



Teaching Students to Practice Reflective Learning

Genersol G. Monton

Core Participant

METROBANK FOUNDATION'S Strengthening Leadership and Teaching Excellence Skills (SLATES)

I wanted to be a doctor but my father died when I was in fifth grade, and so I had to finish my education through my own efforts. When I received a scholarship from Mindanao State

University (MSU) in Marawi City, I took it and chose BS Fisheries as it was the course that had biology subjects I could use in case I could proceed to medical school. After graduation, I was asked to teach in the same university and I did for 12 years. I forgot about medicine because I was happy with teaching. I studied subjects in education, and that was the beginning of my journey as an educator.

My family moved to Manila after my husband got shot. He was a member of the Philippine Constabulary (now the Philippine National Police). In 1989, I applied for a teaching position at the Department of Education (DepEd) and was accepted and assigned to Fort Bonifacio High School (FBHS). I taught science there for 15 years.

In 2003, Metrobank Foundation held its annual Search for Outstanding Teachers and our principal told me that I had been nominated. I was awarded the following year, which surprised me because I felt that I was just an ordinary teacher doing her job. This award led to my membership in the Network of Outstanding Teachers and Educators (NOTED) of Metrobank, and it is through this membership that I was able to participate in Strengthening Leadership and Teaching Excellence Skills (SLATES) in 2013, an intervention sponsored by PAHRODF.

I spent one week training in Manila and three weeks in Australia, visiting and observing different schools. When I returned, I had to draft my REAP.

I had observed that teachers with a lesson plan were more effective than teachers without one and thought the same could apply to students. That is, that those who planned and evaluated their learning would be more successful learners than those who did not. I saw reflective assessment being done in Australia and modified it to fit the Philippine setting. I called my REAP the Student Reflective Learning and Assessment Plan (SRLAP), which consisted of a self-learning plan and a student reflective assessment that had to be accomplished by the students themselves.

I shared SRLAP with my colleagues during our first professional meeting for school year 2014–2015. It did not find mainstream application in FBHS because it was not a mandatory program, but the science department, where I was from, adopted and used it. So did my eighth-grade science students.

At first, the students had difficulty understanding what to do with the tool. Later, they recognised that the SRLAP is about identifying their strengths and weaknesses, strategising how to best study, monitoring their progress, and evaluating their results. It gives them the opportunity to clarify their academic goals one subject at a time and further discover themselves, their habits, and even their personal ambitions. I wanted to teach them that staying dedicated to their plans and cooperating with their teacher will help them succeed in school. To do that, I needed to review and react to their SRLAPs and turn them into independent learners. I struggled with time management at first but overcame this hurdle after a while. I wanted my students to be good, push those who are already good to become better, and ultimately enable all my pupils to be the best they can be.

Back in Australia, the emphasis was on collaboration. I learned that you do not impose on others but include them. That way, there is no negative force that leads to resistance, instead, you give them an opportunity to be part of a solution and share in the success. This new mindset has helped me deal better with my students and fellow teachers.

In October 2014, I was promoted to science supervisor of the DepEd Makati Division Office. My responsibilities have increased as I now supervise science classes in all public grade schools and high schools in Makati City. My days are spent visiting schools and sitting in classes, evaluating lessons and giving feedback to teachers. I now have the opportunity not only to share SRLAP to principals and teachers of the schools I supervise, but also to nurture a culture of collaboration among educators and administrators in the DepEd. After all, teachers must equally focus on both transferring the right knowledge and inculcating the right attitude.

Genersol G. Monton is a science supervisor at the DepEd Division Office in Makati City. She is also a lecturer at the University of Makati in the evenings; a student finishing her doctorate at the same university on Saturdays; and an active member of NOTED, the Biology Teachers' Association (BioTA), and the Foundation for Upgrading the Standard of Education, Inc. (FUSE). She continues to look for areas for improvement which she can help address.