

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE POSED BY PISA 2018

by:
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“Philippines ranks low in reading, science, math, global survey shows”, this front-page news in CNN Philippines caught my eye but I was not surprised by this. PISA 2018 results showed that Filipino students obtained a mean score of 340 points in the Overall Reading Literacy scale, 353 points in Mathematical Literacy, and 357 points in Scientific Literacy. All mean scores revealed that the Philippines’ average performance were lower than the minimum proficiency level and our country ranked last in Southeast Asia. These scores were telling us something and it was not a subtle suggestion but a loud awakening call for changes and not just in educational system but also changes in the systems from the national government down to the local government unit up to the smallest social unit, the family.

“DepEd: low gov't spending, lack in teacher training behind low PH ranking in PISA”, this was Glee Jalea’s report last December 5, two days after the front-page news on the rock bottom PISA 2018 results. From the report, Dep. Ed. knew that students will score low since their performance was correlated to the current quality of education in the country. According to Education Secretary Leonor Briones, the government failed to spend portions of its gross domestic product (GDP) for education, a factor which may have caused the Philippines to lag behind other countries in the survey. She also mentioned the need to transform our National Educators Academy into a real academy that will thoroughly train our teachers because the demands have changed nowadays. Problems were well-presented. Meetings and deliberations on what actions to take went well. Even Sen. Sonny Angara has a well-written opinion in business mirror. He said, “...we should take it up as a challenge to do better, to become world-class not only in our

own eyes, but in the eyes of other countries in the world.” However, the proposed budget was not allocated.

“DepEd advised against taking int'l assessment next year”, another CNN front page news last February. Back then, I absolutely disagree on Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian’s suggestion of studying the 2021 PISA first and taking the next one in 2024 because we need to study trends even if it is predictable that we will still score low. His advice made sense. However, every year educators do something to improve our learners’ education. We were not paralyzed by the 2018 results nor by the other challenges before we joined PISA. Although it is predictable that we will score low in 2021, but how low will the score be? Will it be lower than that of the 2018 or will there be an improvement though not that significant? Now that we are in the middle of dealing the effects of COVID 19, I still disagree on Sen. Gatchalian’s advice. With another factor at play, we need data to support our plans and actions. After all, like what Sal Khan said in one of his TED talks “Let’s teach for mastery - - not test scores”.

From my teaching experience, another major factor that contributed to the very low mean score was we, teachers, were not well-equipped. Tasks after tasks were laid on teachers and no proper training was given before each assigned task. It is up to the teacher to discover how to perform each task. Five years ago, a review for an aptitude test turned to an interview. It was useless to give a lecture on a subject they did not want to learn because the aptitude test won’t have an effect on their grades. Their reason for coming was they needed my signature for attendance, a requirement to graduate. Thus, the students’ disinterest to learn and to perform well was the third major factor.

Department of Education launched Sulong Edukalidad to address the issues on the quality of education. As a graduate student and a future teacher, the following are the roles that I could play to contribute in improving the quality of education at school level:

On K to 12 curriculum review and update

Although the K to 12 curriculum was given, teachers tend to make some adjustments so the learners could better understand the lesson. Like what I did before, I won't hesitate to adjust the curriculum to best suit my learners in the future.

On Improving the learning environment

I did not and won't hold back in using my personal gadgets, like tablet and netbook, in order to help students, appreciate the lessons and make sure that at the end of the lesson they will have the desire to explore more on their own using the resources available to them like their own smart phones.

On teachers' upskilling and reskilling

I need to read, watch self-help videos, attend webinars and take advantage of free online classes whenever time permits in order to improve my teaching skills.

On Engagement of stakeholders for support and collaboration

I will try my best to reach out to each parent or guardian of my students and give advice on how to best help their child. Furthermore, I'll try to find NGO's who could provide better learning experience to students

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