WHY CONTEXTUALIZE

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Philippines is as heterogeneous as a nation could be. Philippines is essentially diverse, to begin with. It is composed of 7,107 islands with total area of 300,000 sq km, where 75% of the population belongs to eight major ethnic groups and the remaining 25% are divided among different minor ethnic groups and indigenous tribes, (Abejuela III).

Furthermore, centuries of colonization have made Philippines the home of a ‘unique concoction of cultures’. The complexity of the Philippine culture which is already heterogeneous from the very start, is made even more multicultural by the waves of colonization and foreign migration- from Hindu, Arab, Chinese, Malay, Japanese, Spanish and American (Gate, 2015).

This diversity of the Filipino learners poses challenge in Philippine education which had always been using a single universal curricula (one-size-fits-to-all, if you may) regardless of the students’ origin, identity, or diversity. However, May 15, 2013 Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines approved the Republic Act No. 10533 “An Act of enhancing the Philippines Basic Education System. Aside from adding two years to basic education, another key feature of this new curricula is making the new curriculum relevant to learners through contextualization and enhancements (DepEd, 2018).

Curriculum contextualization is the process of adjusting the content of the curriculum and the teacher’s strategies with the needs and interests of the learners. That the students are diverse must be one of the most elementary lessons that we have learned
in education. As such, this diversity must be considered in lesson planning, implementation, and evaluation (DepEd Order No. 35, s 2016)

Moreover, among the enhancements that teachers are encouraged to introduce to make the curriculum more relevant to the learners are localization and indigenization of learning.

Here, teachers are encouraged to adjust the teachers’ guides to fit the needs and resources in their locality. Further, some localities have different culture or practices that are different from the majority of the group, in order for them to patronize and recognize developing contextualization through indigenization is very significant. The key strategy for student inclusion and ensuring relevance of education process is providing space for unique cultures in the program of K to 12 Basic Education. In the process of indigenization, collaborative efforts among teachers, school administrator, and identified members of community should be executed, so that curriculum will be precise and authentic to the culture in considerations. (DepEd Order No. 35, s 2016)

These features are needed. However it was fairly difficult on the part of teachers to make it possible so that Deped provides trainings, seminars, and workshop to continuously support the teachers. Moreover, Deped launched an order to focus the importance of formulation of professional communities which aim was to produce a new knowledge. It can be done through Learning Action Cell (LAC) which is a group of teachers who engage in collaborative learning sessions to solve shared challenges encountered in the school facilitated by the school head or assigned LAC leader. LAC serves as school-based communities of practice that are positive, caring, and safe spaces. (DepEd Order No. 35, s 2016)

With support from the department, and dedication from teachers in the field, contextualization, localization, and indigenization could be successfully carried out for a more relevant learning.
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