**Raymond Basilio**

**Date of interview: 2 September 2021**

07:11

Hello Hello Good afternoon Can you hear me? Yes issue from your side and the audio Can you hear me? No

10:14

So I just need to inform you, that I will be recording the interview and confidentiality of the data will be maintained. will begin with asking the name of your organization and your designation.

10:29

Alright, I am Raymond, the current secretary general of the Alliance concerning teacher

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Okay. Okay. Okay. And what is the number of experience that you have?

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Yeah, I've been with the organization since 2010. And I've been working as Secretary General since 2016. Okay,

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and were you? What were you doing before joining this position?

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I used to be a private school teacher, a secondary school teacher. Okay. Okay. How

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nice. Alright. Okay. So my first question is, did the schools in your area closed down during the pandemic?

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Yes, Philippines close down all schools since March 2020 t with the declaration of pandemic,

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okay. And they're closed since March 2020. Until now?

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Yes, it is still close. And we are implementing this social distance learning program through two forums, not the online format. And the other one is the modular format. Okay,

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can you elaborate a little more on these two formats? What are these and how are they conducted?

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the online format is conducted through online classrooms through Google through zoom, and through social media. The other one is a printed copy of modules being sent out to students, and these students will have to answer some activity sheets in that module, and they will return that to the school.

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Okay. Okay. So, in the second module, other students coming to school,

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no, only their parents are going to school to, to get the module and to return the activity sheets, but in many instances, also, it is the teachers who are delivering personally these modules to the homes of our students.

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Okay, so who have prepared this modules.

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Under the guidelines, it should be the Department of Education central office, but with the unpreparedness of the Department of Education, our teachers were forced to create their own module, printed and , fashioned and delivered to our students. So it is a major problem that we are facing right now. There's a big scarcity of modules. Okay. Okay.

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And you mentioned that, in the case of unpreparedness of the education department teachers had to prepare this module. So did teachers receive any sort of support in terms of financial support or any other support to be able to prepare these modules.

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This is an approved budget from the national government. However, the education department failed to release this budget on time. So our teachers were again forced to one gather a solicitation or support from the private sector. Second, it's for them to produce their own materials. So based even on the study recently conducted by the Department of science and technology, and by the by the report issued by the Commission on audit, many of the expenses for the modular learning were produced out of the pocket of our teachers.

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Could you give me a sense of how much expenses the teacher would have done on it?

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Many of our teachers said that they are at least they have been shelled out around 2000 peso per month, for the copies of the modules, because the there were instances that for a teacher handling a student of 60 She is only given around 10 pesos per module. . So now the teacher will have to produce copies of that. So some of our teachers bought their own printer, their own ink and papers. So the expenses is varies depending on the situation that the teacher is facing.

15:21

Okay, okay. Okay.

15:26

So you said that there are these two ways in which teaching was going on one was the modular format, and one was the online format. And what the same teachers conducting these two formats of transaction?

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No, no. The format is identified based on the capacity and situation of the area. Now, for highly urbanized cities where connectivity is right, connectivity better, and they are using the online format. But for the provinces, they are using the modular format. However, based on our study, it is only around 20% of the total education program that uses the online format 80%, or under the modular, as you know, to the internet connectivity of the Philippines is very weak, and that even in the National Capital Region, it is not working properly. And again, using the online format entails for the student to have to at least have a gadget and to at least have an internet connection. So students and teachers are complaining of the expenses brought about by the online learning itself.

17:04

Okay, okay. So,

17:06

when these transition was made to these two new formats of teaching during the pandemic, who made the decision of these formats, and were the teachers involved in making this decision?

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Well, if this the Department of Education, the management and approved by the president, and other teachers were not involved at all, my organization is the sole and exclusive negotiating agent of the teachers. But they were never we were never consulted on these. And, in fact, we issued a critique of the policy paper and our critique was never considered in the policy. .

17:51

What do you think has been the experience of teachers in transitioning to the new mode of teaching,

17:58

our teachers are well equipped in handling classes for under the face to face format, and that they don't have any training at all handling, online or modular classes. Now, there being the training program provided by the education department for our teachers to adapt with the new modalities were very limited and did not in a way provided the means to equip themselves, not so many of our teachers, I, many of our teachers find it very difficult to handle the new situation, and many are actually planning right now to submit the retirement not because they can no longer, the longer, they can no longer adapt to the rapid change that the education department would want them to.

18:49

Okay, okay.

18:54

Do you think there have been differences in the way male and female teachers have responded to the situation?

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yes, there is, you know, our female teachers are, aside from handling this online and modular classes. They're also handling the matters of the family. So it makes it makes things way, way problematic for our female teachers.

19:22

And do you think there have been differences in the way private school and government school teachers have responded to the situation?

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As we have documented our private school teachers, at least, we're given enough support by the school management in the production of the learning materials, no, but our public school teachers will have to produce their own materials. Also, on the economic side, many of our private school teachers will fired because of the closure of private schools, but about by the decrease in the number of enrollment in the private schools and know, Well, technically they lost their job. And many of our private school teachers are also struggling with the new modalities as per online teaching as per modular teaching. Okay.

20:22

And as you said that many teachers are about to give their resignation. I mean, they were going to opt for retirement. Are these the older teachers or even the young teachers are planning to give their resignation?

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These are the older teachers because, well, the online teaching requires them to be at least computer and technology savvy, and they don't have been at the needed training for that. And for the modular are teaching, they are having a problem with entertaining calls from morning to night, entertaining messages from social media from morning to night.

21:15

In what ways do you think the pandemic has impacted their work and their working conditions?

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Yes, yes. And before the pandemic, our teachers will have to entertain teaching, teaching matters. from eight in the morning, up to five in the afternoon, right now. They've been entertaining questions and calls throughout the day and throughout the night, because that depends on when the parents are available. So when the parents got home from work it, then that's the time where they get the module and study the module with their children. So that's the time also that we communicate with the teacher.

21:55

Okay, okay. And as you mentioned, the teachers also had to go to children's house and deliver the modules. So it wasn't happening the peak times of the COVID. When exactly was delivery happening?

22:14

Yeah, the delivery started November to December last year, when our teachers are already observed that many of the modules were not being received by the parents, though, when the number of parents are no longer going to school because of multiplw problems. Transportation, because during the pandemic, public transportation has been suspended in the Philippines. So if you don't have any other any private vehicle, you cannot move around. So by December, many has observed already that copies of the modules are not being watched, or not being done. So our teachers decided to roam around and distributed themselves. Okay,

23:05

any any other change that has happened in terms of their working conditions?

23:20

Main concern is that our teachers are supposed to work only for 10 months in a year now. But for the past school year, our teachers, our teachers work for 13 months now. So they started working 1 June 2020. And the end at the end of the school year, July 11 2021. So our major issue here right now is that we have 87 days of overtime, unpaid work of our teachers.

23:52

Okay, I'm sorry, I didn't understand I understand it very clearly. So I understood that you are mentioning that there are 87 extra days of unpaid work, but I couldn't get the calculation that you mentioned.

24:10

Yeah, because under our laws, public school teachers are supposed to run the only 10 months of teaching for a school year. So last year, our teachers reported I started working June 1, 20 20. And, and then their work for the school year, July 11 2021. So that's a total of more than 13 months now. And by calculation, there's an 87 days of overtime work.

24:45

Okay. Okay. So, you mean to say the academic year got extended and that there are 87 more days

24:58

Yeah, and they not paid for that

25:05

And were there any salary cuts any reduction from the salary?

25:12

Well, for the salary, we have not monitored any deduction. But for the benefits, we have more monitoring a lot of deductions, specially in the payment of the special hardship allowance, or a teacher should have received at least 17,000 per month, the government opted to pay only 3500 per month. And in many cases, also, the names were deleted from the list of recipients . Before the pandemic, they used to receive that benefit, but right now, they're no longer receiving that, because the government said that they have kept the budget and so on and so forth. So that's a major issue here. Second, in the Philippines, there's a law that states that when a national emergency is in place, and when you're asking your employees to work, you should be paying a side pay, but in the education department, many of our employees did not receive this hazard pay .

27:11

And this 17,000 that you mentioned that teachers were to receive 17,000. But they were receiving only 3000. Is it a particular head of their salary? Or is it the total amount of their salary?

27:28

Yeah, this is, uh, this is this is a benefit that they use to receive on top of the salary. And what what is it? What is it called this benefit?

27:42

It's the, I'm sending it to the chatbox. Sure, sure.

27:53

Special hardship allowance. Oh, good. Okay. Okay. That's a lot of Okay. All right, we'll move on to the next question. Thank you. What schools in your location already using digital technology before the pandemic?

28:10

Well, digital technology used to be a complimentary and supplementary modality before the pandemic, but all schools are using face to face classes.

28:24

Okay, okay. So when you say they were supplementary, what kind of platforms were being used?

28:33

Well, they're using technology in a teaching inside the classroom. This through the use of computers to the use of televisions, but now, but not distant learning. Hmm. Okay. Okay.

28:50

And what are the new digital technologies that have been introduced in your school system during the pandemic?

28:58

Well, technically, right. Now, all are forced to use Google classroom and zoom, and the use of social media also through the messenger classroom that they're using. But the the the problem here is that the education department did not issue any laptop computer to teachers to be used for the online and modular classes. The Education Department also, we've been demanding them to release funding for the internet, internet connectivity allowance for our teachers that will be used to pay for the internet connection. But these things are not given to our teachers. And yeah, a teacher needs to buy her or his computer, and he needs to have it. His or her own internet connection, out of their own pocket.

30:05

Right. Right. So this relates to my next question, which asks that the teacher had access to a personal device, whether it is a laptop or a smartphone, and the internet connection required for doing their work.

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Yeah, it's all our own expenses they had. And that's the problem. Yeah, that's a problem, because for a teacher, who has, who has, who has a child the study, and that they had to share devices, so they cannot use that simultaneously. No, that means that when the teacher is using that, he saw his or her child must wait till the until the classes is over for him or for her to use that. Right? Yeah.

31:01

Suppose if a teacher did not have had a device, you could not buy a device, then how else was she conducting the classes?

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Well, they're forced to report to the school and use the equipment or the available computer at the school. So again, that is a problem of the possibility of contracting the virus while reporting at school.

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And then they had to travel to school for being able to use the school devices.

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Yes, yes. Okay. Okay. Okay.

31:42

And what are the ways in which teachers work has changed compared to the pre pandemic time?

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The ways it's more on the working hours. And our teachers are having a hard time with this online reports that being that is being asked from them from time to time. So they had to handle the online classes and the same time handle online reports. So we're supposed to have these paperless transactions, but now they're asked to produce a paper document. It's supporting that they were doing the job for the entire school year. So right now they're doing that. So instead of supposedly, our teachers are on vacation right now, but they are very busy right now doing their performance report for the entire school year producing tons of tons of papers for that.

32:39

Okay. And what is included in writing this performance report? Is it being introduced during the COVID? scenario?

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Yeah, that report mechanism has been developed before the pandemic. And now they have totally adapted that mechanism for this online, online and modular learning. So our teachers are complaining, because it's very hard to do that, under the circumstances.

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Is it possible to get a copy of this performance report format?

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Yeah, I think you're going to interview a Linda. Linda will come I think I've shared her report with you. Thank you.

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Yeah, that would be useful. Okay. What are the current major concerns of teachers with regard to their work?

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Well, the major problem our teachers are facing right now is on the safety and on the matters of ensuring that our students are actually learning. So we are very concerned with the level of quality of learning that we are doing right now under this modality, because it's actually based on our own observation. Students are not able to learn under this, under this modality, or teachers are very vulnerable to with with contracting the virus because if it's not through, that our teachers are not asked to report at school from time to time our teachers are reporting physically to the schools. They're traveling. They're performing a lot of other tasks in school.

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What does two teachers expected to take up any other additional work beyond their teaching?

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yeah, for instance, the printing of modules or the preparation for the modules. These these are not under the work of our responsibility, our teachers, this should be processed and prepared by the central office, and our teachers are only supposedly to teach now. But right now our teachers are asked to go to school and to do the printing and though the binding of the module. So that's, that's an additional task for them.

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But they were not involved in any other healthcare support kind of work.

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Well, they were volunteers. Again, this is voluntary, that they exist in the vaccination program. So but it is not mandatory.

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What are the Are there any specific factors that have caused stress amongst teachers? So I'm assuming one is this performance report that they have to fill in, which is not possible to do in in the current scenario? But are there other things that created stress amongst teachers?

36:03

Well, this, this idea of not right now, there's fears and give orders to them any time or any time of the day, you know, there's there's no, there's no delineation between the office work and, and personal time . Because of this new modality, there's a fear, they may get may give them order as early as 6am. As late as midnight.our teachers are complaining that Oh, Boss us just ordered us to submit a report by tomorrow morning. So things are getting instant, not Yeah. And that's the problem. Yeah, absolutely.

36:48

Yeah. Yeah. so in this situation of stress, who were the teachers reaching out for support? And have they approached the Union for some of these things?

37:01

Yeah. They've been bombarding us with complaints. We've been bombarding us well, the Education Department and the government to address these issues and concerns now, it is sad to say that the Education Department has closed its doors to the union and stop talking to the union. Okay.

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This happened during the COVID situation itself?

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Yes, yes. For instance, for the last last school year, we sent around the 30 letters already to the education department, and we receive only around three to four, our response from the education department.

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And did the response, any supportive the three to four responses that you received? Were they positive responses?

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they just, they just said that they're reviewing their policy, and they will communicate soon. So but other there was no communication that came in after that. Okay. Okay. The last one was the last one that they responded to us on the payment of the overtime pay. No, they said that the guidelines for their payment is under review. But it's two months since then. And we have not received any further information on that.

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Is it possible for you to share with us any of these letters? Or are these letters available on your website?

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Yeah, it's available on our Facebook page. Because we are making this public to inform our members that we've been doing this and that.

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Okay, I'll go and look at it on the Facebook page. Okay.

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During the pandemic, and the transition to online mode, how have teachers benefited from being a union member?

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Well, for being a union member, we're able to raise the concerns immediately for immediate supervisors. So we can immediately address matters of handling classes, we can immediately address the issues and concerns. But for non members, we don't have the we don't have the representation. So we just addressed them individually, but that takes time not because it's really hard to handle concerns,that will entail many, many work.

39:57

Yeah.So do you work only with public school teachers or do you also work with private school teachers?

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We have, private school teacher also. But that's only a small portion of our membership. Okay, okay.

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Um, has your union advocated for any policy changes for teachers during the pandemic? So you said that the last letter was about the payment of the the additional amount that teachers were to receive. So what was that? What were the other issues.

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On the other issue was on the, on the hiring of this what you call this LSA or learning support aid. Originally, the idea was for these locally hired individuals to assist those students that are at the verge of giving up or quitting school. So we have campaigned for that for the hiring of at least 100,000. Learning Support aides, as of the moment the Education Department has hired only around 3000, locally, learning support age. Third, we have issued the critic paper on the basic education learning continuity plan of the Department of Education, we have issued a critique of that, and that, that also that critic paper tries to give our own recommendations and suggestions on how the how the program will work better. We have also recommended policies on the issuance of internet connectivity allowance on the provision of laptop computer on the provision of learning support for our, or our poor students. that is our financial support to ensure that our poor students will still have will be able to attend their classes. So those are the major policy matters that we have introduced.

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Okay. Okay. And this learning support aid, is it a person or is it an online application that is that is being asked by the teachers?

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Oh, this is a person. They are hired from their community, so they don't have to travel. So they stay in their community. The they have the features will identify the need of the students that needed assistance, and it will be the job of the Learning Support aid to assist these particular students. Okay, okay. Okay. It's

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a it's an additional human resource beyond the teacher.

43:00

Yes, yes. Because our teachers cannot address the needs of around 30 to 40 students per class, and you're handling six classes a day, so you cannot handle all those concerns..

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Has your union provided any form of support to teachers during the pandemic?

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Yeah, we have provided health assistance to those who are those who have contracted the virus and the those who died during the, at the start of the pandemic until now. So actually, our union fund is depleting because of that.

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And did you also provide any training or professional training?

44:00

Yeah, we have provided, we have launched several roundtable discussions on issues of mental health, on issues of how to handle students and how to address the problem of students , on how to handle classrooms, so I think we have launched around six roundtable discussions and this roundtable discussions are open to our open to our members to join.

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Is any report available of these trainings?

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Our team is currently working on that, but I don't know if they were, they will be able to finish by this week. I'll get back to you if we were able to .

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in your region, what kind of support will be needed by teachers for their work in future?

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Well, I think the very important one is the provision of the needs of our teachers for the for teaching. So you have the gadget, you have the internet, and the and also the capacity, the capability the training, that our teachers should be taught how to make use of different technology, how are they supposed to make teaching quite easier under this modality and how to ensure that students are engaged with this learning?

46:13

Does your organization have any specific plans for supporting teachers in future?

46:21

Well, our organizations , campaign right now, to ensure that sufficient budget allocation for our for our public school system, it will be given by the government. This month is the budget deliberation of our Congress. So that's why we're very focused on this right now. Okay, okay. we cannot we cannot rely on union funds to assist our the needs of our members, because we're only collecting very minimal funds, minimal contribution from our members, and there's the matter is a must be addressed by the funding of the government.

47:15

What are your main concerns with regard to teachers working through?

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Our concern is to reduce the number of students in a class and to to there must be a review of the curriculum there's there must be an overhaul of the curriculum to make sure that the that the curriculum responds to the needs of the community responds to the needs of our students. .

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How do you think the teaching profession will change in the future?

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Right now, there are several policy reforms that being introduced in our Philippine Congress that aims to further strengthen the the training programs for our teachers. So we think that the problem really relies on the on the curriculum that we are offering our teachers and our our students. So if you're asking me what, what's what lies ahead in the future, I think if the problems that you face right now will not be addressed by government matters of working conditions will get worse in the future. Especially that this pandemic will not end the next year will not end in the next two years. So I think the government must be sincere and must be pushed more to address the matters that we are raising right now.

49:00

Do you think digital learning technologies will continue to be used in future?

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Yes, I think that will be used in the future. But again, the problems under the digital divide is very real, especially for third world countries like us.

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So when the schools will reopen, how will these digital learning technologies be placed?

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Well, again, this will have to be placed in a way that it will support and supplement the teaching and the learning process and learning mechanisms at school. So if you have is technology so , our, our teachers will have a better time in preparing the training materials and our students will have the opportunity to further explore learning, with the use of technology

50:06

is there anything else that you would like to share with me with regard to teachers work and the future of their work? That has not been covered in the discussion so far?

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I think there is none. But we enjoy our teachers in calling for the, for the resumption of face to face classes, though we are very worried with the with the effects of the covid 19 pandemic, we are worried with our health situation. But we think that the government must conduct a nationwide a school based risk assessment to see if there are schools that are able to launch their face of limited face to face classes by now then let's do that. Because you are very worried that after this pandemic, we might lose a generation of learners already.

51:03

Is there are there any sources, for example, any newspaper that report on issues of teachers, and their work that we can look at?

51:16

Yeah, we can share to you the surveys, we have conducted together with the movement for safe equality and the safe Education Network. So this is a broad coalition of educators here that we formed last year. And we have several studies. So I can ask our staff to share with you , the result of the surveys that shows the problems that our both our teachers and students are facing.

51:48

Definitely, that will be a very important and very useful document. Yeah,

52:29

Okay, okay. Okay. Definitely, definitely. Key. So, we have finished the interview, I have noted some of the things that I will need to follow up as, as as part of this interview, which is to look at your Facebook page, and look at some of the the things that you will be sending, including some of the letters that you've written to the government and, and the format of performance report, which I will ask Linda, of course, in her interview, and we will wait for this survey, if at all you can share with us it will be really useful. So we can really understand the situation and the context within which teachers work is constructed in your country. When will be the deadline when we have time after September end, but in the this is the time that is also including the time for writing the report. So if you could share your documents, let's say by even by next weekend, it will be helpful.

53:43

All right, because I'll be back in Manila by September 8, so I can work on those things.

53:49

Yeah, sure, sure. So after reaching, even if you send it to me by let's say 11th or 12th, we can include some of the we can read them up and include some of the insights in by writing the report.

54:05

Yeah, I can give you also news clippings of these, of these issues that I mentioned.

54:11

Yes. Yes. That will be the very good source. . Yeah. I write an email to you just listing down all of these. So that there are also you can share it with your colleagues. You don't have to separately write them up. Thank you so much.

54:32