

**SYNTHESIS**  
**2014 CEAP NATIONAL CONVENTION**

*“Set Forth in Faith: Defining the Transformative Role of Catholic Education in a Changing World”*

Magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat!

This year, we were able to gather 3221 educators and academic leaders to Davao – about 50 less than last year’s total in Cebu City - no thanks to Philippine Airlines, Yolanda and the Bohol earthquake.

There is something exciting happening and is definitely affecting all of us – and it has nothing to do with the Passport of Prizes and the give-a-ways from our sponsors. We are nearing the actual implementation of a dream that we have imagined and envisioned some years ago. We are about to realize, in less than two years, one of the key reforms we have set our eyes and our hearts on – the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. Like any structural changes, there are expected birth pains and we made sure that our cries and our lamentations are heard and acted on by DepEd, TESDA, CHED, and by both Houses of Congress. CEAP, representing more than 1,400 Catholic school communities, colleges and universities in the Philippines, has continued to articulate and to assert our right and our academic freedom as providers of quality education. This is what we did during the Discussion Forum in the last Annual Membership Meeting. We asserted our academic freedom and demanded greater articulation of the Constitutional mandate of the complementarity between public and private educational institutions. Fr. Joel Tabora, CEAP Vice-President and concurrent Chairperson of the National Advocacy Commission, did not mince words when he shared our sector’s concerns pertinent to the issue on complementarity, not homogeneity, not tolerance. I think that at the heart of the Constitutional mandate of the complementarity is the capacity for Government and the private educational sector, not to out wit each other, but to be able to sit down and listen to each other’s concerns, anxieties, dreams and hopes for a better quality education for the Filipino youth of today and for the generations to come. This is the reason why we invited Representatives from the Congress, DepEd, Tesda and CHED to sit and to dialogue with us because we are aware that the challenge of promoting quality education is a shared burden by both the private and public educational institutions.

Although direct financial support from the Philippine government would be a welcome respite, its lack of thereof did not deter us from creatively addressing the various and

pressing concerns inherent in this structural change. Foremost in my mind are DLSU's Dr. Raymund Sison, Ateneo de Davao's Fr. Gabby Gonzales, and USC's Fr. Anthony Salas sharings of their own experiences on how they re-thought the way they will be doing Theology given the conditions set by the Revised General Education Curriculum.

Atty. Estrada and Atty. Arnaldo updated us too with the recent legal issues and concerns affecting private education and its serious implications to the mission and identity of Catholic schools and the institutional autonomy of private colleges and universities. We heard from our counsels some updates on recent issues and concerns pertaining to taxation of non-stock, non-profit educational institutions and the response of CEAP, as the association that legitimately represents the sector.

Yet amidst the challenging concerns regarding operational viability and sustainability of our Catholic schools, we remain fired up by the very mission entrusted to us by God and by the Church. This is the message of the CEAP President. Br. Jun Erguiza's words in his Opening Speech remain to be a re-assuring voice, that is, for us to touch base with the very reason we pursued this critical reform in the education sector. "We want to make things better. We desire for a better tomorrow, not for our personal sake, but for the future of the women and men we serve" – the very future of our own children. I am a mother to six children and to thousands of students, I considered my own, in the last 24 years I have been teaching and I know what it means to desire for a good future for all of them. This is not for us. This is for them.

That is why Dr. Lopus, in her response as a Catholic lay educator reminded us of the primacy of our Catholic mission and identity. That is why CEAP has embarked in the Project Catholic School Standards – in order to define as a community, the characteristics, standards and benchmarks of Catholic schools in the Philippines in five important domains – Catholic Mission and Identity, Leadership and Governance, Learner Development, Learning Environment and Operational Vitality. This is not for us. This is for them.

This is also the reason why we cannot belittle the issue on the environment, to be dark green campuses as Dr. Lopus exhorted, and the pursuit of genuine peace in Mindanao. Our children deserve to have a sound, quality education and a peaceful place to live in. This is not for us. This is for them.

With the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro and the Basic Bangsamoro Law being discussed in Congress, peace becomes an increasingly important

imperative for our nation. Dr. Coronel-Ferrer, Br. Gaspar, Dr. La Viña engaged the participants in a dialogue that aims to foster understanding and promote solidarity between Filipino Muslims and non-Muslim Filipinos. They were also able to discuss how the Agreement can become an occasion for Catholic Education to share its mission of harmony, solidarity, and peace in this changing world. Moreover, Dr. Nerisma's presentation on climate change hit a chord in most of us – especially those who were inundated by recent typhoons and storm surges.

We thank our distinguished guests for sharing their own insights with regard to the various issues affecting our schools and our lives.

But what can we do? I have listed a few.

- One, CEAP will continue to engage the Philippine Government in the crafting of legislations and bills that articulate and put into fruition the Constitutional mandate of academic freedom and complementarity through active and substantial contribution during committee hearings, congressional inquiries and timely submission of position papers. Further, CEAP will propose and submit legislations and policies to advocate for and to promote the Government's actual financing of private education. In fact, RA 10533 can be mined for provisions that will support PPP in education. Such provisions as the government considering the capacity of private schools before building new facilities and other forms of assistance specified in RA 10533 can be studied with urgency.
- Two, CEAP will continue to collaborate with the executives from the various educational agencies in the crafting of sound and reasonable policies that promote quality education in all levels.
- Three, CEAP will develop the research infrastructure and capabilities to study the impact of government funding of the private education sector in achieving national development goals and other relevant agenda that will make a case for the private education sector in the country as a necessary partner of the public sector.
- Finally, CEAP will continue to support the implementation of the K to 12 Law because we believe that the initial struggles in its actual implementation is transitional and the positive return of this reform is long term.

To end, I would like to borrow the words of Fr. Arevalo when he received last year's Pro Deo et Patria. Fr. Timoner, Fr. Arevalo is alive and well. Fr. Arevalo said: THE GOOD THAT WE DO MAY BE RECOGNIZED IN OUR OWN LIFE TIMES OR NOT. WE CONTINUE TO DO THE GOOD THAT WE DO BECAUSE THIS IS GOD'S CALL FOR US. WE FIND JOY IN DOING WHAT GOD HAS CALLED US TO DO AND TO BE – EDUCATORS OF THE YOUNG.

And, we will continue to be educators of the young because that is who we are. We will continue:

To promote solidarity and unity of action among individuals and member-institutions that work towards fulfilling the evangelizing mission of the Church in education.

To widen access to and promote quality and transformative Catholic Education.

To serve as a steadfast and effective catalyst of change through education in the different dimensions of human life.

We will continue to do these because it is our call. We are convinced that this is God's call for us. And we will serve with renewed fervor and ardor because we have been set forth to transform a changing world in faith.

We will continue because we are CEAP.

Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat!