

IT IS TIME TO FACE THE EDUCATIONAL CRISIS FOR A GRADUAL CHANGE

by:

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The country and the educational sector find it difficult to uphold the constitutional mandate that all children and youth of the state have the privilege of getting free, quality education at the primary level. Either a lack of resources, unorganized function of national and legal entities involved, or both are to blame for these shortcomings of the state. While population control in the Philippines remains ineffective, the issue of the education crisis will not be resolved either. Immediately, it will alleviate poverty, which also explains why those living in poverty do not take advantage of free education. Sad to say, the attitude of the uneducated Filipinos affects them most once they have their own families. Some become drug addicts, while others have children on the streets begging for money and learning nothing but being used for destructive activities that leads to a problem with insufficient human resources. Thus, the country, through its national and legal channels, must provide comprehensive actions to solve or at least have positive control over a plethora of issues relative to the educational status and standards of the country. Furthermore, these actions would be initially taken place by allocating enough funds. From this initial step, the government, through the Department of Education and other educational institutions, must provide excellent and research-based plans to design well-structured strategies on how these funds should be utilized for the most crucial priorities to solve problems and issues in the education crisis that the country is facing. Some of these issues are relative to the need for the current curriculum to be reviewed and revisited, competitiveness and compensation of teachers, educational-based management of an educational institution, and relationship among education-related stakeholders.

In the aspect of the curriculum, despite revising our Basic Education Curriculum and improving our National Common Core Standards, the results of standardized tests show that Filipino learners ranked the lowest in reading comprehension and second to the lowest in other learning areas. Aside from that, the current educational system has provided K-12 curriculum to all subject areas that need to be more congested regarding the learning content the students should learn about. These congestions result in excessive content to be taught and learned concerning the time available for instruction, often driven by unrealistic expectations for retaining both breadth and depth of content within the allotted time. For these issues, many lawmakers and educators suggested a revisit and review of the K-12 curriculum in all subject areas, and analyze the result of the National Achievement Test, especially the least learned skills, and deciding on what needs to be focused on by Filipino students to provide them with the proper intervention and necessary skills to improve the quality of education. Also, curriculum mapping and alignment must be a priority to ensure the coherency and consistency between the intended outcomes as specified in the formal curriculum and teaching methods, assessment tasks, and learning activities in the classroom and work-based learning. Today, DepEd has established a memorandum concerning reclassifying learning competencies to filter essential ones, known as the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs).

In addition, empowering teacher competitiveness should be the nation's utmost priority because it has the potential to keep the Philippine educational system going. Seed (2005) asserted that one desirable key point for school development is the empowerment of teachers (Wasley, 1991 as cited in Seed, 2005). Empowered teachers are characterized by having the freedom to decide on curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. It was also asserted by Seed (2005) that for teachers to have the opportunity to execute ideas and programs, resources in the form of money, materials, time, and chance must be available (Reitzug and Burrello, 1995 as cited in Seed, 2005). When the principal cannot accommodate the request, other options, such as grants, local businesses, and state

incentives should be discussed instead of a flat "no" (Reitzug and Burrello, 1995, as cited in Seed, 2005). To survive and thrive in the high-stakes school climate, Seed (2005) posited that teachers need to take on new roles such as team leader, action researcher, curriculum developer, and in-house trainer. Concurrently, teachers have to take on other responsibilities, such as experimenting with new ideas, reading new books, and attending and planning professional development activities.

Moreover, satisfaction in salary and adequate remuneration are vital to motivating the teachers to compensate for their multitasking job, and sacrifice should be considered. For their excellent work, teachers should be paid a fair wage. Teachers have a more complex workload than office workers. They serve as the youth leaders and immediate responders to societal issues. As stated in Article XIV, Section 5 Paragraph 5 of the Philippine Constitution, "the State shall assign the highest budgetary priority to education and ensure that teaching will attract and retain its rightful share of the best available talents through adequate remuneration and other means of job satisfaction and fulfillment." This gives teachers the power to come up with solutions as long as they are contended with what or how much they receive. ACT Teachers Party-List introduced House Bill 245 to raise the minimum monthly payment for teaching and non-teaching positions in public elementary and secondary schools. According to this House Bill's explanatory note, the efforts of the government to improve the educational system will only be successful if teachers and other education workers are paid a living wage. Aside from that, the income of public school teachers currently needs to be increased to ensure an acceptable level of living for themselves and their families. As a result, many teachers are forced to borrow money from government financial institutions, private lending companies, or loan sharks to make ends meet.

Educational-based management must be considered an option since it will define how systematic an educational institution is. Within a centrally established framework of goals, policies, curriculum, standards, and accountability, school personnel and other

related school stakeholders must make choices on crucial issues in school operations. The primary argument favoring decentralization is that principals, teachers, and parents are in the best position to decide how to allocate a school's resources, introducing more educational choices. Some observers contend that an influx of additional funds and resources could address the issues facing the education sector and system. However, in many instances, it is the structure of the educational system that has to be reexamined. The problems with the educational system are frequently brought on by an inefficient method of producing, distributing, and providing educational goods and services. The inherent issues of the educational system might be significantly reduced with better utilization of the resources currently allocated to educational services. The state and organizations in the competitive sector must divide tasks more effectively. It is also necessary to consistently use competitive processes and prices to guide individual decisions and government spending (Mongaya, 2012).

The positive relationship of parents with education-related stakeholders has to align with the priorities of the Philippine government and its educational sector. The spirit of collaboration and beneficial partnership among education-related stakeholders should be uplifted for the betterment of schools, academic sectors, and the nation. Meinardus (2003) concluded that there is a positive and persuasive relationship between family involvement and student performance, regardless of race/ethnicity, class, or parent's level of education. In other words, when families are engaged in their learning at home and school, children perform better in school. The study also highlights particular involvement as advantageous to the learner's academic progress. Therefore, it emphasizes that a framework for bolstering parent/family involvement programs is required. With the new national standards, the emphasis is now on what parents, schools, and communities should do collectively to support student success rather than what schools should do to involve parents.

Regarding the learning environment, many schools in our country suffer from inadequate facilities. Poorly kept public restrooms, shortage of classrooms, excessive student enrollment, inadequate ventilation, crowded and unhygienic canteens, and other related issues are signs of these inadequate facilities. Moreover, poor learning facilities indicate that students must be provided with their constitutional entitlement to adequate and well-maintained school facilities (Figueroa, Lim, and Lee, 2016). In these contexts, the district, division, and regional DepEd offices must support and assist their schools in developing strong partnerships with the parents, LGUs, private companies, NGOs, and other educational stakeholders. In addition, many government units and private institutions have provided their help and assistance in supporting DepEd and CHED educational institutions in providing financial aid for school building and training center facilities.

Through the years, issues and challenges have rocked our educational system and continue to do so today. Amid these dealings in education, priority areas for change must align with the educational system's capacity and resiliency. In light of the philosophy of change and with the needs and priorities brought about by the fast-changing society, a new order will need to be developed under the direction of a sound practice of well-internalized human values combined with a robust political will. It is finally time for national and individual-level efforts to achieve a profoundly positive balance between development and equity, internationalism and relevance, technical modernity and cultural preservation, and individual growth and development and learning. It is finally time to face the educational crisis for a gradual change.

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