

The Danger of Passive Learning

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What happens when students are told to sit down, stay quiet, and just listen every single day? This is the daily reality in many Filipino classrooms, where the dominant method of teaching is still lecture-based. The teacher talks; the students take notes. There's little space for asking questions, discussing ideas, or exploring different ways of thinking. This approach may seem efficient on the surface, but the truth is, it's silently failing many students especially those who think differently, those who learn by doing, and those who crave interaction to truly understand.

Danday (2019) stated that passive learning exists because it's easier to manage in large, under-resourced classrooms. In the Philippines, it's not uncommon for public school teachers to handle classes of over 50 students with minimal materials. With time constraints, lack of training, and pressure to finish the syllabus, teachers often default to lectures. It becomes routine: dictate the lesson, give a quiz, and move on. And it exists not because it's effective, but because it's convenient in a struggling educational structure.

But the damage goes deeper than boredom or disengagement. Passive learning kills curiosity. Students stop asking "why" and settle for memorizing "what." Those who don't fit the mold, those who are hands-on learners, those who process by asking, moving, creating are often labeled as inattentive or disruptive (Agatep & Villalobos, 2020). Over time, they begin to believe they're not smart, when in fact, the classroom simply doesn't recognize their kind of intelligence. This shows unfair and it's dangerous. A system that trains students to be quiet receivers instead of active thinkers builds a generation of passive followers, not problem solvers or leaders.

There's no quick fix, but there is a way forward. Schools need to shift toward active learning where students are part of the process, not just recipients of it. Group discussions, real-world tasks, debates, role-playing, and project-based learning should be common practice, not rare exceptions (Corbano-Reyes, 2023; Hornejas & Guntalidad, 2024; Pacala, 2021). Teachers must be supported, not blamed, and given

the tools to make this shift. And students should be encouraged to speak, challenge, reflect, and explore. Education in the Philippines must stop treating silence as success. The future needs thinkers, not recorders. If we want students to lead, we must first allow them to learn out loud.

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