KTC183 First Essay Penny

I never thought that I would became a teacher. I was so into my fashion career and working for the fashion industry as a buyer and merchandiser. I fully enjoyed my career and life. I loved to go on business trips and see many different people around the world. I did my work very actively. At that time I had a stereotyped image of the teacher. I thought that that a teacher to me means someone who has a lot of patience and knowledge, and a calm personality that will help her to maintain a teaching job. However, I did admire the teachers I had met, especially, the teachers of Young Learners. A teaching job was totally beyond my expectation and out of my interest.

However, my life changed radically. I have been living in Myanmar for over 4 years. Currently, I’m working for a Bible College as an English professor. When I started teaching, it was so difficult to communicate with my students. They couldn’t speak English, and I couldn’t speak Burmese at all. I was so frustrated during my teaching hours. However, I was trying so hard to understand my students and was willing to give myself openly without reservations to my students. Time has passed now I can feel very comfortable with my students, and I also can take notice that my students express their opinion and thinking more freely with me. Myanmar’s English education situation is quite similar to Korea's in the era of the year 1970.

Myanmar teachers have a strong power over their students. All the lessons are based on the behaviorist approach. There is no student centered class. Teachers prepare the lessons, and students simply repeat and memorize the lessons without their own thinking.

According to the Arohana Thabyay Education Network, which indicates:

“Despite the high value placed on education in Myanmar culture, the state education system has long been in decline, suffering from a critical lack of resources and skills. Education, particularly higher education, is often perceived as a potential threat by the authorities who exercise strict control over education institutions. Investment in this sector is accorded a low priority by the government. Teachers in state education institutions commonly earn around US $20-30 per month, leading to a lack of motivation, difficulties in recruiting quality teaching staff, and encouraging teachers to prioritize paid private tuition over their school jobs.

During the 4 years that I have been in Myanmar, I felt so sorry for the students because of the Education situation in Myanmar. Every child from the age of five attends a primary school. Every child who is eligible is being encouraged to attend. However, children from a poverty situation, cannot go to school, and they go out on the street for making money for helping the family’s work. They sell foods and flowers to truck drivers on the highway – it is demanding and dangerous work, but the only means they have to support their family. Myanmar children were born in the same 21st century as Korean children and other country children, however, they couldn’t imagine what is happening in another world. Furthermore, lacking of resources and teachers, they cannot receive a very basic education that Korean children and other countries' children take as a matter of course. Especially, the new government (Aung San Suu Kyi) has served as state counselor of Myanmar since 2016. Although she is essentially the prime minister she has demonstrated no emphasis on developing the education system.

English as a subject has been so important to both teachers and students. However, when teachers need resources and information, the Myanmar government cannot support them, so whatever they have or have been trained in, they only can teach their students those amounts of quality in English education. Teachers who have a big class often believe they need to hit students to maintain control. Teachers hit students for many reasons, such as not paying attention, causing disruptions in class, falling asleep or failing to achieve high marks on tests. A student who gets low marks is likely to be hit on their back, legs or palm of their hand with a cane or bamboo sticks that many teachers keep on their desks. It was so similar to the era of year 1970 in Korea. I remember that when we got the result from the test, we were so afraid of corporal punishment by teachers. Teachers often used this method to control the students in Korea. I hated this method.

I want to be a teacher who gives a great inspiration to the students, and cares about their hearts. I have a deep understanding of the great impact that I can give to my students, young English learners; and the great impact that my students will have upon my teaching career and my life. I love Myanmar. I love the people in this country and especially the children and the young generation. I would like to help those young learners through English education. They can then be able to communicate to another world, and dream to travel to other counties. They can express their own idea and opinions freely. I really hope to see that my students can make many questions and comments on my class. And these future generations can enhance the Educational situation in Myanmar. They can develop their country in a better way than before. And I also would like to assist English teachers in Myanmar.

I can share my knowledge and experience through the California State University, Long Beach Office of Continuing and Professional Education Times Media TESOL for Children Certification Program Class. I would like to collect many resources and get a clear idea of teaching for Young English Learners for them. I know that I cannot change the current Education situation in Myanmar. Benefits of the changes to the education system will take many years to be felt. I can only participate in a small part of the change and development. But I will do it. I will start putting my efforts to spark this small movement. The new government’s recognition that education is a crucial part of its long-term goal of creating a bright future nation. I strongly believe that a small spark will slowly take root and become bright in this country, and my students will make a difference for their nation. I love to see this future promise with my students with them together.