

Implementation of Learning Continuity Plan in School Management of Private Schools: Basis for Action Plan

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Abstract

The researcher conducted this study to evaluate and explore the difficulties faced by the private school sector in the division of Tarlac Province as a result of the pandemic Covid-19. This pandemic has indeed posed challenges for schools, especially since the government announced and ordered that face-to-face sessions for the 2020-2021 school year would not begin until the COVID-19 vaccine was available. As a result of the economic downturn, there was a significant drop in enrollment in private schools, as parents who could afford the private schools' exorbitant fees lost their jobs during the pandemic. Furthermore, the abrupt transition in learning and teaching mode imposed significant burden and expectations on school principals, teachers, and students. All private schools in the division of Tarlac Province were asked to comply with all government criteria for the school year 2020-2021 if they wanted to continue teaching and continue to operate. Because of the compliance and quick implementation and strict requirements, the LCP and health procedures imposed additional burdens. Despite the fact that instructions were provided on how private schools can prepare all the requirements for the start of classes, the process of the documentation itself is difficult and must be completed quickly. Finally, the research was to prepare private schools in the event of another disaster, such as a pandemic, by a proposed action plan ensuring that no private schools are forced to close and stop providing quality education to children.

Keywords: private school institutions, learning continuity plan, covid-19, compliance

Introduction

Since its outbreak three years ago, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused widespread disruption in educational systems around the world, with the most vulnerable student bearing the brunt of the impact. Increasing inequality and exacerbating an already-existing education problem are the results of this policy. From no closures in some nations to closures lasting more than a whole school year in others, school closures have varied widely around the world.

There is a significant risk of effective continuity of learning for learners as a result of these disruptions in the education market. Evidence from previous crises and recent reports strongly suggests that enrollment among private schools will decline significantly, with some students choosing to migrate to public schools. A significant strain will be placed on the existing capacity in public schools as a result of the migration of students from private to public schools. Due to a number of underlying factors, private schools are for sure more sensitive and vulnerable to shocks. Education policy responses must ensure that

all students who attended private institutions prior to COVID-19 are able to return to school and complete their educational programs. In contrast, temporary relief will not address the underlying problems that make private schools vulnerable to shocks in the first place. Consequently, 'building back better' must address resilience, quality, and governance in the private education sector in the medium to long term, in addition to public education.

The DepEd demands that all private school sectors adhere to all applicable government regulations in order to continue teaching and learning throughout the current school year. The Learning Continuity Plan alongside the safety rules and health imposes significant burdens due to prompt implementation and strict compliance. Though the Department of Education provided recommendations on how to compile all of the necessary documents for the start of school year, the paperwork process is a lengthy one that may be accomplished in no time. Thus, private schools now face a greater struggle.

It is undeniable that private schools differ from public schools in several ways. Each group has its own space, set of rules, and set of facilities. Private schools throughout the country are capable of upgrading their facilities to ensure the safe return of students to their respective institutions. For the time being, however, private schools will continue to rely on online remote learning because there is currently no policy in place that allows us to provide our parents with the option of [face-to-face classes], and because the guidelines for private schools will be included in the policy guidelines that will be presented by the Department of Education. School reopening needs and restrictions are outlined in the memorandum, which includes the availability of facilities, transmission rate, and sufficient space for holding lessons while maintaining social distance. According to this order, the Department of Education (DepEd) issued department order numbers 007, 12, 13, and 14 series of 2020, instructing that all basic education schools shall develop their individual learning continuity plans (LCPs) as well as health and safety protocols in order to adapt to the new normal in education. The time has come for new developments and the implementation of new normal educational systems and assessment methods. According to Pokhrel & Chhetri (2021) because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we now have the chance to pursue digital learning. This and future events like pandemics will benefit from more research into the short and long-term effects of the closures of schools and of course the reopening of schools during COVID-19. (Viner, Bonell, Drake, Jourdan, Davies, Baltag, Jerrim, Proimos, & Darzi, 2020).

The existing scenario serves as a starting point for conducting research on the subject because there are just a few studies on the subject. With no bridging programs, children are forced to switch from face-to-face schooling to e-learning without any preparation. Considering that experience is indeed the best teacher, the researcher advises that comprehensive research of learning continuity plan for students and teachers alike in private elementary schools be conducted.

Objectives of the study

This study aimed to analyze the implementation of a learning continuity plan in school management of the private schools at Tarlac Province.

Specifically, this study has answered the following:

1. Description of learning continuity plan as described by the school heads, teachers, and parents based on the following feature:
 - 1.1. Health and well-being;
 - 1.2. Curriculum adjustments; and
 - 1.3 Safety and security;

2. Implementation of Learning Continuity Plan in terms of:
 - 2.1. Learning Environment;
 - 2.2. Instructional Leadership; and
 - 2.3. School Leadership Management and Operation;
3. To identify the problems met by the school heads during implementation of the Learning Continuity Plan.
4. To define the plan of action that can be proposed based on the findings of the study.
5. To analyze the implication of the findings of the study to educational management.

Methodology

Based on the study, a quantitative study specifically a descriptive study was conducted. As for this study conducted by the researcher, she used the descriptive method of quantitative research specifically a survey which describes the characteristics of the school heads, teachers, and parents involved. This kind of descriptive method aimed to describe the implementation of the learning continuity plan as described by the school heads, teachers, and parents on the following: Protecting the health of school staff, teachers, and students, maintaining the learning continuity plan by aligning the school curriculum from K to 12 by using different delivery methods, and training teachers and school heads, and making sure the safe return of non-teaching personnel, teachers, and students to work and for the school to take into account the scenarios as seen by the Department of Health (DOH) and the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases in the Philippines (IATF), and of course the other credible sources as well, and the risk assessments made by the DepEd themselves. Furthermore, this study will also describe how school heads of private sector of the division of Tarlac Province implement Learning Continuity Plan.

Results and Discussion

1. Description of LCP in terms of Health and Wellbeing

Table 1 presents the description of Learning Continuity Plan in terms of “Health and Well-being” strand as perceived by the school heads, teachers, and parents.

Looking extensively, the school heads described the Health and wellbeing strand of private schools’ learning continuity plan as *Outstanding* with a grand weighted mean of 4.86. It could be said that the plan on reducing the impact of COVID-19 on the learners’ and school staff’ health and well-being was greatly emphasized as perceived by the principals. Similarly, on this strand, the teachers accumulated a grand weighted mean of 4.85 with a verbal description of *Outstanding*. The teachers’ perception on private schools’ learning continuity plan in terms of health and well-being was highly eminent. On the other hand, the parents expressed that health and wellbeing strand needs to be strengthened despite having a weighted mean of 4.46 and a verbal description of *Very Satisfactory*.

Table 1
Description of Learning Continuity Plan in terms of Health and Wellbeing

Strand 1:						
Health And Well-Being	School Heads		Teachers		Parents	
Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
There is a collaboration with school authorities and local municipality to ensure COVID surveillance in schools in accordance with DOH and IATF	4.84	Outstanding	4.86	Outstanding	4.49	Very Satisfactory
The school response protocols are in accordance with the public health department recommendations on national/local policies and guidelines.	4.90	Outstanding	4.86	Outstanding	4.45	Very Satisfactory
There is a support that sustains critical needs, including school feeding and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities; and sustain essential equipment (soap, alcohol-based hand rub, masks, etc. to ensure they are available for school staff, students, and parents.	4.82	Outstanding	4.84	Outstanding	4.52	Outstanding
The school ensures that WASH facilities are operational in every corner in accordance with DOH (soap, alcohol-based hand rub, hand washing station, including cleaning and disinfectant supplies	4.92	Outstanding	4.87	Outstanding	4.47	Very Satisfactory
The school head encourage children to ask questions express their feelings with you and their teachers. Remember that your child may have different reactions to stress; be patient and understanding.	4.92	Outstanding	4.83	Outstanding	4.43	Very Satisfactory
There is a coordination with the school to receive information and ask how to support school safety efforts(through parent-teacher committees)	4.84	Outstanding	4.86	Outstanding	4.42	Very Satisfactory
Open hotlines or social media outlets to support the mental health of school staff and students.	4.80	Outstanding	4.83	Outstanding	4.45	Very Satisfactory
Grand Mean	4.86	Outstanding	4.85	Outstanding	4.46	Very Satisfactory

2. Description of LCP in terms of Curriculum Adjustment

To conclude with this strand, the description of private schools’ learning continuity plan in terms of curriculum adjustment accumulated grand weighted means of 3.83, 4.49, and 4.29 from the school heads, teachers and parents, respectively. This aligned *Very Satisfactory* description inferred as private schools’ curricular adjustments tend to have exceeded the expectations of the school heads, teachers and parents. However, going above and beyond the expectations is important in point of time. It requires an extensive exploration on the needs of a more responsive curriculum that is contextualized and innovative.

Table 2
Description of Learning Continuity Plan in terms Curriculum Adjustments

Strand 2:						
Curriculum Adjustment	School Heads		Teachers		Parents	
Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
Readiness of principals/ school heads to lead and manage multiple learning delivery modalities.	4.20	Outstanding	4.60	Outstanding	4.40	Very Satisfactory
Availability of learning resources/ materials: textbook/modules; offline learning resources; online learning resources.	4.00	Very Satisfactory	4.60	Outstanding	4.60	Outstanding
Curriculum is appropriately designed for the level of the course.	3.80	Very Satisfactory	4.60	Outstanding	4.00	Outstanding
Learning competencies are specific, measurable, attainable, result oriented, and time bounded.	4.00	Very Satisfactory	4.60	Outstanding	4.00	Very Satisfactory
Learning competencies are designed to observe efficiency in the development of learning resources, which include but are not limited to SLMs, textbooks, teacher's guides, activity.	3.40	Satisfactory	4.00	Very Satisfactory	3.95	Very Satisfactory
Learning competencies in each learning area are all interrelated and anchored on the content and performance standards that allow teachers to effectively design instructional resources without veering away from the standards prescribed by the curriculum.	3.80	Very Satisfactory	4.20	Very Satisfactory	4.60	Outstanding
Lessons are designed to help learners meet the learning objectives.	3.60	Very Satisfactory	4.80	Outstanding	4.40	Very Satisfactory
Grand Mean	3.83	Very Satisfactory	4.49	Very Satisfactory	4.29	Very Satisfactory

3. Description of LCP in terms of Safety and Security

Table 3
Description of Learning Continuity Plan in terms of Safety and Security

Strand 3:						
Safety And Security	School Heads		Teachers		Parents	
Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
Local Authorities examine and update disease outbreak policies for schools and maintain vital health services during school closure.	4.80	Outstanding	4.86	Outstanding	4.52	Outstanding
Standard operating procedures and back-up plans are available to help schools get their WASH services back up and running if they have to close.	4.82	Outstanding	4.86	Outstanding	4.55	Outstanding
An emergency response team is formed to coordinate disease outbreak contingency plans at the national, subnational, local and school authority level	4.82	Outstanding	4.84	Outstanding	4.43	Very Satisfactory
Instruct maintenance staff to recognize the school layout including classrooms, to enable physical distancing and hygiene measures based on the guidelines.	4.88	Outstanding	4.85	Outstanding	4.39	Very Satisfactory
Conduct regular health education and sessions to promote healthy and protective behaviors, and to address and counter rumors and false and misleading information, as well as COVID-19-related stigma.	4.86	Outstanding	4.90	Outstanding	4.44	Very Satisfactory
Grand Mean	4.84	Outstanding	4.85	Outstanding	4.47	Very Satisfactory

In general, the description of learning continuity plan of private schools in Tarlac Province, in terms of safety and security, accumulated grand weighted means of 4.84 (Outstanding), 4.85 (Outstanding) and 4.47 (Very Satisfactory) from the school heads, teachers and parents, respectively. Apparently, the school heads and teachers’ rating conformed with each other and there was a deviation with the rating of the parents. This could mean that when it comes to safety and security, the school heads and teachers recognized that school plans are excellent enough, but parents see more things that needs to be polished.

4. Implementation of LCP in terms of Learning Environment

Table 4
Implementation of Learning Continuity Plan in terms of Learning Environment

Strand 1:						
Learning Environment	School Heads		Teachers		Parents	
Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
The school has an educational platform or Learning Management System (LMS), either subscription- based or locally developed.	4.90	Fully Implemented	4.87	Fully Implemented	4.60	Fully Implemented
The school has the technical expertise to run and support the educational platform 24/7. Technical expertise can be in-house OR outsourced OR a combination, depending on the nature of the deployment.	4.82	Fully Implemented	4.85	Fully Implemented	4.63	Fully Implemented
The school has email facility or domain name for all teachers, students, and users. Note: The school can outsource.	4.86	Fully Implemented	4.82	Fully Implemented	4.48	Implemented
The school has helpdesk personnel working under the platform managers whose main task will be to directly answer usage queries of both teachers and students.	4.89	Fully Implemented	4.82	Fully Implemented	4.41	Implemented
The school exemplify practices in providing support for the school/learning department’s continuity plan.	4.90	Fully Implemented	4.80	Fully Implemented	4.41	Implemented
The school demonstrate exceptional leadership abilities by implementing learning continuity plan strategies to assist students.	4.92	Fully Implemented	4.84	Fully Implemented	4.33	Implemented
Learning modules in various formats are available	4.92	Fully Implemented	4.81	Fully Implemented	4.38	Implemented
Learners and teacher can receive mental and psychosocial support.	4.86	Fully Implemented	4.71	Fully Implemented	4.37	Implemented
Grand Mean	4.87	Fully Implemented	4.82	Fully Implemented	4.45	Fully Implemented

Table 4 shows the description of the implementation of Learning Continuity Plan in terms of learning environment as claimed by the school heads, teachers and parents.

It is conclusive that among the three group of raters, the school heads rated this indicator the highest with a grand weighted mean of 4.87 (*Fully Implemented*), followed by the teachers and parents with grand weighted means of 4.82 (*Fully Implemented*) and 4.45 (*Implemented*), respectively. With this result, the school heads and teachers had observed a fully implementation of the learning continuity plan of private schools in terms of learning environment strand. Also, the parents had observed the implementation but not with the same extent from the school heads and teachers. It is worthy to mention that learning continuity plans related to learning environment has transpired on the private schools of Tarlac Province as it is a key component of teaching and learning process.

5. Implementation of LCP in terms of Instructional Leadership

Table 5
Implementation of Learning Continuity Plan in terms of Instructional Leadership

Strand 2:						
Instructional Leadership	School Heads		Teachers		Parents	
Indicator	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
Encourages teachers to attend professional development courses, seminars, and training.	3.80	Implemented	4.82	Fully Implemented	4.00	Implemented
Facilitates professional development activities and encourages teachers to take chances for innovation in their classroom.	4.20	Implemented	4.80	Fully Implemented	3.82	Implemented
Encourages and helps teachers to enhance their teaching approaches, resulting to higher student accomplishment.	4.00	Implemented	4.80	Fully Implemented	4.20	Implemented
Provides coaching and mentorship for the teachers in school that will enhance teachers' performance	4.35	Implemented	4.40	Implemented	4.40	Implemented
Ensures that teachers have what they need to achieve the best possible job for students	4.20	Implemented	4.60	Fully Implemented	3.80	Implemented
Supports teachers by providing them with the appropriate resources, material and otherwise.	4.20	Implemented	4.37	Implemented	4.40	Implemented
Keeps informed of new developments in effective instruction, assessment, and curriculum	4.40	Implemented	4.40	Implemented	4.20	Implemented
Grand Mean	4.17	Implemented	4.60	Fully Implemented	4.11	Implemented

Table 5 presents the description of the implementation of Learning Continuity Plan in terms of instructional leadership as perceived by the school heads, teachers and parents.

Cross examining the result of the description of implementation of learning continuity plan of private schools, the school heads and parents claimed that instructional leadership strand were *Implemented* with grand weighted means of 4.17 and 4.11, respectively. This concurrence suggests that necessary efforts, in the eyes of school heads and parents, in terms of instructional leadership, were put into action. However, this is still an opportunity that they don't want to miss, basically, it could still be improved. On the other hand, the teachers have rated this strand a grand weighted mean of 4.60 (*Fully Implemented*). This is a manifestation that the plan of the private schools related to instructional leadership have all been completely fulfilled.

6. Implementation of LCP in terms of Leadership Management and Operations

In terms of indicator seven, the teachers believed that their school with the leadership of their school heads *Fully Implemented* this indicator with weighted mean of 4.80, the highest weighted mean in this strand. Some school heads believe that, while they meet the requirements, there is still room for improvement, particularly in terms of student and teacher health and safety. According to some of the school heads interviewed by the researcher, due to the pandemic, they need to reallocate some of the school's budget from PAPs to other materials such as the thermal scanner in the entrance and exit gate, alcohol dispenser in school gates, and the availability of more handwashing stations.

Table 6
Implementation of Learning Continuity Plan in terms of Leadership Management and Operations

Strand 3:						
Leadership Management and Operations	School Heads		Teachers		Parents	
Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description	Weighted Mean	Verbal Description
Developing a strategic plan for the school, in consultation with the teachers or boards, including the preparation of a staffing and resource plan.	4.40	Implemented	4.20	Implemented	4.40	Implemented
Reviewing the performance of the school in terms of its objectives as stated in its strategic plan and in its staffing and resource plan.	4.20	Implemented	3.80	Implemented	4.60	Fully Implemented
Managing and monitoring of implementation of the resource allocation process within the school.	4.00	Implemented	4.00	Implemented	4.00	Implemented
Creating a supportive working environment for all staff in the school and fostering their career development.	4.40	Implemented	4.20	Implemented	4.00	Implemented
Having overall responsibility for the management of school's program of teaching and the implementation of the school's academic policy.	4.60	Fully Implemented	3.80	Implemented	4.00	Implemented
Ensuring the effective operation of the school in accordance with approved governance procedures.	4.40	Implemented	4.60	Fully Implemented	4.60	Fully Implemented
Having overall responsibility for ensuring that the school's arrangements comply with legal requirements and related policies such as health and safety, data protection and data retention policy, freedom of information.	4.40	Implemented	4.80	Fully Implemented	4.40	Implemented
Grand Mean	4.34	Implemented	4.20	Implemented	4.29	Implemented

Finally, it can be noted on the grand means (4.34; 4.20; 4.29) presented in the table that the school heads, teachers, and parents believed that the school implemented the Learning Continuity Plan in terms of leadership management and operations.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The school heads rated the health and wellbeing component of the private schools' learning continuity plan as outstanding. According to the perceptions of the principals, the plan for mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on the health and well-being of students and school personnel was heavily emphasized. Similarly, the teachers' overall weighted mean for this component was outstanding. In terms of health and well-being, the teachers' perception of the private schools' learning continuity plan was of the highest caliber. The parents stated that the health and wellbeing component needs to be strengthened.
2. The description of the private schools' learning continuity plan in terms of curriculum adjustment has an aligned and very satisfactory description that infers that the curricular adjustments of private schools have typically exceeded the expectations of school heads, teachers, and parents. Nonetheless, going above and beyond expectations is essential at times. It requires an intensive investigation into the requirements for a contextualized and innovative curriculum that is more responsive.

3. In terms of safety and security, the description of the learning continuity plan of private schools in Tarlac Province was outstanding from school heads and teachers and very satisfactory rating from the parents respectively. Apparently, the ratings of school heads and teachers were consistent, whereas the ratings of parents diverged. This may indicate that school heads and teachers recognize that their school's safety and security plans are adequate, but parents see additional areas for improvement.
4. It is conclusive that school heads and teachers observed a complete implementation of the private schools' learning continuity plan's learning environment strand. In addition, parents had witnessed the implementation, but not to the same extent as school heads and teachers. As an essential element of the teaching and learning process, it is noteworthy that private schools in Tarlac Province have implemented learning continuity plans pertaining to the learning environment.
5. Cross-examining the results of the description of the implementation of the learning continuity plan in private schools, school heads and parents reported that the instructional leadership strand had been Implemented. This indicates that, in the eyes of school heads and parents, the necessary instructional leadership efforts have been implemented. Nonetheless, this is an opportunity they do not wish to miss, and it could still be enhanced. In contrast, teachers have given this strand as Fully Implemented. This is evidence that the private schools' instructional leadership plan has been executed in its entirety.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were drawn:

1. The school may provide technicality training, seminars, or programs for school leaders and teachers on developing advancement in technicality ways to lead and manage the school and virtual classrooms.
2. Schools can work with stakeholders such as telecommunication companies to provide students with sim cards, devices, Wi-Fi, or mobile hotspots for online learning.
3. Schools may provide IT staff to answer technical questions from the stakeholders. The school may also provide answers to frequently ask questions on Facebook page of the school.
4. The school may collaborate with local agencies to ask for donation for regular covid testing of non-vaccinated teachers and staff in preparation for the face-to-face classes.
5. The school can conduct fund raising events such as mask selling or virtual talent show to boost the implementation and improvement of the LCP.
6. The school may promote teamwork activities among students to put emphasis on emotional connection and camaraderie despite of the distance in the virtual classroom
7. The school administration should conduct an intense orientation to parents about the Learning Continuity Plan before the start of school.
8. Future researchers may conduct the implementation of Learning Continuity Plan in public schools in Tarlac Province.
9. The school may promote Smart Space among students to reduce distraction, provide security and privacy, and a joyful experience of learning.

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