ENTERING THE ACADEMIC COMMITMENT: DO AGE REALLY MATTER?

by:
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There is a saying that goes “The early bird gets the worm.” Many people apply this in their daily lives and of course, this can also be applied to education. Most parents prefer to enter their kids to school at a young age, the earlier the better even. It is often thought that children should start learning early due to their sponge-like nature that can easily absorb information, and that is crucial for the development both in their minds and in their character. But the thing is, there is a chance that school may hinder their childhood, the time that they could use to play and explore will lessen because of academic activities. Their social circle will widen, they will have friends and will learn how to interact with them not just with their family.

It is in the norm that at the age of 4, kids start to enter kindergarten here in the Philippines. The activities that they are most likely to do is to learn the alphabet, numbers and play. The duration of their time in school daily is normally 1-4 hours due to their short attention span. There are researches that conclude that play-based early childhood program is beneficial for children before they start formal education. But unlike in other countries wherein formal education starts when children are of 6b or 7 years of age, in our country it starts at the age of 5, children usually starts to have their peers and develop a need to be approved by them. They are gullible and are easy to be drove around by peer pressure added to their sensitivity and if not properly guided they may develop misconception about their environment and have distrust. Added to that, some may think that the peer pressure that children can give is no threat but we should take note that at this age, minds are just starting to develop empathy, children lack the reasoning to know what’s good or bad and if it gets worse, instead of them starting to be empathetic they might turn apathetic, bullying is likely to occur. There are other reasons that may lead to the hindrance in their development and learning as to they may lose interest in going to school.
In Finland, the age children starts to enter school is at the age of 7 year old. Many may agree that it is a late start but it is quite a good age to begin attending formal classes because children at this age are mature, confident and capable of settling well in their environment. It is also noteworthy that students in this Scandinavian country are happier and are more mature than children in other countries. They start at a later age and their curriculum isn’t heavily academicals.

That positive outcome is because this is applied to their country and the public accepted it and embraced it properly. If ever a parent send his/her child to school at the age of 7 in a country wherein children starts at a younger age, this may fail as the child may feel out of place and be discourage by both peer pressure and the gap between his/her classmates’ age as per Jen Hogan stated his experience in the website Irish Examiner.

And so a vital question rises, what is the optimal age for children to attend formal school?

Younger or older, it really depends on the maturity of the child and how he absorbs and reacts to his surroundings. Children must be prepared as well as their parents to properly guide them on the changes they will encounter. A big factor is also dependent on the educational system of the country where one will stud, as well as its society.

References:
