

THERE'S NOTHING 'LANG' IN BEING A TEACHER

by:

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'TEACHER LANG' in English a 'mere teacher', 'only a teacher', 'just a teacher. These are some of the words I mostly hear whenever we are talking about the teaching profession with other professions. Some may not verbally say it, but the connotation is certainly there. Lingering. Creeping.

I wonder when the word 'lang' started to be associated with the profession of being a teacher. I wonder what changed and how it happened for a 'noble' profession to be viewed as low as being 'just' a profession. I wonder why for some reason, the social standing of a teacher in our society slowly started to deprecate every day here in the Philippines. From being put on the pedestal and viewed as an 'honorable' vocation to suddenly becoming an inferior position.

I will not be a hypocrite to say that I never once thought the same whenever the topic of discussion somehow shifts into this. I remember the conversation that I had with my former student when he asked for my opinion on him taking Bachelor of Education in college. My initial reaction was, I immediately shook my head and then answered 'no'. Not because I am ashamed of my profession because I am proud of myself, my co-teachers, my past mentors, my professors, and others. It is just that I know how overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated teachers are in this country.

He then proceeded to ask me 'Why, Ma'am'. The question caught me off guard for a few seconds that I just looked at him but not looking at him for my mind was wandering elsewhere, wondering how I will answer his question without sounding like I am against it. Eventually, I answered him by saying he can be so much more if he wants to, with his

academic standing as one of the brightest students in our school, he could be a doctor, an engineer, a lawyer etcetera. He looked at me but said nothing, I looked at him and said nothing. It's as if we were both weighing each other's words and I see that he is still wants to ask me more questions but chooses not to as we moved on to another topic.

Later that day, the questions still hang around my mind like a bad song syndrome, adding more questions like, 'why did I say that?', 'what made me say that', 'how I came up with that thoughts', 'what's wrong with being a teacher?' etcetera. It made me question my whole point of view and it took me a long time and a former student to make me realize, although unaware, that my thoughts are changing not in a better way.

Suddenly it hit me that I am just like them. That I think less of this noble profession, that no matter how I take pride of it, deep inside I thought less of this vocation. It was a bittersweet realization and from that moment I vowed to uphold my profession to the highest level, for I believe teaching birth other professions and it is still the noblest profession. It takes a lot of courage, effort, patience, passion, and love to continue pursuing this craft.

Yes, there will be days when we feel as if being a teacher in the present society is not valiant as it sounds but when we love what we do, molding and shaping the future generation we are already living the honorable way of being a teacher. Because as far as teaching is a concern, there is nothing 'lang' in being a teacher. And if in the future I will not be a part of the teaching force, I will always remember that I loved being a teacher, and I am proud of being one.

Mabuhay po tayong mga Guro.

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