CAPACITATING ONESELF TO UNDERSTAND INDIGENOUS LEARNERS

by:
Sally S. Basalo
Teacher II- Parapal Elementary School

Indigenous People (IP) took important roles in the continuous cultivation, enrichment and preservation of Filipino identity and culture. Today, as they struggle both to keep their cultural identity and embrace new trends of learning, the Department of Education (DepEd) provides a responsive program which aims to provide basic education which is responsive to their context and respects their culture. This program was launched as the Indigenous People Education (IPEd) program.

DepEd Order no. 32, S. 2015, “Adopting the Indigenous People Framework” seeks to provide guidance to both public and private schools to localize, indigenize and enhance the K to 12 Curriculum based on their respective educational and social contexts, as they engage with indigenous communities.

For a teacher who is assigned in IPEd implementing school, it is always a protocol to have a deep understanding of their culture before implementing your classroom practices. According to Koffs (2020), to have a successful teaching program involving Indigenous learners, the teacher herself requires to be sensitive for their special needs and deeper knowledge about aboriginal cultural protocols.

Many of the newly-hired teachers are initially assigned to remote and far flung areas where indigenous communities were located. Hence, Koffs (2020) provided some tips for them to capacitate themselves to being culturally sensitive teachers.

Be sensitive to cultural needs. Some of our Indigenous Learners avoid direct eye contact because looking directly to eyes of elders is considered rude in their culture. Do
not let yourself misjudge this kind of behavior. Another thing to consider is that most of the time, they tend to keep quiet to avoid getting wrong when they are struggling to understand the lesson.

Contextualize and relate examples to their environment and community. Relatedness is the key feature for our indigenous learners which stems out from their belief that everything is connected to living thing which is also the foundation of their culture and tradition.

Helping them to create power. Social scientist Amy Cuddy reveals in TED Talk typical body postures of people who feel inferior and the messages this sends to their brain. Proper posture may help people to create who you want to be.

Teaching them with their first language. Scientifically, children's brains are stimulated in the first language that they speak, thus, expected learning is observed.

Successful IPEd programs relate content to real life and work around our IP parents' limitations. As the middleman in bridging the gaps in our indigenous people education, teachers must capacitate themselves to provide the best education among our indigenous learners.

References:

DepEd Order no. 32, S. 2015, “Adopting the Indigenous People Framework”
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Source: Ways of teaching & engaging Aboriginal students - Creative Spirits, retrieved from https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/education/teaching-aboriginal-students