MAKING SCIENCE CLASSES RELEVANT AMIDST THE PANDEMIC: LESSONS AND REALIZATIONS

by:
Alfredo C. Cabanilla Jr.
Teacher II, Limay Senior High School

The COVID19, other than its negative impact to the minds of people, has positively promoted science because people have started to take keen interest on viruses and other areas of scientific inquiries. A lot of people have begun to explore and ask more scientific questions because of the dangers and threats of the pandemic. However, Senior High School Core Curriculum Subjects which includes the physical sciences, earth and life sciences do not mention anything about pandemic or even a substantial discussion on viruses, immunization, antibodies, or vaccines? In fact, even our Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Education components focus mainly on natural disasters such as earthquakes, typhoons, and fires, but not specifically on pandemics. These topics on viruses and pandemics were of course remain important before the pandemic and will remain so for the years ahead.

Providing relevant science education and promoting “scientific literacy” among our youth will remain as one of the main goals of the country’s K12 Education, but how we have been doing it before the pandemic, and even now that we are in the middle of the pandemic remains debatable. As we all struggled over the past 11 months of lockdowns, ECQs, MECQs, and GCQs, and MECQs, forcing us all teachers to shift to modular or blended learning, the question “How can we make science education relevant (and even responsive) amidst the pandemic?” is an important question that need to be discussed. Over the past few months that we are delivering science contents in the basic education via modular approach, what have we realized and learned so far? For me, here are three lessons and realizations that I want to share to our heroic educators.
First, put value on reading and writing even if it is a science class. Balinbin (2020) in his report in Business World revealed that students in the Philippines are falling behind their Southeast Asian counterparts in terms of reading, writing, and mathematics, “with a significant percentage of students still performing at levels expected in early years of primary education, a regional study showed,” the report revealed. Our Grade 5 students perform even worse than those in Cambodia, an even poorer country than the Philippines. The pandemic has taught us teachers to put back the value of reading in our science classes, most especially now that our students have to read much on their own.

Second, going back to practical science. Because of the ban on face-to-face classes, it has been a great opportunity for teachers to direct their students to explore the theories of science with what is already around them and whatever is already available in their homes. As science teachers, we can direct our students to utilize practical things to experiment and understand science concepts.

Finally, I have realized that access and equity is a real problem. How do we make sure that students received equal level of quality instruction? How can we make sure that students have access to resources they need in order to progress on their learning? It is already common problem that many of our students do not have access to learning resources, especially internet connectivity which is essential now in the new normal of education. Equity concerns have been there even before the pandemic, and the situation has exacerbated the problem. As teachers, we have to ensure that certain level of equity and access are provided to our students.

Truly, it is challenging to deliver science instruction during the pandemic. But as of now, we have to take note of realizations and learnings. Why? We can use all this one day to better our teaching and provide more quality instruction to our students.

References:
Balinbin, A. (202), December 3). Filipino students falling behind in reading, writing levels in Southeast Asia, Business World.