POSITIVE DISCIPLINE IN EVERYDAY TEACHING PRIMER: A TEACHER’S VIEWPOINT

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INTRODUCTION AND THE PROBLEM

Teaching is a vocation. It is not a lucrative position. Those who decide to teach must have the passion and commitment to make children learn. He must have this genuine love for young people.

Elmore (2015) gave “Six Defining Characteristics of Generation Z”, and these are cynical, private, entrepreneurial, multi-tasking, hyper-aware and technology dependent. The new batch of millennials is the most technologically saturated generation who consider technology as equally important as water and air.

In this scenario, schools and teachers are even more challenged to battle with these outside forces that magnetize and transform the many aspects of youngsters’ personality including their values.

Not to mention, the long-lived problems in the Department of Education system such as classroom congestion, insufficiency of learning materials, backward mode of instruction and the like which have not been fully addressed up to this time.

The education’s battlefield is intricate. Teachers are obstructed with too many barriers to get through. While many programs and projects are created to encourage and make students finish school, there are lesser efforts to arm and sustain teachers in the performance of their duties.

The issuance of DepEd Order 40, s. 2012 (Child Protection Policy), DepEd Order 55, s. 2013 (Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 10627 otherwise known as the
Anti- Bullying Act of 2013), DepEd Order 18, s. 2015 (Guidelines and Procedures on the Management of Children-At-Risk and Children in Conflict with the Law), and the latest, the Positive Discipline in Everyday Teaching (PDET) Primer gives a full swing protection to the students and gifts parents an effective counter-attack to teachers even in their mildest mistakes.

The PDET Primer which is the focus of this analysis was formally launched in June, 2016 in DepEd NCR, Quezon City. It materialized in collaboration with E-Net Philippines and Save the Children. According to DepEd Usec. Alberto T. Muyot, the primer is another product of the continuing efforts of the Department and all partners and stakeholders to promote zero tolerance for any act of violence against children in school.

Indeed, the primer laid careful steps to facilitate a problem solving approach to handle unfavorable classroom situations. In totality, the content was impressive, very psychological in approach, seemingly; however, it overlooked the actual situations in grass roots.

EVIDENCES

Identifying a gray area in the PDET Primer is unsuccessful. The message is clear. The sample problems and steps are indisputable. Experts have obviously worked on the Primer.

E-Net Philippines, began in 1999, is a Civil Society Network for Education Reforms with 150 member networks and organizations in the Philippines. Save the Children is the world’s leading independent children’s organization, and has worked in the Philippines for 30 years.
Sadly, however, it is too good to be true. The suggested steps are very ideal, as if the teaching field is a haven paradise, and teachers have no other duties and responsibilities but to attend to student’s needs.

The following are striking statements contained in the Primer:

- It is important to note that every situation is different and that teachers need to consider each situation and follow each step. (page 18)

Does the teacher need to go through the five steps before solving the issue?

- Positive Discipline is about problem solving, so you may try several different ways of providing warmth and structure before you find the response that actually addresses the problem as the child sees it. (page 20)

How much time will the teacher invest to get through the problem? What if it is too long to handle, like a month or more? What if it is a special case?

- You may also introduce innovative teaching methods where interaction is possible such as role playing, dance or action songs so everyone can participate. This can also provide a break for children are easily bored or who need to discuss issues raised in class with other students rather than just listening to the teacher speaks. (page 26)

Will the teacher suddenly shift the lesson into another activity just to get the attention or interest of the bored child? What if this child is frequently inattentive? Is it still about the teacher’s incapability to animate the lesson?

- Talk to the children immediately. Listen to each child’s explanation about what happened. Ask what the fight was about. (page 27)

If the fight happened in the middle of the discussion, will the teacher leave the rest of the class, and conduct a sincere talk with the two students? How long will it take to appease the situation?
The project may not be suited to the student’s capability. (page 31)

Teachers usually give a uniform project to give an objective appreciation of the outputs. There is one set of criteria and rubrics, good for all classes handled. How much does the teacher know each student? Does she have much free time to consider variation?

Ask him if he needs help in doing the project. (page 32)

How many students need extra time and assistance? Can the teacher attend to them all? How long is the free time of each teacher? Does she have no other things to do? Like DLL, checking of papers, recording, other forms etc.?

Remind them and the whole class about the rules on school attendance and explain the importance of asking for permission if they have to go out of the school. (page 34)

How truly significant is classroom attendance to passing? There are many cases of long absences but given due considerations because the system has to reduce dropout and failure rates? How should a teacher respond to a constant threatening reminder that if you fail a student, you are obligated to teach him in summer without extra remuneration?

When the parents are working, the student has to take care of younger siblings. (page 35)

How will a teacher get into family issues? Does she have control on personal issues of the family, including what is best for the children?

The reality is the school is not a haven paradise, not to mention, the more difficult situations in island and mountain schools.

While we keep on adopting the best practices of the best school systems in the world like Finland, Switzerland, Belgium, Singapore and Netherland, the government
investment on education is no much to the heavy investments of these countries to their schools.

In Kindergarten where a teacher has to handle 30 students or more, she has no teacher-aid. The provision of assistance will depend on the generosity of parents. A kindergarten teacher generally has two sessions to complete the six hours requirement in service. How will she properly handle cases of continuous crying and grabbing others’ belongings? Pre-schoolers are innately active, carefree and restless. Are the present kindergarten classrooms well-equipped to sustain the interest and focus of these young children? Take a look at the two pictures below.

![Picture A](image1.jpg) ![Picture B](image2.jpg)

The first picture is the common kindergarten classroom in the Philippines. The second is the ideal one which may be seen in the country but only in Montessori or elite schools. Unfortunately, the number of children is far greater in public than in private.

Children with special needs are oftentimes mixed with the regular classes, especially those coming from poor families. For example, Children with Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity (ADHD) mixed with typical students tend to become the source of class disorganization/disorientation. They have needs that are not addressed because the majority is normal. They need specialized teachers to handle them.
In a Rappler report of 2014, it was said that only 620 out of 34,000 public elementary schools nationwide have either a SPED center or at least a SPED program. There is also a shortage of SPED teachers with only 6,000 handling 239,000 pupils with special needs.

In Elementary and High School, situations are tighter, majority of Pinoy classrooms are congested, accommodating 60-70 students. Worse, others have no classrooms due to several reasons. Classes are held in covered courts, tree shades, and/or other available shady areas. There are also cases that big classrooms are divided into two to house two different sections or grades. Many schools have 2-3 shifts because of overpopulation. In this setting, a conducive environment is quite impossible. Noise, heat and space are insoluble. Teachers cannot fully take control of the situation. They need extra effort to make students listen, focus and work according to instructions, and oftentimes extra energy is not enough to sustain the one hour period.

Teachers do not have a fountain of inexhaustible energy. They are not invincible from noise, heat, space and the many changes brought about by global warming. The Primer reiterates anger management. Teachers in face of disagreeable behaviors should hold their temper, and always speak to students in a calm and soothing voice. They should find time to explain what is right to the students. Did the authors consider these factors?

It is fortunate for teachers who have one lesson preparation but not those who are handling multiple grades or different subjects. Though there are downloadable lesson plans and daily lesson logs available in the Internet today, many principals opt to additionally burden their teachers by requiring them to handwrite everything. Not to mention the other paper works and the paper evidences for the RPMS that they have to produce. Let me pose again this question: How much free time does a teacher have to make private talks with problem students?
In our system, no remuneration is given for extra services. Tardiness and absenteeism are sure deductions, counting by the minute. That is acceptable! You get hospitalized due to sickness or accident, it is not excused. You are mourning because a family member died, it bears no reason. You conduct home visitations on Saturdays or other school related work, it is part of your job. It is like demanding more but caring less.

The Primer encourages innovativeness and creativity to hook the interest of today’s millennials. However, the Philippine schools are unable to adjust with the trends of time. Chalk and board are the long standing partners of teachers up to this time. In 2007, I had the opportunity to participate in a month training in Asia and the Pacific, Ortigas City. The university is a high-class institution where classrooms were fully air-conditioned. The student chairs were arranged like in theater house. Every room had a white board, projector, karaoke and microphone to aid teaching. This setting was 10 years ago, and it might have improved even more. In fact, there is so much that can be created inside the classroom if only, teachers are aided with the power of technology today. Sadly, even Wifi is only for office consumption.

Moreover, the Filipino kids are getting different especially with the way they deal with teachers. Aside from the fact that they are pampered with many rights and protection policies, parents today are getting different as well. According to the latest news (2016), Philippines has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in Asia. One out of 10 Filipino girls in 100 million, 15-19 years old, has already given birth. Parents are getting younger. The family, which is the foundation of values, is gradually collapsing. Consequently, the school carries the burden of reforming children. Many of the problem students are products of broken families. Oftentimes, they are the ones who challenge authority and break rules, and the number cannot be underestimated. Do the generalist and specialist teachers have background and trainings in psychology and guidance and counseling? Disruptive behavior, fighting, rudeness, no assignments and
projects, cutting classes, absenteeism and tardiness are not occasional but common happenings in schools. I remember, my former student who was a transferee from Pasig City, when I asked his reason for enrolling in the province, he told me: “Magulo po dun Ma’am. Laging may away. Marami po kasing frats.”

The campaign for zero tolerance is praiseworthy, but if rule breakers persist, is calm and diplomatic approach still effective? Rules and regulations keep the order and structure intact. We cannot keep on laying out all possible reasons to explain misbehaviors. More oftentimes, consistency in rule implementation will hold rule breakers at bay.

Zero tolerance and zero dropout rate are achievable. Government has to invest big in education. Let us take Japan, one of the top performing countries for literacy, science, and maths in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) group. In this country, high school is not compulsory but enrolment is close to 98%. Why? Because the education is fully sustained.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The vision of the Department of Education to make every school a safe, free from fear, and conducive learning environment is also a dream of every Filipino teacher.

Teachers are partners of the government in uplifting the quality of Philippine education, and raising the standard of its system in the country.

Teachers are hoping that as the government prioritizes the children, it also creates sustainable projects for their welfare.

If there is positive discipline for students, hopefully, there is also positive reinforcement for teachers.
The following are recommended to boost the morale and rejuvenate the enthusiasm of Filipino teachers.

1. Increase the salary of teachers. In a survey conducted by National Economic and Development Authority (2016), it came out that a Filipino household of 4 should have a gross monthly income of P120,000 to live a "simple, comfortable life," which entails owning a car and a medium-sized house, traveling occasionally, as well as sending 2 children to college. The net income of Teacher I is only 14 percent of 120 thousand, too far to enjoy a simple and comfortable life. The influence of financial stability is unquestionably significant to one’s emotional security.

2. Provide well-equipped classrooms for teachers and students. If education resources are sufficient, learning can be maximized. An inclusive, pro-active and participatory learning can be created. Poor teachers won’t have to produce from their pockets to make visuals or individualized materials to concretize concepts.

3. Reduce class size. An ideal class of 30-40 is manageable. Electric fans will be somehow effective to lessen heat especially during hot days. Students’ noise is controllable. There will be more space for interactive activities. Tension among students will somehow be minimized.

4. De-load teachers. Positive discipline can be well applied if teachers have enough time to balance paper works, other related works and attending to students’ needs. Teachers have their own personal life and struggles. They also have a family and children to attend to so they should be given due consideration especially in that aspect.

5. Provide trainings. Teachers should be equipped with knowledge and skills to help them address unfavorable situations and misbehaviors intelligently and skillfully.
7. Activate the guidance office and discipline committee. Both offices should know their functions to provide support for classroom teachers in maintaining a safe and conducive learning environment.

8. Have a uniform student’s manual nationwide. This will serve as a bible for every school. If rules and regulations are defined, a better system can be maintained. We cannot keep on validating inexcusable excuses. Though, there is power in positive discipline, it is sometimes a case to case basis.

9. Build more public schools for students with special needs. These students should be provided with right curriculum, correct learning environment and specialized teachers to be educated.

References:


