



JOURNEY AND PITSTOPS OF ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING: ENHANCING THE LEARNING CONTINUITY PLAN FOR THE NEW NORMAL IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

Education is a physical and interactive human activity. Primarily, teachers and students meet and take part in various learning activities in school. Other educational activities are held outside the school to augment what is learned inside the school campus. When technology developed and made online education possible, it was not fully embraced because education is also a social activity. However, the Covid-19 pandemic forced everyone to do things online including education. Unprepared and untrained for this new learning modality, educators had to prepare for a short period of time. Teachers underwent training through online webinars and conferences, and learning continuity plan was developed. Online classes for academic year 2020-2021 started six months ago which revealed the strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and issues in online teaching and learning. This study aims to find out the challenges encountered by the school leaders, teachers, and academic in the implementation of the learning continuity plan for online education including the resolutions made to address the challenges. Based on the study, it was found out that formulation and implementation of new policies, technological resources and capability of teachers and students, mental health and concerns of teachers and students, communication with parents and students, and school requirements. Different resolutions were made that addressed the concerns. It also revealed that the learning continuity plan is responsive to online teaching and learning but there are components that need to be enhanced.

Keywords: Learning Continuity Plan, Online Education, Challenges In Online Learning

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid developments in technology have affected significantly the way people live globally. From economy to education, systems have to be changed to facilitate the processes leading to better and more efficient results. Communication can be done anytime, anywhere. The power of the internet has paved the way to bring people near to each other virtually. In fact, it was unimaginable that personal transactions can be done in an online modality, making the processes faster and easier.

As the Philippines begins transitioning to online transactions, there were doubts migrating to this technological system because of the unstable and poor internet connection. However, the Covid-19 pandemic forced everyone to optimize digital or online system in the way things are done. Though open education or online teaching and learning was introduced many years ago, teachers and students were not enticed to this alternative modality due to the belief that physical classes are better. Despite the problems brought by the pandemic to the education of students, the government through the Department of Education (DepEd) and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) decided that education should continue through online modality and other alternative modalities like the provision of learning package. This can be found in the Department of Education Order No. 007 s. 2020 which states that it is committed to ensure educational continuity amidst the challenges. Education must continue to give hope and stability, contribute to the normalization of activities in the country, facilitate development of our learners and bring normalcy to their lives, but health and safety of learners and school personnel are of utmost importance and must be protected at all times. The order also pointed out that 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, 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 combine face-to-face learning with distance learning. Part of the preparation for the different modalities in learning, a learning continuity plan was prepared by all private and public schools before the opening of school year 2020-2021. This is part of the DepEd Order No. 12 s. 2020 where the Basic Learning Continuity Plan stands on the principle in ensuring learning continuity through K-12 curriculum adjustments, alignment of learning materials, deployment of multiple learning delivery modalities, provision of corresponding training for teachers and school leaders, and proper orientation of parents or guardians of learners.

Initially, classes were set to open in September 2020 but the Department of Education postponed it to October 2020 due to some major concerns. But some private schools that were already prepared began school year 2020-2021 in August and September 2020. A private sectarian school in the National Capital Region in the Philippines decided to start last August 24, 2020 after all the needed preparations were done particularly a well-spelled out and data-based learning continuity plan.

As the school year progressed, the preparations paid off as the stakeholders commended the conduct of synchronous and asynchronous classes including the other activities. But there were challenges including issues and concerns that came out as shared by the stakeholders. After five months or almost two terms of classes, it is important to find out how the issues and concerns including the challenges in online teaching and learning were addressed by the management team and teachers. This study aims to enhance the learning continuity plan and in preparing the learning continuity plan for school year 2021-2022.

The following are the research questions for this study:

1. What are the challenges encountered by the school leaders and teachers in online teaching and learning?
2. How did the school leaders and teachers address and resolve the challenges in online teaching and learning?
3. Based on the findings, what components in the learning continuity plan should be sustained and enhanced ?

II. METHODOLOGY

To monitor the conduct of online teaching and learning based on the learning continuity plan of the junior high school department of a private sectarian school in the National Capital Region, Philippines, the researcher used the case study method. Case studies are a design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Creswell, 2014). For five months, the researcher observed, participated and conducted meetings, and interviewed school administrators and teachers.

The researcher, a member of the principal's council that prepared the learning continuity plan for school year 2020-2021 was also a participant in the study. For a period five months (August to December 2020), he gathered field notes through observations, and obtained data through meetings, unstructured interviews, and survey questionnaire. From the field notes and data from meetings and interviews, he analyzed the data by coding them. In coding, the researcher organizes data collected into segments and assigns a word or phrase to them as labels (Creswell, 2014). The researcher sought the permission of the principal and assistant principals before conducting the study and explained to them that its main purpose is to enhance the learning continuity plan and not to put the department in a compromising situation.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. What are the challenges encountered by the school leaders and teachers in online teaching and learning?

It was just the outset of Term 3 of academic year 2019-2020 that the lockdown was imposed by the government due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Classes were held through online modality during the remaining months of the academic year. With the declaration of the Philippine government that classes will continue in academic year 2020-2021, the school heads prepared a learning continuity plan (LCP) based on the experiences during Term 3. Orders from the Department of Education were followed and included in the LCP. Despite the preparation and anticipation of future problems, different kinds of challenges were encountered by the school heads and teachers in online teaching and learning in the first five months of academic year 2020-2021. Similarly, a study found out that significant challenges for schools and teachers to meaningfully and sustainably connect home and school learning which positions children, teachers and parents as agentic and creative in online learning (Hutchison, Paatsch, & Cloonan, 2020). They are the following :

1.1 Formulation and Implementation of New Policies

As experts have said, the way we do things in physical classes cannot be simply migrated to online classes. There are a lot of things that have to be considered. With limited interaction during synchronous classes, the type and number of requirements to be given to students had to be regulated. In Term 1, many requirements and summative tests were given which led to the late or non-submission of many students. It affected also the mental health of the students because it caused a lot of stress to them.

The conduct grading system was also changed from numerical to descriptive. The criteria had to be revised and adjusted based on the present situation. Everyone agreed that using the conduct grading system for physical classes will be difficult since there are a lot of indicators in the criteria that are unobservable. New policies had to be implemented insofar as student discipline is concerned particularly in online classroom behavior. The use of microphone, camera, chat box, and taking photos of actual classes have to be included in the policies. In terms of attendance in synchronous classes, teachers have to be more understanding since internet connection is unstable and the students' situation at home affects their focus in classes.

It was not easy to formulate new policies because everything is so fluid. Anything may happen and change because nothing is definite. As new policies have been formulated, its implementation appears to be challenging because of the limitations brought about by the online learning environment. The disruptions forced the formulation of new policies. Across the United States, state education agencies and school districts face daunting challenges and difficult decisions for restarting schools as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. As state and district leaders prepare for what schooling will look like in 2020 and beyond, there is an opportunity to identify evidence-based policies and practices that will enable them to seize this moment to rethink school in ways that can transform learning opportunities for students and teachers alike (Darling-Hammond et al, 2020).

1.2 Technological Resources and Capability of Teachers and Students

An orientation before the enrollment for academic year 2020-2021 was given to all parents in order to respond to all queries on how the new normal in education will be conducted. It was emphasized by the school leaders that online classes (synchronous and asynchronous) will be the primary learning modality. Hence, all teachers and students must have the needed technological equipment and internet connection. During Term 1 or the first three months of classes, teachers and students got disconnected unexpectedly. Some teachers and students were just using mobile phones though most of the students are using either desktop or laptop computers. There were also some who were using mobile data in order to attend classes. Such technological problems and concern as everyone adopts to online learning. Given the high rates of adoption of online learning during the COVID-19 crisis, it is likely that schools will integrate online learning to some degree in even regular school times. However, the need for well-developed IT infrastructure, and the likelihood of power and Internet outages, limits the applicability of online learning at this time for all contexts and types of emergencies (Schwartz et al, 2020).

In conducting classes, teachers had to use other online educational platforms to make teaching and learning more interesting and engaging. There were some teachers including students who are new to these emerging platforms which have become very useful. However, most have adapted since both teachers and students have been using technology extensively during physical classes. At study in teaching science in the new normal showed that Science teachers prepared well for online teaching and learning despite not

knowing the path to be traversed. They prepared professionally by attending webinars, studying various online platforms, and identifying non-negotiable competencies (Arrieta, Dancel, and Agbisit, 2020).

1.3 Mental Health Concerns of Teachers and Students

Man as a social being, relates with others in a physical manner. Its primary basis is man socializing with others in a face-to-face manner. It is a natural behavior of man to talk and touch others that lead to a more meaningful relationship. Even when technology was invented starting with the telephone and internet today, it never replaced the socio-physical dynamics of human interaction and relationship. However, the Covid-19 pandemic forced everyone to go online most especially online classes, and some serious mental health concerns emerged.

The voluminous requirements, unstable internet connection, difficulty in collaborating with classmates, lack of immediate response from teachers and classmates, and problems at home caused stress and serious anxiety among some students. A significant number of students felt isolated and became less enthusiastic in online learning.

Teachers have their own share of mental health concerns. They felt overburdened with online work and responsibility. In fulfilling their duties, they worried a lot when their internet connection became unstable because it may mean absence from teaching. As parents and caretakers in the family, they could not ignore their responsibilities as they do their work at home. It is a balancing act of doing your duties as a parent or family member and as a teacher. The pressure is higher causing a lot of physical and mental stress.

The mental health concerns of teachers and students have become a serious challenge to all academic heads. Though it was anticipated, it became more challenging and sometimes overwhelming when online classes started. Addressing mental health concerns has become a priority of the department. In a study on online learning, it shared that caution must be used in technology use in both children and adolescents. It is important to balance technology use with other activities that promote relationships, creativity and development. Excessive use can negatively impact the physical, mental, emotional and social development of youth (Halupa, 2016).

Filipino teachers are perceived to be strong mentally and emotionally. However, a study revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic indeed changed the lives of many people around the world. It created fear, trauma, depression, and anxiety to people, especially those who lost their loved ones due to the pandemic. In the context of the Philippines, Filipinos, particularly the teachers are worried about the safety of their loved ones and even their lifestyles have been affected because of the fears due to the pandemic. Though the Filipino teachers have shown a positive outlook in life amid the COVID-19 outbreak, they are still susceptible to the anxieties since the pandemic is still ongoing worldwide. These teachers though are well aware of what to do to cope with their educational, social, and personal anxieties (Talidong & Toquero, 2020).

1.4 Communication with Parents and Students

While communication is already in place insofar as face-to-face classes is concerned, this has become a

challenge to all school leaders and teachers in online classes. It was already anticipated that communication is one of the major keys in making online classes happen. After setting up the official gmail accounts of faculty and students, information was sent out to parents to get and update their existing mobile numbers and email accounts. The school updated its social media accounts but communication to parents about the schedule, and behavior and performance of students will be through the official email account of the school. Despite improving the communication system with parents and students, there were reports that parents are not receiving any information related to their children's school activities and performance. It was found out that students don't share the information to their parents who eventually failed to access their children's gmail account due to various reasons.

The partnership with parents most especially in online education is very important. Teachers seemed to have the most success by contacting students and their families personally by email, phone calls, text messages, video conferencing, etc. To ensure connection, teachers divided their list of student families and made personal contact every other week. Teachers and administrators encouraged parents to support their students' behavioral and affective engagement. If parents were unaware of student inactivity, a phone call or text message usually got them involved (Borup et al, 2020).

1.5 School Requirements

Assignments, quizzes, summative tests, and performance tasks are the normal requirements that students have to comply in physical classes. Working overnight on a certain project individually or collectively is

part of a student's life. Deadlines have to be met to avoid getting point reduction or a failure in a worse situation. Students have accepted such reality and will strive hard to accomplish the requirements. However, the normal reality in doing requirements changed when classes were conducted online. In the first three months, it seemed that the requirements were basically the same with face-to-face classes. Though the government imposed the implementation of the most essential learning competencies, the school requirements were hardly reduced. Students and parents were overwhelmed by the requirements and complained that they were not easy to accomplish. After checking the accomplishment report issued to the parents and students after Term 1, students were asked to accomplish at least thirty-five requirements in all ten subjects. It was a challenge that educators had to address immediately for it also affected the mental health of the students.

Online learning is not about requiring many performance tasks or other classroom activities for it is a different environment. In online learning, students do better when they can go at their own pace, on their own time, when they have some choice over their learning strategies, and when materials enable them to engage deeply and critically with course content (Darling-Hammond et al, 2020).

2. How did the school leaders and teachers address and resolve the challenges in online teaching ?

The challenges in online learning should be attended immediately by school leaders in collaboration with the other stakeholders. It cannot simply be ignored due to the many risks and related issues.

Addressing the challenge brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic starts with informed and vigilant stakeholders. A great deal of policies, programs, services, and projects that aim at raising awareness on sensitivity and pandemic response should be central to detailed actions related to education processes during the pandemic. Once stakeholders are aware and have accepted the reality of the current situation, the next vital step would be providing them with ideas on how they can contribute to efforts in successfully delivering education in the middle of the COVID-19 crisis (Ancho, 2020).

The following were the actions taken to address the challenges including the issues and concerns :

2.1 Formulation and Implementation of New Policies

At the beginning of the academic year, it was agreed that everyone should be open to change. There was a strong mindset that the physical classroom teaching is no different from virtual classroom teaching. Academic heads and teachers were told to relax and adjust the implementation of school policies based on what the situation calls. Academic heads in particular were told to be more observant and meet their teachers regularly to know what is happening in virtual classes.

The grading system for academic and technical subjects was adjusted. After consulting all stakeholders, it was decided that there will be no term examinations in consideration of its difficulty and being prone to cheating. Instead, it will be performance task presentation.

The conduct grading system became descriptive and the behavioral indicators were adjusted. It was presented in the management team and faculty meetings for comments and suggestions. After review and incorporating the inputs, the new

conduct grading system was implemented in Term 1. It was agreed that it will be used for the next two terms. Everyone was encouraged to send comments and suggestions for future consideration. A policy on academic ease and submission of requirements was also formulated. When students started to get overwhelmed with the many tasks to accomplish, it was brought out in the meetings and resolved that a schedule of giving and submission of requirements must be made. At the beginning of Term 2, the policy was implemented. After almost two months, the complaints decreased significantly but some teachers failed to implement strictly the policy.

In consideration of the stress brought about by online teaching and learning, it was decided that a term break will be scheduled at the end of every term or when necessary. At the end of Term 1, a one-week term break was implemented giving students to rest and teachers more time to compute the grades.

The management team can be likened to a crisis team that immediately responds to any concerns involving teachers and students. This is similar to a study that recommended the creation of a Crisis Team for Online Students. Campus leaders should invite any units that serve the online student population to brainstorm possible crisis scenarios and develop strategies to mitigate the scenarios. These units should primarily address academic issues such as enrollment, course management, instruction, and technological support. Human resources personnel could be helpful for training, communication, and assessment of crisis plans (Wang & Hutchins, 2010). They could also develop strategies for temporarily assigning staff to assist the crisis

response and offering counseling resources to personnel during the crisis. One last consideration should be to include a member of the student affairs division on the crisis team in order to support nonacademic needs such as advising, counseling, and accessing emergency funding (Holzweiss et al, 2020).

2.2 Technological Resources and Capability of Teachers and Students

With internet connection becoming the perennial problem of teachers and students, it was agreed that the academic heads must become more understanding and patient with the teachers. To resolve this concern, teachers were given the option to report to school for their online classes and internet allowance was increased. Another strategy was suggested as observed by a learning area where they attend the synchronous classes of other teachers in the area during their vacant time to assist them should any technical problem occurs. This was eventually adopted by other learning areas that have teachers with less teaching load. The other faculty and staff were also told to be on-call should any technical issues are experienced by the teachers.

On the technological capability of teachers, trainings and mentoring of expert teachers were put in place immediately. It was agreed that everyone shares their knowledge, skills, and discovery of new educational platforms that other subject areas may use for their classes. Likewise, a video editing team was created for the online activities of the department. This is to ensure that key programs can be conducted even in a virtual environment.

For the students, it was resolved that everyone must become more understanding and patient with

students on their absences and tardiness in synchronous classes due to unstable or no internet connection. However, it was emphasized that all teachers will remind regularly the students on their attendance in synchronous classes. The academic heads sent a letter to all parents reminding and reiterating the agreement on having a more stable internet connection for online learning.

A study revealed that students prefer online learning for they are able to manage the curricular programs during this pandemic. Majority of the students preferred to use smart phone for online learning. Using content analysis, students prefer recorded classes with quiz at the end of each class to improve the effectiveness of learning. The students opined that flexibility and convenience of online classes makes it attractive option, whereas broadband connectivity issues in rural areas makes it a challenge for students to make use of online learning initiatives (Muthuprasad et al, 2020).

The support for technological infrastructure for teachers is important. In fact, it is recommended telecommunications infrastructure with focus on high bandwidth connectivity has to improve. Advanced countries can help neighboring countries. Already this technology cooperation has been happening with countries like USA, China, and India assisting their neighboring countries. Online education quality must be improved and perceived as equal to traditional Face to Face (F2F) classroom-based education. This will ensure recognition of online education on par with the traditional education. Ultimately, getting credentials in any mode of education should become

indistinguishable from one another (Palvia, et al, 2018).

To strengthen teachers' technological capability, training must be accompanied by mentoring. Schools must support mentoring and new teacher roles. Policymakers and school leaders can consider new teaching roles and arrangements that support novice teachers and address the health concerns of veteran teachers. This may include veteran teachers serving as virtual mentors for colleagues and new teachers; leveraging student teachers and paraprofessionals as members of teaching teams; and utilizing technology to increase professional expertise sharing, such as by streaming lessons offered by expert teachers and providing job-embedded learning (Darling-Hammond et al, 2020).

2.3 Mental Health Concerns

Anticipating that online teaching and learning will have a significant effect primarily on the students, the office of the student affairs created an online counseling session and homeroom and guidance program to address the students' mental and psychological needs. An understanding and compassionate atmosphere was initiated to uplift and prevent the students from disobeying school policies. Resorting to giving sanctions to erring students would be the last option in instilling discipline. After almost two months of online classes, some students experienced anxiety and loneliness. A more collaborative action was taken by the office of the students affairs implementing various interventions. A weekly meeting with class advisers, and a twice-a-term grade level teachers' meeting were held to keep each other informed and have a uniform proactive action taken for the welfare

of the students. After almost two terms, there are very cases of serious misbehaviors but an alarming number of students experiencing anxiety, isolation, and online fatigue. It was resolved that the activities will continue to be carried out in order for students to feel that there is a strong support from the teachers. At the start of Term 3, a peer counseling group will start assisting students who are having difficulties coping with online learning.

The preparation and actions taken by the department is supported by the findings of a study on student's mental health concerns in online learning. The health and safety of students and staff should be the top priority. Proper counseling services should be available to support the mental health and well-being of students. Authorities should take the responsibility of ensuring food and accommodation for international students. Faculty members should embrace technology and pay careful attention to student experiences to make the learning rich and effective (Sahu, 2020). Similarly, another study emphasized that as the pandemic continues into the 2020–2021 school year, parents and children are in need of more mental health intervention to reduce mental health problems, as well as assistance in carrying out at-home educational activities. Innovative solutions that utilize telehealth as well as partnerships with community-based organizations may help to meet these challenges (Lee et al, 2021).

To attend to the mental health needs of the teachers, the guidance counselors expressed their commitment to assist the teachers with the help of the academic heads. It was resolved that part of the learning area meeting is having an

informal talk with the teachers. Teachers were also provided formation sessions on mental health facilitated by the guidance counselors. More formation sessions including informal ones will be conducted in the upcoming months. This is supported by a recommendation in a study conducted on teachers' wellness. It emphasized the need to target multiple components of wellness rather than just one or two components (e.g., physical health, mindfulness and stress reduction, positive behavior change, health education trainings). The wellness program must be incorporated into the structure and the culture of the work environment by allowing employees time to participate in the wellness program (e.g., have wellness activity as part of already scheduled faculty meetings, integrate stress management practice into morning announcements that can be heard by students and staff). There should also be an open and frequent communication between teachers and administrative staff to problem solve how to address and help reduce the stress experienced by school staff. Moreover, it is important to be mindful of the periods of increased stress for teachers (e.g., time leading up to standardized testing, the weeks leading up to a school vacation) when wellness program activities may be particularly needed. The staff, student, family, and community wellness strategies and supports, when possible, should be integrated to promote overall well-being in the school setting. (Lever, Mathis, & Mayworm, 2017). If teachers are not mentally, physically, and emotionally healthy, it will also affect their students. In a study, associations were found

between teacher wellbeing and student wellbeing and psychological distress. There were also an association between teacher depression and student wellbeing. Both may be partially explained by teacher presenteeism and quality of teacher-student relationships. (Harding et al, 2019).

2.4 Communication with Parents and Students

The partnership with parents in online learning is considered a priority by everyone. Despite establishing a communication system with the parents particularly in the use of the institutional email, activation of homeroom officers, directory, and social media sites, there were still complaints that information and other reports on student performance and activities were not reaching them. The homeroom officers were tapped to reinforce the communication system by establishing a viber group, update of telephone directory, and strong reminders to all parents in asking for updates from their children. Through the class advisers and virtual morning assembly, students are reminded of their activities and requirements. Parents can view the announcements from the official facebook page of the school. With less complaints from parents, it was resolved that all stakeholders will continue observing the communication system.

This is in line with the recommendation that a policy on communication must be in place for online education. Schools should formulate a holistic policy to address parents' concerns responsively and proactively to gain support. Schools can enhance parents' pedagogical understanding of e-learning and address parental concerns through school-parent communication and

peer support among parents (Siu-Cheung Kong, 2018).

Likewise, it is imperative in online learning to strengthen partnerships with families. Out of necessity during school closures, many schools and districts have found new strategies and routines for connecting with families that should not be lost with reopening but rather should become part of the core approach to education. Virtual home visits are one of the many strategies that schools can use to build relational trust and make families feel welcome (Darling-Hammond et al, 2020).

2.5 School Requirements

The unintentional giving of many school requirements caused mental stress, online fatigue, and anxiety to students. Though the mindset is online teaching and learning, it was not easy to depart from physical classroom activities. Unconsciously, teachers gave requirements in online classes that is quite similar to face-to-face classes. Based on observations, complaints, and recommendations, several meetings were called to discuss the issues on school requirements. A resolution was made which is to lessen the number of requirements per subject and schedule the giving and submission assignments and other tasks. Called as academic ease, fewer complaints were heard from parents and students in Term 2 since its implementation. For Term 3, it is expected that integrating activities will be conducted by level where three or four subjects will give one requirement.

The giving of requirements and other activities must be carefully planned most especially in an online modality. Delivering instruction online and ensuring your students have a high-quality and effective

learning experience—whether through an intentional choice to develop an online course, or because of an emergent situation—is a process that requires thoughtful design based on evidence-based best practices and proven strategies (O’Keefe et al, 2020).

3. Based on the findings, what components in the learning continuity plan should be sustained and enhanced ?

The data obtained in the study show that all components in the learning continuity plan will be sustained but with some areas that need more enhancement.

a. Rationale and Framework

The rationale and framework remain to be very significant and responsive to the needs of the teachers and students for online teaching and learning. Regardless of the learning modality, the learner must be formed holistically. The framework anticipates the conduct of face-to-face classes which may not happen this academic year but with a big possibility of having it next school year either in Term 2 or 3. This should be sustained and communicated to all stakeholders before the end of academic year 2020-2021.

The communication system will be sustained based on what is presently done. Any new platforms for communication may be included in the learning continuity plan for academic year 2021-2022.

b. Academic and Technical Programs

The synchronous and asynchronous classes have been very helpful in making education happen this academic year despite the limitations caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The number of class hours and screen break are responsive to health standards based on scientific studies. The bridging program which was conducted two weeks before the opening of classes proved to be an

excellent preparation for the actual online classes. It may be conducted again provided that the program should be based on the evaluation of the learning continuity plan.

With the experiences in academic year 2020-2021, the academic and technical programs can be enhanced by including the policies on grading system, assignments, summative tests, and performance tasks which have been formulated during Term 1 and 2. The curriculum must also be reviewed as a response to the implementation of the most essential learning competencies (MELCs). Likewise, different learning areas may plan for integrating activities that will lessen the number of performance tasks of students.

c. Student Affairs Program

The online student activity, guidance, and intervention programs should be sustained. The student activities are creative, interesting, and meaningful. The collaborative work of the academic heads, class advisers, teachers, and guidance counselors on student's performance and behavior led to minimal disobedience of school policies, and provided appropriate interventions to students experiencing mental health concerns, unstable internet connection, absence from synchronous classes, and failure to submit requirements. Since a new conduct grading system has been formulated including some online policies, these may be reviewed and included in the learning continuity plan for academic year 2021-2022. The guidance program will also be reviewed and revised based on the experiences in academic year 2020-2021.

d. Pastoral Program

The pastoral program will be sustained but will be reviewed for possible new pastoral activities. The Christian Living program has been responsive to

the spiritual and moral needs of the students in the online modality.

e. Faculty Development Program

Prior to the beginning of academic year 2020-2021, the teachers and staff were provided trainings on the use of technology for online teaching and learning. As the school year progressed, formation sessions on spirituality, mental health, and research were given to teachers to provide balance in online engagement. The formation sessions should be sustained but more trainings should be provided to teachers on pedagogy and practice in online modality. Other technological and financial support should be continued to be provided to all teachers.

With the possibility of online teaching and learning as the modality for academic year 2021-2022, it is suggested that a handbook be developed containing the rationale, framework, programs, and online policies.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study found out that formulation and implementation of new policies, technological resources and capability of teachers and students, mental health concerns, communication with parents and students, and school requirements are the challenges encountered in online teaching and learning. These challenges were addressed through meetings and collaboration. Resolutions were made and appropriate actions were taken. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that despite the planning and preparations, unexpected challenges including issues and concerns emerged. It is expected that new policies and programs will be formulated and implemented immediately. Another point is online learning may cause more mental health concerns since the students are practically at home with a strong feeling of isolation. Communication system plays a vital role in ensuring that online teaching and learning takes place more effectively. Education

whether physical or virtual is a partnership between the school and the home. It can also be concluded that regular communication among academic heads and teachers to discuss the challenges will result to appropriate resolutions. The implementation of the resolutions led to an improved online teaching and learning. In particular, better policies and interventions were formulated and implemented leading to an improved performance and behavior of students. The learning continuity plan is responsive to the needs in online teaching and learning. However, there are components that need to be enhanced. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the learning continuity plan should be enhanced in preparation for the next academic year whether it will still be online modality or blended learning.

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