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THRIVING IN THE MARGINS: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION RE-IMAGINED

(Speech delivered at the 15th SEAMEO Innotech International Conference, March 6, 2018)

Sheikh Manssour Bin Mussallam

President, The Education Relief Foundation

Your Excellency, Secretary of Education of the Republic of the Philippines; Honourable Director of SEAMEO Innotech; Esteemed Members of the SEAMEO Innotech Senior Management; Distinguished delegates to the 15th SEAMEO Innotech International Conference; Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning.

Over the course of 2017, in my capacity as President of the Education Relief Foundation, I have made numerous speeches about the organisation and its mission. And as speech succeeded speech, they gradually, sentence by sentence and then in a sudden swoop, standardised themselves. Today, whilst I will certainly explain ERF's mission and activities, centred around the concept of Balanced and Inclusive Education, abbreviated as BIE in our Geneva office, I would like to commence in an order different to that of my past speeches, by beginning from my usual conclusion. I would like to do so because of the theme of this conference: "Thriving in the Margins: Inclusive Education Re-Imagined."

This theme is extremely ambitious, which makes ERF privileged in co-sponsoring it, because it dares us to momentarily halt our, often laudable activities, immovable from the present in which we act; to not only share our past experiences but also project ourselves into the future; challenging us to step beyond the realm of the feasibly imaginable into the world of what could be, because it should be, if we only dare make it possible.

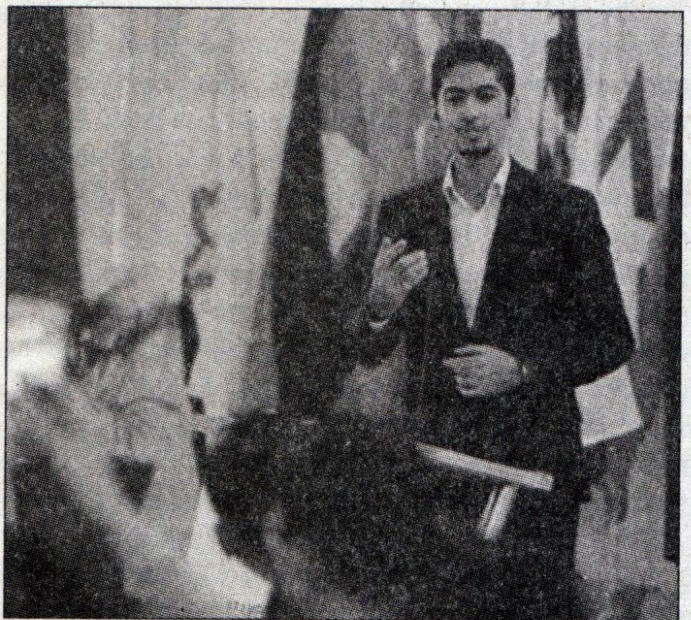
On the 10th of December 1957, Albert Camus was bestowed the Nobel Prize of Literature. During the award ceremony at which he delivered his lecture, he said: "Each generation, probably, feels called upon to 're-make' the world. Mine, however, knows that it will not 're-make' it. But its task is perhaps greater

still, for it consists in preventing that the world 'un-makes' itself."

And today, in 2018, over 60 years after Camus's speech, our task is twice as complex and multiple times as urgent: to ensure that the world does not unmake itself whilst simultaneously re-making it. And many are those, now, that may believe that I am engaging in substandard sophistry, seeking to purchase more enthusiastic applauses with some fleeting inspiration in exchange. I will leave this for reflection.

But regardless of sincerity or sophistry, this conference, to achieve its aspiration of re-imagining inclusive education, must demonstrate that this is indeed no second-rate sophistry from ERF.

There is no doubt, as you all know, that our societies are no longer sustainable: our social contracts are fracturing, our societal fabrics are unfurling, and our environmental equilibria are further destabilising. Humanity is now, in the words of the renowned French philosopher and ERF friend, Edgar Morin, "on a planetary Titanic."



Continued on the next page

One of the battle cries of the Department of Education is to achieve its mission and vision to the Filipino learners – to give access to education and to produce competent and knowledgeable citizens of tomorrow. Today the challenge is very clear that our government should have a clear solution to all the old problems in the arena of education.

The agreement with UNESCO and other concerned nations and organizations, strongly stated that by the year 2015, there should be no more dropouts in all schools in the nation. That is why society expects that Education will be the solution to all problems in our nation. But how can we achieve this if the performance of our Grade V pupils is only 50.09% and based on the study that teachers are complying rather than performing inside the classroom? They are not ready to produce graduates who can compete in the trend of modernization and globalization of the world. Today, this scenario will mark a bench point on the bases for planning of the different programs and projects of the Department of education.

The programs and projects created by the Department of Education encourage every teacher, school administrator, and other personnel in the field to give their best every day to uplift the quality of our education. One of the programs that help to improve the competencies of the teacher is Gabay Mentoring where the teachers

ONE FOR ALL, ALL FOR ONE:

DepEd Commitments to the Nation

will choose their best teacher to assist the new teacher or teachers who they think need assistance in terms of the content mastery because we all know that we cannot teach what we do not know. Another project for the teachers is Project Turn Around which is a special intervention project of DepEd (DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2007). It aims to increase the performance of schools that scored low in the NAT. Specifically, it identifies the schools whose mean was 34% and below and which were given special training and intervention schemes. This program will enhance the different pedagogical trainings in the different learning areas. The government has not stopped implementing programs and projects for the improvement of performance of the teachers.

On the other aspects, the

**We are mandated by
our Philippine Constitution
to give quality education
to our clientele –
the children we consider
as the leaders of
tomorrow.**

DepEd and other concerned organizations unite in one mission to give the best to the pupils. Through the assistance of the Australian government, the public schools received new classroom buildings for the betterment of the learning process. There are a lot of organizations that help in the public schools like in the feeding programs and other related activities in terms of the performance of the children. PROJECT REACH or reaching all children – even the children at risk are another concern of the Department of Education that all children ages 6-15 must be in the public schools for the eradication of dropouts in our nation. One of the programs that help our pupils a lot is Drop Out Reduction which means that DORP is an intervention program to reduce the high dropout rate and improve learning outcomes in public and private schools of the country, using formal and informal approaches. The program aims to facilitate access of every Filipino to quality basic education and equip him with the basic literacy tools and content that are essential for his growth and development as a person and as a citizen of a democratic society. DORP has the objective of reducing if not totally eliminating school dropouts, increase retention rate, retrieve