

JUNE 19 – A HERO'S BIRTHDAY, A LESSON IN CIVIC AWARENESS

by:

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June 19 – As I opened my Facebook account, my newsfeed was filled with posts honoring and celebrating the 164th birth anniversary of Dr. Jose Rizal. After reacting to several tributes, I went about my usual morning routine in preparation for school. Just before class began, I learned that one of my pupils was also celebrating his birthday. As a trivia enthusiast, I eagerly told him that he shares the same birthdate with our hero which then led me to my usual reflection on how deeply Rizal believed in the youth—and in their power to bring meaningful change to the nation.

A series of responses from the class steered our discussion toward pressing national issues, eventually circling back to the outcomes of the recent 2025 midterm elections.

The Youth Vote: A Political Awakening

The results of the 2025 midterm elections revealed shifts in the Philippine political landscape. Yes, political dynasties and dominant parties remain in power, but upon closer look, cracks are beginning to show. Old alliances are being broken. New names and fresh faces—many of them young, reform-oriented, and policy-driven—are beginning to emerge.

The power of the youth vote has been the game-changer here. Empowered by access to information, driven by a desire for change, and frustrated by long-standing systemic problems, young voters turned out in historic numbers. They did not just vote; they campaigned, debated, created content, and mobilized both online and offline. They

helped amplify platforms centered on education reform, anti-corruption, climate justice, and youth empowerment.

Implications for the Education Sector

This momentum presents a clear message to us in the education sector: we must do more to prepare our learners—not only academically, but also as informed, critical, and engaged citizens.

1. Civic and Voter Education Must Begin Early

Discussions about governance, public service, and democratic participation should not be limited to Araling Panlipunan classes. These concepts must be interwoven into everyday classroom conversations and activities, beginning from elementary.

2. Media and Information Literacy is Essential

In a world saturated with misinformation, especially on social media, our learners must be equipped to analyze sources, verify facts, and form independent, evidence-based opinions. Media literacy is no longer optional – it's fundamental.

3. Linking Curriculum with Real-World Issues

Our students are not apathetic; they are aware. But awareness must be nurtured into action. We need a curriculum that challenges them to think critically, question the status quo, and envision solutions to national and global challenges—starting from their communities.

A Challenge for Educators

As Rizal said, “Ang kabataan ang pag-asa ng bayan.” But hope alone is not enough. We, teachers, must also build competence, character, and courage among our learners. The

2025 elections showed us that the youth can – and will – act when they are empowered. It is now our turn, as educators, to help sustain that fire.

Let us create classrooms that are not only centers of academic excellence but also hubs for civic engagement, integrity, and innovation. In doing so, we don't just teach the youth about the future – we prepare them to lead it.

References:

Shifting Lines of power in the 2025 Philippine midterm elections. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Philippines. (n.d.). <https://philippines.fes.de/e/shifting-lines-of-power-in-the-2025-philippine-midterm-elections.html>