EDUCATION IN THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL

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In far-flung, upland villages, it has become common for one to come across a group of school children walking towards their one-classroom school at the peak of the ridge. A number of them walk for hours, usually with only a piece of plastic sheet as their protection in instances of downpour. Day by day, they plod through the usual muddy and uphill pathway, still their faces beaming, seemingly oblivious of the disadvantages they have compared to their fellow school children in more privileged communities.

Some of these pupils in the uplands, already in their teens, had barely learned to scribble their names. Others were just starting to recall the lessons, having dropped out of school for the past couple of years, often due to sheer poverty.

It is also common for pupils in different grade levels to sit together as a single class – the so-called multigrade system. How the teacher, the only one in the village, manages to make her pupils distinguish their lessons from that of the other grade level is, until today, short of a mystery. In some instances, these children hold their classes for only four days of the week, not five like the normal grade school, as the teacher would need the fifth day to walk home.

The challenge becomes more and more difficult as they reach the fifth grade or the secondary level. They now have to hike to the nearest intermediate or high school, which is about half-a-day’s walk away. There are no rides to take, for there is no serviceable road leading to the place. This has become the reason for many to stop their schooling, and concentrate instead on growing crops.

Yet, just like any other children, their thirst for knowledge is evident, happiness comes easily for the children – and their parents – over any little help that comes along, like a set of armchairs for their classroom, a box of used books, or a makeshift stage.

The desire of many to strive for good education is like no other, as manifested by countless success stories of pupils from schools in the countryside, given their situation and the struggles that they have to go through, one could not help but ask, is their craving complemented with the proper education specialties that are prescribed for the Filipino youth?
Despite unending efforts by the government, through the Department of Education, to bring quality basic education to the remotest of villages in the country, it is an undeniable fact that pupils in these areas remain at this sorry state. This situation remains a nagging problem, which has raged on through more than a century of existence of the Philippine educational system.

But the mere fact that the most basic education has reached the remotest of places is a far cry from the situation not so long ago when the education of villagers here was either disregarded, or was left to tribal missionaries.

Reference:

http://www.skillingindia.com/thought-tree/interviews/educating-at-the-grass-root-level