NEW ERA IN EDUCATION FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2021-2022 DURING PANDEMIC

by:
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Time is indeed flying so fast—September 13 marks the official opening date of classes for School year 2021-2022. It feels like yesterday since this pandemic has started, and we all just witnessed how, not only our lives, but also the entire education system has changed immensely and tremendously. It has already been more than a year of having so called blended learning as adopted approach to overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges in delivering quality basic education amid global health crises.

As a DepEd Non-Teaching employee, and a father as well who has a child to get schooling probably this school year or next, I get this exhilarating feeling about the opening of classes. Everyone hopes that everything will be back to normal in our lives, particularly in our children’s education per se. However, with the increasing number of Covid cases day by day, this high hope is far from realization.

Upon reading the latest news online reported by Philippine Star (Limos, 2021), I found out that Philippines is the only country in Asia, and one of the two countries in the world, that has yet to resume physical classes in school: Venezuela being the other country. Although Southeast Asian countries tallied the highest daily cases of the delta variant in the region, most of the countries have decided to reopen schools. The UNICEF-Philippines (2021) has been persuading the government to reopen schools, highlighting “best practices” of other countries that have resumed physical classes. According to Faingold (2021), the head of education work in UNICEF-Philippines; resumption of physical classes should be done gradually, on voluntary basis, and learning from the experience of other countries but adapting to the experience of the Philippines. He also
stated that closing schools at the beginning of the pandemic was the best thing to do, but this has relatively negative impacts on learning, hence voluntary and gradual reopening of schools should be taken into considerations.

Having read this, I was uncertain of what to think or feel about the information. Initially, I got disappointed, somewhat ashamed, and pressured, not to mention the negative comments of netizens regarding the issue. Being quite aware that our Filipino children and students will keep on missing education opportunities, frustration hit me. Nevertheless, as I had retrospection of the things transpiring in our country during these trying times, I got to say that we must have a realistic mindset about it. We should not join the bandwagon. No one in his right and sound mind should consider reopening schools in the middle of the worst waves of the deadliest variants to emerge in this pandemic.

Schools may be able to guarantee implementing safety health protocols within their campuses, but how about when they leave the school’s premises? Will they still be protected from the virus? Sadly, we are still in the middle of the worst wave of pandemic, and we do not get any better than we were in 2020. Reopening schools with physical classes of most countries does not mean it is a sound decision.

Let’s face the reality that we cannot risk the lives of our children. More than ever, their lives are more important and should never be gambled for the sake of anything, not even for face-to-face learning.

Although, currently, we can say, many parents are in favor of face-to-face classes as they have experienced the toll and struggles of blended learning approach and perhaps, they have come up with the conclusions that this is ineffective in achieving the quality education the learners deserve to get.

As I see it in the perspective of a DepEd employee and parent, our present situation serves as an eye-opener for all of us; a wake-up call for some. We now clearly observed
the long-term problems and challenges our education has been facing since then. As parents with direct monitoring in the teaching and learning process of my children, we become completely aware of the attitudes and behavior of the students of the new generation towards studies and learning. We ourselves discover these and finally, encounter and experience what the teachers do in handling not only one or two, but rather, at least 50 students inside the classroom—great empathy, understanding and unity should be developed among us.

DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones assured the public that no learner will be left behind as we have another academic year of blended learning. Surely, our Department of Education is doing its best to provide appropriate, timely and quality education for the learners. We, as stakeholders, parents, and guardians, we should give our continued cooperation and support to schools and to the Department of Education, as they prepare for another challenging, yet worthwhile endeavor in the education of our children. Hand-in-hand, we can undoubtedly surpass this pandemic triumphantly without putting the education of our children at stake.

Truly, the opening of classes for this school years marks a new era, a new beginning for all of us. It embarks another journey to take, so we can get better, braver, kinder, wiser, and more compassionate to one another to get through the hurdles and biggest challenges brought to us by this pandemic. The future of our children lies in our hands—we are responsible for our children not being left behind in their education. We are all accountable for the consequences and result of every decision we make. We should take part to make the efforts of DepEd successful for our children’s welfare, safety, and education. Brace ourselves for the new era! Together, we can do it! Together, we can still have a brighter future ahead for our children and for our family.

References: