BATTING DROP-OUT RATES: GUIDE TO A BETTER STUDENT - TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

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Education has long been known to be the key to success. Children are taught from a young age that acquiring knowledge through education will equip them with the necessary skills and abilities to strive and succeed in life. Many believe that good education often guarantees a better social status in the future. But as times change and globalization took over the world, certain factors affecting not only the quality of education, but also its fundamentals emerged.

According to a 2017 study done by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) a whopping 3.8 to 4.1 Million school-going aged Filipinos are not in school. The undying problem of poverty still taking the top spot as to why millions of Filipino youth are out of school. But recent studies show that it might not be the only case. The alienation of youth has long garnered public and scholarly attention, related as it is to behavioral disorders, family conflict, and larger social problems (Merton 1964; Newman 1981). The Cambridge English Dictionary defined alienation as the feeling of isolation or lack of connection to the people around you. It can further stem to depression, lack of motivation to study, and worse, suicide. The rate of teenage death because of depression, alienation, and suicide is higher now more than ever, with numbers reaching up to 1.9 for females, 5.8 for males, and 3.8 for both sexes for every 100,000 of the general population in the Philippines alone. Furthermore, data from the same study in 2016 sheds light upon our mental health problems: we have close to 9 million prevalent cases of mental, neurological, and substance use disorders, 3.3 million of which are anxiety disorders, and 2.6 million of which are depression.
All of these becoming primary reasons for the great number of drop-out cases in the Philippines.

But just how can we really battle this overwhelming number of drop-outs in the country?

There is a method called social integration that is recently becoming known in the field of psychology. Social integration refers to strengthening someone’s social ties or relationship with other individuals from childhood up to the present. Typically, intergenerational bonds have been studied in terms of parent-child relationships, but there is another bond that should be studied closely, such as the Student-teacher relationships as a primary source. Such relationships have been studied extensively — the factors that underlie these relationships (Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson 1987), their affective dimensions in elementary school (Birch and Ladd 1998), and their instrumental dimensions in secondary school (Rowan, Chiang, and Miller 1997). For example, within schools, young people interact daily with their teachers, who can serve as mentors, models of behavior, and sources of support (Pianta, Steinberg, and Rollins 1995).

Studies show that humans have a natural instinct to follow and respect those whom they have a strong natural bond with. How well students get along with their teachers and whether they perceive them to be caring and fair could potentially greatly affect and change the country’s drop-out rate. Of course, this should work both ways, with the teacher actively engaging the students and the student’s acceptance. Nonacademic factors, such as interpersonal relations, should help shape academic adjustment. Social integration from a multilevel perspective, specifically, the intersection of the interpersonal and institutional leads to a more holistic development. Schools who value a better student-teacher relationship produce students who feel secure and have a more positive academic response.
An Educator’s role extends far more than just helping students broaden their knowledge and facilitating education itself. Interpersonal relationships are an important resource in school, but it is recognized that relationships are difficult to manipulate by policy or programs. But on the other hand, identifying and building on the characteristics of schools that appear to facilitate the interpersonal relations that may be important for keeping students tied into and committed to the educational process and to more conventional pathways are necessary. Interpersonal relationships such as that of student-teacher might very well be the key in battling these waves of drop-out rate in the Philippines.

References: