

FREE EDUCATION: A RIGHT OR AN OBLIGATION?

by:

Marites P. Banzon

Teacher III, E.C. Bernabe National High School

“Education is a constitutional right.”

This has been the call of many activists movement as they fight for the free education in the Philippines. Surely, this call was heeded by the government as Bam Aquino principally authored the Republic Act 10931 otherwise known as the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education which was signed by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte on August 3, 2017. The enactment of this law is a breakthrough for the education system as it gives hope especially to the unprivileged students of finishing college education with less financial burden.

As for primary and secondary education, Article XIV section 2(2) of the Philippine Constitution provides that “the state shall establish and maintain a system of free public education in the elementary and high school levels...” Hence, it is clearly stated that access to quality education is a constitutional right of every Filipino. Anchored with this right is a promise of better life for the hope of the motherland. The government, therefore, must utilize its resources to make this hope realizable.

However, as they say, there is no such thing as free lunch. The right to education does not solely lie on the idea of it being “free”. Likewise, (Pocock, 1997) elaborated in his book that education is crucial in strengthening human resources and reducing poverty in Less Developed Countries (LDCs). In the Philippines, wherein SAPs had been introduced in 1980, government spending per student declined following that. Attached with this right is a great obligation of every student to transform himself to become better and be of greater service to this nation. It is not enough for students to just invoke their right to

quality education. They must, at all cost, prove that they are worthy of this education. This includes studying very well and applying all the learnings for the common good. In the magazine article released by (Paul, 1984) it is important to promote critical thinking abilities that are important to a free, logical, and independent mind. We need students who are not only great academically but also those who use education to create a community of love and respect. One who can see that education is just a tool to uplift the country from its current condition.

Cliché as it may seem but I could say that the government believes in Dr. Jose Rizal when he said that youth is the hope of the country. I believe in youth. I believe in their capacity to transform this nation to be the best in the world. This is possible when they realize that their right to education is coupled with the obligation of holistic development.

Education may be a right but it cannot detach itself from its obligation of creating a just, humane, and progressive society for Filipinos.

References:

Paul, R. W. (1984). Fundamental to Education for a Free Society REASONED JUDGMENT EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP 4.

Pocock, D. (1997). The Impact of Structural Adjustment Policies on Secondary Education in the Philippines. In UNESCO (p. 385).