

Exploring the Implementation of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP): Challenges and Opportunities from the Lenses of Select Stakeholders

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Abstract: *This qualitative case study aimed to derive research-based inputs for a policy review in enhancing the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) in public schools. Select stakeholders from two large schools in a City Division in Pampanga that were regionally recognized for having a meritorious partnership with internal and external communities were virtually interviewed on their experiences about the BE-LCP implementation. Thematic analysis of the data led to the emergence of seven themes regarding challenges and problems met: policies on crossroads, technological discrepancies, limitations triggered by health constraints, dynamics of education, training inadequacy for facilitators of learning, barriers to building stakeholders' partnership, and imbalanced between curriculum and instruction. Meanwhile, from the described strategies and best practices of the schools, seven themes were also formed: flexibility and adaptability of DepEd authorities, schools address the deficiencies in digital resources, advocating a safe and healthy safe environment, consideration of individual learning needs, provision of limited transition programs to teachers, stakeholders' willingness to participate in the implementation of BE-LCP, and constant monitoring and evaluation of the plan. Recommended ways offered to triumph on post-COVID-19 education include a thorough review of plans and decisions before its implementation and purveying robust e-learning infrastructure and sustaining financial resources to address the discrepancies in digital resources, among others.*

Keywords—basic education learning continuity plan; implementation; stakeholders; challenges; opportunities; case study; thematic analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has caused an enormous disruption across all grade levels in several countries to contain the dispersion of the virus. Undeniably, in history, it created a most severe global education discontinuance. Global disease outbreak has changed the delivery of basic education services. It created uncertainty about when the pandemic will end and go back to normal face-to-face classes. It has brought mental health problems to various stakeholders. Undeniably, in April 2020, the Department of Education (DepEd) threatened whether schools will be allowed to open the incoming school year 2020-2021 and what conditions would be (Department of Education, 2020) [1]. As a result of this health crisis, half of the world's learners are greatly affected.

Even before the outbreak of COVID-19, one of the most significant challenges the world faces is the learning crisis. The learning crisis ensued the following: the most underprivileged children and youth had severest gain access to schooling, peak dropout rates, and leading learning deficits. Hence, it was already far off the path to attaining Sustainable Development Goal 4, aiming to provide an unbiased and all-encompassing education.

In the event of a delayed school closure, educational leaders think of ways to continue learning. Countless considerations are a critical component of preparing a learning continuity plan, such as accessibility, modes of learning, learning materials, and the like.

At the height of the pandemic, the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP) was the response to deliver quality education amid the threat, challenges, uncertainties, and restrictions brought about by COVID-19. Moreover, it aims to allow Filipino learners to continue learning and for teachers to provide instruction in a safe learning and work environment (Department of Education, 2020).

Moreover, the BE-LCP framework was crafted based on the inputs gathered from the consultative discussions of various stakeholders. These involve senate committees on basic education, legislators, executives from several units, and field offices. Likewise, a survey form was forwarded to teachers, parents, and learners across the country to assess the department's readiness in terms of remote education (Cahapay, 2021) [2].

The BE-LCP embodies the appropriate guidelines, rules, directives, programs, projects, and activities for basic education in the school year 2020-2021. As stated in Department Order No. 012, s. 2020, the BE-LCP, consisting of education interventions since it is in its first year to implement it, operationalization would be complex. Gains and challenges can be expected along with the implementation.

Generally, this study aimed to collect research-based inputs for a policy review in enhancing the BE-LCP in public schools. The study sought to describe the stakeholders' experiences on the operationalization of the BE-LCP in terms

of (1) challenges faced by the participants and (2) best practices and strategies of the school.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THEIR EXPERIENCES ON ENCOUNTERED CHALLENGES AND SCHOOL'S BEST PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BASIC EDUCATION LEARNING CONTINUITY PLAN

Participants were very open in sharing their experiences relative to the ongoing implementation of BE-LCP. BE-LCP was launched in School Year 2020 up to the present, and it is its first time of execution, and "birth pains" were stated keenly by select stakeholders. After a thorough analysis from the experiences given by the key participants, seven themes emerged: *Policies on Crossroads, Technological Discrepancies, Limitations Triggered by Health Constraints, Dynamics of Education, Training Inadequacy for Facilitators of Learning, Barriers to Building Stakeholders' Partnership, and Imbalanced Between Curriculum and Instruction.*

Despite the barriers, obstacles, and challenges encountered by the school frontliners in implementing BE-LCP, opportunities and the school's best practices and strategies are still being reflected, contributing to its operationalization, seven themes were derived: *Flexibility and Adaptability of DepEd Authorities, Schools Address the Deficiencies in Digital Resources, Advocating a Safe and Healthy Safe Environment, Consideration of Individual Learning Needs, Provision of Limited Transition Programs to Teachers, Stakeholders' Willingness to Participate in the Implementation of BE-LCP, and Constant Monitoring and Evaluation of the Plan.*

Several ways were humbly recommended to triumph on the challenges and problems posed: (1) A thorough review of plans and decisions before its implementation; (2) Purveying robust e-learning infrastructure and sustaining financial resources to address the discrepancies in digital resources; (3) Propose ways in safeguarding the health and safety of internal stakeholders; (4) Ensure the quality learning resources by undergoing exhaustive quality assurance; (5) Come up with various ways for the learners who lag academically for them to be engaged in learning; (6) Devise ways on how to inculcate the value of academic honesty; (7) A systematic review of teacher's duties and responsibilities; (8) Devise a comprehensive adjustment program for teachers, learners, and parents; (9) Foster an open line of communication among the internal and external stakeholders; (10) Re-consider the funds allocated in education to support the educational plans; (11) The local government unit and community partners may have a strong, sustained, and engaged partnership with the schools; (12) Schools must ensure feedback mechanisms relative to the performance of every learner; (13) Review and modify the K to 12 curriculum as to the quality and relevance to the context of post-COVID-19; and (14) Offer other ways of learning who are incapable of self-directed learning.

To further sustain the best practices and strategies employed in the first year of its implementation, various recommendations were also offered: (1) Uphold the

individual's right to education despite of VUCAD world; (2) Continue to identify and resolve the issues, problems, concerns, and needs of every learner to ensure inclusivity; (3) Strengthen the implementation of safety protocols inside the school; (4) Intensify the safeguarding of one's mental health of teachers and learners; (5) Consistently involve the parents and learners in the mapping of appropriate modalities and resources; (6) Sustain the teachers' professional development by providing sufficient and relevant transition program; (7) Reinforce the partnership of every stakeholder to foster schoolwide community engagement; (8) Deepen and nurture a sensitive and supportive relationship among teachers and parents; (9) Heighten the financial resources from the LGU and private partnerships; and (10) Improve the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms among schools to maximize effectiveness in learning modalities.

Based on the inputs collected from the lenses of select stakeholders, this paper humbly offers the following recommendations:

The national government may guarantee a solidified protection on the right to education regardless of socio-economic background to achieve the "No Filipino Learner is Left Behind." Likewise, they may review the budget allocation and distribution to the education sector. Besides, all learners and school personnel may be provided digital resources to bridge the technological gap in learning continuity.

The central, regional, and division offices may strictly be committed to equitable and inclusive education. The concerned offices may modify the K to 12 curriculum as to the quality and relevance to the context of post-COVID-19 is concerned. Likewise, they may integrate special lessons on fighting against misinformation and digital citizenship since we are in the digital world of learning. Relative to implementing learning modalities, the central office may provide uniform self-learning modules and strictly observe a thorough quality assurance. Furthermore, the offices may think of possible ways to keep an engaged learning modality rather than compliance-based.

Moreover, consistency of decisions and plans may be observed to avoid confusion. In addition, independent learning is the counterpart of the adapted modality, and it may be reviewed to assist the low performer learners. Transition programs were provided to school personnel. Instead of orientation, the offices may devise a comprehensive adjustment program for both learners and parents. Also, the central office may formulate contextualized manual relative to duties and responsibilities of internal and external stakeholders in this new normal education.

The school may provide quarterly rewards and incentives for frontline educators, parents, learners, and community partners. It is highly advocated to maintain the best practices employed in the new normal. Likewise, the school may engage in holistic partnership with internal and external stakeholders to build a resilient system.

The school leaders may sustain a win-win situation for all concerned individuals and groups. They may advocate for a happy and unified workplace to make situations lighter and more comfortable.

The teachers may cultivate deeper communities of practice in the workplace. Hence, the culture of innovation would be attained most especially during this unprecedented learning crisis. Likewise, they may consistently sustain their immense patience, consideration, and sensitivity to all learners, parents, and guardians. Equally, teachers may revitalize the means of communication to all stakeholders.

The learners may establish a home learning routine, maintain balanced health in all aspects, and accept change wholeheartedly. Similarly, learners may nurture a clairvoyant mindset as a coping mechanism.

The parents and guardians may foster a growth mindset amid the threats and uncertainty. They may offer extensive support to their child's welfare and education. Equally important, the home should be the best place to intensify the values of their child.

The local government unit and community partners may have a strong, sustained, and engaged partnership with the schools. In addition, during this pandemic, they may furnish a remote learning hub to reach out to those who are financially challenged and actively involved in the teaching-learning process.

3. REFERENCES

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