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Strengthening teacher education (Opinion piece by Benjamin Espiritu)

By Benjamin Espiritu – February 8, 2023

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Just last week, a private-sector-led advocacy group released its findings on its study about the performance of schools offering teacher education. The results showed that in the last 12 years, 56 percent of the said schools had below passing rates in the teacher licensure examination. Furthermore, only two percent of schools offering teacher education were classified as high-performing.

The group cited the 2022 research done by the government's Philippine Institute for Development Studies or PIDS which stated that the low qualification of teachers was a major factor in the low-quality education and poor performance of students.

This is sad and disturbing news.

Teachers are the lifeblood of an educational institution. A school is only as good as its teachers.

It is a fact that the most important resource of any institution, of any nation, is its people. The competence, attitudes, values and norms of the citizenry are the primary determinants of a nation's growth, development, and strength. Whether formally or informally, these are in turn brought about, to a very large extent, by teachers.

Jose Rizal wrote in his *Noli Me Tangere*: "The school is the basis of society. The school is the book in which is written the future of the nation! Show us the school of the people and we shall show you what the people are."

Thus, since a school is only as good as its teachers, the future of a nation is to a very large extent dependent on the quality of its teachers.

Given the results of the said study on the sad state of teacher education, what measures should be undertaken to strengthen it?

The first is the strict enforcement of the rules of the Commission on Higher Education on the closure of schools with poor licensure examination results. Ideally, this move must be spearheaded by the national leadership so that CHED can effectively carry out its mandate on the matter.

The second is the regular publication and widest dissemination of the results of the licensure examination, particularly the performance of the schools offering teacher education. The results will guide students as to where they should enroll. It will serve as a natural attrition mechanism since students who would want to become professional teachers will not enroll in schools with very low passing rates.

At the same time, it will encourage schools to do well so that they can enhance their academic reputation and increase their enrollment.

The third is strict enforcement of the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers. It is not enough that a school employs teachers who have passed the licensure examination. It must ensure that its teachers comply with the academic standards required of the profession. Of equal, if not more important, is that the school makes certain that its teachers become role models for their students and society. Teachers must walk their talk, practice what they preach, say what they mean, and mean what they say.

One of the noteworthy provisions in this Code of Ethics is that it also clearly states how school officials and other personnel should act. A school is run by a team, and the professional administrative and financial support of the school officials and non-teaching personnel to the teachers is essential to give the students quality education.

Let us all work to strengthen teacher education because by doing so, we strengthen our nation and ensure a better future.