

Pursuing education for all in the Philippines: Next steps

Policy address by

Secretary Jesli A.Lapus

Department of Education

06 November 2007

Our membership and work in the international organization UNESCO continues to keep us abreast of global developments in education and access to cutting edge ideas on managing reforms.

There is now a convergence of the idea of education as a human right and educating for development. Worldwide, there is a clear and growing link between the level of education and economic growth. Not growth for growth's sake but it must also be sustainable; meaning education for all must be sustainable too. Already we see public and private partnerships for a sustainable environment and social development anchored on the education for development platform.

The approach to education now calls for the emphasis on quality – that students learn is key. In our developing country, this will be the engine for personal fulfillment and eventual social harmony. An immediate effect is gender equality; in the longer term, social stability, peace and the resolution of conflict. To quote the consensus document, “broad-based education serves to help counter extremism and terrorism by giving hope and life chances.”

The linkages required are the increased, balanced and prioritized investment made in whole education system the present administration is addressing; the regular sound assessment of programs; building bridges to access information and communication technologies and ICT to facilitate distance education, teacher training and more flexible and innovative education models.

Specifically for the Philippines, there is recognition of the contribution of our workforce to economies everywhere. The focus is not on brain drain but on the circulation of skills to ultimately benefit our country.

Even as we become citizens of the world, we keep on listening to the voices of our communities so that our rich cultural heritage may be respected.

Here at the DepEd, our pursuit of education is active and unending to put us at par with the rest of the countries. The following is a summary of the salient resolutions on policy consensus from the recently concluded 34th Unesco General Conference:

1. Focus on early childhood education to emphasize learning begins at birth and continues throughout life. This covers alternative learning systems which we have been espousing.
2. It is the national government in partnership with business and civil society to achieve universal free primary education and gender equality by 2015 in accordance with Unesco's goal.
3. Our secondary education must prepare our young people for further learning and sustainable livelihoods.
4. The engagement and use of technology to promote learning and to bridge the access and resources gaps.

An important accord is recognizing that within the education for all framework is the literacy for all agenda - noting that one in five adults is still not literate (two-thirds of them women) while 72 million children are out-of-school. Some 774 million adults lack minimum literacy skills. Only by literate population can economic growth be achieved.

As the country assumes the seat in the Unesco Executive Board, its highest policy-making body, we shall take on the challenge of reforming systems and procedure to make the Unesco truly responsive to the crying needs in the education sector specially in the developed countries. We shall push for the Unesco to take a more proactive role to call for national governments to give the highest budgetary priority to education in theory and in practice. We shall press for Unesco to lend its voice of credibility to free the task of education from being held down by political forces for education to be truly for all.