COLLABORATION: KEY TO SOLVING TEACHER BURNOUT

by:
Delfa T. Dabu
Master Teacher I, Mariveles National High School-Poblacion

In recent weeks, there have been multiple social media posts about teacher depression and the hardships that teachers in the Philippines face. These posts show us the ‘dark side’ of one of the noblest professions on earth. Some of the posts were from concerned family members, former teacher and unfortunately from current teachers who experience a loss of a beloved colleague allegedly because of depression in the work place.

It is no secret that being a teacher means you are a multiple person in one. A teacher is not only an instructor of topics, they are also part of multiple governmental thrusts and mandates and programs. This reality means that teachers are bombarded with a lot of clerical tasks that may really consume their personal moments and exhausting their professional time. This scenario is commonly known as teacher burnout.

What is teacher burnout?

According to Enyedi (2015), professional burnout is not a simple feeling from the effects of being overworked or underpaid. It is an accumulation over time of stress, fatigue, isolation and feeling of devaluation as a professional. This condition has an effect on the over-all performance and may even cause health problems.

Enyedi (2015) also stated in the article the signs of teacher burnout. The author used the Maslach Burnout Inventory which is created to quantify the degree of burnout. This tool takes a look at three areas linked to burnout namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and negative relation to personal accomplishment.
Emotional exhaustion means for a teacher as a lack of motivation to teach or the teacher does not like to set goals anymore. This could also mean that the teacher is putting the blame on the students or to the institution for not achieving success.

Depersonalization is characterized by negativity in general. Almost all aspects of professional life have been put aside. The teacher does not want to mingle anymore.

Another area is the perception of personal development negatively. Teachers suffering from burnout do not have goals or do not set them. They lack in confidence and they are frustrated. Not only their professional lives suffered but also their personal life.

What can we do to remedy or lessen teacher burnout?

Since burnout is about feeling neglected and not supported and could lead to being unproductive, we can employ the help of others to lessen or remedy this condition. We can put teacher collaboration at the heart of our professional life. Collaboration means that every member of an institution is working positively to uplift the one another and improved results. Through a systematic, effective and efficient policy on collaboration, teacher can feel part of a working and supportive community.

Through collaboration, a culture of support can be created. Members of an institution do not let others work on their own all the time without guidance. Clerical works can be made easier if teachers collaborate and share ideas to address different situations and innovate existing processes and programs. In return, works are done with quality but it will not consume so much time.

Using collaboration, problems encountered by teachers alone previously can now be worked on by team. Through this system, the burden and the solution is not on one shoulder only. Teachers can see that something is changing for the better.
With the positive feeling being created, a harmonious professional relationship will occur. Teachers will see they are not alone. They can see that they can change things for the better. They can still set goals for themselves, for the students and for the school. They will feel worthy and valued. They can hear encouragement and gratitude. They can regain their sense of pride.

Collaboration is not an escape but instead it is a powerful tool that could uplift everyone in an institution if done right. Helping one another is a simple tool to make work bearable and to achieve the goals set.

Reference: