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**Laguna Congressman's Sideswipe On Duterte Backfires**

"Look who's talking." This may have well been the response from Mayor Rodrigo Duterte's camp after Laguna Representative Dan Fernandez said he can accomplish more than the mayor did in a span of 10 years.

According to Mar Masanguid and other proponents of the Duterte for President Movement, when it comes to accomplishments in office, Fernandez has "very little to show". They said that one visit to the website of the House of Representatives will clearly show that the congressman's legislative performance is "anything but impressive".

Congress' website enumerates the 23 bills that Fernandez sponsored, including the conversion of municipal roads in Laguna into national roads, creation of four barangays in San Pedro City, a bill that sought the increase in the number of the Sangguniang Panlungsod of Biñan City from 10 to 12. The congressman's latest bill, which was passed and signed into law by President Aquino, made Biñan City a



Duterte

separate legislative district.

Masanguid belittled Fernandez's accomplishments and said a hard-working congressman would've filed more important bills, adding that Fernandez should not have boasted of being able to rival Duterte's achievements.

Meanwhile, another Duterte ally, who begged to be anonymous, made a comment which may have instigated notions that might further discredit Fernandez. Supposedly in 2009, as the comment went, the House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal kicked Fernandez out of the polls after finding his residency in the first district of Laguna questionable.



Fernandez

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### #RememberHaiyan Calls for Justice Amid Disasters, Worsening Climate Conditions

**“Two years after super typhoon Haiyan ravaged central Philippines, communities, especially of the poor and workers, are still unable to fully recover because of inept rehabilitation efforts by the government and poverty. Worse, we continue to face the same danger of super typhoons and long droughts because of climate change,”** lamented Daisy Arago, Executive Director of CTUHR (Center for Trade Union and Human Rights) as it joined numerous Filipinos and the world in commemorating the catastrophe brought by super typhoon Haiyan early November two years ago.

CTUHR and the **Kalikasan People’s Network for the Environment** organized the first **Philippine Environmental Conference (PEC)**, November 5, with the theme **“Confronting the Climate Crisis”** wherein the People’s Climate Platform was presented. The PEC comes seemingly well-timed as it resonates the various demands of marginalized and front line communities concerning climate change, matters that are right within the context of the upcoming Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in the Philippines this November and the United Nations Conference of Parties (COP) in Paris, France this December.

CTUHR emphasized that workers are among the groups at high risk to the adverse impact of climate change as workers lose jobs and sources of income whenever big disasters happen.



“In the context of prevalent contractualization, low wages, high commodity prices and very low unionization rate, workers are pushed further to deeper poverty when climate-related disasters happen,” Arago said.

In addition, CTUHR cited that the urban poor are subject to more suffering and financial pressure, especially if the government does not wholly address these concerns, as typhoons and flood repeatedly inundate communities. The people who suffered during the typhoon Ketsana (Ondoy) in 2009, again suffered floods brought about by prolonged monsoon rains in 2011 and 2014.

“Since women are often employed in informal or contractual jobs plus women have been relegated to do household work and responsibilities, women workers and urban poor feel more pressure and burden during calamities compared to male counterparts,” Arago added.

CTUHR stressed that if the climate crisis the world is facing will not be resolved, another Haiyan, Pablo or Ondoy is bound to happen which spells more tragedy to the working poor especially in high risk countries like the Philippines. The vulnerable marginalized communities must have increased capacity to adapt to climate change which can only happen if neoliberal policies that attack basic rights and humane living standards are abandoned, the group insisted.

“Climate change is an issue of the poor and the workers. It is ultimately an issue of social justice”, Arago reiterated, “As we remember Haiyan and its impact to poor, we also call an end to the climate crisis. We must fight our right to development at the same time transform economies toward societies that are sustainable and just.”

## EDITOR THINKS

### The Youth Raise Arms Against the Beasts of Government

-by JOHN BAYBAY



**M**embers of the progressive youth group Anakbayan massed up in front of the Commission on Elections on Thursday, Oct. 15 and called on candidates filing for their certificates of candidacy (COCs) to stand up on issues that matter to the Filipino people.

“People or self?”, the youth cry, calling on the candidates to stand up and address several dozen issues that are crucial to the majority of poor Filipinos. Issues that for years have been cast aside on a waiting list by the Aquino administration. Among them: stopping tuition and price hikes, P125 increase in wages, measures to put an end to contractualization, the improvement of government services, genuine land reform, resuming peace talks and stopping the incursions of US and China. These issues are all very critical issues that are currently being ignored. There has been little of not action given these issues not has there been any satisfactory response. Instead, what has been offered is a systemic sidelining of national issues in favor a gaining brownie points for the ruling party’s hopefuls.

The youth were seen holding placards saying “No” to fraudulent elections! The groups also warned that the occurrence of massive cheating in the polls is highly probable, with a connivance between the incumbent powers and the “administration-biased” Comelec heads who, in many ways, often act as “king makers”.

Certainly the embodiment of our nation’s future, the concerned youth are urging the people, including the candidates vying for public offices in the coming elections to stand up for a clean, honest elections and to be vigilant against fraud and trickery, particularly with the aid of “Hocus PCOS” in 2016. The Comelec is again seen to use the controversial Smartmatic ‘auto-daya’ machines in an alleged scheme to rig the elections in the administration’s favor.

Kabataan Partylist Rep. Terry Ridon has earlier expressed concern over the lease deal brokered by the poll body with Smartmatic-Total Information Management (TIM) Corp., which involves the lease of 93,977 new machines for the upcoming national elections.

In House Resolution 2308, Ridon said the lease deal is more costly, in violation of government standards, and sets the stage for “massive cheating” and foreign meddling in the elections. Used in 2010, the machines proved to have a high rate of malfunction. Coupled with the appalling number of disenfranchised voters (estimated at 30%), the unreliable PCOS clearly just opened up the 2010 polls to a plethora of cheating tactics. The continuance of this arrangement deserves to be placed under close scrutiny and accountability.

The practice of collusion between the ruling families that control the private sector and government has successfully preserved a haven for the selected few to rule uncontested in a nation so needing of change. Indeed we are living in a “false democracy” where the choices of those who remain in power has been made for us in a charade of “entertainment-based” politics. There is a systemic dumbing down of the next generation through fluff media and the national pa-bebe and Aldub phenomenon. A systemic neglect to the empowerment of our youth through decent and affordable education has been perpetually denied in a false free-market based approach. Affordable education is hardly competitive in the real world where supply far exceeds demand. The voices of our youth calls for reasonable reforms and the least they could ask is for government is to hear if not advocate their cause. Should they not have a voice to speak about their future?

Our society has not evolved from the days of feudalism where the powers that be only perpetuate their grips upon politics through modern means. What type of future do we have for our children if their voices are forever quelled in an oppressive regime where the status-quo is preserved?

As press is heating up due to the elections are we not too focused on personalities rather than the issues? It is not the first time that we see our youth in ranks with placards which again signal that nothing much has changed. They serve as a constant reminder that the revolution have not yet ended in EDSA. Worse, is that her old heroes and her legacy has done nothing to change this country for the better. The constant charade of so-called reforms had only succeeded in lining the pockets of the same people in power through a legitimized pork-barrel scheme. With accusations of corruption being hurled across the table, three fingers point back at the accusers and in the end all of them are guilty.

CCT, PDAF and DAP has successfully cemented and monetized political capital and its distribution down to the barangay levels. It is a device that is certainly “pro-poor” as it perpetuates poverty through the practice and culture of mendicancy. It exacerbates the dependence of the poor on their local leaders. We again, have successfully institutionalized corruption. Hoorah! How dare they point their crooked fingers under the banner of “Daan na Matuwid”. Even with that, they have failed to even provide a small semblance of moral authority. What we get instead is arrogance from elected officials that seem immune to reproach while hiding behind a veneer of self-righteous and false governance. Government is service (in case they have forgotten)! You were voted to serve and not to simply lord upon us. Is it too much to ask for fair play?

While the youth are often condemned for their belligerence, perhaps we should consider some of the changes that they are asking for. This writer was just 12 years old when EDSA happened and 30 years later a generation has passed and we are still fighting for a true representative democracy. An entire generation has matured and we still have a false sense of democratic freedom and a free-market economy. The least that we could expect is for the elections not to be rigged! But then again we are still just hoping.

Governments decide who gets what, when and how. They make policies and pass laws that are binding on all of society’s members. They decide about taxation and

spending, benefits and costs, even life and death—governments possess power. They are the gate keepers of who gets in and who stays out. Democracy, just as much as true capitalism must be allowed to work, even though it sometimes works against itself. This is capitalism and democracy's self-correcting feature. A government that is subject to regulatory capture to protect the few is no real democracy. It only perpetuates the power of the oppressive feudal oligopolies through the maintenance of the status-quo. Unless something drastically changes things, we are at their behest.

The travesty of our defense is channeled as a measure to protect ourselves from ourselves. There is much more activity to counter insurgency and keep it going as a well oiled machine while not developing the means to protect our own sovereignty. We make policies to promote division rather than developing a sense of national identity. We have only historically united ourselves against a common enemy but now we should only look at ourselves as such. It should not be a surprise that our own politicians along with the historically left leaning has sold us to China while on the right hand, they are courting the West.

How long must our laws serve to protect the interest of the few? How long must we use the laws and the arms of it to be used in suppressing free speech? How long must the laws be used to keep us in check in oppressive regulatory regimes just to keep our eyes off the fiscal abuses of those in power? These young people serve as a stark reminder to keep our eyes on the issues that we need to press for action.

Elections legitimize our government, even if these are rife with fraud and violence and all that is foul. Even as political dynasties and other anti-democratic traditions dominate the processes by which the quality of our government is determined, we still submit to a philosophy that insists "this is the way things are, and we should just make-do with it, no matter how stupid".

We follow this system blindly, without even stopping to think why the same names, and the same faces end up in the leadership after every election. Even if we can't seem to change the corrupt, counter-progressive ruling class, or if injustice and inequality are the norm in our society, or if all government institutions have become warped with dysfunction—we somehow accept such a pathetic and damning fate. This should stop in our generation and the time is now! Let us call a spade a spade even when it hurts just as the truth does many times.

As the next presidential election nears, it is becoming more an imperative to question the kind of governance we are compelled to accept as appropriate. For truly, it seems this nation's leadership cannot be more unbecoming. Farce abounds as much as self-righteous pretenses. We should stick with the issues that effect national progress instead of getting caught up in superficial propaganda that is being wielded by those that have means.

More than asking ourselves who to select as our next leader, perhaps we must scrutinize the processes by which an evident ruling class is able to recycle itself into the leadership and thereby perpetuate the few who are mostly corrupt and inept. An anti-dynasty bill must be passed.

What ever happened to the Constitutional provision that prohibits political dynasties precisely because of its potential to usurp our democracy? Why do all policy

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decisions and the laws that are enacted seem so anti-Filipino in their effect? Why does corruption thrive and seem to infect the highest public offices? And why so few ever get punished for corrupt acts and practices? We should not allow the impunities that infected the last generation to pass itself on to the next. Justice should be given to all and it should be absolute; if not, then it is not justice at all.

While our youth rally in the streets holding placards, here is congress filing bills to make adobo a national dish! City councils meet to change names of streets for the hundredth time. Our congressmen are our direct lines of representation in government. They are there to write legislature in advocacy of the people they represent. They are there to legislate and debate in favor of issues that matter most to their constituency. They are not there to serve as mobile pharmacies, feeding centers, the town's godfather or waiting shed builders. They are there as our inquiring eyes on how government behaves and function as our checks and balance. Congress is not a congregational slumber party!

When the leadership is helplessly engaged in power struggles, instead of cooperation and consensus; when the Philippine government is acting wholly against the Philippine Constitution; when separation and division into autonomous regions become the quick fix to decades of bitter and deep-seated conflict; when the very government deliberately keeps laws that protect and uphold civil liberties from being enacted, while on the other hand becomes the first to disregard and vastly violate human rights—we need to change the the people in government if not government itself.

More than an election, this is a continuing revolution. But more than a revolution, we need a definition. If our elections do not bring us change and progress, we should force this change in government the old-fashioned way—taking to the streets and simply exercising civil our rights till they are heard. We will still keep battering our keyboards at the same time! However, upon forcing this change, is it not essential that we define exactly what it is we need to change? Government in a democracy is dependent upon "consumer sophistication". Unless we are educated and ask more of government, then we shall always be at the behest of the beast we have made it to be.

## Ayala Foundation, Ayala Land Turns Over New School Buildings, Classrooms in Iloilo

*The Ayala group's commitment to rebuilding communities remain strong 2 years after Yolanda.*

Commemorating the second anniversary of Typhoon Yolanda, the Ayala group of companies continues to assert its commitment to aid communities destroyed by the typhoon, helping to erect new school buildings in northern Iloilo province. On November 6, 2015, Ayala Foundation and Ayala Land held turnover rites for new school buildings and classrooms to the Department of Education and to the local government units.



**Ayala Foundation Programs Director Joie Lopez together with representatives of DepEd and the local government of Iloilo during the ceremonial handover of Carles Central School held November 6.**

Sagay Elementary School in Sagay City, Negros Occidental, in November 2014. The third building was built at Cawayan Elementary School in Carles, northern Iloilo, and was inaugurated in September 2015. The five schools have a combined total of 33 classrooms.

Besides building new schools, Ayala Foundation has implemented other interventions

facilitated in northern Iloilo would not have succeeded without the collaborative spirit of our donors, LGU, DepEd, and the people of Carles and Estancia."

Meanwhile, Ayala Land officially handed over new classrooms to the Northern Iloilo Polytechnic State College. These interventions are part of the Ayala group of companies' Bulig Bisaya initiative



**The new two-storey, eight-classroom building of Cano-an Elementary School in Estancia, Iloilo can withstand winds up to 250kph.**

Ayala Foundation and its associates formally turned over two 2-story, disaster-resilient school buildings for the Carles Central School in the town of Carles, and Cano-an Elementary School in Estancia.

Combined, the two school buildings have a total of 16 classrooms, and also had rest rooms and emergency alarm systems. The new school buildings are also sturdier as the need to build better structures that could withstand up to 250 kph winds have been taken into account.

To date, Ayala Foundation and its partners have constructed and turned over five school buildings to Yolanda-stricken communities. The first two school buildings were put up at the Old

in the province. The Training Institute, for instance, launched in Iloilo earlier this year, offering learning and mentoring sessions for 47 teachers and three principals.

Since Yolanda's onslaught, Ayala foundation and its partners have provided the following interventions in northern Iloilo: 16 temporary classrooms; a feeding program for 173 students; shelter kits for 100 families; 66 boats and 66 fishing nets for fishing families; and fertilizers and seedlings for 71 hectares of agricultural land.

"We have committed ourselves to helping our Yolanda communities get back on their feet," said Joie Lopez, Ayala Foundation senior director for Programs. "And all the interventions we have

for Yolanda-stricken areas. Over Php400 million have already been granted by the Ayala group of companies, for relief, recovery, and rehabilitation initiatives for Yolanda-affected communities.

### About Ayala Foundation

Ayala Foundation envisions communities where people are productive, creative, self-reliant, and proud to be Filipino. As a believer in creating shared value and inclusive growth, it has four key program areas—Education, Youth Leadership, Sustainable Livelihood, and Arts and Culture. AFI is a member of the Ayala group of companies.

[www.ayalafoundation.org](http://www.ayalafoundation.org)

# Alta Veranda De Tibig and Great Celebrations



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## The Medical City acquires operating control of Southern Luzon Hospital and Medical Center

PSI Healthcare Development Services Corporation, a wholly owned subsidiary of The Medical City (TMC), in a strategic partnership with Calamba Medical Center, has acquired operating control of Southern Luzon and Medical Center (SLHMC).

Now known as The Medical City South Luzon and located in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, the latest addition to the TMC's growing network of clinics and hospitals will serve as TMC's gateway to Southern Luzon covering the provinces of Laguna, Batangas and Cavite.

TMC South Luzon will have a full complement of top-quality diagnostic and treatment services, drawing from the strengths of TMC's centers of excellence and flagship programs, which include Wellness, Cardiovascular, Diabetes and Cancer Care. New services will also be brought into TMC South Luzon with the planned upgrading of its Radiology Section, Catheterization Laboratory, Emergency Department and Operating Room.

Its eye center is also being upgraded in terms of equipment and the recruitment of additional ophthalmologists to allow the diagnosis and treatment of complex eye procedures that are usually done in larger hospitals in urban areas like Manila. TMC South Luzon can likewise handle not just the usual health issues but even more complex cases.

"The expansion in bed capacity from 50 to 150 beds over the next two years reflects the anticipated strong growth

of Region IV, this anchored on robust commercial and residential development extending from Santa Rosa to as far west as Tagaytay and Silang, eastward into Laguna de Bay, north to Muntinlupa and Las Pinas, and south into the northern portions of Batangas province," said TMC President and CEO Dr. Alfredo R. A. Bengzon.

Dr. Jose O. Juliano, President and CEO of Calamba Medical Center adds, "We welcome this opportunity to closely work with The Medical City. SLHMC stands to reap the benefits of this strong partnership as it aims to reach the next level of growth and expansion."

TMC's entry into SLHMC reinforces its strategy to expand its national presence by developing a network that extends the reach and broadens the TMC brand. Aside from TMC South Luzon, TMC operates a network of hospitals located in Iloilo and Clark, which was opened in January 2015 and a 36 clinic sites in 32 locations in Metro Manila and strategic provinces. This year, TMC also opened Guam Regional Medical City, the first and only private hospital in Guam, and an ambulatory clinic in Dubai. Scheduled to open next year is TMC Pangasinan.

"TMC South Luzon is a new beacon for TMC's unique brand of patient partnership where patients and doctors openly and equally collaborate towards effective, personalized care for the people of Region IV," says Dr. Bengzon.



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## Tia Belle's and Three Years of Good Pinoy Eats

The singular talent of Evelyn Wise is quite manifest in the story Tia Belle's. The devoted proprietress' gracious, hands-on management of the popular Filipino comfort food eatery has proven how she is a bonafide triple threat—innovative, determined and all out hospitable.

From the start, Evelyn had already intended that the core of Tia Belle's would be simple: to serve original Pinoy flavors. The uphill climb was mostly on the imperative to obtain her aunt Belle's cooking acumen. She needed to learn it, imbibe it, perfect it, and afterwards add her own contributions to the recipes, by tweaking it—not to become some imagination-defying concoction—but just a little bit...just to put on her personal touch.

So from the essential Pinoy favorites like linaga, kare-kare, kaldereta, paksiw, dinuguan, lumpia, ginataan, pinirito, sisig, binagoongan, embutido, eskabetsa, adobo, sinigang, relleno, pinangat, torta, and pancit, Tia Belle's menu entrees have evolved to achieve finely considered pairings that add up to a savory course of contemporary best-sellers oozing just the same with traditional home-cooked warmth.



Because Tia Belle's also wishes customers good health, the super healthy Oolong Tea is served FREE-OF-CHARGE.



Suman Cacao



Lumpiang Bukid



Lumpia Sa Laguna



Of course, Tia Belle's signature is all over the renowned Pancit Malabon and the Pichi-Pichi that everyone's gone crazy about after trying.



Bahay Kubo  
(Sari-saring Gulay Pinoy)



At P350., Tia Belle's Bulalo Sa Laguna is a hearty filler.



Tia Belle also offers season favorites like the "very in-demand" bibingka and puto bumbong.



Evelyn also made a good move joining forces with 5 cooks who come from different regions and know how to cook--Kapampangan, Bikolano, Tagalog, Visaya at Ilocano. The result: from starters, way down to appetizers, Tia Belle's can offer a plenary of things to eat...all delectably Filipino. And that is precisely why this place has garnered its fair share of loyal patrons, even as it remains quaint and down-to-earth homey.

Now celebrating its 3<sup>rd</sup> year anniversary, Tia Belle's success further highlights Evelyn's brilliance in ensuring Pinoy food lovers are satisfied continuously.

"I wish to thank Tia Belle's loyal patrons...by improving, innovating, making our food and service better everytime. I even listen to their suggestions", says Evelyn, who feels truly grateful to her customers who have come in a steadily increasing stream since they opened.

A place where Pinoy dining is at once comforting and gastronomically gratifying, Tia Belle's is where the natively traditional and avant-garde simultaneously please, with grassroots warmth and familial savors...just like home.



Recent additions to the menu, the Spicy Batter Chicken and the Manok sa Pugaran, are already making waves among the patrons.



ChickenBelle Crumbs



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## OTHER NEWS

### Good Looks, Humor of Politicians, Still Effective Tools

As they campaigned in Laguna, some politicians found that good looks and some humor still work in garnering votes.



When Senators Grace Poe and Francis "Chiz" Escudero visited STI College in Calamba, Laguna and the University of Perpetual Help in Binan, Laguna, students shrieked from the sheer thrill of seeing them up close.

The presidential and vice presidential aspirants, respectively, were accompanied by 5 senatorial bets, namely, Manila Vice Mayor Isko Moreno; Congressmen Sherwin Gatchalian, Roman Romulo and Samuel Pagdilao; and lawyer Lorna Kapunan.



Isko Moreno came out as some sort of heart throb to the students of STI College in Calamba, Laguna when he compared his life with them when he was a struggling poor boy.

"Yung iba malalim ang suliranin yung iba naman ay mababaw katulad ng iniwan ka ng dyowa mo. Pag iniwan ka ng BF (boyfriend) mo, palitan mo. Move on! Magpa bebe ka naman," he said, drawing a loud cheer from the students.

A former actor, Moreno attempted to erase doubts on his ability to serve the public and hold a higher post in government. He said by getting a break as an actor, he was able to rise from poverty, and now he wants to give back to the people.

Escudero, meanwhile, charmed the students with his humor, saying he's been going against the advice of his grandfather who told him: when choosing companions, make sure you're the most good-looking one. Escudero was referring to his handsome companions and pointed out Calamba Mayor Timmy Chipeco, aside from Isko Moreno, adding that Chipeco was not only handsome but a bachelor too.



And, of course, being married to actress Heart Evangelista, Escudero just had to mention his wife.



Drawing more laughter from the audience, he said he may not have the celebrity looks of his companions, but at least he was able to hook a celebrity. In closing he said he just wished to greet the students, from "Heart" and from his heart, a remark which reaped loud cheers from the crowd.

Grace Poe then added that many of their senatorial candidates are not only good looking but they also have plans for the people and the country. She jested afterwards, asking the lady students if they like what they see in their Senate slate, to which the students responded with an agreeing applause.

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- New guidelines on preparation of tax returns
- What's new on annualization of withholding tax of employees, updating of status of employees & issuance of BIR Form 2316 introduced last July 2015
- Statutory compliance on registration of books of accounts
- What's new on preparation of inventory list & changes introduced last October 2015
- Local business registration & ongoing local tax amnesty offered by respective LGUs
- What's new in the BIR and how these affect your future compliance
- Recent developments on income tax cut: Where are we now?
- Impact of BIR's computerization projects on our present compliance
- A revisit of controversial tax evasions cases filed in 2015 & alleged modus operandi
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# K to 12: The rise of low-fee private schools for profit

By ANNE MARXZE D. UMIL [Bulatlat.com](http://Bulatlat.com)

**MANILA – As the government’s new curriculum nears its full-blown implementation next school year, the last quarter of 2015 saw parents of Grade 10 students scrambling to find low-cost private schools which offer senior high school (SHS) – the additional two years of secondary education under K to 12.**

Earlier this year, the Department of Education (DepEd) announced that only 5,800 out of the 7,748 public high schools in the Philippines are set to offer Grades 11 and 12.

Education Secretary Armin Luistro, FSC said that up to 2.2 million students can be accommodated in public schools, but some 800,000 to one million students are expected to go to private high schools and colleges, state universities and colleges that will offer senior high school.

Now here comes the Affordable Private Education Centers, also known as APEC schools, which promise low-cost, “world-class quality education,” to appeal to lower- to middle-income families who cannot afford college-level fees for the added two years of high school.

However, many K to 12 critics say that, with the rise of schools such as Apec, the new curriculum would not only be geared toward producing cheap labor for big business, but also paves the way for big business to get even more profits: through education.



*APEC School on second level of street side commercial property*

## Education is good business

In May 2014, the Ayala Corporation announced its new business venture — low-cost private high school.

The Apec schools are a chain of for-profit secondary schools, created by British company Pearson PLC,



*Curtis Riep (left), the author of the research “‘Corporatised Education in the Philippines: Pearson, Ayala Corporation and the emergence of Affordable Private Education Centers (Apec) and Angelo Gavrielatos (right), Education International’s program coordinator express concern over the interference of private sector in the Philippine public education system. (Photo by A. Umil/ Bulatlat.com)*

the biggest education corporation in the world, through its venture capital fund the Pearson Affordable Learning Fund (PALF), and Ayala Corporation, through its edu-business arm, LiveIt Global Services Management Institute (LGSMI).

A recently released research commissioned by Education International, however, revealed that behind the promise of low-cost but world-class education is a profit-driven design aimed to supply cheap labor to global industrial capitalists.

The research entitled “Corporatised Education in the Philippines: Pearson, Ayala Corporation and the emergence of Affordable Private Education Centers (Apec),” was written by Canadian Curtis B. Riep, a doctorate student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta.

The independent research commissioned by Education International said K to 12 created an opportunity for private corporations to take part in the Philippine education system. In this case, the Ayala and Pearson conglomerates have built Apec schools targeting lowest-income learners.

Education International (EI) is an organization of educators in 170 countries around the globe.

## Promoting privatization

Apec schools are packaged as world-class private high schools at an affordable cost, for as low as P64 a day which includes books, computers and fees.

But Riep said Apec school fees still cost at least P24,850 (\$527) a year, or 40 percent of the income of a poor family.

Riep said there are currently 12 APEC schools in the National Capital Region with approximately 1,500 students. He said APEC plans to expand in the next years to come.

In 2016, it plans to double its chain to 24 schools serving 4,000 students. He said that in 10 years time, APEC plans to grow and expand their chain of schools to 500 schools serving 250,000 students in the whole Philippines.

“An APEC student paying at least 25,000 per year for classroom services and with this rate, 250,000 youth paying P25,000 is a very, very lucrative business venture for Ayala and Pearson,” said Riep.

## DepEd lifts own regulations

But how did Apec schools cut down its expenses? Riep’s research said DepEd has relaxed a number of regulations “so that Apec and its shareholders can implement their low-cost, for-profit schooling experiment with limited government restriction.”

For one, DepEd has given permission for Apec schools to operate in unused or vacant commercial buildings which Apec could lease, instead of purchasing land and constructing proper school facilities.

James Centenera, former business development manager of Pearson Affordable Learning Fund who was interviewed by Riep for the research, said that they talked to the government to have some regulations relaxed.

The DepEd’s Manual of Regulations for Private Schools in Basic Education states: “Unless exempted by the Secretary, each private school shall own its site, or shall have a definite and feasible program for ultimate ownership thereof within a reasonable period, which should be adequate and suitable for the build-

ings and activities of the school.”

In the research, a property space rented by Apec is typically on the upper levels of vacated commercial buildings that include three to four office rooms, transformed into secondary classrooms that house approximately 30 to 45 students each.

The research also said that because the school facilities have been downsized, Apec schools have no science laboratories, gymnasiums, or libraries, which DepEd requires of all private secondary schools.

“Apec is forced to be creative in their usage of operational space for classes such as physical education (PE) or laboratory-oriented courses. One Apec teacher explained, ‘PE is difficult in our space because it’s so small the children can’t really move around. But we try to maximize the space to try and get the children to move around a bit,’” said the study.

Like the condition in public schools, Riep said there were complaints on poor air ventilation and overcrowded classrooms. If school management puts on air conditioning, they will also pass the cost to clients — in this case, the students.

“Because at the end of the day we are not a charitable institution, we are still a business. So is it going to be profitable for the company?” the research said, quoting an Apec school head.

## Low qualification, low compensation for teachers

The research also revealed that approximately 70 percent of teachers in all Apec schools do not have proper professional accreditation, which is the Licensure Examination for Teachers, required by DepEd for secondary school teachers. Riep said these teachers are also paid severely low wages.



*Inside an APEC classroom*

Riep said Apec teachers, referred to as “learning facilitators,” receive lesson guides that tell them what to cover and provides them with activities to facilitate a class.

“We ask teachers not to deviate from the lesson guide because it can provide inconsistency across the chain and we don’t know if all teachers are equipped to do it otherwise,” an Apec administrator was quoted as saying in the research.

The DepEd, the research said, also permitted Apec to lower the standard for a qualified teacher.

In a news report, Apec Human Resources director Pam Wu said that they give low compensation to teachers to ensure that they “are able to balance cost and revenue.”

Riep quoted one Apec school manager as saying: “Sometimes quality is compromised because of the companies’ concern for making profit.”

With this, Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) secretary general, France Castro said the Apec and the DepEd is violating the teachers’ rights. “This only proves that these private schools are not really operating for service but for profit. What’s worse is that the DepEd is in connivance with these corporations — the Ayala and Pearson.”

“It only goes to show how subservient our government is to the dictates of corporations,” she added.

## Cheap labor for companies

Riep’s research showed that Apec schools were designed to produce cheap and flexible labor not only to the local but also global labor market.

“By focusing on skills and traits required by industry and reverse-engineering a curriculum to inculcate the necessary dispositions, Apec’s corporatized system of education has oriented learner outcomes to serve the interests of industrial capitalists,” the research read.

The research quoted Apec president Alfredo Ayala’s explanation: “We literally brought Ayala com-

(continued next page)



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K to 12...(from page 8)

panies to the campus and asked Bank of the Philippine Islands or Globe Telecom to tell us what they need to hire by March, what are the specs, observe the high performers and let's reverse engineer the curriculum."

In turn, Riep said, "Apec students learn skills that include processing bank loans and selling android phones."

Riep said Apec follows the DepEd's K to 12 curriculum by offering mathematics, science, English, Filipino, social studies, MAPEH (music, arts, physical education and health) and TLE (technology and livelihood education). However, Apec's curricula focuses on employability skills and traits, at the expense of foundational subject learning.

Apec curriculum also focuses on English communication skills required for employment in call centers.

In turn, Riep said, Apec schools involve two forms of privatization: de facto privatization in the form of user fees paid for by students in exchange for basic education, and privatization that exists because of the increasing private control and influence in the social relations of production.

He said this is demonstrated by the joint venture between Ayala and Pearson that aims to produce a repository of labor with the skills, knowledge and values in demand by industry.

Angelo Gavrielatos, project coordinator of Education International lamented that instead of pushing for free education, government even promotes Apec schools, which are not that cheap.

"Rather than investing in quality free primary and secondary education for all, the Philippine government is encourag-



**Education International (EI) is an organization of educators in 170 countries around the globe, calls on all government to prioritize students before profit. (Photo by A. Umil/ Bulatlat.com)**

ing the growth of for-profit Apec private schools. Fees charged by Apec represent about 40 percent of the income of the poor in the Philippines. That's hardly affordable," Gavrielatos said at the launch of the research in November.

**A nation of low-wage, contractual workers**

Apec schools, in line with DepEd's K to 12, promise employability, but critics of the K to 12 argued that it will not solve the joblessness that has plagued the country for decades.

In a Bulatlat.com report, labor group Kilusang Mayo Uno said K to 12 will further make the country a "nation of

low-wage workers persistently locked in contractual employment."

Through K to 12, the labor group said the production of cheap labor will be even more systematic.

The KMU said the government has been promoting lies about "jobs mismatch" as an excuse for the widespread unemployment in the country and for retooling the country's education system to further suit the interests of big foreign and local capitalists.

The group said many Filipinos are jobless because only a few jobs are available in the country, not because Filipinos are not skilled enough for the available jobs. "It is foolish to think that the country's problem in employment can be

solved by adjustments in the education system," group said.

**'Invest in education'**

Gavrielatos said the government has an obligation to properly fund education. "What we're worried about is that the announcement of K to 12 without the necessary funding is providing an opportunity, and in fact, the government is encouraging the entry of corporate, for-profit, non-state actors to come to education. For-profit actors are driven by the profit making. That is the primary objective — to increase profit," Gavrielatos said in a separate interview with Bulatlat.com.

He added that the profit motive has no place in dictating what is taught in schools, how it's taught or how schools are organized because in that world the first casualty are students and quality of education.

"To generate profits, Apec and other similar chains, employ fewer and unqualified teachers and provide facilities which do not comply to standards. What's quite regrettable in this regard, and almost scandalous, is that the government has waived regulations that exist in the provision of education, to satisfy the business interests of Pearson and Ayala," Gavrielatos said.

"Whenever you put a price on education, it's a barrier when it comes to access in education. We call on all governments to fulfill its obligation to provide the political and financial commitment necessary to realize free primary and secondary education for all," Gavrielatos added.



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