

Beyond the Borders

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The onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic has shifted every system, including those in the educational sector, to the so-called new normal. For the teachers, it is crucial to respond to unusual changes and challenges that this new normal brings. Now more than ever, it is always accompanied with extra mile for the teachers to fulfill their mission to the learners and the nation.

Despite the limitations in face-to-face classes, the Department of Education has adopted different learning modalities to continue the basic educational system in the Philippines. The most commonly employed are distance learning and blended learning modalities, which include modular, online, and television/radio instruction, that make use of computer technologies, print and non-print learning materials. Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) are self-paced learning materials that can be delivered in print or digital format, with teachers monitoring learner progress through the use of social media, text messages, and/or phone calls, educational sites and sources, and other similar resources to deliver instruction. The teachers play a fundamental role in this new educational landscape since they serve as the front liners or the key agents in bringing about these significant shifts in education. However, this is never a simple task. The shift to the new normal education requires teachers with new pedagogical approaches and more advanced technological literacy. Also, they are confronted to battle with poor internet and connectivity problems, difficulty in reaching the students and parents, the threat to human life caused by the pandemic, and other issues in education that are not expected to rise or are not anticipated to worsen in the near future. For some teachers, they need to extend more efforts in riding boats, climbing mountains, and/or crossing rivers in order to reach each students who live in remote sections or far-flung areas of schools. The above are only a few examples of the unprecedented changes and events that teachers have to deal with in these times.

Consequently, both the teachers and learners make adjustments and endure challenges in this journey to the new educational path, which is described below. The teachers' relentless efforts and unwavering attempts to adapt to the circumstances and needs in teaching are of extreme importance to the success of their students. To attain this, teachers in the new normal attend various preparations and training to ensure that they will be geared toward the new normal of education. Nothing is insurmountable for someone who is willing to bend over backwards for the good of the greater good. For instance, training in the use of different online learning platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Office, and others is being carried out to equip the teachers with knowledge and skills in these learning tools. Some webinars are being conducted to discuss the different teaching strategies in the new normal, cybersecurity, and

professional development courses for the teachers they participate in. It is necessary for students to put forth more effort and for teachers to be more patient in the face of a new educational normal... and vice versa. It is universally acknowledged that students must, at some point, pay attention to their teachers.

Modular distance learning is widely used in schools to facilitate the teaching and learning process because it can accommodate the vast majority of students and teachers. Teachers prepare, distribute, and, in some cases, personally contact parents and students in order to provide them with their learning materials. Furthermore, even though physical interactions are limited, teachers can extend and build a learning community for their students through social media applications, allowing them to maintain open lines of communication with both students and parents. They use social media applications to motivate students, connect with them, and reduce their anxiety when they are going through difficult times.

Teachers who are driven by passion, determination, and commitment are able to overcome these obstacles and discover new and innovative ways to provide high-quality education.

It is undeniably true that the roles of teachers are critical in today's society, and teachers were able to adjust quickly to the new normal in their classrooms as a result of their remarkable fortitude and commitment. The need for teachers to upskill has arisen almost overnight in order to adapt to the new modalities of teaching and ensure that learning is still accessible to students regardless of the circumstances. They strive to be well-equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills, to overcome difficulties in the teaching and learning process, and to always look beyond the borders in order for learning to continue despite the limitations imposed by the pandemic itself. Despite the circumstances, they are unable to remain contained. Even in the face of great uncertainty, it is their goal to pursue and ensure that the torch of knowledge is always lit in order to infuse hope into and illuminate the paths of Filipino learners.