



ROTC inculcates values to prepare Filipino youth in nation-building

Pasulong, Kad!

This command drill, which translates to “forward march”, reflects the current state of the implementation and revival of the mandatory Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) in senior high school. This is after President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. urged the Congress to pass the bill making the ROTC mandatory in both public and private senior high schools in the country during the 2022 State of the Nation Address. *“The aim is to motivate, train, organize and mobilize the students for national defense preparedness, including disaster preparedness and capacity building for risk-related situations,”* he said.

While it has been applauded by many, it also caused others to raise eyebrows and expressed concerns over its underlying purpose. In retrospect, the idea of reviving the ROTC, which PBBM has broached as early in his presidency, serves a good purpose. This topic may have sparked debates but let us look at it on the bright side of things.

The ROTC aims to bring better sense of purpose among the youth by building upon valuable “leader-follower” relationship. ROTC will teach younger generations about the essence of patriotism. It will inculcate in their minds and hearts a deep love for one’s country. More so, it will prepare and mold them to become disciplined and respectful Filipino citizens. On top of that, they will obtain skills and knowledge on basic soldiery, which in turn helps personal development and builds up one’s character.

Meanwhile, the aim of teaching basic military training is contrary to the idea that ROTC is the government’s way of “militarizing” the youth. Aside from values that will be developed among the youth of today, the program is designed to teach and help ROTC cadets to understand and appreciate the soldiers’ sacrifices for the nation, why they chose to staunchly serve our motherland, and defend and keep the Filipinos safe while risking their own lives.

Citing a Pulse Asia survey commissioned in June 2022 by the chairman of the Basic Education, Arts and Culture Committee, Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, most Filipinos are in favor of reviving the mandatory ROTC.

The involvement of universities and colleges in the ROTC program is essential in supporting the implementation of the program. The educational institutions will be able to observe how students will contribute to the country’s peace, security and national development program. More so, the program provides students with significant opportunities and benefits. The young-molded cadets can acquire tacit knowledge on leadership and national defense preparedness allowing them to become scholars and be among those to participate in the ROTC Cultural Understanding Language Program.

Seeing the ROTC as a catalyst for change, the Philippine Air Force (PAF) works hand-in-hand with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to support the endeavor of molding the youth. The graduates of ROTC, who are trained by the PAF, will form part of its reserve force who will be tapped to assist in times of disaster and participate in different Civil Military Operation activities of the AFP such as tree-planting, gift-giving, feeding programs, and relief operations. Same way, one may choose to continue his/her military service by commissioning into the regular force as officer or enlisted personnel.

The PAF gives its thorough promotion by publicizing the activities highlighting the ROTC cadets' participation in the different PAF activities. Likewise, the PAF prepares and reviews accordingly the upcoming plans and directives from higher Headquarters and develop a good plan on providing scholarship grants to qualified ROTC students and giving due recognition to those who have contributed to the overall mission accomplishment of the PAF.