FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT: WORKING TOWARD THE INCREASE OF THE COUNTRY'S SCHOOL PARTICIPATION RATE

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As the national government entails to invest to its human capital, specifically the youth, it started improving its policies to give the Filipinos sound, responsive education. In 2011, the Philippines vowed to achieve a 100% enrolment, or participation, rate by 2015, as signatory to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the world's time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions-income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion-while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability. The said MDG goal was implemented under the Philippine Development Plan (PDP 2011-2016) to ensure that all Filipinos, especially the marginalized, would have an equal opportunity to learn and contribute to the progress of the country.

According to the Philippine Education for All 2015 Review Report, a review of the 2011-2016 PDP, the Aquino Administration has failed to reach all the educational reform targets, especially in the participation and survival rates of students. The reports and analysis of the five-year plan revealed that the Secondary School age participation rate only reached 65%, 35% short from the target, while the Primary School achieved a 95% rate. The completion rate in the Secondary School, on the other hand, was recorded only at 73%, while the Primary School has a 72-percent completion rate.

Although the figures do not show a sudden dipped, it is still a question for the educational institutions and agencies as to when they could achieved the 100% educational reform targets. The national government admits that the educational reform requires greater effort from the instituting
bodies. At the provincial level, educational programs like visiting out of school youths at home, online modules for working students and counselling drop out students have played a great role in giving basic education to all the students. Teachers’ efforts, especially in the town of Mariveles which has the largest number of youth population, are beyond the classroom hours. It is very notable that teachers are also encouraged to discuss the educational needs of the students to the parents.

With all the said programs, one question remains: are the teachers fighting a good fight in encouraging students to finish their studies, despite the intervention of the socio-economic factors like poverty and the environment? The national government and all the previous administrations have always prioritized the provision of quality education. And the efforts and the contribution of the teachers are always significant in increasing the achievements of the Department of Education. It will always be a good fight for the educators. It is always with a great pride that educators can say they helped in building the nation by offering quality education to all Filipinos in all age, and in all era.

The Philippines is setting new targets under the new administration and the influence of the new K to 12 program. Educational agencies and institutions would face more challenges and encounter more problems, but rest assured, the teachers will be fighting a good fight in helping build the nation.
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