THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF LEARNING FACILITATORS IN DISTANCE LEARNING

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While the world is battling the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, educators, legislators, and the country’s executives have focused all efforts in allowing the education sector to continue the school year, while ensuring safety and not compromising quality of education. The Department of Education conducted a national survey to parents during the remote enrolment period from June 1 to July 15, 2020 about their preferred alternative learning mode. Results show that modular learning is the most preferred by parents with a turnout of 8.8 million, followed by blended learning (a combination of modular, online classes, television, and radio) with 3.9 million, online learning with 3.8 million, educational TV with 1.4 million, radio-based instruction with 900,000 and other modalities that are not specified by the agency with 500,000. This shows that majority of the parent respondents prefer their children to learn at home where they are more safe through printed modules. In any case, we should learn to embrace the new normal where learning modality is through distance learning.

In a distance learning modality where the teacher has no or limited contact with students, the role of a learning facilitator is very crucial. A learning facilitator is a person who can guide the learner during contact session at home, in going through the distance learning course and materials and monitor the activity of the learner. Carrying out contact sessions demands methodical training, preparation, and support. Because it is indispensable to establish contact with students and to facilitate interaction among students, facilitators should provide help with questions or discussions held during the
contact sessions (Willis: 1993). Parents, guardians, relatives, anyone in the community with the capacity to be a learning facilitator can be tapped in for this purpose.

ACS International Schools published a parent’s guide to distance learning, and it can help the learning facilitator to be ready for some of the more practical aspects of learning from home. Here are some recommendations to consider:

• Establish daily routines and expectations - It is imperative to develop good study habits from the start. Create an adaptable routine and talk about how it is working overtime. Program your days into predictable segments. Help learners get up, get dressed and ready to learn at a reasonable time. Observe the contact time limit per learner’s age level.

• Choose a good place to learn - Provide a learning space that is dedicated to school-focused activities. Ensure it is quiet, free from any distractions and has a good internet connection if necessary. Make sure that the space is well-ventilated, and that lighting is adequate.

• Keep in touch - Subject teachers will primarily be communicating regularly through online platforms and virtual learning environments. Make sure that the learners and the facilitators keep the line of communications with them open.

• Help learners to be the owner of their learning - Nobody expects parents or other learning facilitators to be full-time teachers or to be experts in educational and content matters. Just give support and encouragement and motivate learners to do their part. Let them struggle occasionally and do not help too much. Let the practice being independent.

• Begin and end the day by checking the learners -

Early in the morning, you might ask:

• What are your scheduled classes/subject for today?
• Do you have any assessments?

• Is there anything I can do to make feel good?

• At the end of the day’s lessons, you might ask:

• How were your learning tasks for today?

• Did you discover a lot of new things? What was hard?

• What do you think can we do to make tomorrow better?

References:
