The Experiences Of Junior High School Teachers In Online Teaching And Learning During Enchanced Community Quarantine: Inputs For The Learning Continuity Plan For The New Normal In Education

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A. Introduction

School life is about students coming to school and teachers discussing the lesson in the classroom. During recess and lunch break, students chat and play with each other. Learning is about social interaction between teachers and students, and among students. At the advent of technology, education found the importance of technology that became an integral part in teaching and learning today. With researches revealing how technology is enhancing learning, various educational software and platforms were created which are integrated in the curriculum. Social media such as facebook is being utilized for learning where teachers and students communicate.

While everyone is actively and normally engaged in their daily activities, everything suddenly changed when COVID-19 became a pandemic and eventually a global health crisis. Practically, all countries in the world had to impose lockdowns or enhanced community quarantine to prevent the spread of the virus. Many businesses temporarily closed and classes had to be cancelled. Social or physical distancing had to be observed very strictly which prohibited mass gatherings like conferences, concerts, community prayers in churches, and face-to-face classes. Meetings, business transactions, seminars, and classes had to be done online through different platforms like google meet, zoom, big marker, and video chat. Though technology has been part of the system and culture, it has not been fully embraced until the pandemic forced everyone to do their activities online. This includes holding the graduation ceremony virtually which was considered unimaginable and unacceptable.

In schools, students and teachers scrambled to teach and learn using the internet. While public school classes were about to end when the lockdown was announced, private schools and some college and state universities had one quarter (three months) left and classes continued through online modalities. It was an immediate shift and policies had to be crafted, changed, and finalized as classes continue. Initially, it was perceived only to be a short-term crisis but experts predicted that it may take a year before everything returns to normal. However, the current situation is already considered the new normal. Online learning will be part of the new normal in education as claimed by education experts. In the Philippines, the government decided through the recommendation of the Department of Education (DepEd) and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) that classes will continue in school year 2020-2021 through various

learning modalities in the midst of the COVID19 pandemic. However, face-to-face classes will only resume when a vaccine has already been discovered. As per DepEd Order No. 007 s. 2020, school opening will not necessarily mean traditional face-to-face learning in classroom. The physical opening of schools will depend on the risk severity grading or classification of a locality, pursuant to guidelines of the Department of Health (DOH), the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases in the Philippines (IATF), or the Office of the President (OP). Even in areas where schools are allowed to open, physical distancing will still be required, which will necessitate schools to combing face-to-face learning with distance learning.

Don Bosco Technical Institute-Makati City Philippines was only starting the last term of school year 2019-2020 when classes were suspended due to COVID19 pandemic. Expecting that classes would resume after a one or two weeks, teaching and learning were conducted online through Genyo (official online platform of the school), messenger, and email. There was no synchronous or asynchronous modality not until it was announced that there would be no physical resumption of classes. Teachers, wanting to connect with the students, thought of using other platforms like google classroom, google meet, zoom, and messenger videochat. Unprepared for the unexpected new normal in education, teachers relied on what they know and they have. Some didn't have wifi connection at home while others didn't have reliable laptops for online learning. With regards to the students, they were also unprepared for a full online learning. Just like any suspension of classes, they were enjoying it until it became a totally different environment for them. Classes had to be conducted through different online modalities, and the school year ended in an unexpected

way. School requirements had to be lessened because it was creating a lot or mental, physical, and psychological stresses for the students and teachers.

Despite the effects and limitations brought about by COVID19, classes must continue because it is an essential need of everyone. A year or more without classes will create more problems. Students have to be engaged in learning with the use of technology. Technology has become an integral alternative to continue classes and may open new learnings and teaching strategies. However, the limitations of online learning made the Department of Education to rethink and focus more on the most essential learning competencies. In preparing for school year 2020-2021, the Junior High School Department conducted a survey among teachers to design the learning continuity plan. The data became one of the most important bases in coming up with a learning continuity plan for the new normal in education.

B. Discussion

1. Online Teaching

In the last twenty years, the school has been integrating technology in teaching. Every year, teachers are provided training on technology, pedagogy, and different online platforms particularly Genyo, the school's learning management system. Through blended learning, the teachers became familiar in the use of technology in teaching. When face-to-face classes were cancelled, they felt challenged in using technology as the mode for learning. It also revealed their readiness and skills in adapting to the unexpected change in teaching. It can be gleaned in Table 1 the responses on online teaching.

Table 1. Online Teaching

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have the knowledge and skills to teach using Genyo.	46.9 %	50 %		3.1 %
I have the knowledge and skills to teach using other online platforms.	21.9 %	78.1 %		
I used other platforms including social media to conduct classes.	15.6 %	50 %	31.3 %	3.1 %
I felt better teaching at home using different online platforms.	3.1 %	53.1 %	31.3 %	12.5 %
I was able to demonstrate creativity in teaching using online learning platforms.	9.4 %	65.6 %	25 %	
I had difficulty in online teaching.	18.8 %	56.3 %	21.9 %	3 %
I set a schedule of interaction, communication, or consultation with my students.	21.9 %	62.5 %	15.6 %	

I was able to communicate with all my students regularly.	15.6 %	37.5 %	40.6 %	6.3 %
I required performance tasks that can be done by students in consideration of time and availability of learning resources at home.	28.1 %	50 %	18.8 %	3.1 %
I showed understanding and consideration to my students in the submission of requirements.	78.1 %	21.9 %		

The teachers said that they have the knowledge and skills in using Genyo in teaching because they are regularly trained and assisted. Being familiar with the other online platforms, they also shared that they have the knowledge and skills. However, in using social media to conduct classes, they used it though there is no official announcement from the administration because it was the easiest way to communicate with the students.

Online teaching has become a challenge and it led them to become creative in the delivery of the lessons. Considering the limitations and stress brought about by the sudden shift to online learning, teachers became more

considerate, understanding and compassionate. The requirements became less and more time were provided in order to accomplish them. The school administrators said that they had to remind the teachers to tone down the requirements because parents have been complaining about the voluminous work that they students have to complete. To follow up the students, teachers communicated more regularly with the students through different platforms like email, viber, messenger, and text.

In terms of teaching at home, they felt better but had difficulty in online teaching. Many said that there were a lot of distractions at home and the internet connection was not stable.

With the teacher being an important component in education, the delivery of learning greatly depends on them. They must have the knowledge and skills in pedagogy and technology. Regardless of the tool or medium, a teacher with the right knowledge, skills, and attitude can make learning really happen. Today's tool is technology. One can be creative and passionate in preparing and using instructional materials, but planning can make it better. With technology as a powerful tool in education, it is important to use it appropriately and effectively. When thoughtfully applied, technology can add significant value to each of the eight models of teaching. Ultimately, it is up to the teachers to plan for the integration of technology and to articulate the specific ways in which it represents additional value for themselves and their students. The authors believe that this is most likely to occur when teachers view different forms of technology as authentic tools that students will likely need in their current and future lives, inside and outside of school. It is also most likely to happen when teachers have a clear conceptual understanding of the diverse purposes for which technology can be used to

enhance the teaching and learning process. Using a particular software for classroom discussion should involve an interplay of words and pictures. Students are in the world of visuals. They are digital natives. They like to see attractive things that will make them interested in the lesson. They grew up seeing and listening to words related to pictures or graphics. In teaching, preparing technology-based instructional materials require appropriate words and graphics (Lasley, Matczynski & Rowley, 1997).

2. Technology Resources

The school has invested in technological equipment and infrastructure most especially in the last fifteen years. Though desktop computers are sufficient for teacher's use in the faculty room, most of them use their personal laptops to teach and do other academic related work. The rapid development in technology has been a challenge to all teachers most especially when they continue their work at home. It can be gleaned in Table 2 that status of technology resources of teachers.

Table 2. Technology Resources

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I used my own laptop/desktop to teach.	65.6 %	15.6 %	12.5 %	6.3 %
I also used my mobile phone to teach.	46.9 %	37.5 %	12.5 %	3.1 %
I used the internet connection at home.	56.3 %	12.5 %	15.6 %	15.6 %

I used my mobile phone WIFI connection (data).	40.6 %	34.4 %	15.6 %	9.4 %
I lacked the needed equipment and connectivity for online teaching.	28.1 %	37.5 %	31.3 %	3.1 %
I had access to e-learning materials that I used in teaching	15.6 %	68.8 %	12.5 %	3.1 %

Not all teachers have their personal laptops. When classes had to be continued at home, there were teachers who used their mobile phones to continue communicating with their students. Some used the laptops provided by the school while the others borrowed from their friends. Concerning their internet connection at home, not all have WIFI at home. They have to use their mobile phone WIFI connection in order to continue communicating with their students. With their access to the internet, they are able to find e-learning materials that they used in teaching.

Budget and lack of sufficient equipment were identified as issues in technology integration. Integrating technology in teaching and learning is still a problem among middle school teachers. Principals consider the use of technology a new development in making teachers more dynamic and students more engaged in learning. However, the principals identified budget as the main issue in fully implementing technology integration. Teachers and principals embraced the use of technology as part of the culture of teaching, learning, and completing professional responsibilities. However, they hungered for appropriate

professional development. Also, they said that since technology is ever-changing, there is a need to upgrade the equipment in a short period of time. They observed the lack of equipment since many were frequently using it. Emerging problems like funding technology, lack of equipment, and limited continued professional development derailed the strong incorporation of technology in teaching. The Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) was also suggested to address the lack of equipment (Majeski, 2013).

3. Student Online Learning

While the students were enjoying coming and learning inside their classrooms, they saw themselves attending classes at home without any warning. For three months, they had to continue doing their requirements with limited help coming from their classmates. Unlike when they were in the classrooms, seeking assistance from their classmates became virtual and less personal. It was not easy for them to adjust since they were unprepared for it despite their knowledge and skills in technology. It can be gleaned in Table 3 the experiences of the students which the teachers have learned based on their online interaction with their students.

Table 3. Student Online Learning

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Students showed interest in online teaching and learning.		75 %	18.8 %	6.2 %

Students were participative in the online discussion/classes.	62.5 %	31.3 %	6.2 %
Students submitted all requirements on or before the deadline.	3.1 %	28.1 %	50 %	18.8 %
Students used their computers (laptop or desktop) at home for learning.	3.1 %	75 %	18.8 %	3.1 %
Students have internet access at home.	3.1 %	75 %	18.8 %	3.1 %
Students showed respect in communicating with teachers.	15.6 %	75 %	4.7 %	4.7 %
Students observed the "netiquette" in their online behavior.	12.5 %	68.8 %	12.5 %	6.2 %

Being digital citizens and adept with technology, students found it interesting to continue learning through online platforms. Though they were participative in online discussion, many failed to submit the requirements on time. The teachers also found out that most students have their own computers at home and have internet access. In

terms of their behavior when they communicate with their teachers, they are courteous and demonstrated respect during online activities.

Effective online instruction is dependent on well-designed course content, motivated interaction between the instructor and learners, well-prepared and fully supported instructors, etc. With our thorough analysis on this matter, this study further confirms that teachers definitely and indisputably play a crucial role in online education. They facilitate individual and group discussions, respond to student questions, design course assignments, and evaluate students' learning. Technology does not – and cannot – replace the role and position of the teacher. However, study showed that online faculty in higher education have not been receiving sufficient support from their respective institutions. It is a common practice that online instructors devoted more time and energy to online courses in comparison with their counterparts who teach in traditional classrooms. The reality is that they teach large numbers of students in their classes, receive little to no workload relief, get insufficient support from their universities with regard to recourses and technology, and have no professional development on online education (Sun & Chen, 2016).

For students to become more engaged and motivated in online learning, their welfare must be one of the top priorities of the school. As a society, we need to navigate the challenge around how to have a healthy relationship with technology, such as screen time and how we use it. We can address it through digital citizenship and literacy programs (Sampat, 2019).

4. What are the three challenges that you encountered in online teaching?

Online teaching has become a challenging experience for all teachers despite their knowledge and skills in the use of technology in teaching. No JHS teacher has been prepared to hold online classes on a full-time basis. Based on their experience during the last term of school year 2019-2020, Table 4 shows the challenges experienced by the teachers :

Table 4. Challenges in Online Teaching

Rank	Challenges
1	Unstable Internet Connection
2	Student's Learning and Attitude
3	Technological Equipment at Home
4	Communication

The unstable internet connection emerged as the top challenge of teachers and students. When there is no internet connection, online learning becomes impossible. The internet connection in the country remains to be one of the slowest and most expensive in the world. With only two big telecommunication companies providing internet service, digital communications and transactions are unstable. With teaching and learning becoming online, it is expected that it will continue to become unstable as the internet providers have just started upgrading their facilities.

With no one monitoring them except their parents or guardians, the students are challenged to become more responsible. Being at home, students showed laziness and procrastinate in doing their school work. When they are being followed up by their teachers, some become unresponsive pretending that they have not received any information.

Both teachers and students said that they need to have the needed technological equipment in order to comply with the requirements of online teaching and learning. Some teachers have no laptops and relied only on their mobile phones. Some students share their computer or laptop with their other siblings. Not all parents are able to provide a laptop for each of their children.

In terms of communication, both teachers and students were overwhelmed with emails and other messages that may have caused them anxieties. Some were unresponsive and opted to remain isolated. Though teachers exerted efforts to reach out to their students, the communications protocol of the school has not been established that made it difficult for them to answer queries most especially from parents.

On top of all these challenges in online teaching, the student welfare must be the top priority in teaching and learning. As emphasis is given to the content, the mental health of the students is equally important. Learning virtues and values such as empathy and kindness, and developing emotional intelligence are equally as important as the math and science lessons that we teach, in order for children to understand themselves, their connection to others and to the world (Jafari, 2019).

5. **Based on your experience in Term 3 online teaching, what support can the school provide to teachers for online teaching?**

Table 5. School Support to Teachers

Rank	Support
1	Provision of Technological Resources
2	Consideration for Time
3	Online Training and Workshop

With the lack of technological equipment and infrastructure at home, most teachers said that they need support for laptops, desktops, and allowance for internet connectivity. With all the adjustments that they have to do, they are asking for consideration for time particularly in accomplishing requirements. The dynamics at home may prevent them from concentrating on their teaching tasks. In order to become more adept and confident in the use of technology, they asked for provision of webinars. Technology continues to become unpredictable and developments may come anytime. Teachers also asked that communication guidelines be provided so that there will be uniformity of dissemination of information.

Teachers will need big support from the administration in doing online learning. Above the financial assistance is the moral upliftment and understanding that educational leaders must show to the teachers. Online teaching is not as easy as others may perceive. It takes the personal time and space of teachers. From grading to preparing resources, teachers invest a lot of time and energy in administrative tasks. Globally, teachers spend an average of three hours a day on work-related tasks, including marking and lesson planning. In comparison, they spend five hours per day teaching lessons. And only 34% of teachers worldwide say they currently have a good work-life balance. Similarly, support for professional development is needed. As teachers are increasingly seen as 'agents of change', schools are looking for ways to help motivate them and focus on professional development, rather than spending time on administrative tasks. Technology is being employed to streamline the day to day, so teachers can focus on their classrooms and teaching methods (Google for Education Report, 2019).

The communication between the school (administrators and teachers) with the parents is a vital factor in making education happen successfully in online learning. Collaboration between parents and teachers would not only be helpful for parents, but also be helpful for teachers to know more about the environmental conditions and the family situation where students are coming from, because most of the differences in student outcomes are actually shaped by families and not by schools (Dumont, 2019).

6. Learning Continuity Plan 2020-2021

Based on the data provided by the teachers, it laid a strong foundation in creating the Learning Continuity Plan (LCP) of the Junior High School Department of Don Bosco Technical Institute-Makati City as a response to challenges in the new normal in education. Without the inputs of the teachers particularly their experiences during the Term 3 classes, the LCP would not have been developed scientifically. It will just be superficial just like any other plan. The LCP provides a framework where it can be gleaned that it has three important elements – the learner, the school and the home. Both the school and the home support the learner, who is considered as the most important element in the teaching and learning process. Students are formed to become "Good Christians and Upright Citizens" both in school and at home, with both the Salesian educators and parents actively engaged in the fulfillment of their respective roles and responsibilities in this process. The school supervises and implements the curriculum and instruction, administers assessments, and provides spiritual formation, counseling, and Salesian assistance. Likewise, it sees to it that all learning support systems are in place most

especially its technological capability to deliver instruction and yield better results.

The support of parents is more needed in these challenging times. In the Google for Education US Edition Report 2019, it found out that globally, 25% of parents spend seven or more hours assisting children with their homework. As 'drone parents' in America become more involved in their kids' lives, they want to be involved in their schooling, too. This desire is also being expressed by teachers in the USA – 70% think that parents are not sufficiently involved in their child's education. So, there is an opportunity to create networks that allow guardians to closely engage with schooling. Research suggests that engagement between families and educators can actually improve student achievement. Messaging apps or online portals can create an ecosystem between guardians, students, and educators to highlight homework assignments, share school notifications, and help guardians understand how to support their child's progress.
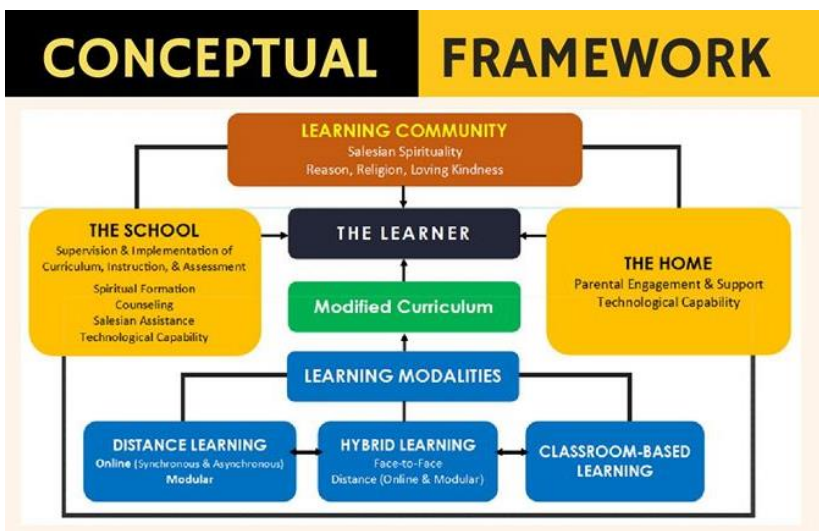
Don Bosco Technical Institute-Makati City 2020-2021

C. Conclusions

The study found out that teachers may be equipped with the knowledge and skills for online learning but without the needed support from the school administration particularly on technological resources, online learning will not be successful. Teachers need equipment that will meet the technological requirements of online teaching. Having a more stable and dependable internet connection at home will enable them to carry out more effectively and creatively online teaching and learning. In order to ensure that students are guided and accompanied in this new normal in education, communication guidelines and systems must be in place. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that online learning will become impossible if there are no technological equipment and infrastructure. Teachers have to be provided with the needed technological equipment and support by the school. A well-established communication system will enable all stakeholders to participate and support in the new mode of teaching and learning. Above all, a learning continuity plan must be in place that will guide the community in carrying out their duties and responsibilities in online learning. The new normal in education requires a strong partnership and collaboration between the school administration, students, and parents. With less supervision, the new normal in education means being more responsible, diligent, and understanding. It is a challenging situation where honesty, integrity, and charity have to be observed all the time.

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