HOME GARDENS IN DISTANCE LEARNING

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Due to Covid-19 pandemic, Filipinos turned their attention to indoor or house plants to cope with stress. The monikers for enthusiasts “plantitos” and “plantitas” become popular because of the plant craze. Plants improve mental health. The restrictions from quarantines and lockdowns affect the mental well-being of many people. Research has shown that plants can lessen stress and make people at ease. It improves the air quality of your home providing more oxygen. More oxygen makes your body work more efficiently and think clearly. It can also improve productivity as it adds color giving you mental boost and inspiration for creativity. It can also improve relationship not only with nature but also with other people. This leads to improved compassion and empathy towards other people (Positive Health Wellness, 2018). Now, many Filipinos are setting up small gardens at home. These gardens can be used in education.

One of the best things about planting or gardening is that it fosters personal growth which can be used in teaching and learning. Garden-based learning (GBL) can be adapted in the new normal. Instead of the usual GBL at school or community, the new setting is at home. This can be used as an innovation in distance or remote learning. Parents and teachers can use this strategy in making the learning process more meaningful and authentic.

GBL is defined as a strategy that uses garden as an instructional tool in teaching. This strategy is based on experiential learning. GBL has the ability to enrich education in all cultural settings around the world (Desmond et al, 2004). Gardens provide real-life context specially in science education. It is flexible since learners across educational stages
can experience its benefits. Learners experience spatial and observation skills which are linked to the development of scientific knowledge and maturity (Eugenio et al, 2020).

Subjects such as Science, Mathematics, Social Studies and Arts can be taught using the garden as laboratory. Research has found out that GBL improve life skills of learners. These skills include critical thinking, problem solving, leadership and decision making, community service and environmental responsibility, health and food security. Related literature also show evidence that GBL increase academic performance. It also helps in discipline and management. It also improves focus and enthusiasm for learning. More importantly, it gives the learners a sense of ownership to learning and accomplishments (Desmond et al, 2004).

GBL will surely make distance learning interesting and interactive as it engages the five senses. In line with this, the Department of Education (DepEd) has launched “Gulayan sa Tahanan” as an extension to the existing “Gulayan sa Paaralan” Project. The aim of the project is poverty reduction, food security, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Parents and their children are encouraged to plant vegetables and herbs in their home gardens.

Aside from the academic benefits of GBL, gardening can be a relationship connector between parents and their children. A family gardening together gives opportunity to be away from social media and mobile phones for a moment and engage with each other face to face. It is also better than spending time together watching television since it is interactive and requires active participation. In this strategy, parents are also the stars in the teaching process. Teaching lifelong skills such as patience and gratitude which are relevant in our present time. GBL helps family grow stronger (Lemire, 2018).

The Covid-19 pandemic allowed educators to explore other learning pedagogies. Curriculum developers may consider gardens as a laboratory and GBL as a component
of distance learning. With the many benefits of GBL, educators will surely sustain and provide quality education to every learner.

References:


