FACE TO FACE CLASSES IN THE PHILIPPINES: ARE SCHOOLS AND GOVERNMENT READY?

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In a little more than a week, the 2021–2022 school year will begin, and for the second year in a row, primary and secondary school children will be kept out of classrooms and left to accept "blended learning." Many people have slammed the policy, and it is definitely problematic in numerous ways. However, in the midst of a pandemic that is still far from being contained, it is still the greatest option for completing schooling.

The national pandemic task team will try again to persuade President Rodrigo Duterte to allow physical courses to be held in regions where COVID-19 illnesses are unlikely to spread. However, Malacañang is unable to specify when education authorities would make their proposal to the President concerning physical education programs.

The question is whether we are prepared to offer face-to-face classes in the light of the continuing rise of COVID-19 positive cases and the therapeutic interventions of new variants of the virus. The Philippines has only vaccinated around 12.5 percent of the population. As of now, only few school-aged children have been vaccinated, which is concerning given indications that younger individuals are more vulnerable to the now-common Delta form of the coronavirus.

Another thing to consider is that, in "normal" conditions, kids in the Philippines and abroad are mandated to receive vaccines against prevalent infectious illnesses. Children who have not had vaccines are not allowed to attend school until they have received them, and the same experts who are now condemning the government's choice not to reopen classes are unconcerned about this regulation.
It is logical and realistic for the government to investigate ways to reopen schools, but the benefit of doing so is that the country will be better prepared when the time comes, which will not be before student vaccines are readily accessible. The possibility of long-term harm from a lack of face-to-face education should compel organizations like Unicef, which are quick to condemn the Philippines, to act quicker to assist the nation acquire the immunizations it requires to remedy the problem.

References: