COPING WITH THE DETERIORATING READING LITERACY IN THE PHILIPPINES

by:
Edgardo Jesus S. Basa II
IT Officer I, SDO Bataan

Reading is one of the macro skills that are very essential for the students to master. This skill serves as an important gateway to many other disciplines and opens many opportunities to make people successful in their endeavours in life. However, the reading literacy in the Philippines is becoming a serious problem which results into incompetency of Filipinos in different fields, may it be in local or in foreign. It is because many has no mastery in this skill in which the practice should be starting since elementary.

In fact, many students can ready but not all of them have the literacy in reading. According to Juan Miguel Luz (2007), reading and literacy are two different things but they are related. He said that "They are related, but literacy is a level of competence, while reading is a skill. One can be literate but not necessarily a reader because reading, as a skill, requires the development of a habit that must be exercised daily if it is to be retained and enhanced. If left unexercised, the skill becomes rusty and can even be lost."

This dilemma in a classroom setting is very alarming because this can lead to a more serious problem not only in the classroom but into the society as well. Poor reading literacy results into poor learning since people need to have reading ability in able to work effectively, to communicate well with other people and to be globally competitive. However, this problem is not always student-factor. There are many factors to be pointed out that can serve as reasons why such problem exists.

In fact, as stated by an article entitled 'Reading Education in the Philippines' (2012) published on the website Smart Schools, poverty, technology and lack of motivation and inspiration impaired the reading education in the Philippines. Some families do not have
enough money to send their children to schools in which they can assure a quality education but there are public schools for those who cannot afford costly education. However, some public schools do not have enough teachers or sufficient updated reading materials for the students.

In addition to this, the modern technology also compete with the chance of the children to read books. Many children choose to play video games or mobile games or spend several hours in different social media sites instead of reading a book. Lack of motivation is also the problem because not only the teacher's motivation is needed but also parental motivation. If there is no support or motivation from the people around them, it may hinder the willingness or interest of children towards reading.

However, despite these problems encountered in the reading literacy, there are several reading programs offered both by public and private groups in able to promote reading and save many children from incompetency in this skill. There are also programs which offer trainings for teachers to remediate and enrich reading education. There are also some reading comprehension strategies and techniques that can be applied by the teacher, such as generating questions, determining importance, silent reading, interpretation of vocabulary in context, etc.

Philippines is tagged as 'a nation of nonreaders' and it was said the reading literacy in the country us getting worse. What the children need are the motivation from the people that surround them, support from the government in providing up-to-date reading materials, trained teachers and help from adults or friends to inspire them to love reading. Nothing is impossible to achieve if there is determination. As long as there are programs that support reading education, there would still be hope and as long as there are committed teachers in nurturing young minds, it is not yet too late for a better change.
References:

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