

Education and Peace

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Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “all human beings are born **free** and equal in dignity and rights”. Furthermore, Human Right No. 4 declares that “no one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.”

Are people in this world really free? Is there no slavery or servitude? Freedom has many dimensions covering the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. A critical examination of our world today would reveal that in many ways it has not changed and that we are no different from the past.

In our world today, many people are still in bondage. Tied down to the arid fields they toil, to jobs that give them no fulfillment, to poverty, to the dictates of their government, to their culture and even religious beliefs. Because of these, the world is full of people with despair - people who believe that they have no choice, who lose hope and start to think and do things contrary to the common good. For them, it becomes a fight at all cost to get out of their present predicament. In desperation they clutch at straws in the wind to catch a sliver of their dreams for themselves and their families.

The Universidad de Zamboanga believes through its motto “Educacion es Libertad” (Education is Freedom) that EDUCATION is the answer to our present predicament. While education is a human right, education should be perceived as a means and not an end in itself. The value of education is when it can secure the freedom for a person to enjoy not only the rights necessary for a better life but an **actual realization of these rights and the fruits thereof**. The acquisition of knowledge and skills through education should serve a purpose. Foremost would be a realization that a person has the right, but a right anchored on true and tested values, to make a choice, to effect changes in their lives and the four dimensions of freedom albeit a responsible one that not only benefits him but others too.

The way from the person to peace is a three step process. First, is the acknowledgment by the person of a right such as education. The second is access to that right, and last, the enjoyment of the fruits of that right.

In the Philippines, many aspire for the right to education. Although this right is guaranteed for all, not many can avail of this right. The obstacles could be lack of opportunities, mental capacity, financial resources, and time among others. These obstacles can be mitigated by schools and universities like UZ offering scholarships for deserving students, and grants for those from the low income sector. Further access to

education can be given by having reasonable admission requirements and flexible class schedules. The more “underprivileged” are granted access to educational opportunities, the less “discontents” there will be. While they are in school, they know that their hopes are alive and may be realized in the future. The third process is the most important and it is the provision of sufficient opportunities for the educated to find their place in the sun and reap the benefits of their education. When we have done all these, peace will finally reside in the hearts and minds of people.

Not to be bound to the soil or to unrewarding jobs unless by choice, only then can we say the right to be free has been achieved and peace has come at last.

Education for freedom! Let this be our battle cry in our quest for peace.