



PROMOTING LEARNING AMIDST PANDEMIC

A Thematic Content Analysis on the Curriculum Management Aspect of the Department of Education of the Philippines' Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan (BE-LCP)

ROCKY NIÑO L. MANIRE

The Graduate School, University of Santo Tomas, España Boulevard, Sampaloc 1015 Manila, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the basic education system in the Philippines. As a response, the Department of Education devised a Learning Continuity Plan to carry on with the learning process. This paper deals with the uncovering of the curriculum management aspect of the Department of Education of the Philippines' BE-LCP through thematic content analysis. Findings revealed the four phases of the curriculum management of BE-LCP anchored in the adjustments made in the aspects of learning; these are: 1) Correcting Phase (Learning Content); 2) Connecting Phase (Learning Delivery); 3) Coping Phase (Learning Management), and 4) Collecting Phase (Learning Assessment). Further empirical research on the impact of the BE-LCP implementation in Public Basic Education Institutions across the Philippines is recommended.

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Introduction

Since the first infection of the SARS-Cov-2 was transmitted in Wuhan, China, this disease caused by the novel coronavirus created an uproar to the whole world and developed into the now known COVID-19 pandemic. After a year, this disease is still prevalent today, infecting various countries while struggling to find ways and means on how to eradicate the disease and flatten the curve of infections (Guo, et al., 2020; Tria, 2020). While the hope of developing vaccines and medicines are nearly at hand, the fear that it has instilled in people has resulted in widespread disruption such as global economic recession (Fernandes, 2020), the proliferation of disinformation and conspiracy theories through various social media platforms (Enitan, et al., 2020), unprecedented changes in curriculum and instruction (Mukhopadhyay & Mukhopadhyay, 2020), and shutting down of buildings which involved schools, universities and many other educational institutions (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020) among others. Despite the continuous efforts of the Philippine Government to eradicate the disease, those who are infected by COVID-19 in the country continue to rise because of the increasing number of cases with an average of 1200 cases per day. As of writing, the COVID-19 cases in the Philippines registered an overwhelming number of 434, 357 cases, of which 399,005 have recovered. Aside from this fact, the Department of Health confirmed that they have registered 8,436 deaths since the spread of this disease in the country, while 26, 916 cases are still classified as active (Department of Health, 2020).

Disruption to Philippine Education

Apparently, due to the disruptions brought about by COVID-19 in the education sector, most education systems around the world were caught unprepared for the big leap to digital learning opportunities (Petrie, et al., 2020). In fact, this problem has been encountered by several countries in which educational systems were put to test due to the global pandemic (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Di Pietro, et al., 2020; Garcia & Weiss, 2020; Holotescu, et al., 2020). Moreover, despite the fact that online learning has become

integral in the educational system, (Duraku & Hoxha, 2020), approaches to the utilization of technology and digital tools still depend on the capacity of localities that can only employ available means of instructional delivery involved in implementing remote strategies to adhere to the preventive measures against the COVID-19. It is also notable to emphasize that the impact of COVID-19 on learners, teachers, parents, and guardians is immense; they face a much bigger problem ahead of them and are confronted with several issues as they continue to engage themselves in the learning process, especially those who cannot afford to study on their own because of several personal-related issues (Reimers & Schleider, 2020). Just like any other country confronted with this herculean challenge, the landscape of Philippine Education greatly suffered. Several schools closed permanently and stop their operations because of the impact of COVID-19 on student enrollment. Moreover, several private basic educational institutions cannot cope with the demands of learning in the new normal set-up.

Department of Education's Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan

Be that as it may, education must continue its process for the future of the country. Notwithstanding the threat that COVID-19 may cause, and as this global pandemic continues to disrupt the balance of the educational system in the Philippines, the Department of Education bravely came up with a solution to continue the learning process among learners for the school year 2020-2021. Moreover, the Department of Education Secretary Leonor Briones assured the general public that the basic education is now ready for the upcoming school year 2020-2021, and the opening of classes will resume on August 24, 2020 (Hernando-Malipot, 2020), but was moved to a later date because of some technical problems encountered during the implementation of blended learning modality and due to the deferment from the President himself to postpone the opening of classes in order 'to provide relief to the logistical limitations faced by the areas placed under MECQ and to fill in the remaining gaps of the school opening' (Santos, 2020). Despite the tremendous uproar of several rights group and

activists who seek to implement an academic freeze for this school year (Hernando-Malipot, 2020; Santos, 2020), the Department of Education gave an assurance to the general public that utmost precautionary measures, as well as safety and health protocols aligned with the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF), were all considered in coming up with this big decision.

Through the Department Order No. 12, series of 2020, the Department of Education implemented the drafted Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for the school year 2020-2021 which aims to carry on with the learning process among students while taking into serious consideration all the implemented precautionary measures and safety protocols from the government. This initiative is a response to the call of ensuring the continuity of “quality education for all” (Petrie, et al., 2020) in the Philippines while the national government continues its efforts in battling and containing the spread of the virus. Arrieta (2020) added that having a learning continuity plan will serve as a guiding principle for the academic community in carrying out their obligations and commitments in providing a conducive online learning environment to the learners. Furthermore, the Department of Education emphasized that the adoption of this learning continuity plan ensures the progression of learning while espousing the protection and safety of its stakeholders through the adjustments made in the K-12 curriculum, and delivering these learning competencies using available means of learning and instructional modalities (Department of Education, 2020a, par. 3).

While several international and local researchers have focused on the effects and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic to curriculum and instruction (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2020; Nazri, et al., 2020; Tria, 2020), the implications of the use of social media as a means of teaching instruction (De Vera, 2020; Toquero & Talidong, 2020), the implementation of Emergency Remote Teaching during Pandemic (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020; Hodges, et al., 2020; Holutescu, et al., 2020), curriculum flexibility in the blended learning environment (Jonker, Voogt & Marz, 2020), teacher preparation, challenges

and coping mechanism (De Villa & Manalo, 2020; Lansangan & Gonzales, 2020) continuity of teaching and learning in the online environment (Schwartz, et al., 2020; Yuriivna, 2020) and flexible learning options in the time of pandemic (Fontanos, et al., 2020) among many others, very few researches focused on learning continuity plans (Ancheta & Ancheta, 2020; Arrieta, 2020; Schwartz, et al., 2020). As a matter of fact, the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for the public basic education program of the Department of Education of the Philippines has not yet been researched comprehensively. Moreover, no research was found focusing on and discussing the curriculum management aspect of BE-LCP in the public education program. Thus, the researcher perceived that the need to typify the curriculum management aspect of the BE-LCP in the public education program is necessary in order to understand thoroughly the Department of Education’s decision in adopting the said initiative. Hence, this paper aims to find an answer to this research question: What characterizes the curriculum management aspects of the Department of Education’s BE-LCP in the public basic education program as disclosed by a select number of department orders discussing the said initiative?

Objectives of the study

This study was conducted to uncover the aspects of curriculum management of the Department of Education’s BE-LCP for the public education program. Specifically, this qualitative research sought to realize the following objectives: 1) To analyze a select number of department orders discussing the curriculum adjustments made by the Department of Education to adapt to the new normal education brought about by COVID-19; 2) To determine the curriculum management aspect of the BE-LCP found in the documents; and 3) To determine the implications of these aspects to the educative process in the public education program.

Research method

Corpus of Data, Data Collection Procedure, Ethical Consideration

Driven by the purpose of uncovering the curriculum management aspect of the BE-LCP, this qualitative paper was carried out in an unobtrusive way of data collection. An unobtrusive strategy is a nonparticipant observation technique of doing qualitative research. It refers to methods of data collection that do not necessarily involve the direct participation of subjects under study (Luo, 2020). Additionally, unobtrusive research may include recorded shows, printed papers, documents found online, and the likes. In this investigation, the richness and thickness of descriptions were helmed based on a select number of department orders which focused on the curriculum adjustments made through the BE-LCP of the Public Basic Education program. The following inclusions were considered for this investigation: 1) The department order must have been released from the beginning of the

Community Quarantine in the Philippines (March 15, 2020) until October 5, 2020; 2) The title of the department order must contain or have mentioned the words “Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan”; and 3) The department order focuses solely on the curriculum adjustments of the implemented BE-LCP for the public basic education program. Of the 29 department orders released on the said timeline inclusion, six department orders contained or specified the terms “Basic-Education Learning Continuity Plan” in the title. However, only three department orders focused solely on the curriculum aspect of BE-LCP for the public basic education program, thus, being selected as the main corpora of the data collection for this research. Since all department orders are readily available online and are accessible to the public, the Internet has been a useful tool in locating and downloading the needed documents in order to execute the desired objective of this investigation.

Table 1. Three department orders which discussed the curriculum adjustments made for the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan of the Public Basic Education Program in the Philippines

Coding Scheme	DepEd Order (D.O.)	Date of Release	Title
D1	D.O. No. 12, s. 2020	June 19, 2020	Adoption of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan for the School Year 2020-2021 in light of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency
D2	D.O. No. 18, s. 2020	July 20, 2020	Policy Guidelines for the Provision of Learning Resources in the Implementation of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan
D3	D.O. No. 31, s. 2020	October 2, 2020	Interim Guidelines for Assessment and Grading in light of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan

Mode of Analysis

Reading and re-reading the three documents is necessary in order to uncover the curriculum management aspect of the BE-LCP. Considering the qualitative tone of this paper, this investigation utilized Thematic Content Analysis

(TCA) as its research design in order to capture emerging themes through the uncovering of the meaning behind the contents of the document. Thematic Content Analysis is a device used to recognize patterns in the gathered data to come up with codes and categories (Bowen, 2009; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Moreover, TCA

necessitates the critical examination and interpretation of the gathered data to draw out knowledge imperative for research and development (Bowen, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The constant reading and re-reading of the significant phrases and statements and the researcher’s close interaction with the documents facilitated the smooth uncovering of the desired objective. To proceed to the analysis, the identified meaning units were subjected to cool and warm thematic analyses (De Guzman & Tan, 2007). Cool thematic analysis was used during the identification of significant statements

evident in the documents. These significant phrases and statements served as the basis of the warm thematic analysis phase where data categories are drawn and themes generated (De Guzman & Tan, 2007). To better facilitate the formulation of themes, a Kelly Grid tool was utilized. Arrangement of themes through code booking was then observed by the researcher (De Guzman, et, al., 2009; Ryan & Bernard, 2003)

Table 2. Sample Kelly Grid

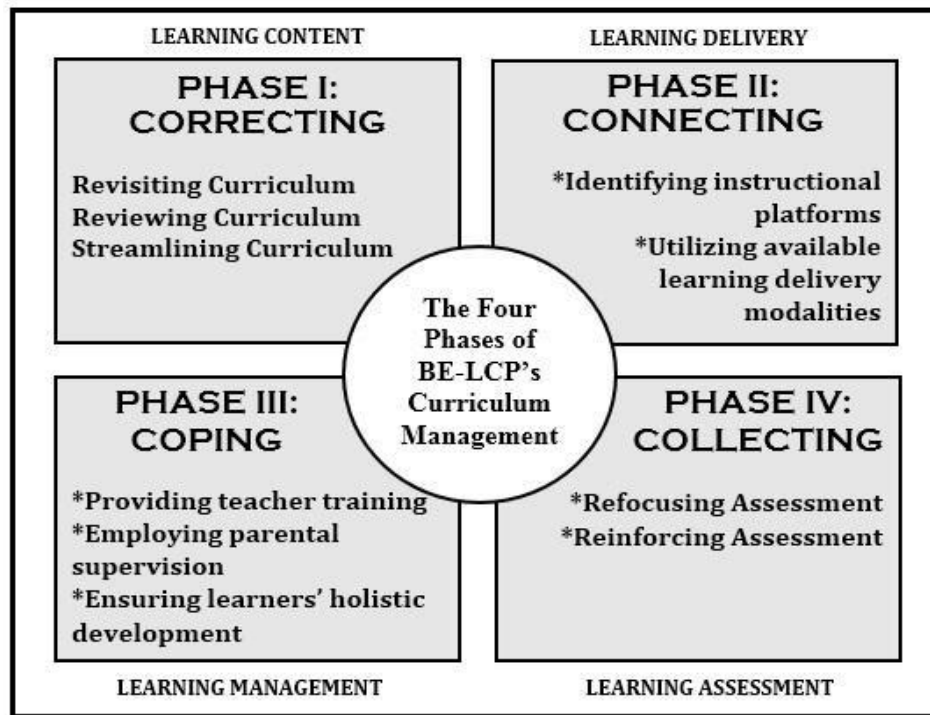
Themes	Categories	Condensed Meaning Unit
Correcting Phase	Streamlining Curriculum	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contextualize MELCs to accommodate varying contexts of learners, teachers, learning environment and support structures 2. Adoption of Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs)
Connecting Phase	Utilizing Various Platforms for learning delivery	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Necessary platforms or technologies (printed, digital online and offline, television, radio) are engaged or made available in a timely and efficient manner 2. Innovative strategies to deliver distance learning in a larger magnitude

Findings

From the cool and warm thematic analyses of this qualitative investigation, four distinct themes were uncovered as to how this Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan of the Department of Education developed its curriculum management aspect. This investigation discovered the four phases of the curriculum management aspect of Department of

Education’s BE-LCP anchored in the adjustments made in the four aspects of learning. These are: A) Correcting Phase (Learning Content), B) Connecting Phase (Learning Delivery), C) Coping Phase (Learning Management), and D) Collecting Phase (Learning Assessment). Figure 1 shows the simulacrum of the said findings.

Figure 1. The Phases of Curriculum Management of the Department of Education’s Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan



Correcting Phase

Learning continuity is the primary reason for the creation of BE-LCP during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Analyzing the significant phrases and statements gathered from the three department orders, the researcher observed that the first phase of the curriculum management aspect of BE-LCP evolved in the adaptation and adjustments made for the most essential part of the curriculum and learning content. This observation is very evident in the document:

The BE-LCP streamlines the K-12 Curriculum into the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs), to be delivered in multiple learning modalities and platforms. The MELCs shall be used nationwide by field implementers for SY 2020-2021 only. The streamlining of the K-12 Curriculum into the MELCs is an emergency measure to allow instruction amid challenging circumstances to focus on the most essential learning, and to ease the requirements for adapting classroom-based learning resources to distance learning. (Department of Education, 2020a, par. 5)

Undeniably, the learning content set forth by the implemented K-12 curriculum is crucial to the quality of education of 21st- century learners. However, all of the goals and objectives carried out by this relatively new curriculum cannot be accomplished due to the risks posed by COVID-19. This is the reason for the creation of the Most Essential Learning Competencies. MELCs is generally defined as “competencies necessary to develop a learner’s practical and lifelong skills for learning amidst a crisis” (Department of Education, 2020b, par. 3.2). As such, the Department of Education ensures, through this effort, the continuity of learning based on these adjustments, while *encouraging all its internal and external stakeholders for inputs in the design of a learning delivery strategy* (D1). Monitoring and evaluation are key to the strict implementation of this streamlined curriculum. Having said this, the Department of Education has created a Learning Resource and Platform Committee that will continue to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the streamlined curriculum. Additionally, this steering committee is tasked *to evaluate the effectiveness of MELC in consultation with the regional directors* (D1). This is to assure everyone that the objectives carried

out in the implementation of MELCs are still aligned with the objectives and goals of the K-12 curriculum. Since MELCs are implemented for the current school year only, the Department of Education assures its stakeholders that MELCs are products of continuous review of the K-12 curriculum properly enforced to avoid overcrowding and congestion in the curriculum. This assurance is found in the document – *the identification of the MELCs is not only in response to the challenge of delivering learning in a time of COVID-19 but is actually the accelerated result of the curriculum review that the secretary has directed as early as two years ago* (D1). Moreover, upholding integrity amidst the new normal of education is also an indisputable characteristic of the Learning Continuity Plan. This is clearly pronounced in the document – *teachers, school leaders, learners, and parents must commit to upholding the integrity of learning and instruction in the context of distance learning* (D3).

Summarily, the overall disposition of this phase can be described as the adaptation of the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) through a profound revisiting and reviewing of learning contents that will eventually be streamlined to cater to the needs of learners and other stakeholders in this time of the pandemic. This phase is called the correcting phase of the curriculum management aspect of BE-LCP.

Connecting Phase

Moving to the second phase of the curriculum management aspect of BE-LCP, this research detected that the Department of Education is faced with a major problem – learning delivery. Without a doubt, delivering the learning content to the learners was also affected by this global pandemic. Face-to-face classes cannot be carried out because physical distancing and safety protocols will not allow the traditional classroom set-up. This situation prompted the department to find other means of learning delivery amidst this threatening health crisis. As a solution to this problem, the Department of Education emphasized that the utilization of the blended learning approach will be implemented for this school year to ensure the safe facilitation of learning among students. By providing different types of instructional modalities, learning will be

readily made available to all learners while guaranteeing a safe learning delivery.

Termed as connecting phase, this aspect of curriculum management of BE-LCP is concerned with the identification of various instructional platforms and utilization of the available means of learning modalities such as online platforms, television, and radio education, homeschooling, flexible learning options, and modular learning through Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) among others to efficiently deliver the learning content of the streamlined curriculum to the learners with utmost consideration to the safety of its stakeholders. As manifested in the document, *“our teachers and school leaders shall be capacitated to implement and manage the adoption of multi-modal learning delivery models”* (D1), moreover, *“educators are encouraged to make use of innovative strategies to deliver distance learning in a larger magnitude”* (D1). The Department of Education further elaborated their desire to reach all learners while ensuring health and safety protocols using various instructional modalities. This observation is manifested in this statement: *“Ensure that learning opportunities are provided to the learners, in a safe manner through different learning delivery”* (D2). In addition to this, the Department of Education has sought various non-DepEd entities for a collaborative strategy to produce self-learning materials so that learners will be able to learn at their own pace, using self-direction methods. This observation is validated by the document – *self-learning modules (SLMs) are self-contained, self-instructional, self-paced, and interactive learning resources for public schools intended for learning specific topics or lessons* (D2). The document also emphasized that these self-learning materials are ideal learning resources, thus being a preferred delivery method in a remote and distance learning modality.

Coping Phase

The third phase of the curriculum management aspect of BE-LCP lies in the quality of the learning management among teachers, learners, and parents or guardians who will supervise the learning process of their child. Learning management is differently understood when it

comes to the adjustments made to adapt to the new normal education. Everyone is potentially at risk and can be threatened with the virus infection at any time if they do not practice safety measures, thus, learning in this time of pandemic is not as fun as learning in a traditional classroom set-up, wherein one can easily ask other students as regards the lessons presented by the instructor. Moreover, teachers also need to adjust and adapt to the virtual environment in order to monitor the progress of learners entrusted to their care. Aside from this, parents and guardians also have a big responsibility in the child's learning process through their participatory role in the supervision of learning. These circumstances involving the duties and responsibilities of teachers, parents, and guardians, and learners themselves comprise the coping phase of the curriculum management aspect of DepEd's BE-LCP.

The need for teacher training and professional development is highlighted in the implementation of BE-LCP – *amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its concomitant challenges, DepEd, through the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP, affirms its commitment to providing and supporting the professional development of teachers and school leaders* (D1). Apart from this, reinforcing teachers' capabilities to manage learning through blended learning modality is also necessary to effectively deliver the desired learning content to every learner under their supervision. Moreover, teachers shall be provided with *tools and mechanisms to make informed decisions on appropriate learning delivery mode* (D1). A support mechanism for teachers is also established for them to have access to *the relevant on-demand technical and administrative advice and guidance* (D1). Parents and guardians, on the other hand, have a role to fulfill in the blended learning environment. Parental supervision is highly encouraged in order to facilitate the learning process of the child concretely. This is verbalized in the following statements – *encourage parents through the Parent-Teachers Association (PTA) towards possible collaborations with the schools that can support the delivery of learning while adapting to the new normal* (D1); *the new role and increased involvement of the parents in the learning of their children are essential in augmenting available resources and technology in*

the community (D1) and; *thus, only when necessary, parents/guardians are requested to assist in the assessment process by guiding their children in accomplishing the assessment tasks and/or monitoring tools designed by the teacher* (D3). Furthermore, students are also expected to cope with the new normal and adapt themselves to the new learning environment. In a blended learning environment, the learner is by himself/herself in comprehending the lessons integrated with the learning materials. DepEd designates seminar orientations to learners so that they can develop the habit of self-paced, self-directed learning through constant interaction with the available learning resources, with utmost consideration to the learners' overall well-being, and with the aid of their teachers, parents, and guardians. Developing this attitude is key to the internalization of lessons found in all SLMs. This claim is evident in the document – *the days in August prior to the formal school opening will be used to orient learners on the utilization of alternative learning delivery modalities and corresponding learning materials, and mental health and psychological support activities* (D1).

Collecting Phase

The last phase of the curriculum management aspect of DepEd's BE-LCP is termed as the collecting phase. This phase, anchored in the adjustments made in the learning assessment aspect of the curriculum, is described as BE-LCP's character to refocus and reinforce assessment strategies as means to elicit useful evidence of learning to fully encapsulate the desired objectives of the streamlined curriculum. Despite the risks and threats of COVID-19, the learning must continue its process, and this process will not be complete without quality assessment practices. Thus, *the continuity of the administration of national examinations amidst pandemic as a necessary part of quality assurance* (D1) is an imperative endeavor. Refocusing assessment can be seen in the flexible and lenient strategies designed by teachers and school leaders while maintaining the *reliable, valid, transparent, fair, and inclusive* (D3) nature of assessment objectives. This observation is clearly manifested in the document – *teachers need to be creative and flexible in assessing*

student learning, while still adhering to the principles of quality assessment practices (D3). Reinforcing assessment is understood as the emphasis on quality assessment practices as evidence of learning despite the challenges set forth by COVID-19. The document clearly emphasized this claim – in distance learning modalities, teachers shall design assessments bearing the assumption that the learners will asynchronously take them and have open access to various sources (D3). Moreover, the document also emphasized the importance of summative and formative assessment which are avenues for students' academic and personal growth. Assessment through testimonies of parents and other adults including community leaders (D1), utilization of self-monitoring tools (D3) and the engagement of learners in assessing and improving each other's work (D3) are some of the characteristics of reinforcing learning assessment in the new normal. Considering these things, DepEd's commitment to quality education is clearly manifested in its holistic approach to the adjustments of the curriculum.

Discussion

The Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan of DepEd is designed to continue the reception of learning amidst pandemic (Ancheta & Ancheta, 2020). In line with this, the adjustments made in the K-12 curriculum through the adoption of this BE-LCP is very much relevant in today's carrying out of education amidst the continuous disruption of COVID-19 to the education sector. Through the cool and warm thematic analyses performed in the gathered data, this research discovered that the Department of Education's dedication to quality education for all (Petrie, et al., 2020) is clearly manifested in the learning continuity plan initiative. Interestingly, upon doing thematic content analysis, this unobtrusive qualitative investigation uncovered four interesting phases of curriculum management aspect (*see figure 1*) concealed in the BE-LCP of the Department of Education for the public basic education program in the Philippines.

The first aspect of curriculum management uncovered in this research is the correcting phase. Anchored in the adjustments in the learning content aspect of the curriculum, this

phase is described as the revisiting, reviewing, and streamlining of the implemented K-12 curriculum into the MELCs to adjust and adapt to the needs of the learners and other stakeholders during this time of the pandemic. Considering these findings, this investigation asserts that streamlining the curriculum into the most essential ones is the most practical means of attaining the goals and objectives of the K-12 curriculum as perceived from the findings. Essential to this claim, Reimers, and Schleicher (2020) specified in the OECD April 2020 report that adjustments in the learning content should focus on the explicit cultivation and "development of skills, attitudes, and values, resilience and self-efficacy" through various activities that will foster connection and affirmation among learners. This further elaborates that 21st- century skills must strictly be advanced by the streamlined curriculum. The steering committee must ensure that these goals and objectives are properly implemented in all regions. Similarly, the study of De Villa and Manalo (2020) emphasized the same sentiment by stating that the objectives of the congested learning competencies (MELCs) are developed towards the achievement of 21st century skills such as "critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity" which is also the agenda of the K-12 curriculum. These adaptations and adjustments are necessary to carry out the continuity of the learning process while dealing with the ongoing health crisis (Tria, 2020). Moreover, the streamlined curriculum will ensure the quality of learning and promote better engagement (Wang & East, 2020) among learners amidst the threat of COVID-19 while utilizing available platforms of learning. However, the effective reception of these learning competencies needs a more comprehensive evaluation to ensure the faithful transmission of 21st century skills among learners.

As previously stated, utilizing blended learning modalities will be implemented for this school year to facilitate effective learning. True to its characteristics, the collecting phase, anchored in the adjustments in the learning delivery aspect, manifests the necessity of identifying learning and instructional deliveries

and utilizing the available ones in order to effectively relay the desired learning objectives to the learners. It is important to note that distance learning strategies, both online and offline (Fontanos et al., 2020; Schwartz, et al., 2020), comes in handy during emergency situations. Tellingly, the documents identified several instructional modalities (online, television and radio education, self-learning modules, homeschooling, flexible learning options) that can aid the learning delivery of the curriculum contents among its learners, but among these types, online learning is the commonly used delivery method. Apparently, taking advantage of the available technology and digital tools has become a “rule” nowadays (Cosmas & Mbwette, 2009; De Villa & Manalo, 2020) since the learner can easily access it and because digital literacy is acknowledged as a fundamental tool for lifelong learning for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (De Villa & Manalo, 2020). Because of this, the use of digital platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, and the likes have successfully transmitted the learning contents to the learners (Holutescu, et al., 2020; Mukhopadhyay & Mukhopadhyay, 2020; Nasri, et al., 2020). Hence, it is clearly pointed out in these findings that information and communications technology (ICT) is vital in the learning process of the 21st-century learner. However, since the internet connection in the Philippines is unstable, online distance learning cannot be the be-all learning modality for its educational system because not everyone can avail of this service. Interestingly, this observation is evident in De Villa and Manalo’s (2020) study wherein they stressed that several learning delivery modalities can be utilized in order to cater to the needs of learners. Moreover, while the documents also identified and emphasized that these different types of learning modalities (online, television and radio, etc.) can be useful in delivering learning contents, the Department of Education, for its part, highly encouraged the utilization of self-learning modules (SLMs) because of its practical and effective nature. In a similar tone, the utilization of modules is deemed more effective in the current educational setup in the Philippines since these learning materials can easily be turned over to learners through mailing options or coordinating with parents and

guardians to pick up assignments from a strategic location or any accessible meeting point (Schwartz et al., 2020). Additionally, learning modules provide more flexible pacing among learners since these are self-directed materials. The document also mentioned that SLMs are an ideal learning resource in remote teaching setup because it can serve as the “backbone distance learning mechanism to accompany textbooks, complemented by other distance learning modalities such as online and educational television and radio” (Department of Education, 2020b, par. 6).

The identified coping phase in this study conveys that stakeholders have a very important role to play in the learning management upon the implementation of blended learning modality. Influenced by the demands and threats of COVID-19, this phase is primarily concerned with the coping strategies adopted by teachers, learners, parents, and guardians for the continuity of the learning process. Teachers’ role in the educative process in the new normal is vital, however, they must take a less dominant role (Nasri, et al., 2020) by supporting and promoting the development of commitment and participation among learners. Also, teachers must be trained in the use of digital technologies and other blended learning tools to further convey the effective transmission of learning to the learners. In order to do this, DepEd must provide avenues for teachers to familiarize themselves with the various instructional methodologies available for use in the blended learning environment (De Villa & Manalo, 2020). Similarly, the findings of Duraku and Hoxha’s (2020) study emphasized that the professional development of teachers will help the upgrading of the quality of teaching; this will also contribute to the application of reforms expected to better facilitate students’ learning management. Moreover, the document also emphasized that teachers, like any other stakeholders, need consistent assistance, and a sustainable support system. This is to ensure the constant updating and quality instructional delivery as well as the protection of their well-being against burnout and stress brought about by the new normal setup. Parents and guardians have a role to play in the learning management of their children in the blended learning modality. The document is very clear in

emphasizing the close collaboration between teachers and parents or guardians for the effective reception of learning among students. In order to do so, DepEd needs to develop extensive orientation among parents and guardians on the learning plan of the school as an assurance that the learner will complete the program (Fontanos, et al., 2020). Additionally, parents and guardians must be fully committed to advancing the well-being of their children to better facilitate the learning process. In a blended learning environment, the home serves as the new classroom of learners (Arrieta, 2020), hence, parents and guardians have the responsibility to maintain a conducive atmosphere in their respective places. Lastly, the safety and well-being of learners are among the utmost priority of the learning continuity plan, thus, the closure of schools and prohibition of conducting face-to-face classes took effect in the early stages of COVID-19 transmission around the world. Adaptive strategies are important in the learning process of learners; hence, they are exhorted to grab all opportunities for learning. The documents, following the health and safety measures set by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF), have initiated several considerations for the benefit of the learners. Guided by the goals and objectives of promoting learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, educational leaders have to always emphasize the learners' psychological and emotional dimensions (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). The learners, for their part, have the responsibility to maximize their time in mastering all the available learning materials aligned in the adjusted curriculum so that they can acquire all intended learning outcomes necessary for the development of their 21st century skills. In order to do so, they need to be actively engaged in the activities and performance tasks provided by the blended learning environment.

Anchored in the adjustments made in the learning assessment practices during the pandemic, the fourth phase of the curriculum management aspect of BE-LCP called the collecting phase is responsible for the refocusing and reinforcing of quality assessment practices despite the challenges faced by education in the new normal. Gathered data entails that amidst

the pandemic, the need for assessment is still necessary for the promotion of a holistic approach to the educative process. However, changing learning and instructional modalities also changes the landscape of assessment practices (Nasri, et al., 2020). Reweighing and redesigning assessment practices (Wang & East, 2020) is necessary as long as they "comply with the DepEd's standard indicating the required percentage in each of the components including written work, performance tasks, and quarterly assessments" (Ancheta & Ancheta, 2020, p. 10). Refocusing learning assessments also requires flexibility in providing assessment mechanisms and the utmost consideration for the well-being of learners. Moreover, parents and guardians, as well as the whole community are encouraged to contribute to the formative assessment practices by monitoring the learners in terms of self-growth and self-actualization of his learning. As assessments are keystones to finding evidence of effective learning reception (Schwartz, et al., 2020), reinforcing them in this time of pandemic needs to be emphasized. Written examinations and other quality assessment practices should not be removed in the blended learning modality, since they provide a concrete evaluation of students' academic performance. Most importantly, integrity among learners must be developed. Teachers should provide self-assessment tools and other personal monitoring assessment mechanisms like reflections, journal writing, etc. so that learners can also hone their values and attitudes for the holistic development of their 21st-century skills amidst the threat of COVID-19.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This qualitative attempt to uncover the curriculum management aspect of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan of the Department of Education in the public basic education program paved the way to the discovery of the four phases of curriculum management aspect concealed in this learning continuity initiative. Undoubtedly, the use of thematic content analysis is a fitting tool in realizing and unfolding the objectives of this qualitative investigation. In the final analysis, this unobtrusive research exhorts DepEd to

further refine their curriculum management strategies in all phases to effectively integrate the 21st-century skills to the streamlined curriculum in the new normal setting of Philippine Education. This research also emphasizes the need to provide comprehensive seminars, trainings, and orientations to teachers, and parents, and guardians as regards their responsibility in the educative process in the blended learning environment for a better internalization of their participatory role in the realization of learners' 21st - century skills amidst the threat of COVID-19. Finally, the learners have the duty to maximize all the available means to achieve quality education through the exercise of integrity. To further develop the claims of this unobtrusive investigation, empirical researches on the impact of the implementation of BE-LCP to Public Basic Educational Institutions across the Philippines, both qualitative and quantitative approaches, is highly recommended to provide more references for researchers in the future. The impact of parents' and guardians' participatory role in the new normal set-up, as well as the challenges and struggles they faced in the course of supervising

their children in these pandemic-laden times, are also recommended for further empirical investigation.

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic gave the education sector gigantic tasks in terms of adjustments and adaptation in the new normal set-up. However, these challenges cannot hinder the continuity of the learning process in the Philippines. Driven by the zeal to promote learning during this pandemic-laden time, school leaders, teachers, learners, and other stakeholders are always ready to take a step forward and overcome all these obstacles. Amidst the realities of this COVID-19 pandemic, the community must become an advocate of continuous education and learning. Everyone must become a bearer of light in order to highlight the importance of education amidst this global health crisis.

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