ON THE RECENT READING COMPREHENSION RESULTS

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The Philippines came out as lowest among 79 countries in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) reading comprehension survey results released this December (Rappler, 2019). Reasons and solutions have both been raised by several individuals. Sen. Cynthia Villar’s response to the matter is a notable example.

Villar has proposed that well-performing schools should be incentivized, while low-performing schools should be disincentivized. This is so low-performing schools can have the “wish to excel better.” She also suggested that the quality of students be given emphasis. Additionally, she prompted that there should be measurements of school performance, such as competitions. Villar recommends that there be “requirements with regards to quality” (ABS-CBN, 2019).

Simply put, this proposal “discincentivizes” schools that provide education that is considered low quality in terms of the established government standard, if it is ever implemented. What is concerning with this proposal is that it only serves to create greater disparity between schools that have access to resources and those without. It also further aggravates problems of schools that is beyond their control and should be addressed by the government. Two of these many problems are access to materials and lack of proper facilities. Both of which contribute to conducive learning and teaching environments. Hence, this may also affect reading comprehension. However, this does not denote that this is the solution and the only possible solution to the reading comprehension problem.

Medium of instruction and the language with which reading materials are written are possible contributors to performance in reading comprehension and, in general,
learning. For Filipino children, a study has found that phonological processing skills serve as a base for developing reading and spelling in English and Filipino languages (Ocampo, 2002). A study by Aquino (2012) on the effects of bilingual instruction on literacy skills was conducted with 14 urban poor children aged four to six. The children had Filipino as their primary language, were non-readers, and haven’t attended school. They were assigned to one of the following 8-week interventions: monolingual instruction in Filipino, monolingual instruction in English, or bilingual instruction. Monolingual Filipino as medium of instruction was found to have the highest post-test scores. Meaning, this group has improved the most. This was followed by the monolingual English group. Meanwhile, the bilingual instruction group improved the least (Aquino, 2012). These findings imply the potential of promoting and enhancing Filipino language education policies in alleviating reading comprehension issues. But, we are yet to win this battle. Last May 2019, Filipino and Panitikan were also removed as required subjects in college. Hence, adjustments that favor Filipino language education, without the complete neglect of English’s role as the universal language, could be made.

References:


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