



LAKBAY-DIWA
Publishing

e-ISSN 3082-4397

p-ISSN 3082-5741

VOLUME 2 | ISSUE 4

ECHOES

of EXPRESSION

A Creative Folio

APRIL 2026
MONTHLY ISSUE
NATIONAL

NATIONAL BOOK PUBLISHER IN THE PHILIPPINES
DTI Business Reg. No. 6488937
TIN 492-741-614
lakbaydiwapublishing@gmail.com
Butuan City, Philippines
+639543906965

ECHOES

of EXPRESSION

A Creative Folio

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LAKBAY-DIWA PUBLISHING is a national digital and printed book publisher in the Philippines with DTI Certificate Number 6488937, ensuring compliance with Philippine laws and regulations.

Butuan City, Philippines
lakbaydiwapublishing@gmail.com

ISSN (Online) 3082-4400

ISSN (Print) 3082-5733

Printed by: LDP

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**The Silent Gap in Governance: When Capacity
Is Delivered but Not Built**

The state of governance in various places has its share of gaps, especially in terms of its implementation. In recent years, one of the most common ways of addressing issues in governance in the Philippines has been capacity-building. Capacity-building is a way of providing training, seminars, and even technical assistance to local officials at various levels of governance. This is because there has been an important realization in recent years that being in a position of authority in governance is not enough. One must have the capacity to perform the job. This is why capacity-building has been at the forefront in addressing issues in governance in the country. Despite the growing number of capacity-building initiatives in the country, however, there still exist various gaps in terms of governance, especially at the barangay level of governance.

Some local communities have shown high levels of planning, leadership, and implementation, while some have shown otherwise. This brings into question an important issue: if capacity-building has already been implemented in the country, why are there still gaps in terms of governance? The answer, however, lies not in the absence of capacity-building but in the way capacity-building is done.

Capacity-building in various places involves the conduct of events like seminars, workshops, and even orientations regarding different aspects of governance. These are undoubtedly important and well-intentioned. Capacity-building, however, is often short-term, fragmented, and even lacking in terms of its connection with everyday realities that local officials face.

While it might be possible to address the basics of certain key concepts in a one-day or multiple-day training program, governance is not a one-time event. It is an ongoing process that requires repeated application, adaptation, and reflection. Without the ability to apply or reapply the concepts learned in the training program, the information learned is abstract in nature, and the skills learned are not fully developed.

In addition, there is often a disconnect between the information learned in the training program and the reality of the situation in the community. The information learned in the program might be general in nature or based upon standardized procedures, whereas the governance in the community is specific in nature or specific to the situation or environment in which the individual is working. Resources might be scarce in the community, the interests of different stakeholders might be different, or the support of the institutions might be different.

This is where the silent gap begins. The local officials might be more aware of the situation after the training program; however, there is still uncertainty about the application of the lessons learned in real situations. The issue is not about knowing what should be done; it is about knowing how it should be done in the environment in which they work.

This is the silent gap that is not seen at first glance. It is not necessarily about capacity; it is about the disconnect between the capacity learned in the program and the way in which governance is actually practiced.

Another limitation is the lack of support after the training. After the seminar, the officials are supposed to put into practice what they were taught on their own. There is no support in the form of follow-up or coaching, which would help them in the further development of their capacities. Without this support, it is impossible to maintain the training. Capacity in this sense has been built, but not entirely.

This does not diminish the importance of training. Rather, it highlights the need to examine how capacity-building is actually carried out in practice, particularly in terms of continuity, contextual relevance, and sustained support.

The manner in which this can be done is a matter for serious and sustained reflection. What is clear, however, is that without such a rethinking of the manner in which capacity building is undertaken, governance will continue to exist in form but remain uneven in practice.



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Sa Puso ng Pamayanan... Bakit Ang Simbahan?

Sa bawat baryo at bayan ng Pilipinas, may isang estrukturang tila hindi nag-iiba sa paglipas ng panahon—ang simbahan. Ito ang gusaling matatagpuan sa gitna ng pamayanan, nakatindig na parang ilaw na gumagabay sa bawat hakbang ng mga mamamayan. Hindi lamang ito tahanan ng asal, kundi puso ng buhay panlipunan, tagapagdala ng kasaysayan, at salamin ng kaluluwa ng bawat komunidad. Sa bawat batingaw na tumutunog, tila binubuhay nito ang diwa ng bayan, isang paalala na ang simbahan ay higit pa sa bato at ladrilyo; ito ay pundasyon ng kultura, pagkakakilanlan, at pagkakaisa.

Ang sentro ng simbahan sa pamayanan ay nag-ugat sa panahon ng kolonyalismong Espanyol. Sa ilalim ng Sistemang Reducción, ang mga katutubo ay pinagsama-sama sa mga planadong bayan, kung saan ang simbahan, plasa, at munisipyo ay nakapuwesto sa gitna. Ang disenyo na ito, ayon kay Agoncillo (1990), ay hindi lamang praktikal upang mapadali ang pamamahala kundi simboliko rin, ipinapakita nito na ang pananampalataya ay dapat na sentro ng buhay. Ang simbahan ay naging haligi ng pamayanan, isang estrukturang hindi natitinag sa panahon ng unos at bagyo, tulad ng espiritwal na pundasyon na nagbibigay ng gabay at liwanag sa madilim na panahon. Dagdag pa rito, nagsilbi ang simbahan bilang instrumento ng kapangyarihan at pagkakaisa, hindi lamang sa relihiyon kundi pati sa pamumuhay ng mga tao sa lipunan (Arcilla, 1998).

Higit pa sa kasaysayan, ang simbahan ay patuloy na nagsisilbing sentro ng ugnayang panlipunan. Dito nagaganap ang mahahalagang yugto ng buhay—binyag, kumpil, kasal, at libing—na hindi lamang seremonyang panrelihiyon kundi ritwal ng pagkakabuklod ng komunidad. Tulad ng tala na nagliliwanag sa gabi, ang simbahan ay nagbibigay gabay sa bawat Pilipino sa kanilang paglalakbay sa buhay. Ayon kay Jocano (1998), ang mga ritwal na ito ay nagpapatibay sa pagkakaisa at nagpapalalim ng ugnayan ng bawat miyembro ng pamayanan. Ang simbahan ay nagiging saksi ng bawat tawa, luha, at asal, isang tahimik na tagapangalaga ng kasaysayan ng bayan.

Hindi rin maihihiwalay ang simbahan sa mga makukulay na tradisyon ng kultura, lalo na ang pista. Ang pista ay hindi lamang pagdiriwang ng patron ng bayan, kundi pagkakataon upang buhayin ang diwa ng pagkakaisa at pagpapahayag ng pananampalataya sa anyo ng sayaw, kanta, at prusisyon. Ayon kay Ileta (1979), ang mga ganitong gawain ay paraan ng kolektibong pagpapahayag ng identidad at pananampalataya ng mga Pilipino. Sa bawat prusisyon, tila sumasayaw ang bawat puso sa ritmo ng tradisyon; ang bawat hakbang

ay patunay ng buhay na nakaugat sa simbahan, isang lumang haligi na hindi kumukupas sa agos ng panahon.

Ang simbahan ay higit pa sa pisikal na sentro; ito rin ay kanlungan sa oras ng pangangailangan. Sa panahon ng kalamidad at unos, ang mga pader nito ay nagiging kanlungan, ang altar ay nagiging saksi sa pagkakawanggawa, at ang batingaw ay nagiging tinig ng pag-asa. Sa ganitong paraan, ang simbahan ay hindi lamang gusali kundi buhay na pumapaloob sa kaluluwa ng bayan, tagapangalaga ng moralidad at espiritwal na lakas. Ang bawat haligi, bawat bintana, at bawat pintuan nito ay tila nagbubulong ng mga kwento ng pagkakaisa, tapang, at pagmamahalan.

Sa kontemporaryong panahon, kahit na nagbabago ang hugis ng mga pamayanan dahil sa urbanisasyon at globalisasyon, nananatili ang simbahan bilang pusod ng komunidad. Maaaring hindi na ito laging nasa literal na gitna ng mga lungsod, ngunit ang simbolismo nito bilang gabay, pundasyon, at ilaw ng pamayanan ay nananatiling buhay. Patuloy itong humuhubog sa moralidad at pananaw ng mga Pilipino, nagbibigay ng direksyon sa bawat landas at nag-uugnay sa nakaraan at kasalukuyan (Arcilla, 1998).

Sa pangkalahatan, ang simbahan ay higit pa sa estrukturang gawa sa bato at ladrilyo; ito ay pundasyon ng kulturang Pilipino, haligi ng pamayanan, at puso ng buhay panlipunan. Sa bawat batingaw na tumutunog, bawat seremonyang isinasagawa, at bawat prusisyong nagaganap, muling pinapaalala ng simbahan sa bawat Pilipino ang kahalagahan ng pananampalataya, pagkakaisa, at tradisyon. Sa puso ng bayan, ang simbahan ay hindi lamang gusali, ito ay buhay, diwa, at kaluluwa ng pamayanan. Sa simpleng tanong na, "Bakit ang simbahan?" nakatago ang sagot sa bawat pintig ng puso ng bawat Pilipino sapagkat ito ang haligi at ilaw ng kanilang pagkakakilanlan.

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My Journey Through Field Study

Field Study was not just a subject for me. It became a real journey, one that tested my patience, strength, and confidence. From the beginning to the end, I experienced many emotions that helped me understand what it truly means to be a teacher.

On my first day, I felt nervous and unsure of myself. When I entered the classroom, I saw how active and energetic the learners were. Some were standing, some were talking, and others were busy with their own activities. At that moment, I realized that teaching is not easy. It is not just about knowing the lesson; it is also about how you manage the learners and guide them properly.

At first, I had a short briefing with both cooperating teachers. They agreed that I would transfer weekly. I was assigned to Teacher Mary Gee T. Arpon for the first week. She introduced me to her class so the pupils would know who I was inside the classroom. While I introduced myself, the children showed respect by calling me "Teacher Julie Ann," which made me feel welcomed and appreciated. I started to observe my cooperating teacher. I noticed how she used her voice, patience, and strategies to manage the class. I observed that teaching young learners was not easy, but Teacher Mary Gee put forth her full effort to help the students learn. To capture the learners' attention, she used interactive activities to prevent boredom. During this week, I learned how important those skills are.

After a week, I was transferred to another kindergarten class. As in the first week, my cooperating teacher, Teacher Maria Therisa Y. Cuervo, introduced me to the class, and I had a chance to meet them. Observing a different cooperating teacher helped me learn a lot, as they used various strategies to capture learners' interest. During discussions, I noticed how the learners interacted and asked their teacher questions when they did not know the answers. I observed how the teachers managed the learners and got their attention. Teacher Therisa also did her best to manage and guide her learners properly.

As the weeks went by, I continued to learn more in my field study. I helped both my cooperating teachers with their pictorials for the upcoming moving-up ceremony. Assisting these learners was challenging, but I worked to guide them. I observed that if you manage the learners properly, they will follow you. In this way, I learned how to handle these kinds of learners.

Reflecting on my field study experience, I gained valuable lessons about teaching, classroom management, and the importance of creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Through this experience, I gained more knowledge and was inspired to keep learning and become a better, more effective teacher someday.



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Not A Graveyard for your Failures

I have witnessed this quiet tragedy unfold time and time again. Why is the BAELS program treated as a refuge for those who fall short in their chosen fields? Why is it used as a mere stepping stone, a transient place where students enroll to harvest high grades before abandoning us for the courses they truly desire? Do you see BAELS as a barren wasteland? Do you see a dumping ground for the academic remnants you have chewed up and spat out?

It is a primeval agony to dwell on this reality, yet it is a truth that nearly all of us see clearly. Let me shatter your fragile assumptions. You treat this program with such blinding arrogance because you harbor the suffocating delusion that BAELS is an easy path. Are you truly certain of that? My words may carry the heavy weight of fury, but I am here to force you into a jarring realization. Who gave you the right to treat our discipline as a graveyard for your failures? You think you possess such brilliant minds, but if you view our program as a receptacle for trash, then what does that make you? The discarded remnants?

If you possessed even a fragment of empathy, you would feel this same consuming anger if we dared to belittle your chosen paths. The raw truth is that the BAELS discipline holds the profound weight and intellectual fire to stand above any arena. However, as I have always maintained, no single pursuit reigns supreme over another. Every path carries its own unique exhaustion, its own relentless demands, and its own quiet agony.

Do not underestimate the crushing depth of what BAELS has to offer. If you walk into our crucible with complacency, the sheer rigor of the language will leave you gasping and bleeding. Can these different academic pursuits not simply breathe the same air and exist together in mutual respect?

Cease this blinding arrogance. When the final bell rings and we are all thrust out into the breathless arena of the real world, we will all be marching the same desperate pavement, searching for our survival. There is no cure for an arrogant soul. So, I warn you: break off your horns of false supremacy now. If you refuse to humble yourself, the relentless tide of time will violently shatter them for you in the most terrifying and unforgiving way imaginable.



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On the Matter of Unfinished Proofs

Professor Calderon was known for precision.

His lectures were challenging. His chalk works are clean, symbols aligned as though governed by the invisible geometry of discipline. Students copied every stroke carefully, as if the order itself carried meaning. In his classroom, mathematics was not merely taught but demonstrated as a language of certainty. "Every theorem," he would say, pausing underlining the final line of a proof, "must rest on firm ground. No gaps. No assumptions left unjustified. In mathematics, we do not guess; we conclude."

The students admired him, but some feared him for it.

However, there was a detail no one knew. In the bottom drawer of his desk, beneath neatly stacked problem sets and graded papers, Calderon kept a worn, leather-bound notebook. Its spine had softened with time, its pages yellowed at the edges. He never brought it to class. Never mentioned it. It belonged to a different version of himself.

Inside were proofs that stopped midway. They began confidently, definitions laid out, lemmas established, but somewhere along the way, they faltered. A step that refused to follow. A conclusion that hovered just out of reach. Symbols trailed off into margins. Entire pages were marked with hesitant arrows and quiet questions.

Some entries dated back to his graduate years, when he had believed that every problem yielded eventually to persistence. Others were written much later, between lectures, during long afternoons when the campus fell silent and even certainty seemed to loosen its grip.

He had never completed them.

The notebook became less a collection of unfinished work and more a record of resistance, places where logic itself seemed to hesitate. Moreover, he still taught his students the opposite. Closure. Completion. Certainty. Perhaps, he sometimes thought, it was what they needed.

One humid afternoon, as the semester drifted toward its end, a student lingered after class. Her name was Ilya.

She approached his desk with a notebook held close to her chest, as though guarding something fragile. "Sir," she began, her voice steady but uncertain, "may I ask about a proof?" Calderon nodded, gesturing for her to continue.

She opened her notebook and turned it toward him. He recognized the problem immediately; it was an extension of a theorem he had assigned weeks ago, one that required both creativity and restraint. "I cannot seem to make it work," she said. "It almost feels right, but something is missing."

Calderon adjusted his glasses and leaned closer.

The proof was elegant. There was boldness to it, a willingness to explore beyond the standard approach. He followed her reasoning line by line, noting the subtle choices she had made, the risks she had taken.

And then he saw it.

Not an error. More like a gap that refused to be bridged. A place where the logic thinned, where intuition pressed forward but proof could not follow.

Ilya watched him, waiting.

Usually, this was the moment when he spoke with clarity. Identify the flaw. Suggest a correction. Guide the argument toward completion.

However, something on the page unsettled him. It reminded him of the notebook in his drawer. Of lines that had once felt just as close to resolution.

He straightened, closing her notebook gently. "Leave it unfinished," he said.

She blinked. "Sir?"

He hesitated, aware of how unusual this sounded, how it contradicted everything he had ever taught. "Sometimes," he continued, more quietly now, "what matters is not finishing, but knowing where the truth begins to resist you."

Ilya frowned slightly. "But is not the goal to complete the proof?" she asked.

He considered her question carefully. "Yes," he said. "That is the goal we are given. However, there is another kind of understanding, the kind that comes when you reach a boundary and recognize it for what it is."

"You have gone as far as the argument allows. That is not failure. That is discovery."

"And what should I do with it?"

Calderon allowed himself a faint smile. "Keep it," he said. "Return to it, if you wish. Or do not. However, remember that place, the moment where it almost works. That is where thinking becomes honest."

Ilya nodded slowly, still uncertain, but thoughtful now. She gathered her things and left the room in silence.

Calderon watched her go.

For a long time after, he remained at his desk, unmoving.

That evening, the campus emptied into twilight.

The hum of distant traffic replaced the murmur of students. Shadows stretched across the hallway, softening the rigid lines of doors and walls. In his office, the only light came from a desk lamp, its glow pooling over scattered papers.

Calderon opened the bottom drawer.

The notebook was where it had always been. He placed it on the desk and opened it to a random page.

An unfinished proof greeted him. The symbols were familiar, though he did not immediately recall writing them. The argument moved with confidence at first, then slowed, then faltered. A question mark lingered at the margin, as if asking something he had long since forgotten.

He turned another page. And another.

Each entry was a fragment of pursuit. A moment where certainty had been within reach, close enough to believe in, yet distant enough to remain unattainable.

He began to notice something he had overlooked before.

These proofs were not empty. They were alive with intention. Each step carried a question forward, even if it never arrived at an answer. The incompleteness was not absence, it was tension, possibility, an open space where thought continued beyond the page.

He leaned back in his chair.

Outside, the last light of day faded into evening.

For the first time in years, Calderon felt no pressure to resolve what lay before him. No need to force closure where it did not come naturally.

He closed the notebook gently.

Moreover, for once, he left it that way. Because on the matter of unfinished proofs, he had finally learned, some truths are not meant to conclude, but to remain open, asking.



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The Equation That Refused to Balance

The equation was simple, as it should have been. Professor Reyes wrote it across the board. The chalk glided with the quiet confidence of years spent teaching the same principles. Symbols aligned neatly, variables placed with care. It was the kind of problem that usually unfolded predictably, step by step, like a well-rehearsed argument. Behind him, the low murmur of students faded as they copied the equation into their notebooks.

"Now," Reyes said, tapping the board lightly, "we solve." He began isolating variables, simplifying expressions and moving terms from one side to the other. The rhythm was familiar, almost comforting. This was the part of mathematics he loved most, the certainty, the logic, the promise that every problem would yield its answer.

However, halfway through, he paused. He frowned, retracing a step. Then another. The numbers did not settle where they should. The equality, so clean at the beginning, began to tilt, as if one side carried a weight the other could not match. He erased a line, rewrote it. Still wrong.

A few students glanced up. Reyes adjusted his glasses, forcing a calm he did not feel. "Let us try a different approach," he said. He started over, this time using substitution. The chalk moved faster now, sharper. Terms shifted, expanded and collapsed, but the imbalance remained. No matter how he manipulated the equation, it refused to yield a true result.

The room grew quieter. A student in the front row raised her hand slightly, then lowered it again. Reyes stepped back. For a long moment, he stared at the board. It was not just incorrect, it was impossible. An equality that would not hold, a symmetry that would not form. However, he had checked the problem before writing it. He was certain of that.

He turned to his notes on the desk, flipping through pages with increasing urgency. The same equation stared back at him, unchanged, unquestioned. It had worked before. It should work now. However, it did not.

A flicker of unease passed through him, deeper than the problem itself. The resistance. The quiet refusal of things to align despite effort, despite logic. He thought of his father, who had once told him that hard work always balances out, that effort equals reward, that discipline yields certainty. It had sounded like mathematics then. It did not feel like mathematics now.

Reyes looked back at the board. The equation seemed almost defiant, its symbols fixed in place, indifferent to his attempts. "Sir?" a voice ventured softly from the back. He did not answer immediately. Instead, he picked up the chalk again and tried once more. Slower this time. Careful. Exact. Every step justified, every transformation precise. Still, the final line would not settle. The two sides remained unequal.

He exhaled, setting the chalk down. The silence in the room had changed. It was no longer passive observation, it was awareness. The students knew something had shifted. This was no longer just an algebra lesson.

Reyes turned to face them. He found himself saying, "What do you notice?" The students exchanged glances. "It... does not work," one said hesitantly. He nodded. "Yes. It does not."

Another raised her hand, more certain this time. "Maybe there is a mistake in the problem?" "Maybe," Reyes replied. "Or maybe the mistake is in how we are trying to solve it."

"We assume," he continued slowly, "that every equation is designed to balance. That if we follow the rules, we will arrive at equality. But what if that assumption is incomplete?"

The students leaned forward, drawn in despite themselves. Reyes gestured toward the unresolved expression. "We have applied the correct methods. We have followed the logic. Moreover, it still resists us." He hesitated, the next words forming more from instinct than preparation. "Sometimes," he said, "not everything balances the way we expect."

The room remained silent, but it was a different silence now, one that listened. "That does not mean it is wrong," he added. "It might mean we are missing something. A condition we have not considered. A perspective we have not seen. Or perhaps..." He glanced briefly at the board. "Perhaps the equation is telling us that balance is not always immediate."

A student near the window spoke up. "So, what do we do, sir?" Reyes considered the question. In the past, he would have answered without hesitation, try again, check your steps, trust the process. Now, he was not so sure.

"We leave it," he said finally. A ripple of surprise passed through the class. "For now," he clarified. "We leave it unsolved."

He picked up the chalk, then set it down again, as if resisting the urge to impose a conclusion where none had yet revealed itself. "Not because it cannot be solved," he continued, "but because forcing an answer too soon can make us miss what the problem is trying to teach."

The bell rang, sharp and sudden. No one moved at first. Then, slowly, notebooks closed. Chairs shifted. The ordinary sounds of dismissal returned, though softened by something unspoken. As the students filed out, several glanced back at the board. The equation remained there, incomplete, its imbalance exposed.

Reyes stayed behind. When the room was empty, he walked up to the board once more, the afternoon light filtered through the windows, casting faint shadows across the symbols. He studied them, not with frustration now, but with a quiet curiosity.

There was something almost honest about it, the refusal to pretend, the insistence on revealing its incompleteness. He realized, with a faint, unexpected smile, that it had given him something no perfect solution could.

Not certainty. But permission.

Permission to leave things unfinished. To accept that not all efforts yield immediate symmetry. That some problems require time, or distance, or a different kind of thinking altogether.

He set the chalk down for the last time and gathered his things. As he turned off the lights and stepped out of the classroom, the equation remained on the board, unbalanced, unresolved, and, in its own way, complete.



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Sa Landas ng Katarungan at Pagkilos

Sa lupang sinilangan, tayo'y nananahan,
Kay gandang pagmasdan, subalit puso'y sugatan,
Sa likod ng ngiti'y lungkot ang laman,
Bayan kong minamahal, bakit ka ganyan?

Mga tinig ng dukha'y tila di marinig,
Sa taas ng trono'y bulag, pipi at bingi;
Katarungan sana'y maging ilaw sa paligid,
Nang ang kadiliman, mapawi't mapigil.

May mga pinunong sa kapangyarihan ay nalasing,
Sa yaman ng bayan, bulsa'y pinupuno nang lihim,
Serbisyonng dapat sana'y para sa mamamayan,
Nauuwi sa sariling interes at kasakiman.

Mga tiwaling kamay ang siyang naghahari,
Boses ng bayan, pilit ikinukubli;
Sa bawat pondong ninanakaw kaliwa'kanan
Kinabukasan ng bansa tila ba'y napag-iwanan na.

Kabataan ngayo'y mulat na sa katotohanan,
Hindi na payag sa hungkag na pangako't kasinungalingan;
Sa bawat sigaw, pagbabago'y hinahangad,
Sa bawat hakbang, pag-asay' isinusulong nang tapat.

Mga kamay na dati'y tikom sa pangamba
Ngayo'y kumikilos, di na natatakot pa;
Pag-ibig sa bayan ang nagsisilbing sandata,
Laban sa sistemang pilit tayong ginagapos at pinipiga.

Sa gitna ng unos at mga suliranin,
Pag-asa'y sumisibol, di kayang pigilin;
Pagkikiba ang sagot sa bawat hinaing.
Bayan kong mahal, ika'y muling aangkin.

Hindi sapat ang pag-ibig kung ito'y tahimik,
Dapat itong isigaw, ipaglaban nang mariin,
Sa tinta at papel, damdamin ay isatitik,
Hanggang ang pagbabago'y tuluyang makamtan din.

O Inang Bayan, ikaw ay babangon,
Sa yakap ng anak mong handang tumugon;
Pagbabago'y di pangarap lamang ng hamon
Kundi mithing kayang abutin ng sabayang pagbangon.

Tayo'y kumilos, huwag nang mag-atubili,
Ang bawat isa'y may lakas tumindig para sa sarili
Sa gitna ng bulok na sistemang naghahari,
Pag-ibig sa bayan ang tunay na dangal at maghahari.

Tayo ang ilaw sa gitna ng kadiliman,
Tayo ang tinig ng pagbabago't katarungan;
Kung ang puso'y tunay na nagmamahal sa bayan'
Hindi tayo titigil hangga't may Liwanag sa kinabukasan.

Kabataan, ikaw ang pag-asa ng bayan
Huwag hayaang mabulag sa maling pamahalaan;
Gamitin ang isip at tapang ng paninindigan,
Isulong ang landas tungo sa tunay na kaunlaran.

At kung darating ang araw ng bagong umaga,
Na ang bayan ay malaya sa dusa at pangamba;
Ang ating sakripisyo'y magiging alaala.
Na ang pag-ibig sa bayan ay sandigan ng pag-asa.



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Learning Beyond the Classroom: A Journey of Reflection and Discovery in Field Study

In the field of education, teaching can be viewed as a vocation and as a professional endeavor. It requires developing a variety of traits, including patience, understanding, and a willingness to continue learning. Through my experiences in Field Study 1 and Field Study 2, I was able to apply the educational theories I learned in my classes to real classroom events. I had the opportunity to observe classes at Tabango North Central School and to see firsthand the realities of teaching, what happens in classrooms, and how students interact with each other and their teachers. I also became aware of student needs through this experience and was able to create effective instructional techniques and determine my day-to-day duties as a teacher.

Field Study 1 allowed me to observe and gain an understanding of the school setting and the diversity of learners within the school. I was able to see firsthand that all learners come from different backgrounds and possess varying abilities, requiring teachers to use multiple instructional strategies to ensure all learners understand the lesson. It is therefore critical for teachers to create a classroom environment that is positive and supportive, so learners will participate, feel confident, and be motivated.

Moreover, I have found that learning through instructional materials improves overall classroom activities and interactions, as learners use visual aids and organized materials to connect with each lesson topic. The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is also very important in providing students with interactive, easy-to-understand lessons.

In field study 2, I learned how teachers teach and help young students. Because students learn in different ways, teachers need to be flexible. There are many ways teachers can help students understand and take part in the lesson. For example, they can tell stories, do group activities, and show students how to use what they learn in real life.

In addition to being an essential aspect of teaching, assessing students is more than giving exams. Assessment is the process of measuring a student's success toward achieving academic goals by observing and documenting a student's performance to inform a teacher's

decision-making regarding that student, including how to support him/her. Thus, the ultimate goal of teacher assessment is to help students reach their full potential.

Furthermore, my field experience taught me that patience and compassion are vital for an effective teacher. To properly address the various challenges presented in a classroom, teachers also need to demonstrate understanding of their students rather than being frustrated by their actions.

To end, my field study made me more aware of what it means to be a teacher and gave me the motivation and preparation to be a dedicated, creative, and caring educator who supports student development and learning.



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The Party of Magical Divisibility

All the people of Numeria were excited about the yearly Divisibility Party at Queen Zero's palace. However, to go in, each number had to pass a test set up by the royal guards, who were very rigid about how they divided things.

Guard Two was in charge of the first door. Only people who wore "even-numbered shoes" were allowed in. If the number ended in 0, 2, 4, 6, or 8, she said, "You are even!" Come on in!

Guard Three kept a very close eye on the next gate. He liked numbers whose "digit team" worked well together. He told each number to add up all of its elements. If the amount could be split into three parts, Guard Three offered a thumbs-up. "Three times stronger when you work together. "Come on in!"

Guard Four was stricter. He only let numbers in if the last two digits made a number he liked. Guard Four grinned and unlocked the gate when the two digits could be split by 4. For instance, 316 may get in since $16 \div 4 = 4$.

Guard Five was laid-back and liked numbers that ended in 0 or 5. He would take any number that had "zero socks" or "five hats" on.

Guard Six did what he was meant to do. He asked Guards Two and Three if they had already let a few people in. If so, they passed his test since being divisible by 6 means you have to be even (which Guard Two wants) and your digits add up to a number that is also divisible by 3 (which Guard Three wants).

Guard Nine was good at one thing. He told the numbers to sum up all of their parts. If the sum could be divided by 9, Guard Nine permitted them in and handed them a royal badge.

Guard Ten was the simplest of them all. He waved at all the numbers that ended in zero. He would say, "You are a number that goes around, just like I am!"

Everyone who follows the split's rules can go to the big party. They danced, had a good time, and were happy for the rest of their lives. They always knew which guard they needed to impress the next year!



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The Digital Co-Founder: How AI is Changing the Way Startups Work

The "garage start-up" paradigm is evolving drastically in the current business landscape. Although the founder's resilience and foresight remain the primary determinants of success for any venture, the methods for cultivating these attributes have evolved drastically. We move from an era in which people labored long hours to make profits to one in which AI assists entrepreneurs.

Whereas only big tech firms could previously afford AI services, they have now become essential for entrepreneurs to outshine other start-ups in their fields. Looking at the advantages of integrating AI, it becomes evident that AI technology is not merely an "extra". Rather, it is an adaptive digital co-founder that evolves alongside its entrepreneur counterpart.

The runway-to-resources ratio is the critical factor that determines whether startups succeed or fail. If a startup runs out of resources before reaching product-market fit, it becomes insolvent. AI has had a significant impact on this calculation by automating repetitive, unvaried tasks. Operational automation allows founders to eliminate the administrative overhead of running a business by deploying AI solutions to schedule meetings and manage finances. LLMs facilitate code generation, making it easier to develop an MVP. With just one founder and proper logic flows, software deployment has become simpler than ever before.

Gaining a good understanding of the client is the top priority for any startup in its initial stages. Traditionally, achieving such insight would require substantial investment in conducting focus group research or manual A/B testing over many months. However, the implementation of AI enables the analysis of large volumes of data, thereby revealing patterns that cannot be discerned through human reasoning. The use of predictive analytics enables the business owner to forecast their clients' desires without waiting for them to express them. By integrating AI into the CRM, a startup will gain the ability to provide personalized services that could be afforded only by boutique firms with their costly approach to high-touch interactions.

Back then, data science was an expensive venture. The use of artificial intelligence in business intelligence enables non-tech founders to conduct complex market research. AI can scan trends on social media platforms, financial cycles, and economic performance indicators, providing clear indications months ahead that the market will change. Artificial intelligence can detect fabricated trends in real time in fintech/e-commerce, safeguarding the fragile startup's bottom line from its very first transaction.

One of the biggest ways' companies start losing their funding rounds is by having to market. Generating creative content, such as videos, text, and designs, requires significant resources. Generative AI has now democratized the generation of ideas and concepts for marketing campaigns. By leveraging generative AI to generate multiple prototypes of potential advertising creatives, companies can experiment with many value propositions simultaneously in the market. This Iterative Velocity is what will fuel any start-up company. The founder can invest in AI-generated campaigns rather than risk a single potential failure.

Entrepreneurship is the art of making high-stakes decisions with incomplete information. While AI cannot replace human intuition or "gut feeling," it serves as a powerful decision-support system. By using simulations (such as Monte Carlo or digital twin simulations), entrepreneurs can model potential outcomes of a strategic pivot or a new pricing model. This reduces the "coefficient of error" and allows for more aggressive, yet calculated, risk-taking.

The psychological boost is probably the most underrated benefit for business owners. At the beginning of a startup, the blank page is a big problem. It is hard to write the first business plan, pitch deck, or legal contract. AI works with the entrepreneur to create a first draft that they can then improve and add their own brand voice to. This reduces friction and keeps things moving.

The key lesson the "Benefits of AI Integration" article offers cannot be stressed enough: AI is no longer a competitive advantage; it is the bare minimum. This is the time we are stepping into, when it will be easier than ever to start a business but harder than ever to distinguish oneself from the rest. The entrepreneur of today has his wings through AI, but it is up to him to choose the path he will fly. The use of technology to handle routine tasks and analysis is an opportunity for entrepreneurs to do what they do best – innovate and disrupt, finally. Those who recognize the potential of AI and realize that they can make the most out of it will be the kings of the future.



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Little Learners, Big Lessons: My Field Study Story

During my field study, I experienced how teaching works in a real classroom, which helped me better understand the responsibilities of a teacher. Before entering the classroom, I felt both excited and nervous because it was my first-time observing pupils closely and seeing how lessons were delivered. As I entered the classroom, I noticed how the teacher greeted the pupils warmly and created a positive learning environment. This made me realize that building a good relationship with pupils is an important part of teaching.

While observing the class, I learned how teachers manage time and organize their lessons to make learning effective. The teacher used different strategies such as asking questions, giving examples, and allowing pupils to participate in group activities. I noticed that pupils became more active when interactive activities were used, especially when they were encouraged to share their ideas. The teacher also used visual aids and simple explanations to help pupils better understand the lesson. Through this observation, I understood that teaching requires creativity, patience, and careful planning.

Another important experience during my field study was observing the different learning behaviors of pupils. Some pupils were fast learners, while others needed more guidance and support from the teacher. I saw how the teacher gave extra attention to pupils who were struggling and encouraged them to participate. This showed me that every pupil learns differently, and teachers must be flexible in their teaching methods. It also made me realize the importance of showing kindness and understanding toward pupils.

My field study experience was meaningful and helped me grow as a future teacher. It allowed me to connect the theories I learned in my college classes with actual classroom practices. I also gained more confidence and became more motivated to continue improving my teaching skills. This experience taught me that teaching is not only about delivering lessons but also about guiding, supporting, and inspiring pupils to learn.

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Angel in Red Vest

I knew it was a calling
to serve while wearing the red vest.
Not just a uniform,
but a promise
to stand with the community.

In every fieldwork, I found fulfillment,
because I knew
a life had been touched,
a voice had been heard,
a burden had been shared.

Working for the people
has always been meaningful.
I met individuals who inspired me
to grow and do better in my craft.
I met mentors who taught me with patience,
guides who walked beside me
throughout my journey
as an angel in a red vest.

Wearing it,
I reached places I never imagined
roads unfamiliar,
communities once distant.
The red vest pushed me forward:
to help,
to guide,
to protect
the marginalized.

I met people living in poverty,
yet holding on to hope.
I met those who lived alone,
yet found family in their community.
I stood among people in times of disaster,
where *bayanihan* lives on
unbroken, unwavering.

No matter how far the journey,
the red vest always found its way
to those in need.

And in those moments,
I realized
this was more than service.
It was purpose.
It was humanity in action.

This red vest made me proud
of my profession.
It opened my eyes
to the bigger picture
of struggle,
of resilience,
of community.

I may not wear it now,
but the lessons it gave me
are stitched into who I am.
The experiences remain,
guiding me still.

With pride and honor,
I once wore the red vest.



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Tour Guiding as a Profession: Bridging Culture, Experience, and Service in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry

Tour guiding requires a unique combination of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes. Effective communication skills are crucial, as guides must convey information clearly and engagingly to diverse audiences. Strong interpersonal skills enable them to build rapport with tourists and create a welcoming atmosphere. In addition, tour guides must possess in-depth knowledge of destinations, including history, culture, geography, and local customs. Problem-solving skills, flexibility, and emotional intelligence are equally important, especially when dealing with emergencies or difficult situations. Professionalism, enthusiasm, and a passion for sharing knowledge further distinguish successful tour guides.

Tour guides significantly contribute to the overall quality of the tourism experience. They enhance visitor satisfaction by providing meaningful insights and personalized interactions that go beyond what guidebooks or digital resources can offer. Their role in promoting responsible tourism is also noteworthy, as they educate tourists about environmental conservation, cultural sensitivity, and ethical behavior. Furthermore, tour guides support local economies by promoting local products, businesses, and attractions. In many destinations, they serve as representatives of their country, shaping tourists' perceptions and encouraging repeat visits.

Despite its rewarding aspects, tour guiding comes with several challenges. Irregular working hours, seasonal employment, and physical demands can affect job stability and well-being. Tour guides often work in varying weather conditions and must manage diverse groups with different expectations and behaviors. Additionally, the rise of digital technologies and self-guided tours presents competition, requiring guides to continuously upgrade their skills and remain relevant. Issues such as inadequate training, lack of standardization, and limited professional recognition in some regions also pose challenges to the profession.

Tour guiding is a dynamic and essential profession within the tourism and hospitality industry, playing a crucial role in enriching travel experiences and promoting cultural understanding. As cultural ambassadors and service providers, tour guides bridge the gap between destinations and visitors, creating memorable and meaningful journeys. While the profession faces various challenges, continuous professional development, proper recognition, and industry support can enhance its value and sustainability. Ultimately, tour guiding remains a fulfilling career that combines knowledge, passion, and service in shaping the future of tourism.

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**The Heart of a Medical
Social Worker**

It is a crowded place to be,
where time moves fast relentlessly.
Amid worried faces, fear and pain,
hope still rises, again and again.

There's always a line that never ends,
of people seeking help to mend.
With silent prayers and hearts unsure,
they come in faith, their strength secure.

As a medical social worker, I stand,
with duty and care, with heart and hand.
To assess with truth, with empathy,
to serve each life with dignity.

Each day I meet new stories told,
of fragile lives and courage bold.
A mother begging for her child's care,
a patient lost in deep despair.

A father strong, yet tears unseen,
hiding fears of what has been.
In every case, in all I do,
I listen, assess, and guide them through.

I bridge the gap, I find the way,
to help them face another day.
Though cases come in endless streams,
I stand with them through shattered dreams.

But there are days when limits show,
when help feels small against the woe.
Too many needs, too little time,
a heavy weight, a silent climb.

Still, I go home with stories deep,
of lives I carry, souls I keep.
The burden stays, yet I remain,
with colleagues sharing in the strain.



Echoes of Expression
A Creative Folio

Volume II, Issue IV (April 2026), National Circulation
ISSN (Online) 3082-4397 ISSN (Print) 3082-5741
Published Online at www.lakbay-diwapublishing.com
Publisher: Lakbay-Diwa Publishing
DTI Business Reg. No. 6488937 / TIN 492-741-614
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I know my purpose, clear and true,
this path is what I'm called to do.
To serve, to care, to still believe,
that even small acts can relieve.

Each little win, each life made whole,
restores the strength within my soul.
A spark of hope, a brighter day,
reminds me why I chose this way.

This field has taught me to be strong,
to stand for right, to serve lifelong.
I am more than the role I play,
I am the stories that chose to stay.

And as I teach and share what's true,
their voices live in all I do.
For every life I helped somehow,
still walks with me, then and now.



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The Architecture of Action: Do It Tired, Do It Scared

The most common falsehood we tell ourselves is that an ideal emotional state must come before any action. We think we need to feel inspired before we can create greatness, confident before we can lead, and energized before we can work. This puts our aspirations in a "waiting room" where they die while we wait for a feeling that might never come.

This reliance is radically rejected by the "*Do it tired, do it scared*" philosophy. It is understood that discipline is the driver, and emotions are the erratic passengers. The strength of the "low-battery" contribution is demonstrated by the fact that it was completed exhausted. Fatigue is an expert negotiator; it tries to sell you on the comforts of the present to secure your future.

However, when you decide to work through fatigue, you are recalibrating your identity rather than merely finishing a task. You are demonstrating that your dedication is independent of your level of comfort. This will create a "floor" for your performance, and when you learn to deliver at your lowest energy level, your "average" performance will start to outperform the "peak" performance of those waiting for the right mood. Weary progress will always beat energized progress.

At the same time, "doing it scared" also deals with the paralysis of the ego. Fear is a misconception that tells one to stop, but in the context of personal growth, fear is a guide that leads one to what matters most. If what you are doing does not scare you, then it probably does not challenge you either. In doing what you are scared to do, you separate fear from failure. You understand that fear is not a hindrance, but a result of doing something of great importance. Bravery is not a precursor to action, but an aftermath. You do not become brave so that you can do something, but you do something, and in doing so, you become brave.

Ultimately, the combination of these two principles is an unstoppable force. When you refuse to let your moods vote on your productivity, you take back your power. You no longer have to wait for the stars to align and your caffeine to kick in just right to be a force to be reckoned with. You have to show up, eyes heavy and heart pounding, and get the work done anyway. The world is made by those who were tired and scared but who refused to let what was going on inside their world dictate their outside world. Success is for the person who can look at their own limitations and say, "I see you, but we are going anyway."



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**Guiding Hands in the House
of Hospitality**

Within these halls, both stern and kind,
A teacher shapes the willing mind;
Not just in skill, nor task alone,
But in the way a self is grown.

Guiding hands, both firm and fair,
Correct the stance, refine the care;
They lift the hesitant, unsure,
And make their fragile steps endure.

For here, to teach is more than show
The proper way a course must go;
It is to nurture, slowly, still,
A deeper sense of human will.

And in this house, both bright and vast,
The lessons learned are built to last
Not just in service, swift and smart,
But in the shaping of the heart.



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Ecotourism as a Sustainable Approach to Environmental Conservation and Community Development

In recent decades, the rapid growth of the tourism industry has brought both economic opportunities and environmental challenges. As a response to the negative impacts of mass tourism, ecotourism has emerged as a sustainable alternative that promotes responsible travel to natural areas. Ecotourism not only focuses on environmental conservation but also emphasizes cultural preservation and community development. By integrating sustainability principles into tourism practices, ecotourism seeks to balance ecological protection with socio-economic benefits.

Ecotourism is commonly defined as responsible travel to natural environments that conserves biodiversity and improves the well-being of local communities. It is guided by several core principles, including minimizing environmental impact, fostering environmental awareness, respecting local cultures, and ensuring active community participation. Moreover, ecotourism encourages ethical behavior among tourists and stakeholders, promoting long-term sustainability rather than short-term economic gains. Education and interpretation are also essential components, as they enhance visitors' understanding of ecological and cultural values.

One of the most significant contributions of ecotourism is its role in environmental conservation. By generating revenue through nature-based activities, ecotourism provides financial support for the protection of ecosystems, wildlife conservation, and biodiversity preservation. Protected areas such as national parks and marine sanctuaries benefit from tourism income, which can be used for maintenance, research, and conservation programs. Furthermore, ecotourism raises environmental awareness among tourists, encouraging more responsible behaviors and advocacy for conservation efforts.

Beyond environmental advantages, ecotourism significantly contributes to the socio-economic development of local communities. It creates employment opportunities, supports small and local enterprises, and enhances income generation in rural areas. Importantly, ecotourism promotes the preservation of indigenous knowledge, traditions, and cultural heritage. Community-based ecotourism empowers local residents by involving them in decision-making processes and ensuring equitable distribution of benefits. Additionally, cultural interaction between tourists and host communities fosters mutual respect and global understanding.

Despite its potential, ecotourism is not without challenges. One of the major issues is the absence of standardized guidelines and effective regulation, which can lead to the misuse of the term "ecotourism" for marketing purposes, commonly known as greenwashing. In

some cases, poorly managed tourism activities can still result in environmental degradation, habitat disturbance, and cultural commodification. Limited community involvement and unequal benefit-sharing may also undermine its sustainability goals. Therefore, proper planning, strict policy implementation, and continuous monitoring are essential to address these challenges.

Ecotourism represents a viable pathway toward sustainable tourism development by harmonizing environmental conservation with community well-being. It offers a holistic approach that not only protects natural resources but also uplifts local livelihoods and preserves cultural heritage. However, for ecotourism to be truly effective, it requires genuine commitment from governments, stakeholders, and tourists alike. Through responsible management and active participation, ecotourism can serve as a powerful tool in ensuring a more sustainable and resilient future for the tourism industry and the environment.



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Digital Transitions in Physical Education: Challenges, Strategies, and Opportunities in Online Instruction

Among the global circumstances that affect daily life is the economic pressure. Recently, these geopolitical conflicts between the United States and Iran have driven up the prices of transportation and basic goods due to rising petroleum costs. In response to these challenges, several state universities and colleges consider shifting to online learning as a cost-saving measure. While this transition sounds practical, it raises concerns for courses that rely on physical interaction, particularly Physical Education (PE).

A trend that became widespread during the COVID-19 pandemic was the rapid shift to online learning, which significantly transformed the delivery of instruction (Chiu et al., 2021). Economic constraints and international crises led institutions to rapidly transition to remote learning, even after the return of face-to-face classes. This showed that higher education relied on online platforms in ensuring quality instruction in practice-based fields such as PE.

For Physical Education, this sudden shift presents a unique challenge. Without a shared physical space, how can movement, fitness, and skill development be effectively taught?

Traditionally, Physical Education depends on direct instruction, social interaction and real-time feedback. Learning is easier when teachers demonstrate movements, correct proper form, and motivate participation through face-to-face engagement. These elements become more difficult to replicate and follow in an online setting, especially for those students who are not kinesthetically inclined. Instead, in guiding students in performing exercises independently, teachers rely on video demonstrations, virtual communication tools and activity sheets (Wallace et al., 2022).

In online Physical Education, maintaining student engagement is a major challenge. Students are often motivated by the presence of their peers, and active participation is easy to monitor in a physical classroom. In comparison, reduced motivation and unwillingness to participate are common in online learning. Studies have shown that sustaining engagement is a major concern in virtual learning settings (Dang et al., 2024). Without direct teacher supervision, students may struggle to stay active. They cannot even perform exercises correctly or complete assigned tasks. They only perform so they have something to submit

online. In addition, distractions at home and limited access to proper space or equipment can further affect participation (Daw-as & Magat, 2022).

Despite these challenges, when supported by appropriate strategies, research suggests that online Physical Education can still be effective. One promising approach is video modeling. Through recorded or live demonstrations, students can observe proper techniques and replicate movements at their own pace. Emphasizing the value of visual learning in PE, Tolentin et al. (2025) found that video-based instruction helps improve students' ability to perform physical skills. This approach confirms the idea that even outside a traditional classroom, students can learn efficiently and effectively through observation and replication.

Moreover, integrating structured physical activities with online instruction yielded positive results. Linna, Li, and Ning (2024) asserted that digital guidance combined with regular exercise programs improves physical performance, including endurance and speed. This blended approach enhanced online PE, demonstrating that online PE does not replace physical activity but rather supports it by providing direction, guidance, and teacher feedback. Through digital tools, students can track their progress and stay engaged in their fitness routines beyond school hours.

Flexibility is another advantage of online Physical Education. Students are given ample time to perform activities at their own pace and within familiar environments. For those students who feel uncomfortable or self-conscious in traditional PE classes, this setup can reduce anxiety and increase engagement for some learners. Online platforms also offer more personalized learning experiences, allowing students to select activities, games, and sports aligned with their interests and fitness levels. This sense of freedom can strengthen intrinsic motivation and encourage long-term commitment in physical activity.

However, certain dimensions of PE – particularly team sports and dual activities – are difficult to replicate virtually. Essential elements such as teamwork, communication, and sportsmanship rely heavily on direct interaction, peer collaboration, and immediate feedback, which are limited in online contexts. Additionally, inequities in access to stable internet, appropriate devices, and safe exercise spaces remain pressing challenges, underscoring the digital divide as a barrier to inclusive participation.

Teacher readiness is another critical factor in the success of online Physical Education. Educators must possess not only expertise in their field of specialization but also the ability to use digital tools to design engaging virtual lessons and activities. Research highlights the importance of developing digital competencies among teachers to ensure effective online instruction (Zhang et al., 2025). Therefore, educators must adapt to this evolving learning environment by engaging in continuous professional development through training, workshops and seminars, alongside institutional support.

Eventually, the effectiveness of online Physical Education depends on how well it is put into practice. Students losing interest and becoming less physically active may be the

result of poorly designed programs. However, when online Physical Education is supported by appropriate use of technology and thorough planning, this valuable alternative can supplement traditional instruction. This online learning surely offers opportunities for continuous learning, promotes self-directed fitness habits, and extends physical education beyond the classroom setting.

In the end, while online Physical Education cannot fully replace face-to-face instruction, it remains an effective method for teaching movement and skills. Effective online Physical Education lies in the proper integration of technology, skilled educators, active learning methods, suitable devices, and support for both teachers and students. These elements help in achieving the learning objectives of each lesson. As education evolves, the main focus should not be on whether movement and skill mastery can be taught online, but on how digital platforms can be optimized to promote meaningful and sustained physical activity.



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The Toll of JC 3: Imbalance and Its Impact on SUC Faculty

CHED-DBM Joint Circular No. 3, series of 2022, was introduced to standardize faculty promotion in State Universities and Colleges. It created a scoring matrix that assigns point values to instruction, research, extension, and production, to motivate faculty to upgrade their ranks and ensure merit-based progression. While the framework was intended to professionalize the promotion system, its implementation has revealed serious imbalances. Faculty members across the country have spoken of the disproportionate burdens it imposes, and the toll has been emotional, financial, and professional.

The emotional strain is perhaps the most immediate. Faculty are expected to balance already heavy teaching loads with the production of publishable research and instructional materials. The rigid scoring system forces them to prioritize compliance over pedagogy, shifting focus away from student-centered teaching. Many reports heightened stress from the uncertainty of whether their outputs will be recognized, particularly with requirements for peer-reviewed instructional materials and indexed publications. This has created a culture of anxiety rather than growth. Evenings and weekends are consumed by documentation, leaving little time for rest or innovation. The joy of teaching is diminished when educators feel their efforts go unnoticed unless quantified, and morale suffers as intrinsic motivation is replaced by the pressure to meet bureaucratic standards.

The financial burden compounds the problem. In many SUCs, institutional support for research and publication is limited, forcing faculty to pay out of pocket for journal fees, instructional material production, and training. These costs can be prohibitive, especially for those in smaller or rural institutions. Developing textbooks, modules, and multimedia resources requires significant investment, and JC 3's requirement for reviewed instructional materials adds to those costs. Workshops and seminars necessary to meet the standards are often unfunded, leaving faculty to shoulder the costs themselves. This creates inequity between faculty in resource-rich institutions, who can access grants and subsidies, and those in resource-poor SUCs, who must rely on personal funds. Promotion thus becomes not only merit-based but resource-dependent, privileging those with financial means and disadvantaging those without.

The professional toll is equally damaging. Faculty who excel in instruction but lack access to research networks or publication opportunities find themselves trapped in lower ranks despite years of service. Promotion, once envisioned as a steady progression, now resembles a discontinuous function, sudden jumps for those who meet rigid criteria, and

stagnation for those whose contributions fall outside the matrix. This imbalance has eroded morale, with some faculty questioning the value of their work and others leaving the profession altogether. Younger educators, observing these struggles, hesitate to enter a system where promotion is tied more to bureaucratic scoring than to pedagogical excellence. The risk of attrition is real, as faculty who feel undervalued may seek opportunities outside the SUC system, weakening the long-term sustainability of higher education institutions.

The imbalance created by JC 3 has also distorted professional focus. The circular's emphasis on quantifiable outputs has shifted attention away from teaching – the core mission of SUCs – toward research and documentation. While research is vital, its disproportionate weighting has marginalized faculty whose strengths lie in instruction and mentorship. Extension services, creative works, and culturally responsive teaching are undervalued, despite their importance to SUCs' role in national development. Faculty are compelled to produce outputs that satisfy scoring matrices rather than outputs that respond to student and community needs. This distortion risks creating a generation of educators more concerned with meeting metrics than with cultivating learning, undermining the holistic role of SUCs in serving communities, advancing knowledge, and nurturing students.

Comparative perspectives highlight the imbalance further. In Malaysia and Singapore, faculty promotion frameworks emphasize balanced portfolios that recognize teaching excellence alongside research. In many European universities, teaching awards, peer evaluations, and community engagement are ideally integrated into promotion criteria. JC 3, by contrast, remains overly rigid and output-driven, failing to capture the multidimensional nature of faculty work. Faculty organizations such as PASUC have consistently called for reforms, advocating inclusivity and the recognition of diverse contributions. CHED's own post-implementation assessment in 2024 acknowledged these concerns, noting the need for supplemental guidelines and adjustments to ensure fairness and sustainability.

CHED-DBM Joint Circular No. 3 sought to professionalize faculty promotion, but its implementation has revealed serious imbalances. Emotional stress, financial strain, and professional stagnation are systemic outcomes of a framework that prioritizes compliance over impact. For JC 3 to fulfill its purpose, reforms must rebalance the scoring matrix, provide institutional support, reduce bureaucratic burden, and ensure equity across SUCs. Without such changes, the toll on faculty will continue to erode morale, distort professional focus, and weaken SUCs' missions. The measure of a teacher cannot be reduced to documentation alone; it must account for the lived realities of teaching, the equity of opportunity, and the transformative power of education.



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The Geometry of Teaching

The four corners of the classroom is a circle,
It draws us back every day
A diameter of inquiries,
Learners circumscribing knowledge.

Lines of ideas converge,
Intersecting at a point of marvel,
Where sense and recollection
Lies in the palms of the learners.

Instruction is a triangle,
Edged with challenges and problems,
Complementing compassion, truth and precision
Sometimes cut on the hypotenuse.

Teaching's geometry is fragile,
A formation of strain and patience,
Collapsing the structure
If trust of one shift.

It is square of walls of preparation,
in solitude and private,
contained and steady,
The silence of inquiry safeguarding.

Yet there is cross of diagonals
Connecting mentor to mentee,
Links of critiques and dialogues
Breaking stillness.

In symmetry we meet
Reflection of two
about an axis,
Reciprocating proof of learning.

Fractals remain though in brokenness,
Hope and effort repeating in patterns,
Fragmentary, complex and infinite
Like the geometry of teaching.



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Ballad of the Loose Heart

I swore we'd write our tale anew,
Past caps that fall and futures wide,
Through lecture halls and skies of blue,
Where hand in hand we'd gently stride.

I dreamed of love that would not fade,
Beyond the gates we'd soon depart,
A promise softly, shyly made,
Still echoing within my heart.

We counted days like fragile glass,
Each moment slipping through our hands,
The hours bent as shadows pass,
Like whispered hopes and distant lands.

I traced our names in silent air,
As if the wind would make them stay,
Believing time was kind and fair,
And would not steal our thread away.

But something stirred beneath the calm,
A quiet shift I could not see,
No storm, no cry, no loud alarm,
Just change that bloomed too silently.

Your laughter found a different tone,
Your gaze would wander, drift apart,
And though you stood not quite alone,
A space grew wide within your heart.

Before the march, before the cheer,
Before the final curtain call,
Another voice had drawn you near,
Another name you chose to fall.

No warning etched upon the days,
No sign the ending would begin,
Just subtle cracks in tender ways,
And distance growing from within.

I held the plans we used to keep,
Like letters never meant to send,
While you had crossed a hidden deep,
And found in him a different end.

The campus dreams we used to share,
Now lingered like a fading chart,
A map that led to empty air,
A story lost to a loose heart.

Yet still I walk toward that gate,
Where futures bloom in unknown light,
Though love arrived a turn too late,
And vanished just before the flight.

For though you chose another way,
And left our pages torn apart,
I'll write anew beyond that day
No longer bound by a loose heart.



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Beyond the Finish Line

The morning air clung to the oval. Students gathered in clusters, stretching and laughing. They distract themselves from the reality of what was about to happen. Today is the culminating activity for all first year students in the college.

“1.5 kilometers, that’s basically torture,” someone muttered. At the oval, Dave is tightening the laces of his worn-out running shoes. His confidence in PE is like the soles of his shoes that weakened over time. He had spent most of his high school PE years unnoticed.

“Dave, you joining the race or just tying your shoes forever?” his classmate Mark teased. Dave forced a smile. “I’m just making sure they don’t fall apart mid-run.

Mark laughed and effortlessly jogged off joining the crowd.

A familiar weight pressing against his chest, the quiet reminder that he didn’t belong among the naturally athletic. Dave thought as he watched him go.

“Alright, everyone, today’s activity will test not only your physical strength but also your mental discipline,” their instructor said.

Dave heard those words before. Mental discipline. He remembered Ma’am Lea’s lesson in PATHFit 2: “It’s the capacity to keep going even when things are difficult. It’s the ability to control your thoughts, and actions in order to stay focused on your goals, and make sound decisions.

“Remember, this isn’t about being first, it’s about finishing,” the instructor continued.

He thought, finishing still feels impossible. Though doubt still lingered, Dave tried to compose himself.

Once the whistle pierced the air, students surged forward full of energy and determination. Dave hesitated before settling into his usual pace, slow, and reluctant. He settled into a rhythm. Inhale. Exhale. Step. But the rhythm became unsteady. The temptation to stop crept in. His legs felt heavier with each stride after the first lap.

As he looked around, other students continued running, some struggling, others aspiring forward.

In his mind, thoughts came in that no one will notice if you walk. You've never been good at this anyway.

Dave jog, then walk.

As Dave approached the far end of the oval, he noticed someone sitting near the track. It was Roxan.

It was unexpected. She was one of the top students in PE, smart, and always confident. Dave stopped beside her. "Hey! are you okay?"

Roxan looked up. "Twisted my ankle. I tried to keep going, but..." She trailed off.

Adrian glanced at the track. The race was still ongoing and students were already nearing their final laps.

"You should go, you're in the race," Roxan said. Dave hesitated seeing her sitting on the ground.

If he kept going, he might actually finish ahead of someone. For once, he wasn't last. It was a rare opportunity. But something didn't sit right as he looked at Roxan struggling to stand.

Let me help you," he said.

Roxan frowned. "You'll lose time, you don't have to do that."

Dave sighed. "I'm already not winning."

"That's not the point," she replied.

He shook his head. "Maybe not. But this feels more important."

Dave helped Roxan back on her feet, carefully supporting her weight as they moved towards the track.

The race continued. Some students looked their way but quickly returned their focus to their own performance.

"You know, you're the last person I expected to stop" Roxan said.

Dave laughed softly. "I usually don't. I just keep on pushing my limits... try to survive PE." Roxan smiled. "You're doing more than that right now."

"I can manage from here, you should finish your run." Roxan said as they reached the edge of the track.

For a moment, he considered it. Dave looked at the oval. The finish line seemed both near and impossibly far.

Then he looked back at Roxan. "I'll stay," he said.

Minutes passed.

One by one, students crossed the finish line. Dave stood still, emotions swirling around him. A feeling of regret, and uncertainty.

"Dave." He turned to see their instructor approaching. "Why did you stop?" the instructor asked.

"Roxan needed help." Dave replied.

The instructor looked at Roxan, then back at him. "Do you know that this was a graded activity?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And you chose to give that up?"

Dave nodded.

Silence filled the air.

Unexpectedly, the instructor smiled.

"Very Good."

Dave blinked. "Ma'am?"

"PE is not just about physical activities, it's about values, teamwork, and empathy. Today, you demonstrated all of those" the instructor said.

Adrian felt a sudden shift inside him, not doubt, but clarity.

"You may not have finished the race," the instructor continued, "but you showed something more important, and that is how PE is."

As Dave sat alone, he replayed the events in his mind. Today had been different. For years, he had believed PE was about strength, and mastery of the skills, things he knew he lacked.

He made a choice.

A worthwhile one.

Roxan came over, her ankle now wrapped in a bandage.

“Hey, Thanks... for earlier” she said.

Adrian shrugged. “It’s okay, it was nothing.”

“It wasn’t, you gave up your chance to finish.” she insisted.

“Maybe, but I don’t think I really lost anything.” Dave said slowly.

“You didn’t.” Roxan smiled.

A week after, another activity was announced, this time, a circuit training session. Something felt different. When the whistle blew, he kept moving forward. Not faster, not stronger, but with purpose. There’s no more doubt in every step, but optimism.

He still struggled and left behind, but he didn’t stop. Now, he understood something he hadn’t before, PE wasn’t about being the first in crossing the finish line, it’s about what you learned. The resilience, the attitude, and the courage to keep moving even when your body begged you to quit.

Sometimes, the most meaningful victories weren’t measured in grades but in character, on how you carried yourself, and how you refused to surrender despite the odds. For Dave, that day wasn’t about winning the circuit session. It was about discovering that the truest finish line lies within and wasn’t being out on the track.



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When the Ace Becomes the Joker

He dealt his gifts with steady grace,
Yet turned away from earned applause;
A quiet doubt concealed his face,
And blurred the truth, resisting cause.

He played the fool in others' sight,
Though brilliance shone in all he'd do;
An ace who dimmed his inner light,
And wore a mask he thought was true.

He laughed along when praise was near,
And brushed aside each spoken claim;
As if his worth were less than clear,
He shrank from ever owning fame.

The cards he held could win the game,
Yet still he chose a lesser role;
He feared the weight that comes with name,
And hid the strength within his soul.

But deep within, a spark remains,
A truth no jest can overthrow;
For even masked in doubt and chains,
The ace still waits it's time to show.



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A Field Study Perspective (My FS Journey)

The journey of my Field Study (FS) prepared me for my first step into the "real" world of teaching, and I found the experience meaningful and eye-opening. Before I began my FS, I was very nervous about how the experience would proceed, but as each day passed, I gained more confidence and comfort in the classroom. Through my observations of cooperating teachers, I came to understand how teachers build relationships with their students, manage student behavior and adapt to the needs of students with different learning styles.

During my observation, teachers frequently used a variety of instructional strategies to keep their students engaged. Some teachers used hands-on learning activities; others employed questioning strategies to assess their students' understanding. I realized that no single teaching method is "perfect"; some teachers succeed by using their creativity, preparation, and making relevant connections with their students. Additionally, patience is a very important quality to have when working with students who may have different learning abilities and personalities. The biggest lesson I learned from my FS experience was the value of preparedness and classroom management. A teacher with experience in preparation can teach a lesson fluently and confidently. Classroom management creates an environment that supports student growth. I admire teachers' commitment and enthusiasm for teaching, despite the difficulties they face daily.

This experience has also made me think about the kind of educator I want to be. The experience has motivated me to be a better teacher by being more responsible, loving, and dedicated to my profession. I realize that teaching is not an easy profession, but it has many rewards. Teaching allows us to mold and influence how young children think and, eventually, shape our future. In conclusion, I believe that FS has not only supported me in becoming a better teacher but also motivated me to help others reach their full potential. I cannot imagine having gone through such an experience without the insights and values I have gained; therefore, the journey that is FS is the beginning of great things for me, and the impact it will have on my life is everlasting.



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In the Meadow of Sorrow

Within the field where shadows lay,
He walked with hearts both worn and torn;
Through silent nights and burdened day,
He bore their grief yet stood forlorn.

He lent his strength when hope was thin,
And stitched their wounds with patient hand;
Yet whispers grew beneath the din,
Till doubt like fire consumed the land.

They named him false, a faithless guide,
Though he had bled for all their days;
His truth was lost where lies abide,
His light eclipsed by shifting praise.

His voice grew faint, his figure dim,
As memory blurred his steadfast role;
The cheers once raised were not for him,
But ghosts that echoed in each soul.

So in that field of sorrow deep,
He laid his burdens to the air;
No more the vows he swore to keep,
No more the weight of their despair.

Beyond the veil, a meadow wide,
Unfolded soft in golden hue;
No tongues accused, no truth denied,
But peace he never fully knew.



Echoes of Expression
A Creative Folio

Volume II, Issue IV (April 2026), National Circulation
ISSN (Online) 3082-4397 ISSN (Print) 3082-5741
Published Online at www.lakbay-diwapublishing.com
Publisher: Lakbay-Diwa Publishing
DTI Business Reg. No. 6488937 / TIN 492-741-614
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There laughter blooms where silence stayed,
And gentle winds recall his name;
No shadow now his path has made,
No trace remains of earthly blame.

And though the world he left behind
May never grasp the depth he gave,
He walks at last with quiet mind,
In heaven's field beyond the grave.



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Watching, Learning, and Growing: My FS Journey

There is a saying that experience is your best teacher, and this idea gained real meaning during my Field Study. What I encountered went beyond simple observation. It became a direct encounter with the depth and demands of teaching as a profession.

Witnessing the Grade 3 classroom served as a clear turning point in how I view education. Teaching is not limited to explaining a lesson or writing on the board. It involves attending to the whole child. It requires awareness of each learner's needs, emotions, and growth pace. The students were often active and loud. They laughed freely, talked to one another, and moved with constant energy. At first glance, this behavior might seem distracting. However, closer reflection shows that this behavior aligns with normal developmental patterns. Children at this stage learn through movement, interaction, and expression. For them to read, think, and solve problems, they need to feel safe, valued, and respected within the classroom.

I observed how patience functions as a core skill in teaching. A teacher engages with learners who differ in ability, focus, and response time. Some complete tasks quickly, while others require guidance and repetition. This variation demands flexibility and emotional control. Teaching involves sustained effort, careful planning, and consistent adjustment. At the same time, it offers a sense of fulfillment rooted in student growth. Seeing a learner improve, respond, or gain confidence reflects the impact of intentional teaching practices. This experience shaped my perspective in a lasting way. The lessons I gained are not abstract ideas but grounded insights formed through observation and reflection. I now approach the goal of becoming a teacher with clarity and purpose.

I look forward to guiding learners, supporting their development, and contributing to their academic and personal progress.



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Little Experience, Big Lessons from My Field Study Experience

During my field study, I observed various classes, including English, Math, Science, and Filipino, in a Grade 6 classroom for several weeks. This experience allowed me to observe actual teaching practices and provided a clearer view of how lessons are delivered in real classroom settings. I noticed that each subject required different approaches, depending on the topic and learners' needs. Through this exposure, I gained practical knowledge about both teaching strategies and classroom management.

I observed that teachers used a variety of methods to help students better understand the lessons. These included discussions, group reporting, and role-playing activities. Each strategy encouraged participation and allowed students to express their ideas. I saw how these approaches made the classroom more interactive and helped students become more confident in sharing their thoughts. It also became clear to me that when students are actively involved, they tend to understand and retain the lesson better.

After each lesson, teachers would give activities or exercises to assess whether the students had understood the topic. These activities also allowed students to apply what they had learned. I realized that assessment is not only for grading but also for guiding both the teacher and the students on what needs improvement. Aside from observation, I was also allowed to assist my cooperating teachers. I helped write the SF10, checked test papers, and handled Grade 4, Aral tutees. These tasks helped me understand that teaching involves many responsibilities beyond classroom instruction.

While observing, I noticed that some students were shy and had difficulty answering questions. However, the teachers remained patient and supportive. They guided the students step by step, gave clear instructions, and encouraged them to participate. This showed me the importance of creating a safe and supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable making mistakes and trying again.

From this experience, I learned that teaching goes beyond simply explaining lessons. It requires patience, creativity, and a genuine understanding of students' needs. I also realized that teachers play an important role not only in developing students' academic skills but also in shaping their character and confidence. This field study strengthened my interest in the teaching profession and helped me appreciate the real challenges and rewards of being an educator.



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Where Small Efforts Quietly Turn Into Something Greater

On the first day of class, I wrote 0.1 on the board. For a few seconds, no one said anything. Some of them leaned forward, others just looked at me, waiting for what was next.

"Ma'am, are we supposed to solve that?" one student asked. "Not yet," I said. "Tell me first, what is it?" "One-tenth."

"Parang ang liit, Ma'am," another one said, and a few of them smiled. "Exactly," I replied. "It looks small. But what if you add it every day?" They started thinking. I could see some of them counting quietly.

"After ten days?" "One." "And after a hundred days?" "Ten", someone said, sounding sure this time. I wrote on the board: Small steps matter.

"Math shows patterns," I told them. "And sometimes, those patterns are the same ones we see in real life."

As the weeks went on, the lessons became more challenging. Some students followed right away. Others were quieter, but I knew they were trying.

There was one student who stayed after class almost every time. She would sit there, solving, erasing, then solving again. Sometimes she would just stare at her paper.

One afternoon, she finally said, "Ma'am... hindi ko pa rin gets." "That's okay," I told her. "Try natin ulit."

We went through the problem slowly. Step by step. No pressure.

The next day, she came back. "Ma'am, I tried again," she said. And she kept coming back. Hindi man perfect, pero tuloy-tuloy.

Weeks later, I returned their test papers. She looked at hers for a few seconds, then a little longer. "Ma'am... pumasa ako." "You did," I said. "And you improved."

On the last day of the term, I wrote 0.1 on the board again. This time, they didn't laugh. "It looked small before," I said, "but when you keep adding it, it becomes something."

As they were leaving, one student stopped by the door. "Ma'am," he said, "gets ko na." I smiled. "Ano 'yon?" "It's not about getting it right the first time." He paused. "It's about not giving up."

I nodded. And in that moment, I realized that beyond formulas and numbers, may natutunan sila na mas mahalaga. Na kahit maliit lang sa simula, kapag tinuloy-tuloy mo, lalaki pa rin.



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Sa Pagitan ng Pa(g)hinga

Sa wakas, tinanggal ko ang bigat
ng araw na pasan-pasan,
ibinaba ang mga balikat
na matagal nang nakayuko.
Huminga.
Hindi upang habulin ang oras,
kundi upang maramdaman ang sarili.

Tahimik ang hangin,
at sa kanyang haplos,
narinig ko ang matagal nang katahimikan
na hindi ko binigyang puwang.
Ang mundo'y hindi bumagal,
pero ako, sandali lang,
hinayaan kong huminto.

Dito, sa pagitan ng paghinga,
walang dapat habulin,
walang dapat tapusin.
May panahon din pala
para sa sarili,
para sa hindi paggawa,
para sa simpleng pag-iral.

At sa pagbangon mamaya,
hindi ako pagod
kundi buo.



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Small Steps, Big Impact: My First Classroom Experience

My Field Study (FS) journey has been one of the most meaningful experiences in my growth as a future educator. Being immersed in a real classroom setting allowed me to witness the beauty and challenges of teaching young learners in a way that no textbook could fully capture. Every observation, interaction, and reflection became a stepping stone in understanding the true essence of education, from lesson preparation to classroom management, and from student engagement to the subtle ways teachers respond to diverse learning needs.

I am especially grateful to my cooperating teacher, Mrs. Jean Dilidili, whose guidance, patience, and dedication truly inspired me throughout this journey. Her passion for teaching Grade 1 – Santan was evident in the way she handled her pupils with care, creativity, and professionalism each day. She created a classroom environment where learners felt safe, encouraged, and motivated to participate. Through her example, I learned not just teaching strategies and techniques, but also the importance of compassion, consistency, and commitment in shaping young minds and building a positive learning atmosphere.

Handling and observing the Grade 1 – Santan pupils brought me so much joy and realization. Their curiosity, innocence, and eagerness to learn reminded me of why teaching is such a noble profession. I saw how even the simplest activities could spark excitement, and how encouragement could build confidence in young learners. Each day spent with them was filled with laughter, learning, small victories, and unforgettable moments that I will always treasure. These experiences helped me understand that teaching goes beyond delivering lessons; it involves building relationships, showing patience, and recognizing each child's unique pace and potential.

As I look back on this journey, I carry with me valuable lessons, experiences, and memories that will guide me in my future career as an educator. I have developed a deeper appreciation for the responsibilities that teachers carry and the impact they have on their students' lives. This FS journey may have come to an end, but its impact will remain in my heart forever, shaping how I will teach, guide, and inspire my future learners. Thank you to everyone who became part of this meaningful chapter in my life. Your support and presence made this experience truly unforgettable.



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The Quiet Weight of Command

Leadership, at least in my experience, does not always feel like something powerful or visible. It often feels quiet, something you carry more than something you show. It lives in the everyday decisions, in the responsibility that continues even when energy runs low, and in the commitment to move forward despite limitations.

In a campus setting, leadership becomes even more defined by responsibility. There are standards to meet ISO to comply with, accreditation to pass, COPC requirements to fulfill. Each comes with its own expectations, timelines, and level of scrutiny. On paper, these are systems and processes. In reality, they are ongoing efforts that require coordination, persistence, and careful use of available resources.

Moreover, often, those resources are not enough. So, leadership becomes an act of finding ways, reallocating what is available, seeking support where possible, and ensuring that operations continue smoothly even when conditions are less than ideal. It means looking at what you have and asking, *"How can this still work?"* rather than *"What is missing?"*

This is where the weight becomes real. There are moments when you see your team already carrying a full load. You know they are doing their best. You understand that more tasks are lined up, waiting. However, deadlines remain. Compliance must be achieved. The institution must move forward.

So, you begin to balance. There are times when, because you want the institution to succeed, you find yourself asking for more—following up, setting direction, encouraging urgency. Some respond quickly, some take time, and some need more understanding. In those moments, leadership becomes less about instruction and more about connection.

Paano nga ba? You learn to weigh things carefully. To lead with empathy while still guiding toward completion. To make your team feel that you understand them that you see their effort, their situation, and their limits, while also helping them see the importance of finishing what has been started. It is not about pressure, but about shared purpose.

Leadership is not separate from humanity. Leaders, too, experience fatigue. They also have moments when they feel unwell, uncertain, or stretched. However, they continue not

because they are unaffected, but because they choose to carry responsibility. This is what sets leadership apart: not perfection, but the courage to keep going.

Moreover, because of this, respect becomes important. Leaders and team members are, in many ways, the same, colleagues working toward a shared goal. The difference lies in the willingness to take on greater accountability. Recognizing this creates a culture where understanding flows both ways where leaders support their teams, and teams, in turn, support their leaders.

This is where the beauty of leadership reveals itself. It is found in cooperation during demanding times. In the willingness of individuals to contribute, even in small ways. In the quiet moments when progress is made not because everything is easy, but because everyone chose to move forward together.

Because leadership leaves echoes. The way you handle compliance, the way you communicate expectations, the way you treat people during demanding periods, these are remembered. Long after ISO is met, accreditation is achieved, and COPC standards are passed, what remains is the experience of how the journey was carried out.

As John C. Maxwell reminds us, *"A leader knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way."* Moreover, perhaps, at its heart, leadership is best guided by this: *"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."* — Philippians 2:4

The quiet weight of command is not about control. It is about carrying responsibility with purpose, leading with empathy, finding ways to sustain operations despite limitations, and guiding people forward, together, until the work is done.



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The Teacher and the Machine When Human Wisdom Meets Artificial Intelligence

In classrooms touched by the morning sun,
Where dreams awaken and journeys begin,
A silent presence enters the learning space,
Carrying the promise of a changing age.

A creation of circuits, language, and light,
A companion emerging in humanity's sight.
It listens, responds, creates, and explains,
A digital mind built from patterns and names.

It offers knowledge at the learner's call,
A guiding voice available to all.
For the hesitant child who struggles to speak,
It becomes a bridge for the answers they seek.

It inspires creation, it nurtures design,
It opens new pathways where ideas shine.
It helps learners explore, imagine, and grow,
Revealing possibilities they once did not know.

Yet in the presence of this remarkable creation,
Teachers confront a profound transformation.
They stand between promise and uncertainty,
Guardians of wisdom, humanity, and integrity.

For machines may generate language and thought,
And offer solutions instantly sought,
But they cannot understand a student's silent plea,
Or recognize the dreams that only teachers see.

They cannot replace the warmth of a guiding hand,
The encouragement to rise and withstand.

They cannot offer compassion born from experience,
Or teach through patience, kindness, and presence.

For education is more than information shared;
It is a relationship built through trust and care.
It is the courage to question, the strength to explore,
The human connection that opens every door.

Yet new challenges emerge beneath technology's glow,
As educators navigate a world they must know.
Questions of honesty, originality, and truth arise,
As artificial voices fill digital skies.

When answers appear without struggle or search,
Will curiosity weaken? Will learning lose its worth?
Will minds continue to wonder, create, and dream,
Or surrender their thinking to a digital stream?

The teacher now walks an unfamiliar road,
Carrying new responsibilities and a heavier load.
Learning new systems, examining what they reveal,
Determining what is accurate, ethical, and real.

They question the data, the patterns, the design,
Searching for fairness in every line.
They guide students to look beyond what appears,
Teaching wisdom that grows through thoughtful years.

They reshape lessons, redefine assessment,
Seeking deeper forms of student engagement.
Not merely answers that machines can provide,
But understanding developed from within and inside.

For true learning is not a completed page,
But a lifelong journey through every age.
It grows through curiosity, struggle, and discovery,
Through reflection, imagination, and human inquiry.

Yet teachers cannot carry this future alone;
They need support, resources, and foundations strongly grown.
They need time to learn, opportunities to explore,
And institutions that help them open new doors.

Schools must build pathways where technology serves,
Where innovation follows the values it preserves.
Where every learner, regardless of place,
Can access the future with fairness and grace.

Artificial intelligence should not replace the teacher's role,
Nor diminish the human spirit that makes learning whole.
It should become a partner, a tool, a guide,
Supporting human wisdom rather than standing beside.

For the future of education will not belong
To machines alone or algorithms strong.
It will belong to those who understand
The power of knowledge shaped by a human hand.

So let technology rise with purpose and care,
While human compassion remains everywhere.
For the greatest lessons humanity can impart
Are written not in machines, but within the heart.

And when tomorrow's classrooms unfold beneath new skies,
Where digital horizons and human dreams arise,
May teachers remain the enduring flame,
The soul and spirit behind learning's name.



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The Weight of Truth and the Comfort of Lies

In the course of human life, one of the most profound moral dilemmas we encounter is the choice between truth and lies. This decision, though often appearing simple, carries deep ethical, emotional, and social consequences. Truth represents honesty, integrity, and authenticity, while lies offer temporary comfort, protection, or escape. Choosing between them is not merely about words, it is about the kind of person one aspires to become and the kind of world one helps create.

Truth is often difficult to uphold because it demands courage. It requires individuals to confront reality, accept responsibility, and sometimes endure pain or conflict. Telling the truth may lead to immediate consequences such as criticism, rejection, or loss. However, despite these challenges, truth builds a strong foundation for trust. In relationships, whether personal, professional, or societal trust is essential. Once broken by lies, it becomes difficult to restore. Truth fosters transparency, strengthens connections, and promotes long-term respect among individuals.

On the other hand, lies can be tempting because they provide immediate relief. People may lie to avoid punishment, protect someone's feelings, or gain personal advantage. In some cases, lies may seem harmless, often referred to as "white lies." However, even small deceptions can accumulate over time, leading to greater dishonesty. Lies create a fragile reality that requires constant maintenance. One lie often leads to another, trapping individuals in a cycle of deception that becomes increasingly difficult to escape. Eventually, the truth has a way of revealing itself, often resulting in greater damage than if honesty had been chosen from the beginning.

Moreover, the choice between truth and lies reflects one's moral character. A person who consistently chooses truth demonstrates integrity and accountability. Such individuals are often respected and trusted, even if their honesty sometimes brings discomfort. In contrast, habitual lying can damage one's reputation and credibility. When people become known for dishonesty, their words lose value, and their relationships suffer.

However, it is important to recognize that the decision is not always black and white. There are complex situations where telling the truth may cause harm, and individuals must weigh compassion against honesty. For instance, in moments of vulnerability or crisis, sensitivity is necessary. Yet, even in such cases, honesty can be expressed with kindness and empathy rather than replaced with deception.

Ultimately, choosing truth over lies is a commitment to authenticity and ethical living. While lies may offer temporary ease, truth provides lasting peace of mind. Living truthfully



Echoes of Expression
A Creative Folio

Volume II, Issue IV (April 2026), National Circulation
ISSN (Online) 3082-4397 ISSN (Print) 3082-5741
Published Online at www.lakbay-diwapublishing.com
Publisher: Lakbay-Diwa Publishing
DTI Business Reg. No. 6488937 / TIN 492-741-614
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allows individuals to align their actions with their values, fostering inner harmony and self-respect. In a world where deception can sometimes seem advantageous, the courage to choose truth stands as a powerful testament to one's character.

In the end, the choice between truth and lies is a defining aspect of human experience. Though truth may be challenging, it nurtures trust, integrity, and genuine relationships. Lies, while momentarily comforting, often lead to complications and broken trust. Therefore, choosing truth is not just a moral obligation it is a path toward a more honest, meaningful, and fulfilling life.



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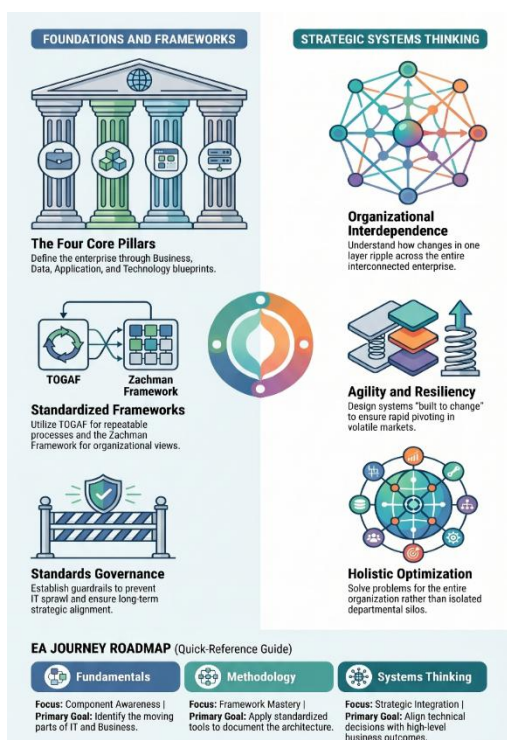
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Visual Summary: Enterprise Architecture Roadmap from Fundamentals to Systems Thinking



Enterprise Architecture (EA) has evolved from a specialized IT role into a strategic bridge that aligns corporate vision with operational reality. This roadmap provides a three-stage journey designed to transform a learner's perspective from basic component awareness to the mastery of complex organizational systems.

The journey begins at the Foundational Layer, where the enterprise is defined through four essential pillars: Business (strategy and goals), Data (information management), Application (software alignment), and Technology (infrastructure). This stage moves EA away from being a mere technical manual, reframing it as a cohesive organizational blueprint.

Building on these foundations, the Structural Layer introduces standardized frameworks like TOGAF

and the Zachman Framework. These methodologies provide the professional vocabulary and logical structures necessary to maintain governance and prevent "IT sprawl," ensuring that every new initiative aligns with the long-term vision of the company.

The roadmap culminates in the Analytical Layer, which advocates for a shift toward Systems Thinking. Here, the focus moves beyond isolated departments to a holistic view of the organization. By understanding the interdependence between layers, architects learn to optimize the entire system for agility and resiliency. The ultimate goal is to move beyond rigid designs to create a transparent, adaptable enterprise where technology and strategy function in perfect lockstep, allowing the organization to pivot effortlessly in a volatile market.



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Tethered but Free

He is an agelast, yet laughter
glimmers in the corners of his eyes,
an ebullient child of apperception,
painting pictures of society's veins
its human pulse, its physical bones.

"In over my head," he whispers,
yet still he dares to call the shots,
to bend over backwards for truth,
to take it with a grain of salt
when obdurate voices speak volumes.

In classrooms of vellichor,
where old books breathe psithurism,
he teaches cathexis
the binding of heart to idea,
the haecceity of each learner's spark.

His altruistic hands trace syzygy,
aligning minds with metanoia,
until learning becomes apotheosis,
a rising flame, a xyresic clarity
cutting through the fog of doubt.

He does not laugh, but he smiles
a boy who knows the world's weight,
yet carries it lightly,
as if society itself were a kite
and he, the string,
tethered but free.



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**When Classrooms Closed,
Teachers Opened Doors**

The world grew still, the hallways bare,
An unseen storm was everywhere.
The classroom doors were closed one day,
Yet learning somehow found its way.

No ringing bells, no desks in rows,
No bustling crowds the schoolyard knows.
Instead, through screens and modules worn,
A different kind of school was born.

Teachers stood where fear had spread,
With questions filling every head.
How could they teach from far away?
How could they guide from day to day?

The internet would fade and fall,
Resources scarce for one and all.
Yet still they worked beyond the night,
Determined to keep learning bright.

They learned new tools they'd never known,
Turned kitchen tables into zones
Of planning, teaching, checking work,
While carrying burdens that did lurk.

With patience strong and hearts so wide,
They stood with every child beside.
Though miles apart, they found a way
To make their presence felt each day.

The crisis taught a truth profound:
That learning's strength is not just found
In buildings made of steel and stone,
But in the people who guide and hone.

Technology became a bridge,
Connecting homes from ridge to ridge.
And teachers once unsure of change
Became innovators through the strange.

They learned to bend but never break,
To redesign for learning's sake.
To meet each challenge face to face,
And find solutions with courage and grace.

Yet hidden behind each smiling face
Were weary hearts in a relentless race.
Long hours, stress, and endless care
Became the burdens they would bear.

The pandemic showed what many knew
That teachers need support, too.
For those who shape the minds of youth
Deserve compassion, care, and truth.

It also revealed a deeper divide,
Where opportunities could not abide.
Some learners lacked the means to start,
Yet teachers reached them with all their heart.

And through it all, one lesson grew,
A lesson lasting, strong, and true:
Resilience is not merely to survive,
But to help others continue to thrive.

Today the classrooms stand once more,
With eager footsteps at the door.
Yet echoes of those difficult years
Still carry wisdom through our ears.

The story is no longer one of pain,
But of transformation born from strain.
Of teachers who, when tested most,
Became the nation's steadfast host.

So let us honor what they showed,
Along that challenging, uncertain road.
For when teachers are valued, empowered, and free,
Education grows in strength and dignity.



Echoes of Expression
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Volume II, Issue VI (June 2026), National Circulation
ISSN (Online) 3082-4397 ISSN (Print) 3082-5741
Published Online at www.lakbay-diwapublishing.com
Publisher: Lakbay-Diwa Publishing
DTI Business Reg. No. 6488937 / TIN 492-741-614
lakbaydiwapublishing@gmail.com
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The pandemic has passed, yet its lessons stay,
Guiding our schools in a brighter way.
And among those lessons, shining through,
Is the enduring spirit of teachers true.

For when classrooms closed across the land,
Teachers opened doors with heart and hand.
And in their resilience, we can see
The future of education's possibility.



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The Hands That Never Rest

The alarm rings at 5:00 a.m. She reaches out, silences it, and sits for a moment at the edge of the bed. The house is still quiet. Everyone is asleep. This is the only time she has for herself, but even this moment is brief. In a few minutes, she will begin again.

She walks to the kitchen, preparing breakfast while thinking ahead, what the children need for school, what bills are due, what tasks await her at work. Her hands move quickly, but her mind carries more than what is seen. There is no announcement, no recognition, only the quiet rhythm of responsibility. By the time the sun rises, she has already done so much.

As the day unfolds, she becomes many things at once, a professional fulfilling her duties, a mother nurturing her children, a sister offering support, and a woman attending to countless responsibilities that seem to have no end. She moves from one role to another, often without pause, juggling expectations with quiet determination.

At home, three little worlds wait for her, Star, Sky, and Sun. Each one carries a different light, a different need, a different dream. Moreover, in them, she finds both her greatest responsibility and her deepest reason to keep going. When she looks at them, she is reminded that every effort, every sacrifice, and every long day holds meaning.

At work, she gives her best. At home, she gives even more. There are moments when she feels the weight of it all, when tasks overlap, when time feels too short, and when rest seems distant. However, she continues, not out of obligation alone, but out of love and commitment. Because she must.

One evening, one of her children gently asks, "Ma, are you tired?" She pauses. For a moment, she considers answering honestly. However, instead, she smiles and says, "Okay lang ako." Moreover, in that quiet response is a love that chooses strength, so that Star, Sky, and Sun will feel safe, secure, and cared for.

This is where a mother's love quietly lives. It is not always expressed in words, but in presence. In the meals prepared, in the worries carried silently, and in the sacrifices made without hesitation. It is a love that continues even when energy fades, even when appreciation is not always spoken.

However, behind that strength is a woman who also feels. She gets tired. She becomes overwhelmed. She has moments of quiet struggle. However, still, she rises each day, embracing her many roles with grace. Not because everything is easy, but because her love gives her reason to continue.

Over time, these small, unseen acts begin to take shape. Star learns to shine with confidence. Sky learns to dream without limits. Sun learns to bring warmth wherever life leads. Moreover, in them, her love continues.

Because a mother's love leaves traces. It is found in the strength we carry, in the values we hold, and in the way, we learn to care for others. It shapes us long before we understand it, and remains with us long after.

The love of a mother reflects a deeper truth. In Isaiah 66:13, it is written, "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you." This reminds us that a mother's love mirrors something divine, patient, enduring, and quietly powerful.

In today's world, many mothers continue to give without pause. They juggle responsibilities, play multiple roles, and navigate each day with resilience. They support, they provide, and they nurture, consistently and faithfully.

May we learn to see them more clearly. May we appreciate not only what they do, but who they are beyond their roles. Moreover, may we carry forward the same spirit of love, selfless, steady, and enduring.

Because behind every strong individual, there is always a mother, whose hands never rest, whose heart never gives up, Moreover, whose love, like Star, Sky, and Sun... continues to shine.



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Learning Mathematics at a Distance: Lived Realities, Pedagogical Challenges, and Emerging Opportunities in ODeL

I created a study wherein I examined the lived experiences of tertiary students at Biliran Province State University as they engaged in mathematics learning through Open Distance and e-Learning (ODeL). The findings reveal a learning environment shaped by both opportunity and constraint. ODeL expanded access to education by allowing flexibility in time, place, and pace. However, this flexibility also introduced significant challenges, particularly in mathematics, a subject that requires clear explanations, guided instruction, and timely feedback. Students reported difficulties in understanding poorly structured modules, limited interaction with instructors, unstable internet connectivity, and distractions within their home environments. These conditions negatively influenced their motivation, engagement, and academic performance, leading many to prefer traditional face-to-face instruction.

Despite these challenges, students demonstrated the capacity to adapt. They developed independent learning strategies to cope with the demands of ODeL. Many relied on online tutorials, peer collaboration through messaging platforms, and structured time management practices. These efforts reflect the development of self-directed learning skills, which are essential in flexible learning environments. The findings suggest that while ODeL presents structural and instructional limitations, it also creates opportunities for learners to become more autonomous and resourceful.

The challenges identified in this study are closely linked to broader issues in mathematics teaching within ODeL contexts. Research on subject-specific supervision indicates that instructional difficulties often stem from gaps in both content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Student teachers may hold misconceptions about key mathematical concepts, which in turn affect how they present these ideas to learners. Structured supervision programs that pair student teachers with mathematics specialists have been shown to address these issues effectively. Through targeted feedback, guided questioning, and demonstration of best practices, supervisors can improve both conceptual understanding and instructional clarity. This process strengthens Pedagogical Content Knowledge, enabling teachers to present mathematical ideas to students in more accessible, meaningful ways.

In addition to instructional practices, educators' beliefs play a critical role in shaping mathematics learning. Studies on external supervisors in ODeL environments indicate that many hold an instrumentalist view of mathematics, emphasizing rules, procedures, and memorization. While this approach can support procedural accuracy, it often limits opportunities for conceptual understanding and critical thinking. There is also evidence of a

mismatch between supervisors' confidence in their professional skills and the traditional nature of their teaching beliefs. This suggests that improving mathematics education in ODeL requires not only technical training but also a shift toward more learner-centered and concept-oriented approaches.

Instructional innovation offers practical ways to address some of these challenges. One effective strategy is the use of teacher-made video lessons as supplementary learning materials. These videos allow students to engage with mathematical content at their own pace, which is particularly valuable in asynchronous learning environments. Learners can pause, rewind, and revisit explanations, enabling them to better understand complex concepts. Empirical findings show that such interventions can lead to significant improvements in student performance and comprehension. Students also report that video lessons make tasks easier to complete and enhance their overall learning experience. However, they emphasize the need for clear explanations, sufficient examples, and contextualized language to maximize effectiveness.

At a broader level, meta-analytic evidence supports the potential of online learning to enhance mathematics education. Studies have shown that online learning can significantly improve student outcomes, including understanding, motivation, and performance. However, the effectiveness of these approaches varies depending on factors such as educational level, instructional design, and the type of technology used. This variability indicates that successful ODeL implementation requires careful consideration of context. It is not sufficient to adopt digital tools without aligning them with pedagogical goals and learner needs.

Taken together, these findings point to several implications for improving mathematics education in ODeL settings. First, there is a need for more responsive, well-structured instructional materials that promote clarity and engagement. Second, a stronger interaction between students and instructors is essential to address misconceptions and provide timely feedback. Third, investment in technological infrastructure is necessary to ensure reliable access to learning resources. Finally, professional development for educators should focus not only on content knowledge and instructional techniques but also on fostering beliefs that support conceptual understanding and student-centered learning.

This study contributes to a growing body of literature that examines the complexities of teaching and learning mathematics in digital environments. It shows that ODeL is neither inherently limited nor inherently effective; its success depends on how it is designed and implemented. While it can create distance between teachers and learners, it can also promote independence, adaptability, and new forms of engagement. The challenge for educators and institutions is to create conditions that support meaningful learning while addressing the barriers students identify.

In a nutshell, ODeL presents both challenges and opportunities for mathematics education. The experiences of students at Biliran Province State University highlight the need for a balanced approach that combines flexibility with strong instructional support. By improving teaching practices, addressing pedagogical beliefs, and integrating effective learning resources, ODeL can become a more inclusive and effective model for mathematics education.



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Sa Pagitan ng Putik at Patak ng Tinta

Sino nga ba ang may karapatang magtakda ng hangganan ng isang kaluluwa? Maaari bang ang isang palad na kalyado sa paghawak ng araro ay matutong humawak ng yeso at humubog ng kaisipan?

Isinilang ako sa ilalim ng bubungang kawayan, kung saan ang bawat patak ng ulan ay tila isang malungkot na sonata ng kahirapan. Anak ako ng isang magsasaka, isang lalaking ang balat ay tila naging kasing-kulay na ng lupang kaniyang binubungkal. Sa aming baryo, ang kapalaran ay madalas na nakasulat na sa putik: kung ang ama mo ay magsasaka, ang landas mo ay patungo rin sa bukid. "Huwag ka nang mangarap nang matayog, anak," anang mga mapanuring dila ng aming kapitbahay. "Ang agila ay para sa langit, ang pagong ay para sa lupa."

Ngunit sa gitna ng kumakalam na sikmura, may isang mitsa ng pangarap na pilit naglalagablab sa aking dibdib. Nais kong maging Guro. Nais kong maging tinig ng mga piping pangarap, ang sulo sa gitna ng karimlan ng kamangmangan. Subalit ang bawat hakbang ko patungo sa luntiang pangarap na iyon ay tila binabatak pabalik ng aking mga sariling pag-aalinlangan. Ang aking mga insekyuridad ay tila mga anay na unti-unting kumakain sa aking kompiyansa. Sino nga ba ako? Isang batang laging walang laman ang baon, na ang tanging kayamanan ay ang mga lumang notebook na pinagpasa-pasahan na ng panahon?

Dumating ang mga gabing ang hapunan ay tanging tubig at matatayog na panalangin. Tiniis ko ang hapdi ng gutom, ang bigat ng bawat libro sa aking likuran, at ang matatalas na tingin ng mga taong naniniwalang ang isang tulad ko ay hanggang dito na lamang. Sinubukan ko. Sumugal ako sa laro ng buhay kung saan ang baraha ko ay tila laging dehado. Pumasok ako sa kolehiyo bilang isang iskolar, namasukan bilang katulong sa umaga at estudyante sa gabi. Sa bawat pagsusulit, ang tinta ng aking panulat ay tila dugo na nanggagaling sa aking mga sakripisyo.

Subalit ang tadhana ay isang mapaglarong manlililok; kung minsan, binabasag niya ang luwad upang lumikha ng mas matatag na anyo. Sa kabila ng aking pagpapakasakit, ang pinto ng akademya ay nanatiling nakapinid.

Hindi ako pinalad na maging guro.

Ang pangarap na maging liwanag sa loob ng silid-aralan ay nilamon ng dilim ng kabiguan. Bumalik ako sa bukid, dala ang sugatang pagkatao at ang malansang amoy ng pagkatalo. Akala ng lahat, ako ay isang lantang gulay na muling ibinaon sa lupang aking kinasuklanan. Nanatili akong magsasaka, isang aninong sumasabay sa kumpas ng karit at init ng nag-aapoy na araw.

Ngunit masdan ninyong maigi ang aking mga yapak. Sa bawat paglubog ng aking bota sa malambot na putik, hindi ako humihingi ng awa sa langit, kundi sumusukat ng teritoryo. Ang mga kasama kong nakayuko sa ilalim ng hagupit ng araw, na tila mga aliping nakakadena sa lupa – sila ay hindi ko lamang kapwa maralita. Sa bawat tagaktak ng kanilang pawis, ang bawat butil ng palay na kanilang inaani ay dumadaloy patungo sa aking mga kamalig. Ang kanilang mga pangarap ay nakasandig sa aking mga palad, at ang kanilang paggawa ay ang dugong nagpapatakbo sa makinarya ng aking tagumpay.

Narito ang mapait at matamis na rebelasyon. Hindi ako naging guro na humahawak ng pisara, ngunit ako ang naging arkitekto ng lupang ito. Ang luntiang kahariang ito na abot-tanaw ng inyong mga mata ay hindi na pag-aari ng mga dayuhan o ng mga mapang-aping panginoon. Sa aking pagkabigo sa daigdig ng mga letra, natutunan kong basahin ang batas ng lupa. Ang lupang dati ay tinatrabaho lamang ng aking ama bilang alipin, ngayon ay yumuyukod sa ilalim ng aking pangalan.

Ako ang naging Panginoon sa lupang nais kong takasan.

Nanatili akong magsasaka, ngunit ako na ang may-ari ng buong sakahan, at ang bawat magsasakang nakikita ninyo ay mga tauhang sumusunod sa aking kumpas.

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DOI 10.5281/zenodo.19483788

A Better Friend

Tom was a happy little boy who loved to play. Every day at school, he ran fast across the playground, laughing and calling out to his friends. "Come on! Let's play!" he would shout.

In Tom's class was a boy named Eli. Eli was kind and gentle. He liked to smile and watch the other children play. Eli used a wheelchair to move around. It helped him go from place to place, but he could not run like the other children.

One sunny day during recess, Tom and his friends decided to play tag.

"Let's run!" Tom said excitedly.

The children ran quickly, laughing and chasing one another. Eli rolled his wheelchair closer to them. He wanted to join.

"I want to play too," Eli said softly.

Tom looked at Eli and frowned. "You can't play," he said. "You're too slow."

Some of the children stopped and looked at Tom. The playground grew quiet. Eli's smile slowly disappeared. He looked down and felt very sad.

A girl nearby whispered, "That was not kind."

But Tom didn't think much about it. He went back to playing.

Later that day, Tom's teacher sat beside him in the classroom. She spoke gently, "Tom, do you know that words can hurt people?"

Tom looked at her and shook his head.

"Eli felt sad when you said he couldn't play," the teacher explained. "He may move differently, but he has feelings just like you."

Tom became quiet. He thought about what his teacher said.

"How would you feel if someone didn't let you play?" she asked.

"I would feel sad," Tom answered.

The teacher nodded. "That's how Eli felt."

That night, Tom kept thinking about Eli. He didn't like the feeling in his heart. He knew he had not been kind.

The next day, when it was time for recess, Tom saw Eli sitting near the playground again. Eli was watching the other children.

This time, Tom walked up to him slowly.

"Hi, Eli," Tom said.

Eli looked up.

"I'm sorry for what I said yesterday," Tom continued. "I was not kind. Do you want to play with us?"

Eli's face brightened. "Yes," he said with a smile.

Tom thought of a new game. "Let's play a game with a ball!" he said. "We can roll it to each other."

Soon, all the children joined in. They rolled the ball, laughed together, and cheered each other on.

Eli was happy. Tom was happy. Everyone was included.

From that day on, Tom remembered to use kind words. He made sure everyone could join in the fun.

Tom learned an important lesson—being kind means including everyone, no matter how different they may be.

And that made him a better friend.



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Sonnet 1391: SUNnet

(A Shakespearean Sonnet)

The sun now rises gently over us,
Outside, we sip our cups of scalding brew;
You're so euphoric, drawing out my glance,
I feel this moment, sharing it with you.

We watch the birds that wander through the sky,
The children's voices lift your face in smile;
I breathe your gentle scent as you let sigh,
And leave the world behind with you a while.

But as the sun descends, all starts to change,
The children's voices harden into noise;
The birds that soared now scatter, wide and strange,
Your fading scent no longer brings me poise.

As daylight fades, the world grows dark and weak,
As daylight fades, life's essence starts to leak.



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What you are, I was; What I am, you'll be

(A Villanelle)

What you are, I was; What I am, you'll be
Many are waiting, many are in queue
To follow affliction; to follow me

Here, there's no light, no eternity
Here, I am the judge; you cannot sue
What You are, I was; What I am, you'll be

Here only lies your greatest tragedy
I am not your dear friend; I am your foe
To follow affliction; to follow me

Here, there's no sun; here, you cannot see
Here, you find yourself in vanity
What You are, I was; What I am, You'll be

Do you not believe me? Just wait and see
You chose this fate; now face what you owe
To follow affliction; to follow me

You damn braggart! Do not ever dare me
You challenged Hades; now face what you owe
What you are, I was; What I am, you'll be
To follow affliction; to follow me



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When the Final Bell Rings

For far too long, my ears have been battered by the relentless, suffocating whispers of the ignorant: "Why BAELS?" They look upon this calling as a road leading nowhere, a hollow pursuit, a barren wasteland of a degree where no jobs wait at the finish line. To endure this constant barrage is a visceral agony. It is a deafening noise, made all the more grotesque because these heavy judgments spill not just from the mouths of fellow students, but shockingly, from the lips of supposed educators and parents.

Their mere distaste for the program does not wound me. What sickens my spirit is the sheer audacity of their arrogance. Who do these people think they are? Have they ever dared to step into the fire of this discipline? Or is the bitter truth that they are simply terrified? Perhaps the very name, Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies, sends a shiver of intimidation down their spines. They recoil at the heavy weight of the language, masking their own intellectual fear with a grotesque display of terrible character.

Can these different academic pursuits not breathe the same air within the quiet sanctuary of a school? Do they harbor some tragic illusion that they reign supreme over us, or does the fear of being eclipsed secretly paralyze them? It is a vile, exhausting thing to witness such boundless condescension, to watch them place their own chosen paths on golden pedestals while attempting to bury ours in the dirt.

I hurl this challenge at them: step out from the safety of your judgments and survive just a single day within the rigorous, demanding crucible of a BAELS classroom. Perhaps enduring that fire would finally shatter your fragile pride and widen your desperately narrow worldview. They walk with the heavy footsteps of false dominance, blind to the reality that while our students might easily survive the rigors of their disciplines, they would likely drown in the breathless depths of ours.

The magnitude of their disrespect is a crushing blow, not just to the students, but to the exhausted, fiercely devoted souls who teach this craft. Let them cease this blinding arrogance. Let them descend from their self-made heights. When the final bell rings and we are all thrust into the fierce, breathless arena of the real world, opportunities will find us all. However, in the end, it is never the title of the degree that dictates our worth: it is the raw, unyielding measure of our character.



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Bakit Galit si X?

Sa bawat pahina nitong ating kwaderno,
Palagi bang hanap ay ang halaga nito.
Si "x" na tila ba lagi nang nagtatago,
Sa gitna ng numero't linyang nagbabago.

Bakit ba tila laging galit si "x" sa 'tin?
Lagi na lang ba natin dapat syang hanapin.
Ilang *formula* na ba ang ating ginamit,
Ngunit ang sagot pa din ay tila kay pait.

Siguro ay pagod na siyang magpahanap,
Sa bawat *equation* na ating hinanarap.
Mula elementarya hanggang kolehiyo,
Siya ang problemang hindi na lumalayo.

Siya ba ay galit dahil siya'y laging "ex"?
Isang nakaraan na kay hirap iwaglit
Pinagpalit sa "y", sa "z", at sa iba pa,
Kaya naman sa *graph* ay laging nag-iisa.

Minsan ay nakakulong dun sa *parenthesis*,
Iniiwasa'y pagsusuri't *analysis*.
May *exponent* pa na nasa kanyang balikat,
Pabigat sa buhay, sadyang nakagugulat.

Sa *slope* ng bundok, siya ay umaakyat,
Hanapin ang *intercept*, upang magpasikat.
Ngunit sa huli, kapag siya'y nahanap na,
Libahin ang tanong, bagong pagdurusa.

Si "x" ay galit sa mga maling hinala,
Sa mga maling *transpose* at kulang na tala.
Isang maling *sign* lang at mawawalan ng bisa,
Ang buong solusyon babalik sa simula.

Siguro ay nais lang niya na mapansin,
Na hindi lang siya letra na dapat lutasin.
May halaga siya, may tinatagong lihim,
Sa balanse ng math at nang buhay natin.

Kaya huwag kang mainis sa galit ni "x",
Intindihin ang proseso, huwag ma-stress.
Paghahanap sa kanya'y isang pagsasanay,
Nang sa tunay na hamon, tayo'y magtagumpay.

Sa dulo ng tula at bawat parirala,
Si "x" ay okay na, huwag kang mag-alala.
Basta't may tyaga ka at may tamang lohika,
Itong galit ni "x" ay magiging musika.



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The Most Expensive Clothes

TOGA, the most expensive clothes: Crafted, mastered, and sewn for nine long years: three years of academics, two years of global pandemic, one year of comprehensive exams, one year of proposal writing and defense, and another two years of gathering data and final dissertation defense.

This is not just a fabric put over my shoulders; it is the woven result of sleepless nights, moments of self-doubt, and significant victories. Each thread tells a story. The sleeves, the weight of academic papers written and rewritten; the seams, moments when I nearly gave up, stitched tightly by resilience and support of those who believed in me when I struggled to believe in myself. The collar, pressure of expectations, those I placed on myself and those quietly echoed by mentors, peers, and loved ones.

Milestones reminded me why I started. The time I presented a research topic meant not with critique, but with curiosity and encouragement. The moment I passed comprehensive exams, realizing I had internalized years of knowledge that once felt so difficult to comprehend. The approval of my proposal, not as a sign of perfection, but as a victory of perseverance. Lastly, the final defense, where every chapter of my research stood not just as a product of inquiry but as evidence of resilience, discipline, and quiet strength.

Every success sheds a silent battle. I endured moments of burnout, where my passion dimmed under the weight of deadlines and expectations. I faced delays that tested my patience and unexpected obstacles, forcing me to pivot again and again. Moments of self-doubt happened, when even writing a single sentence felt impossible. Personal sacrifices were made time lost with loved ones, milestones missed, and postponed moments of joy. This journey was never just academic; it was emotional, spiritual, and deeply personal.

However, from that struggle, a new version of myself emerged. I am no longer the person who timidly entered the program years ago. I am stronger, not because I now possess all the answers, but because I have learned to ask better questions and navigate uncertainty with grace. I have discovered the power of persistence, the strength in vulnerability, and the

value of growth over perfection. This gown, once a distant dream, now symbolizes more than achievement, it reflects transformation.

As I take my final steps in this chapter, I do so, not with arrogance, but with humility. Because I know this accomplishment is not mine alone. It was made possible by mentors who guided me, colleagues who reminded me I was not alone, and loved ones who patiently waited, supported, and believed in me, especially when I could not believe in myself.

This TOGA may rest on my shoulders, but it is stitched with your love, your faith, and your sacrifices. I wore the most expensive clothes. However, more importantly, I wear the pride of perseverance, the power of purpose, and the joy of becoming who I was always meant to be, a Mathematics Professor who dreamed, worked, and persevered.



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The Weightless Art of Waiting and Becoming
(Kasta a Talaga iti Biag)

Indeed, Kasta a Talaga iti Biag. This is life: the quiet unfolding, the waiting, the learning to trust what is meant for you. I have walked paths of ambition, built a career, and carved a place for myself in the world, yet the heart still waits for a companion written by Heaven.

I see you, the love you gave without hesitation, the tears you swallowed in silence, the quiet strength it took to keep believing when your heart was tired. You loved with honesty, prayed with faith, waited with courage. And when they left, when they chose others, chose another road, it was never because you were lacking. You were never a missing piece in someone else's unfinished story. You have always been enough.

I bless the girl you once were: strong and self-possessed, yet soft, open, and unafraid to give everything. I forgive the moments you mistook silence for a loss of worth. I honor the woman you are becoming steadfast, prayer-rooted, still choosing love even after storms you never asked for. I have learned that fulfillment is never tied to another's timeline, and that patience in waiting is itself a quiet form of wisdom.

Somewhere, a heart is being shaped to meet yours. I do not know where you are, but I trust that God is forming you as He is forming me. And when we meet, may we not arrive as halves seeking completion, but as souls already whole healed, though not perfect, ready to build a love that keeps Him at the center.

I release the need to measure time against others. Waiting is not empty when Heaven is involved. God is never late. He comes like dawn, unannounced yet certain, breaking every night without resistance. So, I choose peace over panic, purpose over pressure, faith over fear. I will not rush my becoming or force what is not mine. I will bloom in my own season: steady, rooted, unshaken, learning the weightlessness of surrender, trusting the quiet work beneath the soil.

With or without a ring, I will not be without hope. The love meant for me will arrive in the time written by Heaven, not by Instagram. Until then, I will live fully, love deeply, and trust completely.

Padayon. Hiraya Manawari. Keep going. Keep hoping. Keep becoming. I walk forward not because I see the whole picture, but because I trust the One who writes time itself. I wait not in emptiness but in faith, holding on to the promise: "When the time is right, I, the Lord, will make it happen." (Isaiah 60:22)



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Is Philippine Democracy Thriving or Surviving?

Democracy is a system of governance that enables citizens to participate in public affairs and decision-making processes. It is famously defined by Abraham Lincoln as “government of the people, by the people, for the people,” emphasizing that the ultimate source of political power lies in the citizenry. In this sense, the people serve as the backbone of the state, entrusted with the authority to elect their leaders and hold them accountable, including the power to remove them when they fail to perform their duties effectively.

In the context of the Philippines, democracy was restored following the EDSA People Power Revolution, which ended the authoritarian rule of former president Ferdinand Marcos and reestablished democratic institutions. The ratification of the 1987 Constitution further institutionalized democratic principles by providing safeguards such as the separation of powers, checks and balances, and the protection of civil liberties.

Since then, the Philippines has maintained key democratic structures, including regular elections, a functioning constitutional framework, and an active civil society. However, despite these formal mechanisms, a critical question persists: is Philippine democracy genuinely thriving, or is it merely surviving in the face of enduring political challenges such as corruption, political dynasties, and weak accountability?

On one hand, there are clear indicators that democracy in the Philippines continues to function. One of the strongest signs is the regular conduct of elections, where citizens are given the opportunity to choose their leaders. Citizens who have reached 18 years of age can vote after registering with the COMELEC. These elections, although not perfect, demonstrate the continuity of democratic processes. In addition, the 1987 Philippine Constitution guarantees fundamental rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and the right to peaceful assembly. These rights enable citizens to express their opinions and hold leaders accountable.

Moreover, the presence of an active civil society and media sector strengthens democratic governance. Media organizations such as ABS-CBN and Rappler play a crucial role in informing the public and exposing issues of national concern. Civil society organizations and advocacy groups also contribute by promoting transparency, good governance, and citizen participation. In recent years, the rise of youth engagement and digital activism has further expanded avenues for political participation. In the Philippines,

youth political participation is evidently seen in year 2016 and social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram and etc. are being utilized by citizens to comment and share their thoughts about politics in the Philippines. These situations shows that democratic practices are still alive and functioning in the country

Despite these positive indicators, there are also significant challenges that raise concerns about the quality of Philippine democracy. One major issue is the persistence of political dynasties in some parts of the country where power remains concentrated among a few influential families. This limits equal leadership opportunities and weakens genuine political competition. Instead of representing diverse interests, politics often becomes dominated by elite groups, undermining the principle of representation.

Another pressing concern is the widespread problem of disinformation, particularly on social media platforms like Facebook. It is good that the presence of social media has elevated the number of political participations among the citizens, but it also has a negative impact. Researches show that fake news is rampant because citizens share misleading information without verifying it with experts. This activity will influence public opinion, distort electoral choices, and weaken informed decision-making among voters. This challenge has become more evident in recent elections, where online narratives significantly shaped political discourse.

Furthermore, the weakness of political parties in the Philippines contributes to unstable governance. Many parties lack clear ideologies and are often centered on personalities rather than principles. Political butterflies existed. This results in shifting alliances and a lack of long-term policy direction. Corruption and accountability issues also continue to undermine public trust in government institutions. Reports of misuse of public funds and limited transparency reduce citizens' confidence in their leaders and the political system as a whole.

Human rights concerns also play a critical role in evaluating the state of democracy. Controversial policies such as the War on Drugs have raised questions about due process, rule of law, and the protection of civil liberties. Some were just killed without due process, like the case of Kian de Los Santos. These issues highlight the tension between maintaining order and upholding democratic values, which are essential in a truly functioning democracy.

Given these realities, it can be argued that while democratic institutions in the Philippines remain intact, the quality of democracy is under strain. The country continues to practice what may be considered a procedural democracy, where formal structures such as elections and constitutional rights exist. However, substantive democracy characterized by genuine equality, accountability, informed participation, and justice remains a challenge. This suggests that Philippine democracy is not fully thriving but is instead in a state of survival.

In conclusion, Philippine democracy stands at a critical point. While it continues to function through established institutions and active citizen participation, it faces serious issues that hinder its full development. Political dynasties, disinformation, weak party systems, corruption, and human rights concerns all contribute to its fragility. Therefore, it is

more accurate to say that Philippine democracy is surviving rather than thriving. Moving forward, strengthening democratic institutions, promoting political education, and encouraging active and informed citizenship are essential steps toward ensuring that democracy in the Philippines not only survives but truly flourishes.



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Preface

In every workplace and in every walk of life, the greatest challenge a leader faces is not merely managing tasks, but upholding what is right. Guided by the wisdom of the Scriptures, this poem serves as a reminder that true leadership is built on the solid foundation of honesty and integrity. It calls upon every individual to speak the truth in love, to act with justice, and to stand firm in their convictions, reflecting the light of God's word in all their dealings.

Stand for Truth

Upon the path where duty calls us forth,
We lead with hands that serve and hearts that see,
For truth is justice, bringing endless worth,
"Speak the truth to one another," so we must agree.
In every word and every choice we make,
We build a trust that others cannot break.

A leader true does not deceive nor lie,
But walks with light and casts away the night,
Like Daniel bold, who stood beneath the sky,
And kept his faith with courage and with might.
"Buy the truth and sell it not," the Scripture says,
Through honest work, our spirit always raises.

In offices and fields where tasks are done,
Let fairness shine and let corruption cease,
For leaders great are like the morning sun,
That brings to weary souls a sense of peace.
"The truth shall set you free," the Savior said,
Removing every doubt and every dread.

Do not be swayed by power or by gold,
But stand for right when others turn away,
The stories of your faith will still be told,
Long after ends the labor of the day.



**Echoes of Expression
A Creative Folio**

Volume II, Issue IV (April 2026), National Circulation
ISSN (Online) 3082-4397 ISSN (Print) 3082-5741
Published Online at www.lakbay-diwapublishing.com
Publisher: Lakbay-Diwa Publishing
DTI Business Reg. No. 6488937 / TIN 492-741-614
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"Lead me in Your truth and teach me," we pray,
To guide our steps and light up all the way.

So let us lead with honor, strong and clean,
And let our lives reflect the truth divine,
For in the end, what truly will be seen,
Is not the crown, but goodness in the sign,
To stand for God and what is always right,
Is leadership that conquers every night.

Epilogue

As we close these verses, may we always remember that standing for truth is the highest form of service. Like faithful leaders of old, let us not be swayed by convenience or compromise, but remain steadfast in doing what is good and pleasing in the sight of God. For in the end, it is not power or fame that endures, but a life lived in honesty, integrity, and unwavering faith.



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Preface

Leadership is not a mantle worn for prestige, but a discipline of character, fairness, and humility. True authority is earned through respect, transparency, and the empowerment of others. Policies must be disclosed, protocols upheld, and designations created for service rather than power. Favoritism breeds harm, while proper orientation and communication preserve dignity and resolve conflict.

This work, *Echoes of Integrity*, gathers Dr. Montallana's reflections into a lyrical testament, a manifesto of values that guide leaders to build trust, nurture growth, and uphold justice. It is both a reflection and a call: to lead with conscience, to honor responsibility, and to let integrity echo in every decision.

Echoes of Integrity

"I don't demand respect, I have to earn it in due time,"
Patience is the rhythm, humility the rhyme.
Respect is not seized, nor taken by might,
It grows in the shadows, then shines in the light.

"I don't secretly keep policies, I have to disclose it to all concerned,"
For trust is a lantern, its flame must be burned.
Clarity clears the path where doubt may reside,
In openness, fairness and truth coincide.

"I want to delegate tasks to empower people, improve their skills, let them grow,"
Confidence blossoms when responsibilities flow.
Self-belief rises when given the chance,
To lead, to learn, to join the dance.

"I make friends with toxic people, but they could not look up straight from their eyes,"
A mirror of conscience where dishonesty lies.
"I believe in protocols, it should be followed and not abused,"
Order is strength, when fairness is used.

“Official designations should be created for good, not for the sake of power tripping,”
“Favoritism is harmful, it creates disgusts, demoralizations, and conflicts.”
“Employees should be properly oriented with the policies and procedures to avoid waste,”
“Employees should follow proper channels, except when conflict makes haste.”

Epilogue: The Lasting Echo

Leadership is not measured by titles or authority, but by the quiet strength of integrity. The words of Dr. Teofilo O. Montallana remind us that respect must be earned, trust must be nurtured, and fairness must be upheld. His reflections are more than policies, they are principles that shape culture, empower people, and safeguard dignity.

In every organization, in every community, these values remain timeless. They call leaders to rise above favoritism, to embrace transparency, and to guide with humility. *Echoes of Integrity* is not just a poem; it is a living manifesto, a reminder that leadership is service, and service is the highest form of power.



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Highschool Life

High school reminds great memories
Some are dull, others are cheerful
It is supposed to be a school for learning
But most of the time a place for matchmaking.

Many got a trophy after four years
A reward that breaks the heart of every parent
The trophy that started another responsibility
It's not really how you think, but it's pregnancy.

Now, high school remains a memory
That change student's fate
It might lead you to college life
Or bring you to another family life.

Life is not as easy as you think
Make a choice that will not let you shrink
High school life is really great
As long as you make memories that will never last.



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Adaptability Quotient: A Syntax of Resilience

For many years, the Intelligence Quotient was regarded by society as a gauge of intelligence and reasoning. Eventually, the Emotional Quotient gained importance by highlighting empathy and social awareness. However, in the face of rapid technological change, crises, and uncertainty, a new and crucial kind of intelligence, the Adaptability Quotient, or AQ, emerges. This is the "grammar" that allows us to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

The adaptability quotient represents the ability to adjust, recover, and change during times of transition. While IQ and EQ show intelligence and emotions, AQ shows how people respond when reality suddenly changes. It is the ability to learn, unlearn, and relearn to bend rather than break. In an era where unpredictability is the norm, adaptability becomes the foundation of resilience, growth, and innovation.

The concept is moored on Sister Callista Roy's theory of adaptation. According to Roy, humans are adaptive systems that continually interact with their surroundings, and adaptation entails making thoughtful decisions and meaningful responses to maintain equilibrium under pressure. To put it another way, adaptation is both a procedure and a result. When we learn to react sensibly to changing situations, people evolve.

Roy's Adaptation Model outlines four adaptive modes through which humans modulate their responses to internal and external stressors to maintain systemic balance. The Physiologic-Physical Mode meets basic physiological needs related to oxygenation, nutrition, rest, and protection, thereby maintaining physical integrity. To reflect how a person views and feels about oneself, the Self-Concept/group Identity Mode integrates personal beliefs on ideals, body image, and a sense of purpose. The Role Function Mode pertains to a person's social roles and the role behaviors expected of them to maintain social integrity. Lastly, the Interdependence Mode upholds relational integrity through a strong emotional connection and the exchange of respect, love, and support pre- and post-discharge (Marudhar & Josfeena, 2019).

Adaptability Quotient is essential in both professional and educational settings. Individuals with high AQ demonstrate resilience, embrace feedback, and see obstacles as opportunities. Their ability to innovate, work well with others, and adjust to change allows them to flourish in dynamic environments.

Regardless of how uncertain life may be, our ability to adapt gracefully, never stop learning, and remain optimistic will determine the future. Beyond IQ and EQ, AQ serves as a reminder that the true test of human potential is our capacity to grow, adapt, and overcome change, to turn uncertainty into opportunity and survival into victory. According to Sister Callista Roy, adaptation entails mastering life's changes rather than just enduring them. To adapt, after all, is to live, to translate the grammar of survival into the poetry of human resilience.

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DOI 10.5281/zenodo.19503627

CRIMINOLOGIST

(Poem in Acronym)

Criminalistics: The science of crime detections.

Responsible: Professional Criminologist who are responsible in all his/her dealings.

Investigators: Investigators of the Context of all crimes in his/her area of responsibility.

Masterpiece: Experts in his/her professions.

Initiative: Initiative in servant leadership and dynamic behavior.

Noble: Having a high moral and acceptable principle.

Open-mindedness: Accessible, honest, optimistic and receptive.

Loyalty: Loyalty to the law of the Almighty, Strong and self-reliant.

Original: New, fresh and Unique.

Gallant: Brave, fight for truth and just.

Inspirational: Providing or showing creative or spiritual inspiration.

Sensitivity: Act of discernment to the immediate need of the needy.

Tenacity: Resiliency in all trials, obstacles and challenges.

GLENN PAULO K. LABASAN

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DOI 10.5281/zenodo.19402034

June, We Began

It was June when I first met you,
And something in me simply knew
That we would walk a shared design,
Our lives would meet, our hearts align.

It started when we both took part,
In one shared cause, one hopeful start.
Through every task, through day and night,
You stayed with me, my guiding light.

In extra hours, hand in hand,
You stayed beside me, firm and planned.
You cheered me on in all I'd do,
My source of strength, my fire, my view.

Our bond grew deep, so strong, so true,
A love we thought would see us through.
We dreamed of days that would not end,
More than lovers, you were my friend.

But time moved on, as time will do,
And life began to shift us through.
Another town, a different way,
You hoped somehow, I'd choose to stay.

I asked for trust, and you believed,
While quiet fears remained concealed.
And slowly then, it came to be,
Our paths grew distant, plain to see.

Our dreams no longer ran the same,
Yet still, our hearts held on to flame.
So I returned with hope in view,
To find again the love we knew.

But coming back could not restore
The love we used to have before.
The warmth had faded, silence grew,
And I felt like a stranger to you.

You made me feel I was in the way,
Avoiding words you used to say.
No answered calls, no clear goodbye,
Only quiet endings passing by.

And then I knew, though hard to face,
You'd found another time and place.
While I held on to what felt right,
You had already left that light.

It's been years now since I've seen you,
But I hear your dreams are coming true.
You're reaching far, you've come so wide,
And I still cheer you from the side.

For I've moved on, and now I see,
A brighter path ahead of me.
No longer tied to yesterday,
I've found my joy along the way.



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My Inner Me

I laugh outload and cracked jokes
I give assurance to people losing hope
I do everything when someone ask for help
I'm like someone who never gets tired.

No one knows how I feel when I'm alone
No one asks how my day is
No one thinks I also needs help
No one ever considered my side.

Though these things happened every time
I always thought this was my life
The life that I think God only knows
I accepted and continue doing what is good.

Months and years are changing rapidly
But people never imagined how I felt
For them i am their strongest shield
And never considered my inner me.



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Echoes of the Chalkboard: Roots and Wings

The classroom of 1985 in Bansud, Oriental Mindoro smelled of floor wax, heavy humidity, and the cedar of freshly sharpened pencils. For Dennis, a student in that era, learning was a test of patience. If a teacher assigned a report on the solar system, there was no shortcut. He spent an afternoon "bago mag-uwian" in a quiet library, sweat dampening his uniform, as he carefully transcribed notes from a worn volume of the Encyclopedia Britannica. His world was defined by strict boundaries: the "mano po" upon entering the house, the absolute authority of the teacher's chalk-stained hand, and a 6:00 PM curfew that was never debated. It was a life of conservative grit, where you learned to value what you earned through effort.

As the decades passed, the chalk dust settled, and the world transformed. The heavy, leather-bound books Dennis once hauled were replaced by CDs, then by the internet, and finally by the invisible signals of the digital age. This wasn't just a change in tools; it was a shift in the Filipino soul. The rigid structures of the 80s began to soften, making room for a world where information and self-expression became fluid and fast.

By 2026, when Dennis's son, Paul Arch, entered his college years, the environment was unrecognizable. The ozone of electronic devices and the hum of air conditioning replaced the old scents of the 80s. For Paul Arch, knowledge is a floodgate. With a tablet and high-speed data, he can simulate the solar system in 3D while sitting in a computer shop or cafe. His world is modern and liberated; he is encouraged to question, to challenge, and to express an identity that his father's generation had to keep reserved.

One evening, as the scent of slow-cooked adobo filled their home, Dennis and Paul Arch sat across from each other. At 53, Dennis still carried the disciplined posture of his youth, while 20-year-old Paul Arch sat with the casual, restless energy of a digital native.

"I saw your old photos, Dad," Paul Arch said, tapping his phone screen. "Everyone looks so formal. No one's smiling, and your hair is so short it's almost funny."

Dennis laughed, the lines on his face softening. "We didn't have a choice, Paul. If your hair touched your ears, the school principal or the CAT Commandant would give you a 'military cut' on the spot. At twenty, I didn't have a platform to post my opinions. We followed the script: school, church, home. Life was simple because the path was narrow. We learned how to wait, for the tricycle or jeepney, for a letter, for the world to move."

Paul Arch nodded, looking at his device. “It’s different now. I feel like I’m expected to know everything immediately because the info is right here. It’s liberated, yeah, I can learn anything, pero it’s tiring, Dad. There’s no ‘off’ switch like you had.”

“That’s the trade-off,” Dennis replied gently. “My generation built ‘diskarte sa buhay’ because we had to survive with nothing. Your generation builds ‘adaptability’ because you have to survive with everything. I had the library; you have the world.”

Paul Arch smiled, reaching for the rice. “Maybe we’re not that different. You were resourceful because you lacked tools; I have to be resourceful to find the truth among too many tools.”

As the meal ended, a comfortable silence settled, a bridge spanning forty years. Dennis saw in his son a world of possibilities he could only dream of in the 80s. Paul Arch saw in his father a foundation of discipline that allowed his own freedom to exist.

The conservative roots of the past hadn't disappeared; they had evolved into a silent strength. The liberated spirit of the present wasn't a rejection of tradition, but the fruit of it. In that dining room, the father provided the roots, steady and deep, while the son provided the branches — reaching, expansive, and free.



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A True Leader Is Formed Through Experience

Graduation is often seen as a celebration of achievement, but more importantly, it is a recognition of transformation. It signifies not only the completion of an academic journey but also the beginning of a greater responsibility. It is the responsibility to lead with competence and character. This idea reflects a fundamental truth that a true leader is not simply born, but formed through experience.

This perspective aligns closely with the principles of Political Science. Leadership is not limited to formal positions of power; rather, it is demonstrated through everyday actions and decisions that contribute to the common good. As Aristotle emphasized, “we are what we repeatedly do,” suggesting that excellence and by extension, leadership, is developed through habit and experience (Aristotle, trans. 2009).

My own journey reflects this understanding. Growing up in poverty, I experienced firsthand the realities of inequality and limited opportunity. There were moments when continuing my education seemed uncertain, particularly when financial constraints affected my family. The source of income of our family died the moment that my mom got sick, and my dad has to take care of her. Like many young Filipinos, this is one of the reasons why I faced challenges that could have easily discouraged me from pursuing my goals.

In the midst of these struggles, I asked myself a question that would shape my future: What will happen to my future if I stop now? This question became my turning point. It pushed me to persevere and to recognize that education was not merely a personal achievement but a means of empowerment.

Education, as José Rizal famously argued, is essential in shaping the nation’s future, as “the youth is the hope of the fatherland” (Rizal, 1891/2008). This idea highlights the role of education in developing responsible citizens who are capable of contributing to society. In Political Science, citizenship is understood as an active role, one that requires participation, awareness, and a commitment to the welfare of others.

Through perseverance and discipline, I continued my studies and learned that leadership is not defined by privilege, but by character. Leadership is rooted in service, integrity, and the ability to make decisions that benefit others. These principles are also central to democratic governance, where accountability, transparency, and participation are essential

(Dahl, 1989). If I am discouraged and stop learning because of financial burden, then my life now is harder than before.

I should say that struggles are among the best ways for us to realize that each of us is a leader in our own simple way. I want to call the attention of students who are struggling that it is normal to be confronted with more complex decisions because it will shape their future. These decisions are not merely personal; it will reflect one's values and sense of responsibility. In a democratic society like the Philippines, the strength of institutions depends on the integrity and participation of its citizens.

Everyday choices like choosing honesty over dishonesty, discipline over complacency, and purpose over distraction are forms of leadership in practice. These actions contribute to the development of individuals who are capable of engaging in meaningful civic participation.

The youth are often described as the hope of the nation, but hope alone is insufficient. What society needs are individuals who are prepared, principled, and committed to the common good. These are the qualities that define effective leaders in both local and national contexts.

Equally important are the roles of parents and educators in shaping future leaders. Parents provide the foundation of values and character, while educators serve as mentors who guide intellectual and moral development. Their combined influence plays a crucial role in forming individuals who are capable of contributing to society.

Eventually, leadership is a continuous process shaped by experiences, challenges, and choices. It requires courage, discipline, and integrity. It is not about achieving personal success alone, but about making a meaningful difference in others' lives.

Looking back, my journey was shaped not by privilege but by perseverance. It is a reminder that circumstances do not define destiny. What matters is the willingness to rise above challenges and to continue striving for a better future.

In the end, success is not merely about personal achievement. It is about becoming a leader who embodies competence and character, someone who uses knowledge and experience to serve others and contribute to society.

And perhaps one day, we can all say: "Malayo na rin ang narating ko, hindi lamang para sa sarili ko, kundi para sa bayan."



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Finding My Calling: An Unplanned Journey

I did not grow up knowing what career I wanted to pursue. Like many young people from families struggling financially, the future felt uncertain and unclear. Dreams were often overshadowed by reality, and survival took precedence over long-term plans. I understood early that education could open doors and change lives, but I had no idea which door I was meant to walk through. All I knew was that I had to move forward, even without a clear goal.

After I finished high school, I ended up in a college course that wasn't my own choice. Around that time, our barangay captain did something that changed my life. He saw that my family was struggling financially and helped by enrolling me in a degree program, thinking education could give me better chances. I took this opportunity not because I was sure or passionate, but because I was grateful, trusted his judgment, and hoped for the best. I chose to trust the opportunity, hoping that if I worked hard, I would eventually find my path.

College was never easy for me. There were many times when I felt doubtful, exhausted, and wondered if I really belonged on this path. I faced ongoing financial struggles, tougher classes, and constant pressure to succeed. Even so, I kept moving forward. I realized that perseverance often starts not with confidence, but with the need to survive. Each day, I showed up, pushed through, and didn't give up.

After years of hard work, I graduated with Academic Distinction at 28. I am proud, not just of my degree, but of overcoming challenges that could have stopped me. However, after finishing college, finding a job was challenging due to limited opportunities. Confronted with this situation, I searched for an alternative route that would allow me to contribute while continuing my professional development.

I enrolled in professional education, believing that there is no age limit to teaching. At that time, teaching wasn't a calling for me yet but rather an opportunity I was open to exploring. I subsequently took the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET), seeing it as a modest effort to create new opportunities. By God's grace and through determination, I was able to pass.

I began my teaching career in a private school, and over the next four years, I discovered something profound. Teaching gradually became more than just a job; it became a purpose. In every lesson delivered, every student encouraged, and every challenge faced inside the classroom, I found fulfillment and meaning. I observed learners grow not only

academically but also personally, and I realized the powerful role a teacher plays in shaping lives. Teaching was not something I had chosen at the beginning; in time, it became something that truly chose me.

This realization eventually led me to the Department of Education, where I have now served for fourteen years and counting. Each year has reinforced my commitment to education and to the learners entrusted to my care. Teaching in public service has deepened my sense of responsibility – not only to offer knowledge but also to inspire, guide, and uplift students from diverse backgrounds. My mission continues each day inside the classroom and beyond as I strive to remind learners that their circumstances do not define their destiny.

Looking back, I now see that not knowing my career path was not a failure. It was part of the journey that shaped who I am today. Life does not always reveal our calling all at once. Sometimes, it unfolds quietly through unexpected help, delayed success, and second chances we never planned for. What once felt like detours were actually necessary steps toward purpose. What matters most is the courage to keep going, the willingness to stay open to growth, and the faith to trust that every experience, whether planned or not, can eventually lead us to where we truly belong.

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Home

Home. How beautiful the word home sounds
In my eyes it seems like paradise when found
In this world full of turmoil and unrest
In life's once chaotic flow, it serves as a calm and rest.

Memory. A bitter spark that has left me in pain
The memory of yesterday that cannot be buried in the brain
The one who truly loves is the one left behind
The one willing to fight is always defeated, always resigned.

Solitude. Gazing at the stars as if they know my sorrow
How in solitude there is no peace, only pain to follow
Even the birds' songs seem like melodies of defeat and gloom
In the test of love, when is the right time to let go of its bloom?

Illusion. Life's music seems to have become so complex
Your promises, sweet as sugar, I thought were correct
I thought it was only me, I thought there was no other, I thought we'd
stay till the end
A mistake it was, to give you all the trust I could send.

Hope. Deceived by lies, here I am seeking peace in the waves
That with every crash might ease the sorrow that love gave
May the drops of tears forced upon my eyes be erased
As I dive deep, may I wake forgetting your memories' trace.

Hope. Chapter. I do not know if the page of sorrow has already closed
Yet on the other side is a whisper to rise and let life be composed
In this new chapter, waiting is no longer a burden to bear
For the sake of a love that is certain and fair.

Destiny. Sometimes lonely, not forced, and sometimes beyond control
Those were the words I uttered when I first saw your soul
My heart grew calm, each beat light and free
Filled with an unexplainable joy — you are my destiny.

Shelter. By your side, the pain of the past is unknown
So this is how it feels to be loved, to be chosen and shown
Not forced. You are my shelter, my rest, my peace
Not perfect, but whole and sure, a love that will not cease.

Home. How beautiful the word home sounds
And even more beautiful when a home is truly found
You are the light in my twilight, in you I am safe and free
You are my home, my beloved, my serenity.

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DOI 10.5281/zenodo.19429180

My First Hero

I remember how strong you've always been,
Holding us close through thick and thin.
I remember the battles you fought each day,
Keeping our family from drifting away.

I remember the tears you tried to hide,
Wiping them gently, turning aside.
I remember your care when we were small,
You gave your best, you gave your all.

You are the shoulder where others lean,
A kinder soul I've never seen.
You lend your hand to those in need,
With love and grace in every deed.

You've known betrayal, you've felt the pain,
From those who left like pouring rain.
Yet still you stayed, so calm, so true,
Because your children mattered to you.

You taught me fairness, respect, and care,
To lead with courage, to always be fair.
To dream, to strive, to kneel and pray,
And face each trial that comes my way.

Your heart is pure, your soul so bright,
A guiding star, a constant light.
Though years may pass and time may show,
Your love is all we'll ever know.

Your hair may fade to silver gray,
Your strength may slowly drift away,
But still you shine in all you do
A morning light, forever new.



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DOI 10.5281/zenodo.19656681

Where Passion Meets the Game

Sports start with some initial spark of interest that eventually turns into a burning passion within every athlete. It often begins in the small spaces of open fields, quiet streets, or school courts where young players first taste the joy of movement, teamwork, and challenge. These initial trickles plant seed dreams that solidify deeper and more over time.

It is passion that drives athletes to power through the rough patches and push ahead even when a journey begins to escalate into an odyssey. It reconnects them to where they started and keeps them committed through roadblocks, exhaustion, and challenges that inevitably come their way.

Each athlete has their own story behind practice, sacrifice, and not giving up. Beneath every uniform is a human who has tried, learned, and evolved through infinite hours of training that nobody else sees.

The playing field is a space for learning; it is where discipline and patience come through experience, and where confidence starts to build. It serves as a second home, unlocking the potential of these athletes.

The experience of waking up early for practice teaches the athletes commitment and responsibility. Getting up early is a challenge. Getting out of bed before dawn is not intuitive, but it cements habits that profoundly reinforce both character and willpower over the long haul.

Training is not always easy, comfortable, or enjoyable, but it lays the strongest foundation for a better, more successful life. Each repetition adds to skill and stamina.

Teammates are more than coworkers in the same space; they become comrades who carry each other through winning and losing. The common threads of those experiences make for friendships woven over trust. Sports help individuals discover abilities they never thought they had. With patience and practice, hidden strengths begin to surface, and confidence grows naturally.

Crowd support can motivate athletes, but true strength comes from internal belief and personal dedication. Self-confidence becomes the most powerful tool for success.

Athletes learn the value of persistence as they continue practicing even when progress seems slow or invisible. Every effort eventually contributes to improvement.

Winning a competition brings excitement and pride, but the lessons learned throughout the journey are even more valuable than the final result. Growth becomes the true reward.

Sports teach respect for opponents because competition fosters fairness and understanding among players who share a passion. Respect strengthens the spirit of the game.

Teamwork encourages individuals to support each other and communicate effectively during challenges. Cooperation allows teams to overcome obstacles together.

Athletes develop emotional strength through experiences that test patience and determination. These lessons are useful both on and off the playing field.

Friendships formed through sports often remain strong even after competitions end. Shared memories continue to connect teammates long after the final whistle.

Discipline becomes part of an athlete's daily routine through consistent training and preparation. This habit influences many aspects of life beyond sports.

Sports encourage individuals to manage their time wisely, balancing training, academics, and personal responsibilities. Time management becomes an important life skill.

Confidence grows stronger each time athletes overcome fear and uncertainty during competition. Courage becomes easier with experience.

Physical activity strengthens the body, but sports also strengthen the mind through challenges that require focus and determination. Mental strength becomes equally important.

Athletes learn how to accept constructive criticism and use it as motivation for improvement. Feedback becomes a valuable learning opportunity.

Every competition provides new experiences that contribute to personal growth and development. Each game adds another lesson to the journey.

Sports promote leadership skills as athletes learn how to guide teammates and support team goals. Leadership grows naturally through responsibility.

Hard work becomes a habit when athletes consistently push themselves beyond their limits. Effort turns into achievement over time.

The spirit of sports encourages fairness and honesty during competition. Integrity becomes an essential part of every athlete's character.

Athletes experience moments of doubt, but perseverance helps them continue moving forward despite uncertainty. Determination strengthens their confidence.

Support from family and friends provides encouragement that motivates athletes to keep pursuing their goals. Their presence becomes a source of inspiration.

Sports teach individuals how to celebrate success with humility and accept defeat with dignity. Balance becomes an important lesson.

Each training session represents another step toward improvement and self-discovery. Progress becomes visible through dedication.

Athletes inspire younger generations who look up to them as role models in their communities. Their actions influence others positively.

Passion for sports encourages individuals to stay active and maintain healthy lifestyles. Physical well-being becomes a lasting benefit.

Leadership skills often develop naturally through participation in sports. Some athletes learn how to guide their teammates by example, while others learn how to support their leaders through cooperation and encouragement. These experiences prepare them to become responsible members of their communities in the future.

Sports environments also provide opportunities for individuals to express themselves confidently. Whether through movement, strategy, or teamwork, athletes discover new ways to communicate their ideas and strengths. This self-expression helps them grow into more confident and capable individuals.

Through continuous participation in sports, athletes begin to understand the value of perseverance during difficult situations. Challenges such as injuries, losses, or fatigue become learning experiences that strengthen determination rather than weaken motivation.

Most importantly, sports remind athletes that every journey is unique. Each player progresses at their own pace and faces different challenges along the way. What truly matters is the courage to continue learning, improving, and believing in oneself.

In the end, sports become more than just games, they become powerful experiences that shape character, strengthen relationships, and inspire individuals to become the best versions of themselves both on and off the playing field.



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DOI 10.5281/zenodo.19656131

Heartbeat on the Floor

Although Alex had a passion for dance, he was enveloped in fear of brightness. Can you picture years watching others, carefree and aloof, in the limelight while you remain in the background only imagining joining? This evening behind the heavy drapes of the community stage, he stood up. The room was thick with tension. The stage lights bounced off the gleaming wood onto the space he should have occupied. The drums of his performance began beating a deep, ancient rhythm, striking his ribs in time with his nervous heartbeat. This isn't a practice; this is what it all comes down to.

He now felt the load of every hour spent on the pain of one moment. He took note of how graceful the other performers were whilst thinking his own thoughts that he was an outsider. How could he be expected to move like them when he felt so wrong inside? The sound of a lone drum beat consistently dominated him. The initial move was unavoidable as he knew it was needed to commence the dance.

But Step Two did not happen; there was silence from the stage and from the auditorium. "Just inhale," he thought, pressing his eyes shut. He welcomed the beat and let it flow in his body. With the succeeding gliding step, his anxiety was progressively diminished. He had no reason to be afraid and the stage lights and audience disappeared. The scared child had gone away. He was present. Then the tempo quickens and he's up, a sort of effortless movement justified by nothing more than a repressed urge to run that is finally escaping.

The audience took notice of his actions, evoking a whirlwind of feelings. Suddenly, Alex became more adventurous. With every confident step he took and each turn he made, it seemed he had rid himself of any self-doubt he may have had.

The music that surrounded him while he danced was no longer just an accompaniment; it was a guide to his soul. What did the people watching think while Alex danced? They were experiencing the dance with Alex and feeling him.

They felt the real and the emotion that was being expressed. An instant cyclone of action occurred as he danced, with his arms cutting to the side and legs flying. All the muscles he hated came together to create one smooth movement. Old fears surfaced and dissipated

like smoke as the energy that was usually created from coal was gone. In the darkness, Alex could feel his hands shaking with excitement.

The only thing keeping the noise of the audience to a minimum was the large, heavy curtain that hung in front of the stage. As the audience was murmuring, his fears did not disappear, but rather he took those fears and turned them into wings.

As he made his way to the stage, his breath was heavy, and he tried to calm the pounding he felt in his chest. His shirt was soaked with perspiration, and he could feel his hair matted to his forehead. Did that matter? This was his time to create fancy footwork! In a matter of moments, all he could think of was all of the nights spent alone, all the gatherings he had not gone to, and all of the times he had sat on the sidelines and watched!

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Si Kiara Gitara

Sa isang sulok ng silid-musika, si Kiara Gitara ay tahimik na nakaupo habang nababalutan ng alikabok ang katawan at kwerdas. Dati-rati, ang malamyos niyang musika ay pumupuno sa buong silid na iyon. Ngunit ngayon, siya'y di na pinapansin at dinadaan-daan na lamang sapagkat mas gusto ng mga bata ang malalakas, makukulay, at agaw-pansin na tunog ng ibang instrumento. Tuwing gabi, iniisip ni Kiara Gitara kung siya ba ay may silbi pa. Unti-unti na siyang nakalimutan.

Araw-araw, pinagmamasdan niya ang mga batang pumasok sa silid, nangangarap na siya'y mapansin. Ang mga bata'y agad na lumalapit sa tambol, marimba, keyboard, at iba pang instrumento. Kay Kiara Gitara, walang pumapansin man lang, na sa paglipas ng maraming araw na paulit-ulit na sa kanya'y di pagpansin, lalo siyang nalulumbay. Tuwing gabi, habang tahimik ang silid, tinatanong niya ang sarili, mahalaga pa ba ako? Mapapakinggan pa kaya nila ang aking musika?

Isang umaga, isang bagong mag-aaral ang pumasok sa silid at sa kanya'y nakapansin. Dahan-dahan at maingat siyang hinawakan, nilinis at binuhat ng bata. Kapagdaka, siya ay lumikha ng maikling himig mula kay Kiara Gitara. Ang payak na linya ng musika ay muling nagpakilig sa kanyang mga kwerdas at pumukaw sa kanyang sigla. Masaya at nakangiti, ang mag-aaral habang patuloy na tinutugtog si Kiara. Ang ibang bata naman sa silid ay nangapalingon, nagsilapitan at nakinig sa tunog na likha mula kay Kiara Gitara. Habang nakikinig, napagtanto nila ang kakaibang lambing ng tunog na nagmumula sa kanyang kwerdas na tila ba nagbibigay ng kakaibang kiliti sa puso. Naisip din ni Kiara na hindi kailangang laging malakas at makulay upang mapansin. Sapat na ang maging totoo sa sarili at maibigay ang tunay mong tunog para maging kapansin-pansin. Ngayong gabi, habang tahimik ang silid, ramdam pa rin ni Kiara Gitara ang saya sa kanyang puro. Hindi na siya nalulungkot.

Sa maikling sandaling iyon, napagtanto ni Kiara Gitara na ang kanyang musika ay meron pa ring lugar sa puso ng mga bata. Ang kanyang kalungkutan sa puso at maging ang alinlangan sa kanyang kakayahan ay napalitan ng galak at pag-asa.



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Rebuilding Mathematical Foundations in the Post-Pandemic Era

The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped education systems worldwide, and its effects continue to influence student learning in 2026. Among all subject areas, mathematics experienced some of the most significant setbacks. The disruption of face-to-face instruction, combined with unequal access to resources, created learning gaps that persist today. These gaps are not only academic concerns but also indicators of deeper systemic issues that require urgent and sustained attention.

During the pandemic, students experienced substantial declines in mathematics performance, with learning losses equivalent to several months of missed instruction. These setbacks were caused by reduced teacher interaction, limited opportunities for guided practice, and the challenges of adapting to remote learning environments. Mathematics, which depends heavily on structured explanation and immediate feedback, proved particularly difficult to learn independently. As a result, many students developed an incomplete understanding of key concepts that continue to affect their performance in the post-pandemic period.

In the Philippines, these challenges were intensified by prolonged school closures and the reliance on distance learning. Online classes, printed modules, and broadcast instruction became the primary means of education, yet these approaches exposed major limitations. Many students lacked access to reliable internet, appropriate devices, and supportive learning environments at home. Even when materials were available, the lack of direct teacher guidance made it difficult for learners to grasp mathematical concepts fully.

Recent national data reveal the severity of the learning crisis. Findings from the Second Congressional Commission on Education show a sharp decline in student proficiency as learners progress through the education system. While approximately 30 percent of Grade 3 students reach proficiency, this figure drops to 19.56 percent by Grade 6 and declines sharply to 1.36 percent in Grade 10 and to about 0.4 percent by Grade 12. These figures indicate that only a small fraction of students can demonstrate higher-order skills such as problem-solving, analysis, and critical thinking by the time they complete basic education.

This pattern reflects a deeper issue rooted in weak foundational skills. Many learners struggle with basic literacy and numeracy as early as the primary grades. When these skills are not mastered, students find it increasingly difficult to engage with more complex material in later years. Evidence suggests that nearly half of learners are not reading at grade level by the end of Grade 3, resulting in a learning gap that can extend several years behind expected competencies. Since literacy is closely linked to numeracy, early deficits create long-term barriers to success in mathematics.

The pandemic also highlighted the role of home and environmental factors in shaping academic outcomes. Studies show that during remote learning, students' performance in mathematics was influenced by poor internet access, weak study habits, and limited parental support. Many learners developed only moderate levels of competency, particularly in problem-solving and higher-level skills. Teachers also reported difficulty in delivering lessons effectively and assessing student understanding without direct interaction, further contributing to learning gaps.

In addition to structural challenges, student motivation and attitudes toward mathematics significantly affect performance in the post-pandemic period. Research indicates that factors such as interest in the subject, consistent study habits, and active class participation strongly influence achievement. At the same time, teacher-related factors such as clarity of instruction, mastery of content, and effective use of teaching strategies remain essential. Even in a technology-driven environment, students continue to benefit most from clear, structured teaching approaches that support understanding and retention.

Despite the severity of the crisis, there are signs of recovery. Some studies report that students are gradually improving their performance, with many achieving satisfactory or above-average results in the post-pandemic period. However, these improvements do not erase the gaps created during the pandemic. Instead, they highlight the need for continued intervention to sustain progress and ensure no group of learners is left behind.

Addressing these challenges requires a strong focus on foundational skills. Interventions must begin in the early grades, where literacy and numeracy form the basis for all future learning. Programs that provide targeted support, such as structured tutorials and guided practice, have proven effective in improving student outcomes. At the same time, efforts must be made to strengthen teacher capacity, ensuring that educators are equipped to address diverse learning needs and adapt to evolving educational contexts.

Policy responses in the Philippines reflect growing recognition of this issue. Initiatives such as curriculum revision, increased access to learning materials, and targeted remediation programs aim to address learning gaps and improve overall performance. However, the

success of these efforts depends on consistent implementation, adequate funding, and collaboration among stakeholders, including schools, families, and local communities.

The post-pandemic period presents both challenges and opportunities. While the learning crisis in mathematics is evident, it also offers a chance to rethink educational practices and build a more resilient system. By prioritizing equity, strengthening foundational skills, and supporting both teachers and learners, it is possible to move beyond recovery toward meaningful improvement.

The decline in mathematics performance observed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic is the result of multiple interconnected factors, including disrupted instruction, limited resources, and gaps in foundational learning. The data from national and local studies serve as a clear call to action. Addressing this crisis requires deliberate, sustained, and collaborative efforts. Through targeted interventions and systemic reform, the education system can not only recover from the effects of the pandemic but also create a stronger foundation for future generations.

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Reframing Teaching: Professor's Role in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

In this era, where Artificial Intelligence has advanced even in the academic arena and has fundamentally transformed how we view knowledge, how knowledge is produced, accessed, and disseminated from AI systems that are capable of generating content, summarizing complex materials, and providing answers, the traditional roles of professors as primary sources of knowledge are being challenged. In response to this, universities, in their four corners, must redefine the role of professors not just as mere transmitters of information, but also as mediators of critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and meaningful learning experiences that Artificial Intelligence cannot, will not, and could not clone. Given these undertakings, professors in these changing times must refine their pedagogies.

Professors must prioritize the development of critical thinking among students. While AI can effectively and efficiently process and present information, it does not intrinsically assess the reliability, bias, or even contextual relevance of that information in the same nuanced way humans can. Professors should therefore guide students in questioning sources, analyzing arguments, and synthesizing diverse perspectives. This shift requires moving away from lecture-centered approaches toward more interactive pedagogies such as problem-based learning, case analysis, and Socratic dialogue. In these environments, they can ensure that students are emboldened not only to passively acquire knowledge but also to scrutinize the information they receive, thereby developing higher-order cognitive skills essential in an AI-driven world.

There must be an integration of ethical reasoning into the curriculum. In an era where AI technologies give rise to complex ethical issues such as data privacy, algorithmic biases, academic integrity, and the responsible use of automated tools, professors must serve as ethical mentors helping students navigate these ethical dilemmas thoughtfully and responsibly. This may involve entrenching ethical discussions within disciplinary content, leading students to reflective thinking, and fostering a sense of accountability amidst AI dependency. By doing so, professors help students not only to understand the things that can be done with AI, but also the things that should be done, through the reinforcement of the importance of human judgment in the milieu of technological advancements.

Moreover, professors must design learning experiences that emphasize meaning-making rather than mere content acquisition. Since AI can readily provide information, the value of education lies increasingly in how students transcribe, apply, and connect knowledge to real-world contexts. Professors should instigate opportunities for experiential learning,

collaborative outputs and projects, and interdisciplinary exploration. These pedagogical methodologies enable students to engage deeply with material, hammering out personal understanding while developing transferable skills such as communication, creativity, and adaptability. In this frame, the professor becomes a steward and curator of learning experiences guiding students through complex intellectual landscapes rather than delivering pre-packaged knowledge.

Furthermore, the professor's role must also include acculturating digital and AI literacy. The need for students to comprehend how AI systems work, their limitations, and their potential impacts on society must be communicated. Professors should accouter students to the skills to use AI tools effectively and efficiently while maintaining academic rectitude and intellectual independence. This includes teaching students how to cautiously evaluate AI-generated outputs, recognize misinformation, and integrate AI responsibly in their academic work. By this, professors are empowering students to become informed and ethical users of technology.

To end, universities must support professors in these reframing roles by providing professional development, institutional resources, and a community that highly values pedagogical innovation. Redefining the role of professors is not solely an individual responsibility; it requires systemic change within higher education institutions. Policies and assessment methods must also evolve—prioritizing critical engagement, ethical reasoning, and genuine learning over mindless memorization.

As AI reshapes the landscape of knowledge production and access, universities must reconceptualize the role of professors as facilitators of critical inquiry, ethical reflection, and meaningful learning. By embracing this transformation, professors can ensure that education remains a deeply human endeavor—one that prepares students not only to traverse an AI-driven world but also to shape it responsibly and thoughtfully.



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Beyond Borders: Emerging Trends Shaping the Future of Global Travel and Tourism

The tourism industry is undergoing a profound transformation as it adapts to changing traveler preferences, technological advancements, and global challenges. The future of travel is no longer defined solely by destinations, but by experiences, sustainability, and innovation. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, new trends are reshaping how people explore, interact, and engage with different cultures. These developments are not only influencing traveler behavior but also redefining how the tourism industry operates and evolves.

One of the most significant trends shaping the future of travel is the growing demand for sustainable and responsible tourism. Travelers today are more environmentally conscious and seek experiences that minimize negative impacts on nature and local communities. This has led to the rise of eco-tourism, green accommodation, and conservation-focused travel initiatives. Destinations are now prioritizing sustainability by implementing policies that protect natural resources, reduce waste, and promote cultural preservation. As a result, tourism is gradually shifting from mass consumption to mindful and ethical travel practices.

Another key trend is the rapid advancement of technology in tourism. Digital innovations have revolutionized the way people plan and experience travel. Online booking platforms, mobile applications, and virtual tours have made travel more accessible and convenient. Artificial intelligence and data analytics allow businesses to offer personalized travel recommendations, enhancing customer satisfaction. Contactless services, such as digital payments and automated check-ins, have also become more prominent, especially in response to health and safety concerns. In the future, technology will continue to play a central role in creating seamless and efficient travel experiences.

The rise of experiential and personalized travel is also shaping the industry. Modern travelers are no longer satisfied with traditional sightseeing; they seek meaningful and immersive experiences. Activities such as cultural immersion, culinary tourism, adventure travel, and community-based tourism are becoming increasingly popular. Travelers want to connect with local cultures, learn new skills, and create memorable experiences. This shift has encouraged tourism providers to design unique and customized travel packages that cater to individual preferences.

Moreover, health, safety, and wellness tourism have gained importance in the post-pandemic era. Travelers are now more conscious of hygiene, safety standards, and overall well-being. This has led to the growth of wellness retreats, medical tourism, and destinations that promote relaxation and mental health. Tourism establishments are adopting stricter health protocols and offering services that prioritize the physical and emotional well-being of guests. As a result, wellness is becoming a central component of the travel experience.

Another emerging trend is the increasing popularity of domestic and regional tourism. Due to global uncertainties and travel restrictions, many people have turned to exploring destinations within their own countries. This has boosted local economies and encouraged governments to invest in domestic tourism development. Even as international travel recovers, the appreciation for local destinations is expected to remain strong, supporting more balanced and inclusive tourism growth.

Furthermore, the tourism industry is witnessing the rise of digital nomadism and flexible travel lifestyles. With the expansion of remote work, more individuals are combining work and travel, staying longer in destinations while maintaining their professional responsibilities. This trend has led to the development of co-living spaces, work-friendly accommodations, and visa programs for digital nomads. It reflects a shift in how people perceive travel not just as a temporary escape, but as a way of life.

In a nutshell, the future of travel is being shaped by sustainability, technology, personalization, wellness, and changing lifestyles. These trends highlight a shift toward more responsible, innovative, and meaningful travel experiences. As the tourism industry continues to evolve, stakeholders must adapt to these changes to remain competitive and relevant. By embracing these emerging trends, the industry can create a more resilient and sustainable future, ensuring that travel continues to inspire, connect, and enrich lives across the globe.



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Tourism as a Tool for Preserving Cultural Heritage

Tourism plays a vital role not only in economic development but also in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. As people travel to experience different traditions, histories, and ways of life, tourism becomes a powerful instrument in safeguarding both tangible and intangible cultural assets. When managed responsibly, it helps ensure that cultural heritage is not only protected but also appreciated by future generations.

One of the most significant ways tourism contributes to cultural preservation is through financial support. Revenue generated from tourism activities such as entrance fees, guided tours, and local product sales can be used for the restoration and maintenance of historical sites, monuments, and cultural landscapes. Many heritage sites that might otherwise fall into neglect are preserved because tourism provides the necessary funding. This is especially important in developing countries where government resources may be limited. Through tourism, cultural heritage becomes economically valuable, encouraging both public and private sectors to invest in its protection.

Furthermore, tourism promotes the revitalization of traditions and cultural practices. Local communities often showcase their customs, festivals, crafts, and performing arts to visitors. This exposure not only strengthens cultural pride among community members but also encourages younger generations to learn and continue these traditions. Without tourism, some practices may gradually disappear due to modernization and a lack of interest. By creating demand for authentic cultural experiences, tourism helps keep traditions alive and relevant.

Tourism also fosters cultural awareness and mutual understanding. When visitors engage with local communities, they gain a deeper appreciation of different cultures, values, and histories. This interaction promotes respect and reduces cultural stereotypes. At the same time, host communities become more aware of the importance of preserving their identity, as it becomes a source of pride and livelihood. Cultural exchange, therefore, becomes a two-way process that benefits both tourists and locals.

Moreover, tourism encourages the protection of heritage sites and environments. Governments and organizations are more likely to implement conservation policies and regulations when a site has tourism value. For instance, heritage zones may be declared protected areas, and strict guidelines may be enforced to prevent damage or overdevelopment. Tourism can also promote sustainable practices, such as eco-friendly infrastructure and responsible visitor behavior, which further contribute to preservation efforts.



Echoes of Expression
A Creative Folio

Volume II, Issue IV (April 2026), National Circulation
ISSN (Online) 3082-4397 ISSN (Print) 3082-5741
Published Online at www.lakbay-diwapublishing.com
Publisher: Lakbay-Diwa Publishing
DTI Business Reg. No. 6488937 / TIN 492-741-614
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However, it is important to recognize that tourism must be properly managed to avoid negative impacts. Over-tourism, commercialization, and cultural exploitation can threaten the authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage. Therefore, sustainable tourism practices must be implemented, ensuring that development does not compromise cultural values. Community involvement, responsible planning, and government regulation are essential to maintaining a balance between preservation and tourism growth.

To sum up, tourism serves as a powerful tool for preserving cultural heritage by providing financial support, revitalizing traditions, fostering cultural understanding, and encouraging conservation efforts. When guided by sustainable principles, tourism not only protects cultural identity but also enhances its value in a rapidly changing world. Thus, promoting responsible tourism is essential in ensuring that cultural heritage continues to thrive for generations to come.



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Beyond Representation: Do Indigenous Voices Really Shape Local Governance?

The institutional recognition of Indigenous Peoples in governance has been widely regarded as a significant step toward inclusive and participatory democracy. In the Philippines, the enactment of the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 formally guaranteed Indigenous communities the right to representation in local legislative bodies through Indigenous Peoples' Mandatory Representatives (IPMRs). This legal framework reflects a broader commitment to ensuring that historically marginalized voices are included in decision-making processes. However, despite this progress, representation has not consistently translated into meaningful influence over governance outcomes. While Indigenous voices are now institutionally present, their capacity to shape policy and decision-making remains constrained.

Representation is often equated with participation. The presence of IPMRs in barangay councils is frequently taken as evidence that Indigenous perspectives are already integrated into governance processes. However, participation in form does not necessarily guarantee participation in substance. In many cases, representation functions as compliance with legal mandates rather than as a mechanism for genuine influence. This distinction between symbolic inclusion and substantive participation is central to understanding the limits of current governance arrangements.

One of the key challenges lies in the structural conditions within which IPMRs operate. Although recognized as official members of local legislative bodies, they often function within environments constrained by limited resources, bureaucratic rigidity, and uneven power dynamics. The decentralization framework established under the Local Government Code of 1991 grants local government units autonomy, but this is not always matched by adequate fiscal capacity or administrative support. As a result, even when Indigenous representatives actively participate, their ability to influence decisions is shaped by broader institutional limitations.

Governance effectiveness is not determined by formal authority alone but also by access to resources, technical knowledge, and institutional networks. Indigenous representatives, particularly in rural and geographically isolated areas, often face barriers related to capacity-building opportunities, access to information, and coordination with external agencies. These constraints limit their engagement in policy formulation,

implementation, and monitoring. In such contexts, high levels of participation may coexist with limited policy impact, reinforcing the gap between representation and actual governance outcomes.

At the same time, Indigenous governance should not be viewed as inherently limited. Many Indigenous representatives demonstrate strong practical competence grounded in experience, cultural knowledge, and community engagement. Their roles often extend beyond formal legislative functions to include mediation, conflict resolution, and the integration of customary practices into governance. However, these forms of knowledge are not always fully recognized within institutional frameworks that prioritize technical and bureaucratic expertise.

This tension reflects a broader issue of the coexistence of formal state structures and Indigenous governance systems. Rather than functioning as integrated systems, they often operate in parallel, with limited mechanisms for meaningful interaction. As a result, the potential of Indigenous representation to transform governance processes remains underutilized.

Addressing this gap requires moving beyond a purely legalistic approach to representation toward a more capability-oriented model. Strengthening Indigenous participation demands not only formal inclusion but also sustained investments in capacity-building, improved access to resources, and institutional reforms that promote inclusive decision-making processes. Equally important is the recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems as legitimate contributions to governance.

Ultimately, the issue is not whether Indigenous voices are present in local governance; they clearly are. The more pressing question is whether these voices are empowered to shape decisions in meaningful ways. Representation, while necessary, is not sufficient. Without addressing structural and institutional constraints, the promise of inclusive governance remains only partially fulfilled. For Indigenous representation to be truly transformative, it must move beyond presence toward genuine influence.



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Performative Politics: When Leaders Act for Visibility Rather Than Impact

In many communities today, it is common to see public officials actively documenting their work, posting photos during relief operations, sharing updates on meetings, or highlighting their presence at community activities. These posts often attract attention and praise, creating the impression of leaders who are constantly engaged and responsive. However, beyond what is seen, a quieter question lingers: do these visible actions always translate into meaningful and lasting change?

This growing emphasis on visibility reflects a broader shift in how leadership is perceived. Public officials are no longer evaluated solely based on policy outcomes or long-term development gains, but also on how visible, active, and responsive they appear, particularly on social media. In this environment, governance can sometimes take on a performative dimension – where actions are not only meant to address public needs, but also to demonstrate that something is being done. This is what can be understood as performative politics: when the appearance of action becomes just as important, or even more important, than its actual impact.

This becomes especially evident in the way political activity is now communicated. Leaders frequently share updates about attending meetings, distributing aid, or visiting communities. While these reflect genuine efforts, documenting and presenting these moments can subtly shift priorities. The focus may move from ensuring the quality and sustainability of services to ensuring that these actions are seen. In this sense, governance risks becoming a staged performance in which the narrative of activity is more visible than its outcomes.

In local governance settings, this tension is even more pronounced. In many rural communities, where resources are limited and needs are immediate, the effectiveness of leadership is not measured by how often officials are seen but by how well they address everyday concerns such as access to basic services, infrastructure, and social protection. A barangay official, for instance, may be highly visible during aid distribution, yet the deeper issues of resource allocation or program continuity may remain unaddressed. Visibility, in such cases, can create a perception of effectiveness that does not always reflect the full reality.

This disconnect also affects accountability. When public perception is shaped primarily by what is visible, it becomes more difficult for citizens to evaluate leadership based on evidence and outcomes. The emphasis on appearances may unintentionally discourage

deeper questioning about how resources are used, whether programs are sustained, or if policies are effectively implemented. As a result, leaders may feel compelled to prioritize actions that are easily seen and appreciated, rather than those that are less visible but more structurally important, such as planning, policy development, and institutional strengthening.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that this pattern is not always driven by individual intent. In many cases, leaders operate within a system that rewards visibility. Public approval often depends on what people can see, and in an environment where attention is limited and competition is high, being visible becomes a way to remain relevant. This suggests that performative politics is not simply a matter of personal choice but also reflects broader expectations shaped by citizens, the media, and political culture.

Still, recognizing these conditions does not remove the need to reflect on their implications. If governance is to remain meaningful, there must be a shift in how leadership is understood and evaluated. Rather than focusing primarily on visible actions, there is a need to pay closer attention to outcomes on whether programs are sustained, whether services reach those who need them, and whether policies create lasting improvements in people's lives. This shift is less about rejecting visibility and more about placing it in its proper context.

Education also plays a role in this process. When citizens develop the ability to look beyond what is presented and ask deeper questions about governance, the standards of leadership begin to change. Media literacy, critical thinking, and civic awareness can help people distinguish between activity and impact, between presence and performance. In this way, accountability becomes more grounded, not in appearances but in actual results.

In the end, leadership should not be reduced to what is most visible. While communication and public engagement are important, they should reflect genuine efforts rather than replace them. The challenge is not to eliminate visibility, but to ensure that it aligns with meaningful action. In a time when almost everything can be documented and shared, the true measure of leadership lies not in what is seen, but in what is achieved.

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Still Your Friend

I remember in high school, we were always side by side,
After class or on weekends, you were my constant guide.
Through struggles in life, we stood strong and true,
No matter the challenge, I had you.

In academics, in dancing, in songs we would sing,
On stage in the theatre, we shared everything.
We trusted each other, a bond tight and real,
A friendship so strong, no one could steal.

We promised forever, come what may,
That nothing in life could pull us away.
But then came college, and paths grew apart,
Still holding our dreams deep in our hearts.

We chose different roads, new goals to pursue,
Believing these choices would help us break through.
We supported each other in all that we do,
Even when distance slowly grew.

Until I saw you less, as time went by,
Just hearing your stories, your lows and your highs.
Your laughter, your tears, I once knew them all,
Now echoes of memories I softly recall.

I heard of your heartaches, the pain you went through,
And though I was distant, I still cared for you.
In silence, I whisper a prayer up above,
That you'll find healing, peace, and love.

Now that we're older, I've come to see,
What friendship truly means to me.
It's not just in dreams we chase side by side,
But in hearts that stay close, though time may divide.

I will always be a friend who prays for you,
No matter how far, no matter what we do.
And all of our memories, both old and new,
Will forever remain my bond with you.



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The Culture of Silence and Why People Choose Not to Speak in the Face of Injustice

There are moments when we know something is wrong and still, we say nothing. Not because we agree, and not because we fail to see what is happening, but because speaking feels harder than staying silent. It is easier to let the moment pass, to avoid conflict, or to convince ourselves that it is not our place to speak.

At some point, most of us have experienced choosing silence in a moment when speaking felt uncomfortable, and later wondering if we should have said something.

Silence in the face of injustice is often misunderstood as indifference. It is easy to assume that when people do not speak, they simply do not care. But silence is rarely that simple. More often, it is shaped by fear, by relationships, and by the environment in which people find themselves. And while silence may feel harmless in the moment, it does not remain neutral. When it becomes a pattern, it quietly allows injustice to continue.

One of the most immediate reasons people stay silent is the fear of conflict. Speaking up can disrupt relationships, create tension, and invite confrontation. In families, it may mean challenging someone older or more dominant. In communities, it can mean being seen as disrespectful or difficult. In workplaces or public spaces, it can carry the risk of exclusion or retaliation. In these situations, silence becomes a way of preserving peace. But often, it is only the appearance of peace, not its reality.

Silence is also shaped by power. Not everyone has the same freedom to speak. In environments where authority is concentrated, the cost of speaking up can be high. A community member may hesitate to question a leader. A young person may feel that their voice carries little weight. An employee may choose silence to protect their position. In these situations, silence is not simply a personal decision—it is a response to unequal conditions. People are not naturally silent; they are made silent by the structures around them.

Over time, repeated silence leads to something more troubling: the normalization of injustice. When actions go unchallenged, they begin to appear acceptable. What once felt uncomfortable becomes familiar. People adjust not because they agree, but because resistance feels risky or futile. Silence, in this way, does not only reflect injustice, it allows it to continue. It creates an environment where accountability weakens and where harmful practices persist without question.

This culture of silence is often invisible. It exists in what is not said, in the conversations that never happen, and in the issues that remain unaddressed. It can be found in families where difficult truths are avoided, in communities where decisions go unquestioned, and in public spaces where dissent is quietly discouraged. In each of these situations, silence is sustained not by a lack of awareness, but by the conditions that make speaking feel unsafe.

At the same time, silence is not always a sign of weakness. For many, it is a calculated choice. People weigh consequences. They protect relationships. They consider timing. In some cases, silence can even be strategic. But when silence becomes the default response to injustice, it stops being protective and begins to be limiting. It closes off the possibility of dialogue, of correction, and ultimately, of change.

Breaking this pattern does not always require dramatic acts of courage. It can begin in small ways of asking a question, expressing doubt, or simply refusing to accept something as normal when it is not. These moments may seem minor, but they matter. They interrupt the expectation of silence and create space for others to speak as well. Change often begins not with loud resistance, but with the quiet decision to no longer remain silent.

Still, the responsibility does not lie with individuals alone. If people are to speak, they must feel that it is safe to do so. This requires environments where voices are heard without immediate judgment, where disagreement is not treated as disrespect, and where accountability is part of everyday practice. In governance, this means creating genuine spaces for participation. In communities, it means encouraging open dialogue. In families, it begins with the willingness to listen.

In a nutshell, the culture of silence is not simply about people choosing not to speak. It is about the conditions that make silence feel necessary. If we want to address injustice, we must look not only at silence itself, but at what produces it. Because in the end, the question is not just why people remain silent, but why they feel they cannot speak. And unless those conditions change, silence will continue, not because people do not see injustice, but because they do not feel safe enough to challenge it.



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Where Theory Meets Practice: My Field Study Journey

Before, I thought education was mostly about theories, lesson plans, and everything written in books inside the classroom. However, my Field Study experience made me realize that learning becomes more real and meaningful when you actually see it happening. It connected what I learned from textbooks to what truly goes on in a classroom, the challenges, the adjustments, and the small but rewarding moments of teaching.

One thing that really stood out to me was how different each learner is. No two students are the same. Some were very active and confident in answering, while others stayed quiet and needed more time and encouragement. Seeing this made me realize how important the teacher's role is in ensuring everyone is included. Teaching is not just following one method; it is about adjusting, being flexible, and finding ways to reach every student.

I also noticed how the teacher managed the class. It was not about being strict or making students feel afraid. Instead, it was about respect, patience, and consistency. The teacher used fun activities, gave clear instructions, and positively encouraged students. It showed me that discipline works best when students feel understood, not controlled. During my field study, I am the one handling the learners. This was because my cooperating teacher's child was dying, so she took a short break. The principal asked me if I was willing to handle the learners in grade 2. Without hesitation, I agreed. However, we agreed that I would handle only the 5 learners, and the rest would have a modular class. The 5 learners I will handle are DepEd Aral Program-qualified learners who are having difficulty reading. So, at that time we used to do their daily routine, and after that we would read some words I wrote on the board, and then I gave each learner one story. I will call them one by one to assess their reading. To ease their boredom, I will give them time to play, and after that, we will return to what we have been doing.

Another thing that touched me was the emotional side of teaching. The teacher did not just focus on lessons but also showed care for the students. Simple things like giving praise or checking in made a big difference in how they participated and how they felt about themselves. That made me realize that teaching is not just about knowledge, it is also about the heart. The way they participate in class, we should praise them and offer a kind word to encourage them and boost their confidence.

This experience made me reflect on myself as a future teacher. I realized that being an educator is not easy. It requires patience, understanding, creativity, and dedication. It also challenged me to keep improving so I can meet the needs of different learners and create a classroom where everyone feels important.

During the time I handled the learners, many staff members were present. First, way back when I was in school at Palompon Institute of Technology Tabango Campus (PIT-TC), our instructor always said that a teacher requires more patience, especially when dealing with their learners, and one thing they always said is that there are some situations in which learners may poop. As a teacher, it is your obligation to care for your learners, as I have experienced during my field study. It was a normal day, and as we went about our daily routine, one of my learners shouted that he was at the CR at that time. He said, "Teacher, there is poop in the bowl, and it smells so bad" at first, I laughed maybe that learner is joking not until other learners go check the CR and they said the same way, so I checked the CR so as their guidance that time so I obliged to plush the poop so that they can use again the CR.

In the end, my Field Study experience was eye-opening and meaningful. It made me appreciate teaching even more and helped me see clearly the kind of teacher I want to become: someone who not only teaches lessons but also inspires, supports, and makes a difference in students' lives.



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More Than Just Observations: A Journey of Discovery

There is a saying: "Experience is the best teacher, but it sure does cost a lot." As I walk through this new path of adventure, I discover something extraordinary: a once-in-a-lifetime experience and a valuable lifelong lesson.

As I start to uncover the truth behind the person who brings light to every young learner. I realize that a teacher is not just a dispenser of knowledge, but a gardener of minds, a sculptor of character, and a beacon of hope. It is like every day is a battle of encouragement and long patience. Sitting at the back, I see the room full of students laughing, crying, and gossiping. It is definitely an atmosphere that every teacher has been through, a beautiful, chaotic symphony of growing pains. From my observer's chair, I realize that these are not just distractions; they are the raw, unfiltered sounds of life unfolding.

The laughter is the rhythm of their friendship, the tears are the hurdles of their day, and the hushed whispers are the secrets of their world. It is a vivid reminder that before a child can learn to solve for x and y 's or master a verb, they first try to navigate the rollercoaster of being young. Being in this space is not just about managing a classroom; it is about holding a steady hand in the middle of a whirlwind. As I watch them, I do not just see a grade level; I see a future in the making, and I realize that my quest is not just to teach them, but to hear them amidst the noise truly. I know it will not be an easy task to handle, but seeing those tiny smiles and eyes full of dreams, I will fear no one and continue striving, even if it is against everybody's principles.

As I conclude this chapter, I carry not only knowledge but a transformed heart, ready to step into my own classroom and be the light I was so fortunate to witness. This journey has taught me that the cost of late nights, nervousness, and challenging observations is being repaid in a future of molding young souls.



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DOI 10.5281/zenodo.19688731

A Transformative Field Study Journey

Field Study is an important part of teacher education that allows Field Study students to experience the real classroom setting and connect theory to practice. I was deployed to Tabango North Central School with all my fellow 3rd-year Bachelor of Elementary Education students. My Field Study journey was a life-changing experience that changed how I think about teaching. It provided me with opportunities to observe, assist, and actively participate in different classroom activities. It helped me realize that teaching is not just about delivering lessons or knowledge, but also about guiding, inspiring, and nurturing learners.

On my first day, I focused on observing my cooperating teacher and the learners' behavior. I carefully observed how the teacher managed the class, delivered lessons, and interacted with the learners because I knew the pupils' behavior was different from that of high school students. I observed that Ma'am Maria Lourdes O. Abadines, a grade 4 Science teacher, was patient, kind, and adept at classroom management. The learners were taught to raise their hands before speaking, to ask permission when they leave, and to keep the classroom in order and show respect. I noticed how effective classroom management, clear instructions, and engaging teaching strategies contributed to a productive learning environment.

As the weeks went by, my cooperating teacher gave me responsibilities such as checking students' work, distributing learning materials, and assisting learners who needed help. Especially every morning and before going home, the teacher told them to sweep the floor inside and outside the classroom. These experiences allowed me to interact closely with the students and understand their different learning styles and needs. I realized that each learner is unique and requires patience, understanding, and appropriate strategies to support their learning.

One of the most meaningful experiences I had was assisting my cooperating teacher in the Aral Program, which met every afternoon to improve the reading and comprehension skills of struggling learners. This experience taught me how important it is to be patient, encouraging, and clear when teaching. I learned that slow learners need extra support and guidance, and it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that no learner is left behind.

There were times when my cooperating teacher was not around. During those moments, I took responsibility for managing the students, maintaining order and ensuring

they stayed focused on their tasks and activities. This allowed me to practice my classroom management skills and build confidence in handling a real classroom setting. I felt overwhelmed and grateful for the experiences because, even though I am only a field study student, the learners treated me as a real teacher. They listened attentively to my instructions and showed me respect at all times. This made me feel valued and strengthened my confidence in handling the class.

Throughout my Field Study, I was exposed to different teaching styles from various teachers, which made me realize that there is no single approach to teaching. Each teacher has their own effective strategies in handling learners and delivering lessons. I also witnessed how my resource teachers showed care for their students, not only in academics but also in their personal well-being. There were times when a student had no food to eat, and the teacher gave money to buy food in the canteen. Building positive relationships with learners helped create a supportive and engaging classroom environment. I also helped with school activities, such as decorating the stage for events and assisting during examinations, which enhanced my cooperation and sense of responsibility.

My Field Study journey was transformative. When I was in my first year, I felt bored with the Bachelor of Elementary Education course and questioned my interest in the program. Everything changed when I was exposed to real classroom settings. I began to enjoy the experience, especially the interaction with the pupils, and I realized that I had developed a genuine interest in teaching children. It helped me grow academically, emotionally, and professionally as a future educator. I learned that teaching is not just a profession but a commitment to shaping learners' minds and lives.



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From Learning Crisis to Systemic Reform: Assessing the Philippines' Education Response After PISA 2025

The Philippines continues to confront a deep and persistent education crisis, as reflected in its consistently low performance in the Program for International Student Assessment. Results from the 2018 and 2022 cycles placed the country near the bottom globally, with minimal gains across mathematics, reading, and science. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023), the majority of Filipino students do not reach minimum proficiency levels, highlighting systemic weaknesses in foundational learning. With the completion of the 2025 PISA cycle and results forthcoming, the Philippines now stands at a critical juncture. This essay argues that while recent efforts demonstrate improved coordination and intent, meaningful progress depends on sustained, system-wide reforms that address foundational skills, inequality, and broader socio-economic constraints.

The severity of the learning crisis is well-documented across multiple sources. Reports drawing on data from UNICEF indicate that a large proportion of Filipino learners struggle with basic literacy and numeracy, with many unable to read or perform mathematical tasks at grade-appropriate levels. These deficits begin early and intensify over time, as shown in national analyses and international assessments. Findings discussed by Cielo Chi (2024) further reveal that Filipino students perform poorly in creative thinking, suggesting that weak foundational skills limit the development of higher-order competencies. Together, these patterns point to a systemic failure to translate student potential into measurable learning outcomes.

The roots of this crisis extend beyond the classroom. Evidence from the Second Congressional Commission on Education and discussions with institutions such as the World Bank indicate that structural inequalities compound early-grade literacy and numeracy gaps. These include disparities in school resources, uneven access to qualified teachers, and significant differences between public and private education systems. Socio-economic conditions also play a critical role. Poverty, malnutrition, and exposure to disruptions such as natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic have further constrained learning opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged communities. These factors demonstrate that a complex interaction of institutional and societal conditions shapes education outcomes.

In response to these challenges, the Department of Education undertook extensive preparations for the 2025 PISA cycle. The assessment was implemented through computer-

based testing, supported by efforts to improve digital readiness, teacher training, and school coordination. Reports on the completion of the country's participation indicate that these preparations addressed several logistical and technical issues encountered in previous cycles. Students received training in computer literacy and problem-solving skills, while schools were supported through funding and infrastructure improvements. These measures reflect a more deliberate attempt to align assessment practices with the competencies measured by PISA.

However, short-term readiness initiatives alone are insufficient to address long-standing structural issues. External stakeholders have emphasized the need for more comprehensive and sustained reforms. The Research Institute for Teacher Quality proposed a competency-based framework that focuses on strengthening both student learning and teacher capacity. This approach highlights the importance of assessment literacy, continuous feedback mechanisms, and scalable interventions. Similarly, the Philippine Business for Education underscores the growing disconnect between education outcomes and labor market demands, arguing that reforms must also address workforce readiness and economic competitiveness.

The most comprehensive response to date is outlined in the EDCOM II report, which presents a ten-year national roadmap for education reform from 2026 to 2035. The report identifies critical systemic issues, including weak early childhood education, excessive teacher workload, and persistent shortages in infrastructure and learning materials. It also highlights alarming trends, such as declining proficiency as students' progress through grade levels. To address these challenges, the roadmap prioritizes foundational skills, particularly literacy, numeracy, and early childhood development, while proposing structural reforms in assessment, funding, and governance. This long-term perspective represents a shift from reactive measures to strategic, sustained transformation.

Despite these developments, significant challenges remain. The persistence of low proficiency levels suggests that reforms have yet to produce substantial improvements in learning outcomes. There is also a risk that efforts may focus too heavily on improving assessment performance rather than addressing deeper systemic issues. Public discourse, including commentary by Gerry Lauengco (2026), continues to raise concerns about accountability, instructional quality, and policy effectiveness. These debates highlight the need for balanced reforms that promote both rigor and inclusivity.

In a nutshell, the Philippines' education system is at a critical turning point following its participation in PISA 2025. While recent efforts demonstrate progress in coordination and implementation, they must be complemented by deeper, long-term reforms that address foundational learning and systemic inequality. Improving educational outcomes requires a holistic approach that integrates policy, pedagogy, and social support systems. By sustaining these efforts and aligning them with a clear national vision, the Philippines can move beyond recurring cycles of poor performance and build a more equitable and effective education system.



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Fade-Painted Refuge

Cradled by the hills and mountains – creeks in between,
There stood an old-fashioned, faded building.
Painted in off-white, yellow, and green,
Surrounded by trees, nipa huts, and corn fields.

It may be old, small, and far,
But for Aboy – it's where his future is about to unfold.
Conquering the distance and struggles along the way,
Braving the storms and overflowing rivers on rainy days.

Reaching the grounds before sunrise is his goal,
Had to endure long walks on an empty stomach.
Passing through narrow roads – etched by footsteps,
Of poverty, dreams, and responsibilities.

People would call it school – a place for learning,
Fun, plays, values, and discipline.
But for him, it is an escape plan – a refuge,
From everything that weighs heavier than he holds.

Aboy is the youngest in a family of six,
Mom passed away at three – life is hard.
Life is everything in corn fields – every corn bit,
Work and school had to be juggled.

Driven by poverty and responsibilities,
He had finished school for himself and his family.
Now, taking still the same narrow path
In a complete uniform, with books and a laptop bag.

That fade-painted refuge stands still
Amidst the storm and the rain, the years passed.
The same old and small – a far base,
Yet full of dreams fulfilled, including his.



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Compliance without Competence in Governance

Governance today is increasingly being measured through compliance with requirements. However, compliance does not ensure competence. Reports are submitted on schedule, meetings are held on a regular basis, and required paperwork is submitted in accordance with institutional procedures. It works on paper. However, under this veneer of order and compliance lurks yet a trickier picture - one in which processes are carried out, but not always wholly embraced or effectively enacted. This speaks to a wider governance issue, which is the growing interest in compliance as a measure of performance.

Meeting requirements is now an indicator of effectiveness. Local officials are required to put plans into place, send out reports, and adhere to procedural protocols, all of which are important. Nevertheless, complying with these procedures is not a way to demonstrate depth of understanding or the quality of implementation. Governance becomes a routine in this context. Tasks are performed because they are demanded, not necessarily because the need to do so is completely understood. Employees follow processes but do not necessarily internalize them. So, governance can seem orderly and efficient in principle, yet unequal in practice.

This dynamic is particularly apparent at the local level, where officials operate within complex and often demanding environments. The pressure of fulfilling several expectations, such as writing plans, preparing financial reports, and program guidelines, has the effect of focusing on accomplishing tasks while bypassing their understandings. If deadlines and processes drive priorities, there is far less opportunity to consider meaning and importance in doing such acts. Nevertheless, the problem is not that compliance itself does nothing. It plays an important role in ensuring that accountability, continuity, and coordination are achieved at all levels of government. However, compliance in this instance becomes the only measure of the government's effectiveness.

When governance is reduced to compliance, it can end up being mechanical. Plans can be made because they need to be, but they cannot function as tools to influence decision-making. Meetings might occur at regular intervals, but without proper engagement or consideration. While reports may be submitted accurately, they nevertheless fail to reflect the life experiences and tribulations encountered on the ground. In such situations, good governance prevails, but the depth of its force is lost.

This underlines a crucial difference between doing and understanding. Without full awareness, the decisions become reactive, not strategic. Programs can take place without having a clear fit with community needs, and gaps for invention and enhancement are continually overlooked when processes are enacted without due diligence. They can be

designed with only marginal input and not based on careful consideration, and there is potential for improvement or development.

Over time, this establishes a vicious cycle whereby governance becomes repeated through routine in practice and not strengthened by actual practice. Systems persist, needs are met, but the quality of governance varies. If compliance is considered the most important consideration in determining governance effectiveness, then those key dimensions, judgment, flexibility, critical insight, are more easily disregarded. We need governance that is not just doing things right, but doing the right things well. Increased attention should be directed at how governance processes are perceived, performed, and considered in practice.

In the end, governance is not simply a string of tasks. Compliance guarantees the operation of systems, but competence provides the system's purpose and trajectory. Without those careful compromises, governance may still work, but it may also become routine, a box of things we check off lists more in appearance than they have any impact. Governance will function through compliance, but it can only improve through competence.



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The Heart of Teaching (My FS Journey)

Proverbs 9:9 "Instruct the wise, and they will be even wiser. Teach the righteous, and they will learn even more." Field Study is a challenging part of my teaching and learning with the pupils I have worked with. The reality is that I never expected to manage them all, and I have come to understand that teaching is not just a profession; it is a calling to observe and reflect while doing things with love.

During my FS journey, I observed that in the classroom, filled with different stories, each child carries unique abilities and dreams for their future life, even though they are still in the learning and growing stage. The most interesting moment of my life that really challenged me is my patience, and I have been grateful to be part of this journey. I have experienced this because I have learned how to manage my inner self around the pupils. I was amazed that I was open to changing my behavior to be more flexible and approachable as their teacher, with long patience and compassion, to help them learn. Moreover, this is really a sacrificial duty on that journey. However, it reminds me that an effective part of teaching is not about delivering perfect lessons every day, but about reaching their hearts and minds in meaningful ways.

My observation truly matters because I have learned, too, that not just the students have learned from my teachings. Even though small actions can have big impacts, like my simple smile encouraging the shy students to participate, and every gentle word boosting their confidence during the class. Teaching is not only about instruction, but also about convincing pupils to do what they need to do and learn. This experience challenged me to reflect on myself and realize that I am patient enough and always ready to serve with love and compassion.

In the end, FS is not just about observing; it is also about discovering with great purpose, inspiring future educators to teach with love and compassion. Moreover, serving with a committed heart to make a difference in the lives of children has its own goals. My observation journey reminded me that education is not just about learning; it is a secret path to shaping a future life, achieving goals and inspiring others.

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My Journey with Grade 1 Daisy

As I stepped into Grade 1 Daisy's classroom for my field study, I was immediately struck by how much the environment matters. The classroom was well ventilated and bright, creating a space ready for learning. On the first day, Miss Reggie introduced me to the pupils, and their warm, high-energy welcome instantly dispelled my initial nervousness. We settled into a tone that I soon learned as their daily anchor, a chorus of greetings, a short prayer, and quick practices that sharpened their focus for the day ahead.

Observing a room full of six-year-olds is a lesson in organizing chaos. While many pupils are very eager and active, constantly raising their hands with Miss Reggie's learner-centered questions, some struggled to stay in their seats, drifted away from the lesson, and found it difficult to concentrate. Watching Miss Reggie handle chaos is a masterclass in patience. She managed to keep the momentum of her teaching without leaving the students who struggled to focus behind.

One of the most practical things I learned was not about pedagogy but about classroom management, which is a major challenge in a classroom full of 6-year-olds. To keep the grading process from becoming overwhelming, Miss Reggie used a clever "alphabetical numbering" system. When it was time to collect papers, she would count from 1 to 6, and the pupils would pass their work forward according to their assigned numbers. This small bit of automation means that she could record scores in seconds rather than minutes, a simple but brilliant strategy for any future teacher to remember.

My involvement grew as I began assisting with the daily worksheets. Checking their work gave me a grasp of their progress. I could see exactly who was grasping the material and who was going through with the class. It became more apparent during the ARAL program after lunch. While Miss Reggie conducted intensive one-on-one reading sessions with the struggling learners, I took charge of the more advanced group. Guiding them through reading booklets and checking their comprehension was my first real taste of instructional responsibility.

The most defining moment of my Field Study journey happened when Miss Reggie had to attend a meeting, leaving me alone with the pupils during a test. I felt a surge of adrenaline as I stood before them. It was not just about watching them; I had to become their guide. When the pupils struggled with the wording of a question, I stepped in to translate and provide real-life examples that they could relate to. Even though the room got noisy, which Grade 1 pupils inevitably do, I found my voice. I managed the behavior, kept them with tasks, and the activity ended successfully. The moment of transitioning from watching a teacher become a teacher was the most rewarding experience of my field study journey.



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Whispers from the No Man's Land

1987 - A Remote Northern Valley

Nora felt the earth tremble before she heard it – the low thrum of helicopters sliced through the valley's morning mist. At 32, she had once sung kundiman to her rice fields here. The Chico River was her constant companion. Now, the valley here, Isneg lola called "promesa ti Dios", felt like a cage. "No man's land," the soldiers called it. This came after NPA training camps sprouted at Mapog and Mt. Siamsiandarie like weeds after rain.

"Inday, pack only what fits your apron," her husband Berto whispered. His eyes scanned the tree line. Their three children, Lito (10), Maria (7), and baby Dina, already clutched sleeping mats. The lugaw pot, still warm from breakfast, got wrapped in banana leaves. No time for the carabao, the harvest, or Nora's one good skirt from the market.

Gunfire cracked like dry bamboo at noon. They ran, night after night, really. Thorny rattan tore legs. Babies stayed hushed against chests. Up mountain peaks, down to Cagayan relatives, back when shells stopped falling. "Kung tupad na, tupad na," Berto would mutter. This was the fatalist's prayer that kept panic at bay. However, Nora saw his hands shake. He boiled water, pretending it was coffee. Alternatively, when soldiers banged on their door demanding rice for "operations."

One dusk brought the worst. NPA boys, younger than Berto, disciplined, almost polite, asked for shelter. "Just tonight, Manang. Army's coming." Nora fed them pinakbet from yesterday's roots. Her heart hammered as she portioned lugaw for herself. Dawn brought army patrols instead. Rifles probed corners. "Rebels here?" the captain barked. Maria wet herself in terror. They left empty-handed but branded Nora's home as a suspect. Neutrality? A luxury for city folk.

Life bent but did not break. Lito played basketball by day while shells whistled overhead. "Morning radio," he'd joke, copying his tatay. Maria turned 8 in a jungle lean-to. Her early marriage was whispered by aunts ("Safer than recruitment"). They fished hidden streams. They dug cassava when rice fields burned. They traded fruit with the Agay neighbours, who shared wild herbs. Faith was their lantern. Rosaries came from the vine. Ave Maria chanted to drown bombardments. "God sees the pot's bottom," Nora told the kids. She spooned thinner gruel each week.

October 1990's Oplan Salidumay broke the stalemate. Five hundred families like theirs fled as homes were torched. Tunnels stood exposed. Nora's brother vanished. This was one of the salvagings whispered about. Stigma clung when they trickled back. "Valley rebels," market women hissed. However, rebuild they did. Berto's sari-sari store thrived post-'92 rehab. Real coffee steamed again. Galvanised roofs covered their heads.

2026 - A High School Classroom

I met Nora last month. She is 63 now. Her hands are gnarled like valley roots. Over her rebuilt stove, she shared it all. This was not a trauma, but a testimony. "We were not heroes, Ma'am Fe. Just stubborn. Bayanihan. Diyos." Her eyes danced, telling how baby Dina, now a nurse, drew playgrounds over old tunnel maps for my senior high students.

Valley survivors like Nora teach louder than textbooks ever could. Their patterns, caged valleys, endless running, hunger's siege, blurred loyalties, gunfire lullabies, stolen childhoods, unbreakable faith, are not history. They are our students' inheritance. I teach them now. Listen to Lola. Bend like river grass. Share the lugaw.

In this valley, resilience is not a word. It is coming home.



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The Company I Kept: Fading Lights, Silent Goodbyes

I remember the smell of rain on the road after we graduated from school. It was the kind of smell that stuck to our clothes when we stood under the school canteen, laughing so hard it hurt. Those were the days when my friends felt like family. We were a group of friends from a small-town school. There was Kath, who always had a laugh and planned our next adventure. There was J, who was quiet and liked to draw our jokes. Then there was me, the one who told all the stories. They knew my secrets, my mistakes and how I blushed when someone said something to me. In a world that seemed big and scary, they were my friends.

Life can change things even if you do not want it to. We all got jobs in cities, and that changed our priorities. We said we would always be friends. It did not work out that way. I tried to hold on to our friendship. It was not the same. We would send each other messages and talk on the phone, but it was not like it used to be. We would say things like "we are in this together," but it no longer felt true. I would look at my phone. Wonder if I said something wrong.

When we were together, it felt like we were a team. Then things started to change. We did not talk much, and when we did, it was not the same. I would send them messages. They would not answer. I would ask them questions. They would send me a simple answer like a smiley face. It made me feel like I was no longer important to them.

It hurt me the most when I was alone at night thinking about what had happened. I would lie in bed. Think about what I could have done differently. I would write messages to them. Then I would delete them. I did not want to bother them.

One day, something happened that made me realize that our friendship was over. Someone from our school posted something online, and one of my friends defended them. They did not ask me what I thought, even though I had been hurt by that person before. It made me feel like they no longer cared about me.

After that, I started to pull from them. I would say I was busy with work. It was not true. I was just hurt. I started to focus on my job and the kids I was teaching. They looked up to me. That made me feel good. I still missed my old friends.

Sometimes we tried to get it, but it was not the same. We would talk about our jobs and our lives. It was not like we used to talk. I felt like I no longer fit in.

I tried to hold on to the hope that things would get better. It did not happen. I would send them messages on their birthdays and holidays. They would say thanks. It made me feel like I was no longer important to them.

One day, I realized that it was time to move on. I did not have to try to fit into a friendship that was no longer working. I deserved friends who cared about me and listened to me. So, I quietly stepped away from the friendship. I stopped looking at our messages and photos. I started to say yes to things like joining a book club and hiking alone.

At first, it was hard. I missed my friends, and I felt lonely. Slowly, I started to feel better. I started to see that I did not need them to be happy. I could be happy on my own. I could find friends who cared about me.

Now I teach my students about the importance of knowing when to let go of a friendship. I tell them it is okay to move on and find friends. I share my story with them, and they listen.

To my friends, I want to say thank you for the good times. I wish you all the best. I have found my own way now, and I am happy. Sometimes it is the goodbyes that lead to the most beautiful new beginnings.



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Echoes of the Valley: Stories that Stayed

Uncle Gunding's Bounce Through Bullets

Northern Valley, 1985

Uncle Gunding was only twelve when the helicopters came, their blades tearing the morning quiet above Bucao. He looked up from his little world of fields, riverbanks, and childhood games, and saw the sky fill with fear. Soon, the valley was no longer spoken of as a home but as a "no man's land." To outsiders, it sounded like emptiness. To Uncle Gunding, it was the place where he grew up, where rice waved in the wind, and where children still found ways to laugh.

When the soldiers arrived, life changed at once. Curfew started early, and even farmers coming home late from the fields were treated like suspects. "*Idi addan dagiti military, naggulo,*" Uncle Gunding remembered. The arrival of the military brought chaos, suspicion, and pain. Civilians were hurt simply for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Fear became part of the daily rhythm.

But Uncle Gunding and the other children refused to let war take everything.

They still played basketball. The bounce of the ball mixed with the crack of gunfire in the distance. It was a strange kind of childhood, one where laughter and danger lived side by side. "*Agga ayam kami iti basketball. Mangngeg mo dagiti putok,*" he said. They could hear the shots, but they kept on playing. In that small act, they claimed a little bit of normal life back from the war.

At night, families slipped into the fields to harvest palay when the soldiers were away. When gunfire broke the silence, they stopped and hid. "*Pan kami aglibas nga aggapas ti rabii no adda da dagiti army,*" Uncle Gunding recalled. Survival meant moving quietly, listening closely, and returning only when it was safe enough. The rebels, he said, made sure civilians were hidden before clashes began. Even in war, there were moments of care.

Uncle Gunding said he was not traumatized. Maybe that was how he endured, by making the violence feel ordinary, by carrying it without naming it as pain. But the memory of a boy playing basketball amid gunfire remains powerful. In the valley, even a bouncing ball became an act of defiance.

Sardine Baskets and Broken Dawns

Northern Valley, 1982

Before the war, Tatang Andoy and Nanang Lin lived the kind of life that grows quietly in a home full of effort, trust, and small dreams. They sold *saba* bananas, kept a sari-sari store, and worked their farm so they could send goods to Riverbend Town. Their children went to school, their days had rhythm, and their house was filled with the ordinary peace of people who believed tomorrow would still be kind.

Then Northern Valley was called “no man’s land,” and even the word sounded like a death sentence.

For Nanang Lin, it did not mean the valley was empty. It meant their world had been shut in by fear. No one could freely enter or leave. Roads became dangerous. School stopped. Their four children had to continue their lessons at home, trying to hold on to learning while the outside world turned violent. She did not just lose convenience; she lost the comfort of watching her children walk to school like other families did. She lost the simple joy of normal days.

What hurt her most was how fear changed people’s hearts.

Even one of her children’s teachers was suspected of being a rebel just because he came from Northern Valley. That kind of suspicion cut deeper than words. It made people look at their neighbors as strangers, and it made innocent families carry the burden of other people’s fear. Nanang Lin and Tatang Andoy were not fighters. They were parents trying to protect their children, people trying to keep a store open, farmers trying to make the land feed them. But war did not care who they were.

So they left for Hillside Refuge, hoping distance might bring safety.

Instead, they found another kind of pain. They lived there for ten years, but even in exile, they were not free from suspicion. People looked at them as if they carried danger with them. They were judged before they were known. They had already lost their home, and now they had to fight to keep their dignity. Still, they stayed strong for their children. They endured humiliation quietly, the way many parents do when survival leaves no room for pride.

When the war ended in 1992, they returned to Northern Valley and began again. Their business grew slowly, like a plant that survives after being trampled. But the memories stayed.

Nanang Lin remembered how their house became a boarding place for both rebel returnees and soldiers. She would prepare food for them, even when supplies were thin. Sardines had to stretch for many mouths. When coffee ran out, they drank hot water just to ease the hunger in their stomachs. She would clean the house until it shone, only to come home and find it messy again, with men singing and playing guitar as if war had made her home less her own. And still, she kept cleaning. She kept feeding. She kept opening her door.

That is what makes her story heartbreaking.

She was not remembered for grand speeches or heroic battles. She was remembered for the quiet, aching bravery of a mother and wife who kept her family alive in a world that kept trying to break them. Tatang Andoy and Nanang Lin survived not because the war was gentle, but because they refused to let it take their love, their children, and their will to begin again.

Cassava Roots of Courage

Northern Valley, 1982

Auntie Sinamar was only sixteen when war entered her life, but in many ways, she had already begun carrying the weight of a grown woman. She was a wife, a mother, and a child still trying to understand why the world around her had become so harsh. In a place that should have been filled with the quiet blessings of farming and family, she instead learned how to survive with fear sitting beside her at every meal.

When the war came, it did not only bring gunfire. It took away the simple life they had known. The rice fields could no longer be planted freely, so Auntie Sinamar and her family turned to cassava, fish, and whatever the land could still give them. They planted what they could and gathered what they could, holding each meal like a fragile gift. A small bowl of lugaw had to be divided among many. Hunger became a familiar guest, and every grain of rice was treated as if it were precious as gold.

Even the kitchen was no longer a place of comfort. They cooked only at night, hiding the smoke as though even the rising steam might betray them. Their shelters were temporary, thin, and uncertain. They lived under roofs that could not truly protect them, but still they were grateful for anything that could stand between them and the danger outside. In war, even a little cover can feel like mercy.

But the danger never went far.

Booby traps waited along the paths. Soldiers moved through the valley with suspicion. Families carried children in their arms and fear in their hearts, moving from one hiding place to another, praying they would survive until morning. And then there was the moment that could have taken her life: childbirth without a midwife, with no one to help except her own strength and her own trembling hope. She thought she would die. But she lived.

That survival was not small.

Her husband once carried her sister, who suffered from asthma, up the steep mountain of Siamsiamdarie. That single act says so much about the kind of love that held them together. In the middle of war, when everything was breaking, they still carried one another. The rebels, she said, were not always cruel. Sometimes they helped. Sometimes they protected. Even in a valley wounded by violence, there were moments when kindness still found a way through.

Auntie Sinamar cried as she remembered those years, and anyone who hears her story can understand why. She lost peace too early. She knew fear too young. She had to become strong before she had fully had the chance to be a girl. And yet she smiles when she tells her story, because buried inside all that pain is proof that she and her family endured. They were not spared suffering, but they were not destroyed by it.

Footsteps Home Again

Northern Valley, 1993

McArthur carried the valley in his memory like a scar that never fully faded. People called it “no man’s land,” but he knew better than to believe a name could hold the whole truth. Even in the middle of war, people stayed. They farmed. They hid. They kept breathing, kept hoping, kept trying to live.

In Northern Valley, survival meant leaning on one another. Civilians and rebels alike worked the fields, planting and harvesting together because hunger did not choose sides. There was never enough food to feel secure, only enough to keep moving, to keep the body going one more day. In those years, people did not simply live through war -they lived between its breaks, between fear and the next effort to survive.

For McArthur, the war was not only gunfire and surrender. It was the quiet labor of staying alive. It was the long nights, the shared meals, the fields that had to be tended even when the heart was tired. It was the ache of uncertainty becoming part of everyday life, until even fear felt familiar.

Then June 1993 arrived, and with it, surrender. At Northern Valley River, rebels returned their weapons and materials as part of the amnesty program. What had once been a valley split by violence slowly began to open toward healing. That moment did not erase what had happened, but it marked the first breath of something new.

McArthur’s story feels like the story of a man walking home after a long storm. He had seen the valley before it was broken, while it was breaking, and as it began to mend. And in that journey, he reminds us that returning home after war is not simple. It is an act of courage, and sometimes, a quiet kind of grace.

A Fragile Peace by the Hills

Northern Valley, 1982

Lola Mercy and Lolo Rolando had every reason to believe they could stay. Their child Merlan was born in 1982, even as the land around them grew more dangerous by the day. But war has a cruel way of making ordinary life feel impossible to keep.

What finally pushed them to leave was loss. The death of Lolo Rolando’s nephews shook them deeply. For Lola Mercy, the fear grew even sharper after her brother-in-law was killed.



Echoes of Expression
A Creative Folio

Volume II, Issue IV (April 2026), National Circulation
ISSN (Online) 3082-4397 ISSN (Print) 3082-5741
Published Online at www.lakbay-diwapublishing.com
Publisher: Lakbay-Diwa Publishing
DTI Business Reg. No. 6488937 / TIN 492-741-614
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Rebels used to walk along the road, and the valley never felt still for long. Peace seemed near only to slip away again.

They returned once, thinking the war was over. But they were wrong. The danger was still there, hidden beneath the surface. That mistake taught them how fragile peace can be when it is only hoped for and not yet real.

And yet, even after all of it, they held onto gratitude. "Kaasi ti Apo," they said. By God's grace, they were still alive. Their story is one of fear, loss, and the miracle of surviving what should have broken them.



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Artificial Intelligence in Mathematics Education: Balancing Innovation, Equity, and Human Agency

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has introduced profound changes across sectors, with education emerging as one of the most affected domains. In mathematics education, AI presents both a compelling opportunity to enhance learning and a complex challenge that requires careful pedagogical and ethical consideration. As education systems respond to technological transformation, the central issue is not whether AI should be used, but how it can be integrated in ways that strengthen conceptual understanding, support learners, and preserve the essential role of teachers. In essence, AI has the potential to significantly improve mathematics education through personalization and engagement, yet its effectiveness depends on responsible implementation, equitable access, and sustained human oversight.

AI technologies have demonstrated strong potential to improve mathematics learning by enabling personalized and adaptive instruction. Studies consistently show that AI tools can analyze student performance, provide real-time feedback, and adjust learning pathways according to individual needs. For instance, research by Canonigo (2024) and Davidson et al. (2026) indicates that AI-supported instruction enhances both conceptual understanding and academic achievement, particularly through adaptive learning systems and intelligent tutoring platforms. Similarly, Capinding (2023) found that the use of Photomath significantly improved students' performance, interest, and self-reliance in pre-calculus. These findings suggest that AI can address one of the most persistent challenges in mathematics education, which is the difficulty of meeting diverse learning needs within a single classroom.

Beyond performance gains, AI also contributes to student engagement and motivation. Interactive features such as gamification, virtual simulations, and step-by-step problem explanations make mathematics more accessible and less intimidating. Melchor et al. (2023) highlight that these approaches are particularly effective for Generation Alpha learners, who are accustomed to digital environments. In addition, Medrano et al. (2025) found that the use of ChatGPT has a moderate positive relationship with students' self-efficacy, suggesting that AI can increase learners' confidence in solving mathematical problems. These developments align with broader shifts in education toward learner-centered and competency-based approaches, where students actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive it.

However, the benefits of AI are neither automatic nor universal. Several studies caution that AI alone does not guarantee improved academic outcomes. Roquero et al. (2025) found that while students with positive study attitudes tend to use AI more frequently, AI utilization itself does not significantly predict mathematics achievement. Similarly, Muktar (2025) reports that students only partially perceive AI as improving their understanding and

motivation, indicating that traditional teaching methods remain essential. These findings underscore an important point: AI functions as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement for effective pedagogy. Without proper guidance, students may rely on AI in ways that reduce opportunities for independent problem solving and critical thinking.

The limitations of AI also raise important pedagogical and ethical concerns. AI systems can produce inaccurate or biased outputs, often referred to as hallucinations, which may mislead learners if not critically evaluated. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (2024) emphasizes the need for students to develop strong foundational knowledge to assess the validity of AI-generated solutions. Likewise, Opesemowo and Ndlovu (2024) note that AI lacks creativity, emotional intelligence, and contextual judgment, all of which are essential for meaningful learning. These limitations reinforce the continued importance of teachers, whose expertise is crucial in guiding students, clarifying misconceptions, and fostering deeper understanding.

Moreover, to pedagogical concerns, systemic challenges must also be addressed to ensure effective AI integration. Infrastructure limitations, digital literacy gaps, and unequal access to technology remain significant barriers, particularly in developing contexts. Co (2025) highlights the uneven implementation of AI in Philippine education, with higher education institutions benefiting more than K to 12 schools due to differences in resources. Similarly, policy documents such as the Department of Education Order No. 003, s. 2026 stress the importance of ethical standards, data privacy, and inclusive access. These challenges indicate that AI integration is not merely a technical issue but a structural one that requires coordinated efforts in policy, investment, and capacity building.

Despite these challenges, there is a growing consensus that AI can play a valuable role in transforming education when used responsibly. International perspectives, such as those presented by UNESCO (2023) and the University of the Philippines, emphasize the need for human-centered approaches that prioritize ethical use, transparency, and accountability. These frameworks advocate for a balanced integration of AI that supports learning while preserving human agency. In the context of mathematics education, this means using AI to enhance, rather than replace, the cognitive and social processes that underpin learning.

The implications for practice are clear. First, educators must be equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to integrate AI effectively into their teaching. Professional development programs should focus not only on technical competencies but also on pedagogical strategies that promote critical thinking and responsible AI use. Second, students must be taught how to use AI as a learning tool rather than a shortcut, developing the ability to question, verify, and refine AI-generated outputs. Third, policymakers must address issues of access and equity by investing in infrastructure and ensuring that AI technologies are available to all learners, regardless of socioeconomic background.

To end, artificial intelligence holds significant promise for enhancing mathematics education by improving personalization, engagement, and learning outcomes. However, its effectiveness is contingent upon thoughtful implementation that balances innovation with pedagogical integrity and ethical responsibility. AI should be viewed not as a substitute for human educators, but as a tool that can extend their capacity and enrich the learning experience. By prioritizing critical thinking, equity, and human-centered values, education systems can harness the potential of AI while safeguarding the core principles of teaching and learning.



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The Heart of Teaching (My FS Journey)

Proverbs 9:9 "Instruct the wise, and they will be even wiser. Teach the righteous, and they will learn even more." Field Study is a challenging part of my teaching and learning with the pupils I have worked with. The reality is that I never expected to manage them all, and I have come to understand that teaching is not just a profession; it is a calling to observe and reflect while doing things with love.

During my FS journey, I observed that in the classroom, filled with different stories, each child carries unique abilities and dreams for their future life, even though they are still in the learning and growing stage. The most interesting moment of my life that really challenged me is my patience, and I have been grateful to be part of this journey. I have experienced this because I have learned how to manage my inner self around the pupils. I was amazed that I was open to changing my behavior to be more flexible and approachable as their teacher, with long patience and compassion, to help them learn. Moreover, this is really a sacrificial duty on that journey. However, it reminds me that an effective part of teaching is not about delivering perfect lessons every day, but about reaching their hearts and minds in meaningful ways.

My observation truly matters because I have learned, too, that not just the students have learned from my teachings. Even though small actions can have big impacts, like my simple smile encouraging the shy students to participate, and every gentle word boosting their confidence during the class. Teaching is not only about instruction, but also about convincing pupils to do what they need to do and learn. This experience challenged me to reflect on myself and realize that I am patient enough and always ready to serve with love and compassion.

In the end, FS is not just about observing; it is also about discovering with great purpose, inspiring future educators to teach with love and compassion. Moreover, serving with a committed heart to make a difference in the lives of children has its own goals. My observation journey reminded me that education is not just about learning; it is a secret path to shaping a future life, achieving goals and inspiring others.

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My Journey with Grade 1 Daisy

As I stepped into Grade 1 Daisy's classroom for my field study, I was immediately struck by how much the environment matters. The classroom was well ventilated and bright, creating a space ready for learning. On the first day, Miss Reggie introduced me to the pupils, and their warm, high-energy welcome instantly dispelled my initial nervousness. We settled into a tone that I soon learned as their daily anchor, a chorus of greetings, a short prayer, and quick practices that sharpened their focus for the day ahead.

Observing a room full of six-year-olds is a lesson in organizing chaos. While many pupils are very eager and active, constantly raising their hands with Miss Reggie's learner-centered questions, some struggled to stay in their seats, drifted away from the lesson, and found it difficult to concentrate. Watching Miss Reggie handle chaos is a masterclass in patience. She managed to keep the momentum of her teaching without leaving the students who struggled to focus behind.

One of the most practical things I learned was not about pedagogy but about classroom management, which is a major challenge in a classroom full of 6-year-olds. To keep the grading process from becoming overwhelming, Miss Reggie used a clever "alphabetical numbering" system. When it was time to collect papers, she would count from 1 to 6, and the pupils would pass their work forward according to their assigned numbers. This small bit of automation means that she could record scores in seconds rather than minutes, a simple but brilliant strategy for any future teacher to remember.

My involvement grew as I began assisting with the daily worksheets. Checking their work gave me a grasp of their progress. I could see exactly who was grasping the material and who was going through with the class. It became more apparent during the ARAL program after lunch. While Miss Reggie conducted intensive one-on-one reading sessions with the struggling learners, I took charge of the more advanced group. Guiding them through reading booklets and checking their comprehension was my first real taste of instructional responsibility.

The most defining moment of my Field Study journey happened when Miss Reggie had to attend a meeting, leaving me alone with the pupils during a test. I felt a surge of adrenaline as I stood before them. It was not just about watching them; I had to become their guide. When the pupils struggled with the wording of a question, I stepped in to translate and provide real-life examples that they could relate to. Even though the room got noisy, which Grade 1 pupils inevitably do, I found my voice. I managed the behavior, kept them with tasks, and the activity ended successfully. The moment of transitioning from watching a teacher become a teacher was the most rewarding experience of my field study journey.



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Whispers from the No Man's Land

1987 - A Remote Northern Valley

Nora felt the earth tremble before she heard it – the low thrum of helicopters sliced through the valley's morning mist. At 32, she had once sung kundiman to her rice fields here. The Chico River was her constant companion. Now, the valley here, Isneg lola called "promesa ti Dios", felt like a cage. "No man's land," the soldiers called it. This came after NPA training camps sprouted at Mapog and Mt. Siamsiandarie like weeds after rain.

"Inday, pack only what fits your apron," her husband Berto whispered. His eyes scanned the tree line. Their three children, Lito (10), Maria (7), and baby Dina, already clutched sleeping mats. The lugaw pot, still warm from breakfast, got wrapped in banana leaves. No time for the carabao, the harvest, or Nora's one good skirt from the market.

Gunfire cracked like dry bamboo at noon. They ran, night after night, really. Thorny rattan tore legs. Babies stayed hushed against chests. Up mountain peaks, down to Cagayan relatives, back when shells stopped falling. "Kung tupad na, tupad na," Berto would mutter. This was the fatalist's prayer that kept panic at bay. However, Nora saw his hands shake. He boiled water, pretending it was coffee. Alternatively, when soldiers banged on their door demanding rice for "operations."

One dusk brought the worst. NPA boys, younger than Berto, disciplined, almost polite, asked for shelter. "Just tonight, Manang. Army's coming." Nora fed them pinakbet from yesterday's roots. Her heart hammered as she portioned lugaw for herself. Dawn brought army patrols instead. Rifles probed corners. "Rebels here?" the captain barked. Maria wet herself in terror. They left empty-handed but branded Nora's home as a suspect. Neutrality? A luxury for city folk.

Life bent but did not break. Lito played basketball by day while shells whistled overhead. "Morning radio," he'd joke, copying his tatay. Maria turned 8 in a jungle lean-to. Her early marriage was whispered by aunts ("Safer than recruitment"). They fished hidden streams. They dug cassava when rice fields burned. They traded fruit with the Agay neighbours, who shared wild herbs. Faith was their lantern. Rosaries came from the vine. Ave Maria chanted to drown bombardments. "God sees the pot's bottom," Nora told the kids. She spooned thinner gruel each week.

October 1990's Oplan Salidumay broke the stalemate. Five hundred families like theirs fled as homes were torched. Tunnels stood exposed. Nora's brother vanished. This was one of the salvagings whispered about. Stigma clung when they trickled back. "Valley rebels," market women hissed. However, rebuild they did. Berto's sari-sari store thrived post-'92 rehab. Real coffee steamed again. Galvanised roofs covered their heads.

2026 - A High School Classroom

I met Nora last month. She is 63 now. Her hands are gnarled like valley roots. Over her rebuilt stove, she shared it all. This was not a trauma, but a testimony. "We were not heroes, Ma'am Fe. Just stubborn. Bayanihan. Diyos." Her eyes danced, telling how baby Dina, now a nurse, drew playgrounds over old tunnel maps for my senior high students.

Valley survivors like Nora teach louder than textbooks ever could. Their patterns, caged valleys, endless running, hunger's siege, blurred loyalties, gunfire lullabies, stolen childhoods, unbreakable faith, are not history. They are our students' inheritance. I teach them now. Listen to Lola. Bend like river grass. Share the lugaw.

In this valley, resilience is not a word. It is coming home.



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The Company I Kept: Fading Lights, Silent Goodbyes

I remember the smell of rain on the road after we graduated from school. It was the kind of smell that stuck to our clothes when we stood under the school canteen, laughing so hard it hurt. Those were the days when my friends felt like family. We were a group of friends from a small-town school. There was Kath, who always had a laugh and planned our next adventure. There was J, who was quiet and liked to draw our jokes. Then there was me, the one who told all the stories. They knew my secrets, my mistakes and how I blushed when someone said something to me. In a world that seemed big and scary, they were my friends.

Life can change things even if you do not want it to. We all got jobs in cities, and that changed our priorities. We said we would always be friends. It did not work out that way. I tried to hold on to our friendship. It was not the same. We would send each other messages and talk on the phone, but it was not like it used to be. We would say things like "we are in this together," but it no longer felt true. I would look at my phone. Wonder if I said something wrong.

When we were together, it felt like we were a team. Then things started to change. We did not talk much, and when we did, it was not the same. I would send them messages. They would not answer. I would ask them questions. They would send me a simple answer like a smiley face. It made me feel like I was no longer important to them.

It hurt me the most when I was alone at night thinking about what had happened. I would lie in bed. Think about what I could have done differently. I would write messages to them. Then I would delete them. I did not want to bother them.

One day, something happened that made me realize that our friendship was over. Someone from our school posted something online, and one of my friends defended them. They did not ask me what I thought, even though I had been hurt by that person before. It made me feel like they no longer cared about me.

After that, I started to pull from them. I would say I was busy with work. It was not true. I was just hurt. I started to focus on my job and the kids I was teaching. They looked up to me. That made me feel good. I still missed my old friends.

Sometimes we tried to get it, but it was not the same. We would talk about our jobs and our lives. It was not like we used to talk. I felt like I no longer fit in.

I tried to hold on to the hope that things would get better. It did not happen. I would send them messages on their birthdays and holidays. They would say thanks. It made me feel like I was no longer important to them.

One day, I realized that it was time to move on. I did not have to try to fit into a friendship that was no longer working. I deserved friends who cared about me and listened to me. So, I quietly stepped away from the friendship. I stopped looking at our messages and photos. I started to say yes to things like joining a book club and hiking alone.

At first, it was hard. I missed my friends, and I felt lonely. Slowly, I started to feel better. I started to see that I did not need them to be happy. I could be happy on my own. I could find friends who cared about me.

Now I teach my students about the importance of knowing when to let go of a friendship. I tell them it is okay to move on and find friends. I share my story with them, and they listen.

To my friends, I want to say thank you for the good times. I wish you all the best. I have found my own way now, and I am happy. Sometimes it is the goodbyes that lead to the most beautiful new beginnings.