“EFFECTS OF NATURAL CALAMITIES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING”
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Natural calamities have shaped the Earth as we know it today. Violent volcanic activities that turned ancient cities into pyroclastic ruins of the past, plate tectonics movement causing waves of shocking tremors, and turbulent atmospheric dynamism due to sudden drops and spikes of atmospheric pressure and temperature – these are just some of the known examples of natural calamities that gradually changed the landscape of our lonely home found along the galaxy of Milky Way. By the time the “allegory of the cave” was deduced by the human mind, teaching and learning psychology have been already affected by these natural calamities in a profound fashion, or in a subtle way little by little. From a sweeping tsunami engulfing lazy coastal towns in a matter of seconds, or from a tiny virus slowly spreading itself to a steady wildfire outbreak – civilizations, as always, have been dictated to adapt; and, societies either cowered in fear or learned to circumnavigate towards survival and progress. Thus, creating the ever changing molds of teaching and learning along the history of human survival and progress, whilst tip-toeing through meandering natural calamities.

Since last year, COVID-19 pandemic have been maligning the learning institutions as global quarantining and contingencies pushed the world leaders and state governments to series of desperate measures. The outbreak has been lingering now for over a year. All the while with volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and wildfires around the globe as main backdrafts behind year one of global quarantine. And at the last quarter of the year 2020, a series of formidable typhoons ravaged the Philippines, with some regions badly beaten. In front of everyone’s eyes, new normal and varied adaptations of learning and teaching styles sprung out of research contexts. What was dissertation papers and textbook topics before the pandemic are now the untimely hasten and so called “new normal” modalities of pedagogy. Face to face teaching instructions is fast becoming an almost a thing of the past. Heavy reliance on distant learning seemed to be the savior of the learning communities to continue practicing the rights to education for all. Information and telecommunication companies, with online platform media applications tagging along, became the beacon of hope in the time of academic standstill. Then power grids and mobile network services, the backbone of distant learning modalities, eventually went down, as have been always the case before, when series of serious typhoons
take turns of welcoming the end of the year, week after week. Because of this, learning and teaching communities need to go through yet another phase of modifications within a span of a year. The digital divide dilemma was temporarily resolved for a moment as power lines and curtains of Wi-Fi connections were massively disrupted. One student may have the experience of visiting hot spots away from home, just to be able to send modular outputs while beating the due dates and the struggles of a digital immigrant. If it happened to one learner, so it did happen to a number of other learners as well, and more so it did happen to the teachers and instructors who had their own due dates and struggles to beat. The calamities of the year 2020 affected everyone in the learning communities. And, we can only hope that it will not happen ever again.

For both learners and facilitators of learning, the struggles and shortcomings brought by the year 2020 into the spheres of teaching and learning communities became magnified. The learning aspects, however were not lost as one could find comfort with the distant modalities while the world was slowly recovering from the pandemic crises. Along with this year’s infamous natural calamities that will surely go down the annals of Philippine pedagogy, faith should never be lost with the academic institutions that are part of the covid struggle. If every stakeholders and members of the learning communities stayed together in planning and executing strategies amidst an ongoing natural calamity, it will be easier to continue learning no matter how loud the calls of the fearmongers and academic freeze sympathizers are. Seriously, such calamities naturally happen from time to time, but learners and teachers before us did not buckle and used their own rudimentary tools which were far from the advantages of the ICT’s that contemporary citizens now have. Let it be known that in the time of famine, war, and adversaries before, mankind learned and invented advances in the society that forever changed our world that we now know today. In a way, natural calamities are teachers to us all; and what we do during those calamities became our learning chances. As one allegory of the past taught us, it is okay to go out of our “Plato’s Cave” and learn outside our comfort zones from time to time. Year 2021 – here we go.

References:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typhoons_in_the_Philippines