

Help parents to support distance learning

WHEN the Covid-19 pandemic began, everyone was caught unprepared – including the education sector. Almost overnight, higher education providers all over the world had to resort to new ways to mitigate the pandemic's effects, including sending millions of university students home.

With the crisis continuing, university students have had to attend class remotely from home and lecturers have had to deliver classes from home. There are many issues regarding online classes, such as connectivity, the administration of final exams, validity of assessments, and the delivery of classes. While most higher education providers

focused on the student-lecturer-infrastructure correlation, little emphasis has been placed on parent readiness.

Other than common sense, there are few guidelines for parents on how they can best support their university-going children at home. I can see how the initial relief of having their kids safely at home could soon turn into tension caused by misunderstandings.

Home education on this scale is a new experience and is probably not fully understood by many parents. I believe many are not sure how they can assist their children to learn from home. And there are undoubtedly those who are limited by finan-

cial issues. Then there is the challenge of living in small spaces that makes it difficult to accommodate a space solely for study. For some households, personal space is non-existent with all family members staying home at all hours. Students from such families undoubtedly feel stressed.

In addition, most parents generally believe that children must help with chores at home and might get upset at seeing their young adult children spending hours in front of a computer.

These are some of the many real problems that have cropped up since the government imposed varying phases of the movement

control order since mid-March.

Open and distance learning (ODL) is here to stay so these problems must be addressed. One way to do so is through periodic engagement with parents to educate them and create awareness about ODL. This could, in turn, unfold many forms of assistance from government, non-governmental bodies and the education industry.

This is one way in which higher education providers, with support from the community, can mitigate this situation.

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