

**PRIVILEGE SPEECH**

15<sup>th</sup> Regular City Council  
Sangguniang Panlungsod  
April 28, 2009

**LET US SUPPORT PAY INCREASE FOR OUR TEACHERS**

By Councilor Pilar C. Braga, PhD

Madam President, allow me to talk about the plight of our public school teachers.

The United Nations' "Education For All Global Monitoring Report of 2005" says that "debates continue to rage about the appropriate levels of teacher salary costs, which represent by far the greatest expenditure, especially in developing countries, often leaving a fraction (barely 1 percent in several cases) for textbooks and other teaching materials. There is a need to pay teachers well enough to attract and retain qualified individuals."

Thus is especially true here in the Philippines. Our Constitution provides that the largest chunk of the national budget be allocated for education. However, the Department of Education is the country's biggest bureaucracy, employing around 500,000 teachers not to mention the non-teaching personnel.

If push turns to shove, teachers throughout the country will be receiving P9,000 pay increase in their average monthly salary of P10,000 – at least an three equal tranches of P3,000 for the next three years. House Bill 5213 otherwise known as the "Additional Support and Compensation for Educators in Basic Education" seeks to grant this additional compensation.

With poverty threshold known to afford only for basic necessities like food, clothing, shelter and transportation, no more money can be made available for either recreation or emergency purposes as when the teachers themselves or their children get sick.

Come to think of it, teachers' conditions have not quite improved over time. Teachers are still seen selling all sort of stuff in the premises of the school. Most of them probably go into another job after their teaching schedule if only to "make both ends meet" in an economic environment characterized by high prices.

The so-called purchasing power of the peso is not that brings teachers to a 'comfort zone'. The whole scenario for teachers is far from ideal. They have more students than the ideal size of 40 per class – some of them from 70 to 120 students for one class alone. That means more test papers to check, more students to evaluate for recitation, class activity, and quizzes, seatwork, project and assignments. So are they not overworked than any other government employees? They sure are.

Social justice dictates that those who worked in government should be properly compensated with just remuneration in exchange of their services.

If this fails, the teachers fail, too. And when teachers fail, so do the students – so do the parents we all fail in the final analysis. That is why, until the teachers really get their just compensation package, we should not expect too much of what they can deliver in terms of quality education, innovative methods in teaching, and levels of research and expertise in their subject specialties. Faculty development will not be best served under a low scheme of pay and allowances.

Truth is there are already a significant number of Filipino teachers who opted to get themselves employed overseas because of a better pay scale. Soon there will come a time when only the lesser breed of teachers stay in the country because the government can ill afford to give them so much pay. If this happens, government would have failed in the education sector.

To recall, House Bill 5213 proposes a PHP 9,000 additional compensation, to be given over a three-year period in three tranches, to public school teachers, locally-funded teachers, non-teaching personnel of the Department of Education and Philippine Science High School teaching and non-teaching personnel. For millions of Filipinos, education is the only means out of poverty. Our public school teachers and non-teaching personnel of the Department of Education are the backbone of our education system. Yet, they are one of the most underpaid employees of the government, despite the extensive time that they must spend to perform their jobs.

Public school teachers may not have the firepower of the police and the military to challenge the stability of the government, but the stability of the future of our country lies in the hands of our public school teachers.

As Representatives of the Filipino People, we urge the members of the House of Representatives to work on the passage of HB 4734, and upgrade the salary of public school teachers starting next school year. We implore you to listen to the voice of the most neglected, least represented segment of the public sector.

Madam President, allow me to pass the appropriate resolution to cover this issue at hand.

Thank you.

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