EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES: A PERSONAL OUTLOOK

by:
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Once I read a friend’s status on Facebook saying “I live my life everyday as if nothing happens but when I look back I realized so much have changed”.

I agree at a point that we frequently feel as if our life is stagnant though each day we face different forms of changes. As a person belonging to the Generation X (born 1965-1980), my eyes are wide opened not to see the many changes that took place over the years. Most especially in our educational system.

I can’t help not to be nostalgic every time I reminisce my learning years. From the spacious ground in our elementary school to the traditional and physical games we were engaged to. No cellphones. No gadgets. No internet. Just the nature and us.

As the population never ceases to increase, the need for additional classrooms for bigger number of students had been a necessity. Thus, the once spacious ground we used to roam, run over and frolic are now placed with two, three or four-story building for classrooms.

During our time, we were given assignments even on weekends and it never intervened with our family bonding instead became a way to form a closer relationship with parents and siblings, when at times, we asked for their help.

We frequently visit the library back then, especially when you are assigned to report on a certain lesson. And I will never forget the feeling of frustration and disappointment whenever the topic you are searching for was not found in the available books in the library. It is a totally different story by now. Gone are those days of being a bookworm. With the evolution of internet, almost everything is within reach just by a touch of a fingertip in an electronic keyboard.
We grew up in constant flash card games in our math subject that we voluntarily memorized the multiplication and division table. We were trained not to use calculators in computations. We were oftentimes monitored in our reading ability and comprehension. We were conditioned to pay great respect to our teachers. Even the parents too. We feared that our name will be written on “noisy or talkative” list when our teacher was not around. And most of all, we were products of corporal punishment but no one was abused. It only taught us to be more disciplined. We were frightened by our teacher’s gesture of raising a hand with a stick. We knew that any moment we will be spanked and so we rather behaved well not to.

In later years, when we were introduced in the table of elements, we were ordered to memorize everything on it- symbol, atomic number and mass. During examination, we were not allowed to bring with us a copy. It should all be in our mind. And, yes, we did it. We survived and passed the tests without a copy of the table of elements for reference and a calculator for solving. We made it on our own.

Those practices were no longer observed at the present time. Should I say that the Millennials (1981-1996) and Post-Millennials (1997-present) are lucky enough not to be toiled of the burdens of the past. Or should I sympathize with them for being “half done” instead of “well done”.

Learners nowadays are no longer required to memorize. In my observation, teachers who asked their students to memorize are being criticized for making life difficult for them. And there are a lot of teachers’ complain on how poor are the quality of the learners we have today. This can be easily traced upon enrolment in secondary school where in they are asked to read in English and Filipino and answer some math questions. The result is sobering. Not to mention the decline of values formation which are evident on how they deal with the teachers.

Flash cards games. Reading monitoring. No calculator. No copy of table of elements. Corporal punishment. Where have all these strategies gone?
I do not blame the students for being molded as what they are now. I blame the way we make life easy for them. I blame the pampering. I blame the spoon feeding. I blame the open notes system.

I can see it all clearly and it is inevitable for me to have a comparison. Because I was once a student and now, a teacher.

And this is a sorrowful truth. The sad reality that every day something happens and that produces a gigantic change in our educational system.

References: