UNSPoken truth in the journey of ALS teachers

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“Every individual is a gift.” These are words that we always hear from our old ones. Words, which seem to be true to parents who would have children. To children who have responsible parents. To persons who find generous and loving friends. To employees who are under an understanding and caring employers. To teachers who have wonderful and diligent learners. And to learners who have sympathetic and considerate teachers.

In teaching, our learners are the reasons of our existence. They are precious gifts to us. But in one way or another, teachers sometimes thought that misbehaved learners are problem, burden, or even a cross to carry on their shoulders. Teachers would do their best to understand every learner. They would offer almost everything. They would give assistance whenever possible. But when both ends did not meet, whether because of grades, finances, or family problems, the result would be dropped out of learners. Where would these individuals be given another chance? It is in Alternative Learning System (ALS).

For those who experienced such, the department of education gave birth to a parallel system in the Philippines that provides a practical option to existing formal instruction, ALS is an alternative or substitute. DO 47, 2s. 2002 – Non Formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency (NFE A&E) System implementation, developed by the Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE) under the ADB-assisted Philippines Non-formal Education Project (PNFEP), provides an alternative means of certification of learning to Filipinos and foreigners aged 15 years and above for the secondary level, 11-
14 years old for the elementary level. This project aims to give chance to those who are unable to finish elementary and secondary of any cause. In this option, these individuals will gain skills and competencies comparable to that of the formal system. Learners are given a range of innovative non-formal learning strategies to break down traditional learning barriers of time, accessibility and resources. After gaining proficiencies, they will be assessed through a unified national examination called A & E Test. Once they pass the test, they will be given appropriate certification equivalent to High School or Elementary Diploma/Certificate.

In ALS, most learners are problem students when they are in the formal school. Facilitators cater to diverse individuals. These individuals co-exist in ALS due to different kinds of problems. Most cases are financial. Some are giving way for their younger siblings to finish first before them, but as they realized they are old enough to go to school. Others have to support the needs of the family for them to survive. There are also cases where they have to stop due to several problems in school. In worst cases, roughly are deprived of education due to absence of parents. They are the reasons of ALS facilitators’ existence, the reason for their being.

Just like in the formal school, in the ALS set up, Child Protection Policy stipulated in DO 40, s.2012, is strictly observed. Facilitators need to understand the situation of each learner. But this doesn’t mean that teachers wouldn’t have the right to correct their misbehavior, sometimes in this case reverse psychology technique is used. Infinite understanding is executed to win the trust of every learner. They make them feel that they belong. There were cases that facilitator needs to be in full support when it comes to financial cases of their learners. This instance is being normal to them. There were times that learners are involved in some cases, and there’s no other support coming from the closer family relations, ALS teacher can and do help. Even though teachers are not rich, they are extending their hands just to offer help for them to feel that they are not alone. In this way, learners learn to love their ALS teachers, which lead to a harmonious
relationship as they do together the reason of their presence in ALS, and that is to learn and pass the A & E Test. When learners pass the test, the teachers’ hard work is paid off. As learners continue their life journey and pass the test of life, ALS teachers are in great satisfaction with their work. This is one of the big differences in a formal school. The result of facilitators’ effort is easily seen.

In almost all cases, ALS implementers are sometimes called “makapal ang mukha.” The reason for this is that, they look for many stakeholders that could help them with existing problems in their classes, whether financial, material, or even food assistance. Educators know that the government’s subsidy wouldn’t be enough to continue with the objective of educating every individual. Teachers need to find ways of helping the government to pursue its goal. And this is one of the reasons why learners appreciate and love their teachers, and at the same time value the efforts of the government and other people who are helping them.

Not to mention everything done beyond what is expected of a facilitator, this journey in the life of every ALS teacher would seem to be hard, but if there are willingness, love and passion involved, there is no impossible. For they believe in their existence, and the goal of ALS 2.0, Para sa Bata, para sa Bayan.

References:

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