SPOTLIGHT: CRUCIAL ROLE OF GUIDANCE COUNSELORS DURING PANDEMIC

by:
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“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others”

- Mahatma Gandhi

A year has passed and the coronavirus pandemic still persists not only in the Philippines, but in the entire world. People’s health has been compromised as the virus progresses for over a year now. Health care workers have been working day and night to mitigate the spread of the virus but still, the neglect on the mental health as the encouragement of isolation and physical distancing during the community quarantine perseveres.

Health, as defined by the World Health Organization, is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. WHO has clearly stated that mental and social well-being are factors of a holistic health. It can be argued that without mental health, there is no health. Not only the teachers and administrative personnel of schools experience challenges on mental and psychological aspects but the students also experience such no matter how young they are.

“Guidance counselor” could sound like a deceivingly simple title. In truth and reality, guidance counselors or school counselors play many roles, which includes social and emotional educator, academic adviser, conflict mediator, wellness coach, mental health therapist, student champion, educational collaborator and family liaison. Currently, with the occurrence of the pandemic caused by the coronavirus, many
guidance counselors have become connectors and comforters-in-chief — not only just to students but to parents and school staff.

The role of the school counselors or guidance counselors could be more crucial as the COVID-19 pandemic persists. The mental health of the students should be the utmost priority of the schools at this point since learning would not be possible if the students’ mental and psychological aspects are burdened by this abnormal situation – pandemic – that we are currently experiencing. In the academe setting, mental health could also be properly maintained since guidance counselors are the mental health practitioners in schools.

However, a proper system and support from the higher offices has to be considered for the counselors to be more equipped as they provide assistance to students. The Philippine Guidance and Counseling Association (PGCA) which is the main association of all guidance counselors in the Philippines, said that the initiatives that would ensure the protection of children against all forms of abuses should be strengthened especially at a time of a pandemic. The guidance counselors are more than willing to help and provide the best service but how are they going to do so if the counselors are not given the opportunity to help? How are guidance counselors going to provide help if the profession is not even valued – if not given importance? The guidance counselors could give more with the proper opportunity.

While it is true that parents and teachers play a crucial role in the growth and development of their children and students, it is also important to note that guidance counselors, whether licensed or not, are equipped with theories, principles, and techniques that could be beneficial for one’s mental health needs.

The area of guidance and counseling do not seem an utmost priority in schools at this point but mental health is a basic aspect and everyone needs it. DepEd guidance
counselors are talented but, unfortunately, they’re not given opportunities and support to show their expertise.

References:
