

A Teacher's Random Thoughts this School Year Under the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: *This paper presents the author's random thoughts on teaching-related matters this school year under the COVID-19 pandemic. These thoughts include views and opinions on: (1) teaching-learning engagement; (2) learning assessment; (3) classroom observation; and (4) teachers' organizational commitment and satisfaction in the workplace. These few thoughts were written to reflect on the joyful journey of a teacher in the middle of the global health emergency.*

Keywords — *teaching-learning engagement; learning assessment; classroom observation; teachers' commitment; satisfaction in the workplace*

1. INTRODUCTION

We are now in a whole new world of education systems brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the worldwide health emergency, the Philippine government through the Department of Education (DepEd) pursued the opening of classes on October 5, 2020 [1]. This initiative is congruent with the department's policy of offering education services amidst the global pandemic [2]. With the numerous initiatives of education officials and teachers, parents were encouraged to enroll their children in school safe from any danger of the pandemic through appropriate distance learning delivery modalities. A national enrollment data from DepEd recorded that as of October 26, 2020, a big number of 25.03 million students enrolled for the school year, covering data from both public and private schools from Kindergarten to Grade 12 or K to 12, which comprises 90.14 percent of the previous school year turnout at 27.7 million [3].

Though still uncertain on what lies ahead of everyone as days pass by this pandemic period, teachers and learners alike play important roles in shaping a new history of education, far different from the conventional way we had before this COVID-19.

2. TEACHING-LEARNING ENGAGEMENT

Various distance learning delivery modalities are being offered to ensure that education continues smoothly despite the pandemic. These modalities include modular distance learning, online learning (synchronous and/or asynchronous), radio-based instruction, television-based instruction, and blended learning. Schools are directed to offer the most appropriate modality/ies for their learners for effective learning to happen amidst no face-to-face interactions between the teachers and the learners. [2]

Teachers are more challenged than before to closely monitor the progress of their learners using the adopted modality of distance learning. Teachers are highly expected to

support the learning process of their respective learners, thus a need for the implementation of appropriate interventions to improve their academic performance in each learning area is a must at these trying times. [4]

Everyone's safety is always the priority of the state. Even international organizations, such as the UNICEF to mention one, have issued guidelines for all countries which wish to reopen their schools. A three-stage guide was released, which was named: (a) before opening; (b) entering the opening process; and (3) when the opening has been carried out [5]. This guideline was considered in the implementation of the country's learning continuity plan for the utmost benefit of our schoolchildren.

Teaching-learning engagement must serve its purpose, especially these trying times, of developing our schoolchildren with the necessary competencies to live life to the fullest each day.

3. LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Another challenge this pandemic period is the relevance and significance of learning assessment for the optimum development of learners through distance learning modality. A practical *School-Based Assessment Paradigm for Learners this COVID-19 Pandemic* was published by Cabigao (2021) [6] to lay down a clear and contextualized assessment framework for school. The framework is a triadic representation of the three critical groups of elements for an effective and meaningful learning assessment. The first set of elements are the DepEd's Vision, Mission, and Core Values stipulated in DepEd Order No. 36, s. 2013 [7] as the anchor of the assessment program. The second set of elements highlights the equal contribution of school, home, and community in the learning process of our schoolchildren. The third element is the role of assessment as the heart of teaching-learning engagement for the growth and development of learners which comes into three dimensions, the assessment *for* learning, *as* learning, and *of* learning. Cabigao noted that these three forms of learning serve as the guiding light of teachers on how to make each lesson delivery

appropriate to the development needs of their respective learners. By carefully crafting an assessment tool for learning, learning gaps will be addressed promptly and appropriate enrichment initiatives could be implemented to further enhance the innate talents and skills of our learners.

4. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

According to Cabigao (2021), a classroom observation is one of the most important procedures in ensuring that the curriculum is effectively implemented to its target beneficiaries, the learners who are considered the center of the teaching-learning engagement. He reiterates that class observation is a way of magnifying teachers' strengths worthy of emulation by their colleagues for more fruitful delivery of the lesson and possible replication for the continuous improvement of the teaching practice. He also noted that teachers' performance should be assessed and given appropriate instructional support to enable them to become effective facilitators of learning in the classroom. [8]

An earlier paper published by Dorji (2020) [9] stated that the teaching-learning process in a classroom is best understood through classroom observation. The author likewise noted that classroom observation helps teachers to improve their teaching-learning quality, that there is a need for frequent professional development on content and pedagogical practices for teachers to raise the quality of teaching-learning.

5. TEACHERS' ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND SATISFACTION IN THE WORKPLACE

A certain study noted that commitment to the organization is an indicator of the attitude to the organization in which professionals and beginners work. For beginner employees, a positive attitude from the professional community is such an important matter, they are the example that helps to build positive commitment to the profession and the organization. It stated that teachers with a high level of organizational commitment show a distinctive value system and style of activity, and this system of values demonstrates self-confidence as a teacher, love of work, responsibility for the result. Teachers with a high commitment to the organization are ready for public recognition and are interested in their work. [10]

The said premise is supported by the study of Cabigao (2020) stating that teachers' commitment to school becomes stronger as instructional competence goes higher [11]. Thus, teachers who connect themselves with the school manifest a higher level of competence through the inspiration that they get from the workplace.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, various studies noted that teachers generally have a high level of job satisfaction in the workplace [12]. This statement connotes teachers' happiness in their respective workplaces, inspiring them to do more than what is expected from them by their superiors.

Job satisfaction is comprehensively defined by Singh (2017) as an integral component of the work climate as it is a result of establishing a healthy organizational environment in an organization. Job satisfaction as generally defines is an attitude of an individual to his/her job. Singh reiterated that job satisfaction is regarding one's feeling or state of mind, and its source is not only the job but likewise created from the working environment, supervision style, interpersonal relationship, and organizational culture. [13]

Ramaswamy (2016) gives a soothing statement that the growth of a nation depends on the hands of its great leaders, and those effective and efficient leaders are shaped only from the well-functioning educational institutions. The effectiveness of any educational institution depends on the professional commitment of its teachers, and the commitment of teachers depends upon their job satisfaction [14]. This idea of Ramaswamy must be considered by government officials to produce quality products in terms of holistically developed citizens equipped with the demands of the 21st century.

6. GENERALIZATION

More and more paper works are on teachers' table (at home since most of us are in the work-from-home scheme) each day, but having focus is a good way of finishing those tasks one by one. We can never finish all those reports and urgent communications in an instant. Just enjoy our job and have an outlet to release our stress each day. Writing random thoughts like this one is a good way of spending time away from pressure if this task appeals to you at all. If not, there are still other possible means to rejuvenate our passion in the service as teachers of the new normal.

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