

2017 CEAP Convention Synthesis

(delivered on 29 September 2017)

SMX Convention Center, Davao City

Greetings!

The CEAP envisions a world transformed, a Philippines renewed by people educated in the principles of *Communio* and Service as taught and lived by Our Lord Jesus Christ and shaped by the missionary mandate of the Catholic Church. Last December (2016), during the strategic planning of the CEAP Board, this vision was reinforced by revising the Mission Statement and strengthening the indicators of how the vision is accomplished. The 2017 CEAP National Convention's theme is one of the ways by which the Catholic educational community periodically renews itself. Thus, for this year, the theme *Communio: Building and Sustaining Communities of Life*, celebrates the vision of CEAP as an educational community.

Early March this year, when the National Office released the First Notice for this year's convention, a lot of you were not sure if you want to come here in Mindanao to attend the convention. The Marawi siege resulted to fear among many members of CEAP. The CEAP officers, under the leadership of Fr. Tabora, addressing the incessant question of whether CEAP should push through with the convention in Mindanao, met in June to address this issue. The Executive Committee set a dialogue with one of the top Muslim religious leaders and engaged in a conversation with him to fully understand the Mindanao peace crisis. Immediately after this meeting, the officers affirmed its earlier decision and wrote to all the school heads and superintendents that the convention in Mindanao will push through. More than ever, the letter said, it is during this convention that the Catholic schools should be seen and felt journeying with their sisters and brothers in Mindanao. And you, dear Catholic educators, responded to this call. In this beautiful city of Davao, we gather as a community of Catholic educators to renew our commitment to this theme.

During the Annual General Assembly of school heads and superintendents last September 26, CEAP engaged in a conversation and listened to the sharing on *Promoting Harmony among the Lumads, Moslems, and Christians* by Fr. Roberto C. Layson, OMI. Head, Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Fr. Layson emphasized the guiding principle that Nelson Mandela used during his struggle to liberate his nation from the ills of apartheid, "*Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world*". To heal Mindanao, we should end the historical injustice by teaching the right history to the next generation and to engage in all forms of dialogue, which include [1] dialogue of life; [2] dialogue of action; [3] dialogue of words or discourse; [4] dialogue of religious experience. Religion is an instrument to build relationships. The aim of these dialogues and activities is to build togetherness, neighborliness, and peace.

The next panelist who shared on the *Mindanao Crisis and the Mindanao Siege* was Atty. Maisara Dandamun-Latiph, Member of the Bangsamoro Transition Commission. She emphasized that Mindanao is not a stranger to conflict and that the Marawi siege is not an isolated event. It is just one among the long history of conflict and violence in Mindanao. Decades of marginalization and underdevelopment gave rise to the proliferation of several armed groups, namely, the MNLF, MILF, CPP, NPA, NDF, BMIF, ASG, KIM, private armies of clans, warlords, drug lords, local politicians, and recently, the Maute group.

Atty. Latiph stressed that violent extremism and terrorism are not Islam; these are foreign to Islam. The spread of radicalism in social media is so alarming that the government, the private sector and civil society are hard to keep up to protect the children. The goal is to find ways to win the war that they are now losing, a battle for the hearts and the minds of disenfranchised youth, marginalized, and primarily, Muslims around the world.

She added that education plays a role in preventing violent extremism and radicalizing our young people. There is need for quality education, for peace that equips the youth with the ability to engage constructively in civic structures and in an inclusive political process. She called on relevant actors in society to consider instituting mechanisms to promote a culture of peace, tolerance, intercultural, inter-religious dialogue that involve youth and discourage their participation in acts of violence and terrorism, xenophobia, and all forms of discrimination.

Retired Gen. Emmanuel Bautista shared on the *Challenges to Peace and Security and How We May Deal with Them*. He said that the challenges to peace and security are multi-faceted and complex and need a comprehensive approach; the whole nation should commit to it, voluntarily and spontaneously in the spirit of bayanihan, “winning the peace through bayanihan.” these challenges, the most prominent are peace and security. In winning the peace, bayanihan uses the two strategic approaches: (a) whole-of-nation approach; and (b) people-centered approach. Essential elements of a successful and effective implementation of bayanihan: (1) prepare the armed forces to assume new roles under a new paradigm; (2) strong involvement and coordination among stakeholders; (3) implementation should be sustained;

Finally, during the Discussion Forum of school heads, Dr. Jasmin Galace talked about *Transformation through Justice and Peace Program*. Dr. Galace enumerated the existing problems (both external and internal) which include crimes, clan conflicts, proliferation of dangerous drugs, armed violence, poverty, socio-cultural violence such as biases, prejudice, and discrimination, disrespectful attitude, arrogance, bullying, exclusion, self-focused, self-entitlement, profit-driven worldview, extreme regional extremism, and consumerism. Transformation should be both personal and social structures; Language shapes consciousness and consequently, attitudes, and behavior.

She then recommended the whole school approach to create change. She prescribed integrating justice and peace in ten areas of school life: (1) state the concept of justice and peace in the school’s VMG; (2) declare the school as a zone of peace; (3) teaching-learning methodologies consistent with the concept of justice and peace; (4) capacitate teachers, employees, and students on justice and peace; (5) encourage students and staff to develop peace-related materials and research on peace and justice issues; (6) build feasible structures that will give a clear message that your schools are centers of justice and peace; (7) initiate programs that promote justice and peace, among others.

During the Opening Program on September 27, the colour, texture and sound of Mindanao were presented by the Davao Catholic school students through a series of cultural dances representing the various communities in the island.

Cardinal Orlando Quevedo shared his understanding of the Bangsamoro Basic Law and how it can help the healing of the age-old conflict in Mindanao, because injustice is the root of conflict in Southern Mindanao— injustice to Muslim identity, to Muslim sovereignty and territory, and to Muslim integral development. Cardinal Quevedo said that the way to resolve the conflict is to resolve Historic Injustices through the BBL. He then highlighted the evolution of the BBL and the provisions and principles of the document. In Article I, Section 3: “Purpose – *The Purpose of this Basic Law is to establish a political entity, provide for its basic structure of government in recognition of the justness and legitimacy of the cause of the Bangsamoro people and their aspiration to chart their*

political future through a democratic process that will secure their identity and posterity for meaningful self-governance.”

Furthermore, Cardinal Quevedo shared the following statements from religious leaders who hailed from Mindanao: 1) The conflict in Marawi is not a religious war; it is a war against terrorism. The many stories of mutual assistance between Muslims and Christians attest to their rejection of this evil. 2) Islam and Christianity are religions of peace. He said that there is need to build a Culture of Peace based on personal integrity, respect for human rights, inter-cultural dialogue, care for the environment, peaceful co-existence, and eradication of poverty. He recalled the words of Andrea Riccardi, founder of Sant’Egidio Community, that “war is the mother of all poverty.” And 3) Inter-faith and intra-faith dialogue shall be promoted as a means of understanding and appreciating other cultures and religions and enhancing cooperation, among others.

Atty. Laisa Masahud Alamia, the ARMM Executive Secretary shared her perspective on the same issues but highlighted how she appreciates having been exposed to Catholic Education and the on-going effort to reach out to the Muslim communities. She expressed her hope that what the CEAP is doing will cascade to the educational communities and those the schools serve.

Br. Dennis Magbanua, FSC, launched the Kapatirang Kamagong. This is a project of the CEAP Board to support the small schools which comprise the majority of the CEAP members by raising funds and helping them in many ways. He showed the videos of schools that need support and laid out the plans on how to generate more support for those who need them the most.

During the second day of the convention, the delegates attended various tracks.

Dr. Jose Jowel Canuday shared the Mindanao-Sulu Timeline: *The Mindanao Peace and History Education Project*. The Objective of the project is to promote: (1) learning and building from previous initiatives; (2) to use in actual delivery in the classroom; (3) weave a multi strand story; (4) synthesize the data into a tapestry for all to get an overview and so on.

Atty. Joseph Estrada talks about the *Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers: In the Context of Professional Qualified School Personnel*. He said that Ethics and ethical standards play an important role in a teacher’s life and profession. A teacher must not only competent but is also a role model to his/her students. Teaching is inherently moral. There are restrictions to a teacher’s conduct and behavior which may not be asked from ordinary citizens. Teachers should avoid behavior that may tend to create a suspicion of immorality. PCSS is the brand of Catholic education in the Philippines; there is no excuse for any of us not to follow the standard.

Dr. Jasmin N. Galace and Ms. Rohaniza Usman shared their reflections on *Integral Human Formation of Students in the Light of Cultural Dialogue and Conflict*. They emphasized that every religion has its own ethical obligations to the young.. Children are not born into an ideal world. The examples we provide to the children contribute to their understanding of the world. At the heart of learning is experience. The reality now is that we live with beauty but we also live in a society filled with conflict. We should envision a world where children experience the strengthening of their faith.

Fr. Karel San Juan, S.J., also shared on the topic of *Spirituality and Servant Leadership: Leading the School as a Communion of Communities*. Fr. San Juan talked about the hard realities of servant leadership as human beings experience deficiencies; people experience fear and can misuse power). The call to be inspiring leaders could start by serving with humility, courage, and magnanimity). The need for spirituality in leadership (being formed by Jesus, the servant leader) Our hope as servant leaders lies in Jesus, our leader, teacher, and formator.

Fr. Hason H. Laguerta was also present as speaker who gracefully shared on *Collaboration in Action: The School Leader and the Church Leader*. Fr. Laguerta said that Schools are asked to humanize education; it means putting the person at the centre of education, in a framework of relationships that make up a living community, which is interdependent and bound to a common destiny. Conflicts arise because of our natural tendency to be loyal to our in-group and derogate the out-group. Once our social identity is activated and made salient, there is an almost automatic reaction to protect it in the face of threats and opposition.

Meanwhile, the concurrent session for sub-track 3 included topics like that of Fr. John Christian Young who discussed *Transparency and Accountability in the School*. Fr. John Young highlighted the PCSS 14.3 – the accounting manual is regularly updated to clarify the definition and roles and responsibilities of financial personnel and to improved procedures governing financial transactions. He said that accountability is defining the roles and responsibilities of personnel. He added that Savings help you build your liquidity and advised that schools should meet all financial obligations on time, among others.

To add to this sub-track, Ms. Suzette Aliño shared her ideas on *Creating Space and Time to experience God in the Self, Others, and Creation*. Ms. Alino shared that we must find time for that sacred time and sacred space. There should be moderation in the use of gadgets. There is so much hope regardless of the generation where they are. Adults must device activities that allows them to connect with their God. We must all remember that we are not all bodies, we also have souls.

Comm. Roque Morales and Ms. Ruth Guerrero also discussed the *Mindanao Muslim History: Towards a Shared Mature Understanding of Islam in the Philippines in our Schools*. They insisted that we should appreciate our differences and then establish respect for each other. There must be an effort to provide a counter-narrative based upon our fundamental principles as Catholic Schools. They mentioned how it is well now that Mindanao is now the focus for it is with a better Mindanao, that we could build a better Philippines. They advised that everyone should study the new BBL and see how helpful it is to Mindanao.

Sub-Track 4 on Higher Education (at the University of the Immaculate Conception) was composed of a series of talks like that of Dr. Luis Maria Calingo who discussed *Higher Education Institutions in the Eyes of 'Ex Corde Ecclesiae.'* Dr. Calingo emphasized the document *Ex corde Ecclesiae* and how it affirms not only academic freedom, but also the identity of Catholic universities as an entity “born from the heart of the Church”. As the soul of the university, the curriculum should reflect and add to the Catholic intellectual tradition; independent Catholic universities should contribute to the evangelizing work of Catholic education.

After that, Fr. Joel E. Tabora, S.J. shared his ideas on *Complementarity: A continuing challenge in Philippine Educational Reform*. Fr. Tabora stressed that the legal bases for complementarity rest on Article XIV, Sections 1, 2, 4, and 5 (2) of the 1987 Philippine Constitution. These provisions should be safeguarded and be written in the new Philippine Constitution. Likewise, complementarity between public and private higher education institutions can find its basis in RA 10931, otherwise known as “Universal Access For Quality Tertiary Education Act”. Both public and private colleges and universities should equally enjoy government funding, otherwise, there will be the effect of an immense student migration from the private HEIs to the SUCs, which PASUC believes will cause overpopulation and will affect the quality of education of the SUCs.

Finally, the National Convention’s Sub-Tracks were concluded with a Special Session on *the Proposed Constituent Assembly, Charter Change, and the Enhanced Bangsamoro Law*. It was elaborated on by Atty. January Faye Risonar-Bello and Mr. Mussolini Lidasan, and assisted by Atty.

Brunson Alabastro. The presentation emphasized the fact that the Changes in the 1987 Philippine Constitution will definitely take place under President Duterte and, to date, the most feasible modality is by way of a Constitutional Assembly. Nonetheless, it was emphasized that the enhanced -BBL is an urgent matter; more than the Constitutional Change. The passage of e-BBL will heal the wounds of the Bangsamoro because the Moro identity will be recognized; the Bangsamoro will be more loyal to the Filipino flag and this will give us a chance to build a better country.

Under the leadership of Fr. Joel, the CEAP has consistently pushed for the recognition of the Mindanao issue as a national issue. Programs to build bridges with our Muslim and Lumad sisters and brothers have been promoted and developed in partnership with Ateneo de Davao University and like-minded institutions. The Madaris Volunter Program, which is now on its third year, the Fund-Raising for Marawi and the on-going conversations between the DepEd ARMM and Catholic Higher Educational Institutions with Education Program to help improve the quality of basic education in Mindanao, are some of these concrete steps by which the CEAP has walked the talk.

Your presence here in spite of the earlier fears and apprehensions is a statement of *Communio* with your CEAP family and the people of Mindanao. May you all have a safe journey home. God bless us all.

Maraming salamat sa pakikinig.

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