

THE PARADOXICAL WORLD OF EDUCATION LEARNING OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS DURING PRE- AND POST-PANDEMIC

by:

Gemi D. Nuque

Teacher I, Orani National High School Parang-Parang

We, human beings, are destined to meet a mixture of trials and temptations as we wander to the high road of life. There are times of global peace but domestic conflict. And, a time of building more houses while destroying lots of homes. Various problems flood in as we show off our weaknesses. With each milestone, people enter varied worlds. One is most vital to everyone's advance and growth—the world of education. It is a beautiful place to learn and foster skills. However, a hurricane of drastic changes evaded and affected students and teachers as the coming of the pandemic. In this white, isolated prison, how are we going to keep up with the wave of uncertainty?

Students and teachers were once living in a harmonious world. It was a place where everything was bounded by a fixed and calculated curriculum. Parents, once they enrolled their children in schools, felt at ease and knew that the students were completely unharmed. Educators had all the means to guide their learners in a face-to-face setup. Institutions had their best intentions with the aim of quality education. All are well-practiced and mastered the art of teaching. Not until a big doom happened. Everyone was unexpected.

COVID-19, a perilous, sinewy name, is a tiny pea of the virus, yet it destroys the lives of many millions of families who beg to bring their loved ones back. Children kneel and ask for help. Institutions are forced to close. People are divided on their opinions as to have an “academic freeze” or not. Some educators are at the edge of unwillingly ending their

professions. Meanwhile, others are blindly looking for silver linings. Indeed, we were dragged into a world that is completely unknown.

It has been reported that the total cases in the Philippines range up to 3.99 million with 63,669 thousand deaths as of October 20, 2022. Imagine, a million cases, thousands of death, and a multitude of dreams faded. Is this the world we used to protect? Our yesterday became the home of misery. Our today is filled with darkness, what will happen to our future?

One of the weights that this pandemic brought us was the burdens addressed to people comprising the institution. As this contagious virus came into life, both teachers and students were dragged into new and unexpected versions of the world filled with adjustments and transitions. We opened our eyes to the art of different modalities, such as distance and blended learning where everything is new and seems like going back to the drawing board. It is always the fact that we are destined to experience a series of unexpected twists and turns -- reshaping and molding us into another version - like dough.

The dough is a product that can be presented to be a whole new delicacy. It can be molded and decorated with ingredients that would be given by a certain role of someone. It resembles our "new normal" in education; our capability of shaping ourselves with the help of the school can be a tough crust or can be as easy as pie. It depends if it is blended with a delightful frosting or a decaying topping. There is a possibility that we could be a scrumptious, good-tasting, and mouthwatering delight.

In the new alterations in the world of education, our power of adaptability is oftentimes slow. According to a study by UNESCO, over 830 million children cannot afford basic needs in their humble abodes. The new and "improved" online classes are hard to chase. Students all over the globe can fall to the depths of dark ravines, and jump away from the

excruciating pain of mental breakdown. That is the reason why we need to be sturdy and positive in the midst of the pandemic. A tough mental core is needed in our darkest times.

The punishment that distance learning gave the learners was the pain delivered to their mental health. School, once a safe place, turned to horrors. It can crash a soul. Students were only trying to forge positive thinking until they finally survive it. A lot of testimonies said that the new mode of learning had adversely affected their physical and mental health while others stated that this mode sustained their relationships with their families. In addition, the heaviness of consequences being beard by students became the reason for them to quit thriving.

Teachers, on the other hand, have also been affected in all forms of their lives. Educators may experience a spike in anxiety as a result of social detachment and school closures that are being implemented globally. Regarding both their personal and professional lives, they are undergoing a transition. Aside from the obvious perils to one's physical health, the psychological effects of the pandemic also pose serious risks to one's mental health and general well-being due to elevated levels of stress and worry that are made worse by the ongoing unpredictability of the situation. In addition, teachers must adjust to the new standard in the educational landscape and pursue efficient remedial instruction in addition to the pressure that could arise from the danger that this crisis pretenses to them and their families. It is possible that teachers lack the tools, resources, and skills they need to engage students and flourish.

The new normal is the brand new definition of life. It changed our ways of living. We became distant from one another. Because of this outbreak, our smiles need to be hidden behind our masks. Our eyes are trapped with the colorless face shield, and our hearts need to be separated poles apart. The hardest part is –our lives become desolate as this unending virus strikes each one of us without mercy.

On the flip side, we, Filipinos, have resilience embedded in our hearts. COVID-19 is a type of reset that restarts our lives. Amid the pandemic, we discover talents that we use to keep up with the wave. We successively embraced the new normal and used it as an instrument to move forward. Albeit the crisis destroyed every iota of physical human interaction, we still manage to find the key that leads to the doorway of victory. This just proves that we still hold the crown which controls our future. And as time flies higher, the teachers are still modern heroes, and youth will still be the hope of our land.

In your life, it can be a tricky equation. But with the right formula, an answer would be very valid. With the right face and burning passion, you could do anything. Your desire can slip through the hardest problems. It can be a hard task to create yourself, but it would be easier to follow your guideline and taste the tastiest cake of your choice.

In your lifetime, molding your dreams is a difficult mission. But with the right choice of frosting and the right choice of helper, your cake might be minuscule or enormous. It would be a cherry on top, even if there are flies roaming around your vicinity.

In a world full of alterations, waiting does not equate to emptiness. The new normal brought tortures that none of us ever expected; however, our story still needs an ending. Hence, life is still ongoing. Despite endless negativities, we should welcome positivity. Our yesterday (pre-pandemic) became the nest of hardships. Our today is filled with sorrows (during the pandemic). But, our future (post-pandemic) is still veiled yet promised. Let us go on and believe because this world is filled with paradoxes of uncertainty.

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