CURVING CHALLENGES

by:
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The suicide of a newly hired teacher in Leyte solicited varied reactions and suspicions. Fingers started pointing to different directions. Emotions reached unprecedented heights – from pity to blaming, to anger. Concerned government agencies started to do some modifications on policies regarding newly hired teachers.

However, the main problem is how well teachers are equipped to handle the pressures and challenges of the teaching profession. Teachers do not learn this from college. Internship and practice teaching present only a glimpse of what lies ahead. Reality sets in at the time when we are too excited to teach after hiring. Our eyes open up to stacks of paper works, to pupils' attitudes and behaviors, and to travelling long distances to and from school.

I have my share of shock and disillusionment after seven years of handling classrooms full of Grade 3 pupils. In the past three years, I have been assigned to teach Sections 6, 7, 8 and SPED Slow classes. Several years ago, report forms has started and has increased steadily. The pupils' behavior has become more challenging with misconceptions of Child Protection Policy.

Depression and discouragement can be very challenging, but I hold on. Through the years, I have learned how to cope with trying times. I will admit that there are times when I almost give up, feeling the burdens too heavy to bear. In fact, when I heard about Teacher Emylou’s demise, I felt sad but readily related to her situation. I understood what pushed her to end it all. I believe, the teacher must have missed some encouraging landmarks along the way to the teaching profession. Let me share what I do to curve these challenges.

First, I look at every circumstances, including painful and challenging ones, as learning experiences. As much as we like to see our pupils learn, we also like to see ourselves learning. For a teacher, learning is always welcome. We see our pupils' learning as the ultimate dream in our career. Nothing comes before it, not even our salary. So for me, a teacher, the fact that I can learn something from my situations helps me overcome challenges in teaching.
Second, I divide huge goals into smaller tasks that I can accomplish in a day. Discouragement usually sets in when I see myself insufficient to finish what needs done. So, I do not overburden myself; I bite only what I can chew. Moreover, I make it a practice to finish at least one task every day. This conditions my mind to being successful. I learned this from John Maxwell’s “Law of the Process” from his famous book, 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership.

Third, I reward myself for every accomplished goal, not task. When you see me in a spa, having my facial or my nails and hair done, I have achieved a goal. I also reward myself with foods (diets are suspended for a day), with clothes or with books. Actually, I am now planning to go on a trip somewhere south in April, next year, because I can finish all my reports before that month ends.

Fourth, I look at teaching, not as a means of income, but as a service to God and my fellow human beings. I believe my ability to teach is a gift from God and I will be accountable to God for how I use this gift. Gifts are subtle ways of giving responsibilities to the receiver. When we receive books, indirectly, the giver gives us a responsibility to read the book. Same is true with clothes, jewelries and other apparels; we use them when we know the giver will see us in a gathering. God gave me this gift because God believes I can meet up to the Giver’s expectations. I also believe that one day, God will require me to account how I used God’s blessings. On the way manner, I am also indebted to humanity, because the intention of the gift is to make others’ lives better. I owe it to my professors, to my parents, to my colleagues, and I pay it forward to my pupils.

Finally, I look at teaching profession as an expression of myself. As long as I know who I am and what I can do for the education of young children, I will never quit teaching. Challenges and disappointments may be part of the process, but as long as I can tell the world who I am, I am okay. Besides, all professions have their share of unique challenges and difficulties.

I thank teaching; this is who I am. And even though I walk through difficult times, I will fear no hardships, because God, my parents, my loved ones, and my pupils are with me.
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