational leaders with sudden shift in education, (b) unavailability of materials and resources needed for the alternative delivery modalities, and (c) difficulties of parents/guardians in fulfilling their roles in the new normal in education. Everyone would claim that no one expected this pandemic, thus, no one can truly claim that they are prepared in handling such situation and demands that surfaced because of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Same goes with the educational system in the Philippines. The Department of Education had been tirelessly giving its best to bridge all the gaps in the preparedness of stakeholders in continuing the education nowadays. There were a lot of teacher and staff trainings, countless programs and proposals and other responses, however, the time is just not long enough, and everything seems novelty. In this reason, there are a lot of trial and errors and experimentation that happened. These left teachers being stuck with different scenarios that didn’t really have any finality. Due to this scenario, teachers came up with different implementations and bending of the ideal processes given by the Department of Education. Teachers and principals gave their best in following the guidelines – despite their own training needs. Contextualizing the policies and guidelines to better suit the demands of various workplaces had been one of the responses of principals and teachers in the field.
One priority that teachers and principals made is looking in consideration the basic needs of the learners in the area. It was quite alarming that there were a lot of students and parents who were actually willing to withdraw the enrollment of their children because of the uncertainties encompassed by the new normal in education. In response to this, teachers and principals have been putting a lot of information drive campaigns and programs to convince the parents. At present, teachers and principals may claim that the exceeding-last-year’s data in the enrollment of learners in the Learner Information System (LIS) is one of the success indicators in the conduct of education amidst COVID 19 Pandemic.

On the other hand, it was quite saddening that the Department of Education had been implementing distance learning, but the materials needed for the distance learning in education were not present. In the ideal plan, the materials should have been provided by the Central Office to the different regional and district offices. However, this was not the case. Modular instruction had been the top choice of learners, nationwide. But when October 5 came and classes started, there were no modules available from the Central Office. Good thing, in our local, the Division Office of Bataan had foreseen the situation and prepared its own local modules and materials. This solved the gap of unavailable materials. However, due to short preparation time and lack of teacher-writer trainings, there were some issues that surfaced. But looking on the positive note, all-in-all, students were able to continue modular distance learning because of the materials prepared and produced by the Schools Division Office of Bataan.

Lastly, one of the greatest challenges of the new normal in education had been the shifting in the roles played by the stakeholders. Narrowing it down, one of the crucial turnouts is the new role of parents in the teaching-learning process. Parents, during the new normal in education, do not simply give allowances or gentle reminders to their
children. Their new role in the new normal in education is being a co-facilitator in the teaching learning process.

The stated scenario is very challenging, especially since parents are not used to doing the said role. Moreover, a lot of parents are under the working class - which limits their time for supervising the learning of their children. But with proper scheduling, communication and orientation, parents have been thriving in accomplishing their new role in the new normal in education. This has been evident in their endeavor of personally getting the self-learning modules on the assigned schedules and heightened communication with teachers when it comes to monitoring the learning of the students.

Such enumerated difficulties had been posting grave threat in the quality of education provided amidst the time of COVID-19, which makes the public worry the status of learners nowadays, however, with the participation of all stakeholders, and continuous hard work, the Department of Education will surely achieve its endeavor which is to provide quality education to the Filipino people despite the pandemic that the world is currently experiencing.

References: