

THE VISION & MISSION OF A SCHOOL OF THEIR OWN

by

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I – INTRODUCTION

AN INCREDULOUS PSO ADMINISTRATOR RECENTLY ASKED ME IN A SOMEWHAT EXASPERATED TONE – “DOES ANYBODY EVEN BOTHER TO READ OUR REPORTS? REVIEW OUR YEARBOOKS?” PROMPTED TO TELL A “WHITE LIE” BUT FEARFUL THAT I MIGHT BE ASKED A BARRAGE OF QUESTIONS, I SHEEPISHLY GAVE A VAGUE ANSWER. BUT IF ASKED AGAIN TODAY -- I CAN BOLDLY SAY -- “I DO”!

GIVEN OUR ESTIMATED 10.5 MILLION OVERSEAS FILIPINOS IN 217 DESTINATIONS WORLDWIDE, I HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE TO HAVE MET AND ENGAGED IN CURIOUS CONVERSATIONS...PERHAPS, AROUND A THOUSAND...MAYBE LESS. BUT SAD TO SAY, THESE WERE ALWAYS ABBREVIATED, RUSHED AND OFTEN UNRECORDED. THE SAME CAN BE SAID OF THE NUMBERS OF MIGRANTS I HAVE READ ABOUT, INCLUDING THOSE FROM THE PHILIPPINE SCHOOLS OVERSEAS, WHOSE HARD WORK HAS BEEN DOCUMENTED IN ONE FORM OR OTHER, BUT WHOSE COLLECTIVE IMPACT ON OUR PEOPLE’S HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REMAINS DIFFICULT TO QUANTIFY, AND IF AT ALL, WE DO SO ONLY ANECDOTALLY.

AS A HISTORIAN, EVERY ENCOUNTER WITH AN OVERSEAS FILIPINO -- PERMANENT, TEMPORARY, UNDOCUMENTED HE/SHE MAY BE -- AS OLD AS MR. TOMAS AVENDANO, OUR 84-YEAR OLD PRESIDENTIAL AWARDEE IN 2012 AND FOUNDER OF THE MULTI-CULTURAL HELPING HOUSE SOCIETY IN VANCOUVER, CANADA, OR AS YOUNG AS FRANCINE DINGLASAN, DISTINGUISHED ALUMNA OF PHILIPPINE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL QATAR AND NOW MAKING A NAME AT CARNEGIE MELLON INSTITUTE IN THE EDUCATION CITY IN DOHA, QATAR -- I HAVE LEARNED THAT EACH ONE HAS A VERY INTERESTING LIFE STORY TO SHARE. AND RATHER THAN PUT TOGETHER A COFFEE TABLE BOOK, I SEE MYSELF WANTING TO PUT TOGETHER AN ENCYCLOPAEDIA IN ITS STEAD, AND IN DIGITAL FORMAT TOO FOR EASY REFERENCE AND PORTABILITY.

BUT WHERE DO I BEGIN?

II – THE PSO -- AN UNKNOWN ENTITY

ALLOW ME TO BEGIN WITH WHAT I STILL CONSIDER AN “UNKNOWN ENTITY” – THE 41-42 PHILIPPINE SCHOOLS OVERSEAS AND THE REST THAT OVER THE YEARS, HAVE OPENED AND CLOSED, OR MOVED UP TO GO INTERNATIONAL AND NO LONGER

CONSIDERED A PSO PER THE QUALIFIERS FOUND IN THE PSO MANUAL OF OPERATIONS AND REGULATIONS.

TODAY I AM PLEASED TO SHARE A FEW TALKING POINTS AND EVENTUALLY SEGUE INTO THE RECORDS OF A MOST COMMENDABLE ACCOMPLISHMENT THAT PAYS TRIBUTE -- AND NOT JUST LIP SERVICE -- TO OUR OVERSEAS FILIPINOS. AND WHAT BETTER AUDIENCE TO REFLECT WITH, THAN THE VERY MEN AND WOMEN OF THE PSOS, YOU -- WHO HAVE BEEN SO BUSY DOING YOUR SCHOOLWORK, AND PROBABLY NEVER STOPPED TO LISTEN NOR LEARNED ABOUT HOW APPRECIATIVE WE ARE OF YOUR GOOD DEEDS.

TOO OFTEN DO WE HEAR OF THE \$22BILLION (AS OF END 2012) REMITTANCE INFLOW THAT REPORTEDLY KEEPS THE PH ECONOMY AFLOAT.

TOO OFTEN DO WE HEAR PEANS OFFERED HONORING “ANG ATING MGA BAGONG BAYANI,” THE MOST TEAR-JERKING MOMENTS BEING WHEN THEY ARE BROUGHT HOME IN COFFINS OR, EVEN BEFORE THEN, WHEN THEY ARE FACING THE PROSPECTS OF BEHEADING WHICH ALSO BECOME PATHETIC PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR ASPIRING POLITICIANS AND DO-GOODERS.

TOO OFTEN, AWARDS ARE GIVEN LEFT AND RIGHT, PURPORTEDLY SHOWCASING THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS AND HARD WORK, BUT OFTEN OVERSHADOWED BY THE PRODUCT PROMOTIONS OF THE EVENTS’ SPONSORS OR THE PERSONALITY PROFILING OF CELEBRITIES AND CONVENORS.

TOO OFTEN HAVE WE HEARD AND READ COMPLAINTS ABOUT THEIR SUFFERINGS ON RADIO, TV, PRINT AND DIGITAL MEDIA – THE LITANY OF CASES OF ILLEGAL RECRUITMENT, CONTRACT VIOLATIONS, SEXUAL ABUSE, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, TRAFFICKING, AND DEATH – AND THEY NEVER END!

HOWEVER, I DARE SAY, TOO LITTLE – AND CERTAINLY NOT ENOUGH -- IS KNOWN ABOUT THE COLLECTIVE THAT IS OUR PHILIPPINE SCHOOLS OVERSEAS! WHENEVER I WAX ELOQUENT ABOUT PSOS, (OUR ACRONYM) AND THAT THERE ARE 40+ OF THEM IN 10 COUNTRIES, WITH AROUND 31,000 STUDENTS AND 900 FACULTY -- I ALWAYS GET A QUIZZICAL LOOK, FOLLOWED BY A POLITE RESPONSE... “AH GANOON BA?... TALAGA?” ... “REALLY?!”

III – LIKE A DIAMOND... PSO FACETS FOR POLISHING

ALTHOUGH, IN THE INTEREST OF TIME AND ENERGY (YOURS AND MINE), THE INTRODUCTORY AUDIO-VISUAL PRESENTATION GIVING A RETROSPECTIVE ON THE PSOS FOLLOWS AFTER MY PRESENTATION, I WOULD LIKE TO RATIONALIZE AND SUM UP OUR REASONS FOR CONVENING THIS 11TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

LIKENED TO A DIAMOND, WE ARE HERE TO POLISH THE MANY FACETS OF OUR PHILIPPINE SCHOOLS OVERSEAS. LET ME TO COUNT THE WAYS:

A. MANAGING THE PSO

OUR MIGRANT COMMUNITY OVERSEAS HAS BEEN BUILDING QUALITY SCHOOLS OF THEIR OWN SINCE THE 1980S. NEEDLESS TO SAY, LIKE ALL EDUCATIONAL VENTURES THAT ARE CONSIDERED AS "CASH COWS" -- PSOS AS SUCCESSFUL EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISES SHOULD NOT ONLY PRODUCE ACCOMPLISHED STUDENTS, BUT IN ORDER TO SURVIVE, MUST ALSO BE WELL-MANAGED:

- **ABLE TO BALANCE THEIR BUDGETS;**
- **COVER THEIR OVERHEAD EXPENSES;**
- **PROVIDE FOR THEIR FACULTY;**
- **ENGAGE THEIR PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES;**
- **OBSERVE HOST COUNTRY REGULATIONS; AND**
- **COMPLY WITH PHILIPPINE BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS.**

AN END-GOAL IS SELF OR PEER EVALUATION TO EVENTUALLY GET WEANED AWAY FROM THE DEPED REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AS AUTONOMOUS PRIVATE SCHOOLS, AND ULTIMATELY, ASPIRE FOR INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION. THIS PROMISES TO BE THE WAY TO GO FOR PSOS -- TO MOVE UP AND FORWARD.

B. THE PSO CONFERENCES

THE TEN (10) ANNUAL CONFERENCES THAT HAVE BEEN HELD INTERMITTENTLY IN THE PHILIPPINES AND IN SELECTED PSO HOST COUNTRY VENUES, ARE ADMITTEDLY OCCASIONS FOR WELL-DESERVED "RNR+". AS POSITIVELY PUT BY DR. ALEX ACOSTA OF PSO DOHA, THESE ARE ORGANIZED FOR "PLEASURE W/A PURPOSE" -- TO SOFTEN THE EDGES AND FRAZZLED NERVES OF OVERWORKED ACADEMICS, TO SHARPEN EDUCATION MANAGEMENT SKILLS OF TRUSTEES, PRINCIPALS AND ADMINISTRATORS, AND TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT -- MANY OF WHOM ARE ALSO PARENTS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS AND PHILIPPINE DIPLOMATS THEMSELVES. INPUTS AND UPDATES FROM FELLOW EDUCATORS, MANAGEMENT SPECIALISTS, EXPERTS IN PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES, CULTURAL IMMERSION. ALL THESE HAVE MADE CONFERENCING SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO AT THE END OF A BUSY SCHOOLYEAR IN A DISTANT LAND.

C. THE K TO 12 CHALLENGE

WE ARE HERE TO FURTHER ENHANCE OUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AS A COUNTRY AND AS A PEOPLE. WHILE I SHALL LEAVE THE MODALITIES OF DELIVERING THIS INNOVATIVE CURRICULAR PROGRAM TO OUR RESOURCE PERSONS FROM THE DEPED AND FROM THE EXPERIENCED PSOS, SUFFICE IT TO REMIND OURSELVES THAT ITS ADOPTION IN THE PSOS AS PRIVATE ENTITIES -- WITH MANAGEABLE STUDENT POPULATIONS, MORE THAN ADEQUATE FACILITIES, TIGHTLY SUPERVISED FACULTY AND STAFF, IN A

RELATIVELY CONTROLLED OVERSEAS ENVIRONMENT – GIVES THEM AN EDGE TO LEAP FORWARD. THIS BENEFICIAL SITUATION IS IN MARKED CONTRAST TO THAT OF OUR PHILIPPINE-BASED, PARTICULARLY, OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH THEIR MULTIPLE PROBLEMS: LACK OF FACILITIES, PAUCITY OF TEACHERS, DEARTH OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS, REMOTE LOCATIONS, IMPOVERISHED STUDENT BODIES -- THAT MAKE EDUCATION INACCESSIBLE TO THOSE WHO NEED IT THE MOST. LUCKY INDEED ARE THE CHILDREN IN OUR PSOS, COMPARED TO THEIR COUNTERPARTS – THE CHILDREN OF MIGRANTS LIKE THEMSELVES, BUT WHO BEAR THE SOCIAL COSTS OF SEPARATION FOR BEING LEFT BEHIND BY THEIR FATHER AND MOTHERS. THE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE THAT WE MUST MAXIMIZE IS SELF-EVIDENT.

D. THE PSO-ASSOCIATION OF PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

WE WELCOME THE COMING TOGETHER OF THE PSOS AS A COMMUNITY OF OFFSHORE EDUCATORS. ORGANIZING REPRESENTS A MATURE RESPONSE TO THE NEED FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AMONG PEERS. IT PRESAGES A DESIRABLE MECHANISM FOR STANDARDIZATION THAT ALLOWS OUR MOBILE MIGRANT POPULATION TO LIKewise BE ASSURED NOT JUST OF QUALITY BUT ESPECIALLY OF THE EASE OF TRANSFERRING THEIR CHILDREN'S CREDENTIALS ACROSS HOST COUNTRY DESTINATIONS WHERE NEW OR BETTER EMPLOYMENT AND RESIDENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES MAY BE FOUND. THIS COMMON ASPIRATION AND READINESS FOR PROFESSIONAL PEER REVIEW AND EVENTUAL INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION CAN ONLY FURTHER OUR PSO ALUMNI AND FACULTY'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE LARGER GLOBAL MARKET.

E. THE PSO AS INCUBATOR OF TRANSNATIONALISM (“TRANS-NATSIS”)

BEYOND INSTITUTIONALIZING THE K TO 12, WE SEE AN EMERGENT PLATFORM FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN PSOS. FOR EXAMPLE -- IN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE STUDIES, HENCE OUR LAUNCHING OF THE “VIRTUAL SENTRO RIZAL” (IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS) AS REFERENCE FOR THOSE SEEKING FOR PROFICIENCY IN THE ARTS. AND TOMORROW EVENING, THE CULINARY ARTS COMPETITION – “LUTO-LUTUAN” (IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MAMA SITA FOUNDATION) WILL PROVIDE AN OCCASION FOR ENGAGING OUR YOUTH IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF PHILIPPINE HIGH END CUISINE AS ENTERPRENEURIAL FOODIES. INDEED, THERE ARE LIMITLESS POSSIBILITIES FOR A FUNCTIONAL MULTI-LINGUALISM GIVEN THAT THE PSO STUDENTS' CAN SHARPEN THEIR FACILITY IN PILIPINO, ENGLISH, ARABIC/CHINESE/GREEK ETC. IN ADDITION TO ONGOING ACADEMIC COMPETITIONS, THESE WILL GEAR THEM FOR LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN MULTI-CULTURAL OR CROSS-CULTURAL FIELDS IN THE PHILIPPINES OR OVERSEAS – IN GOVERNMENT (DEPT. FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEPT. OF TOURISM, DEPT. OF TRADE & INDUSTRY, COMMISSION ON FILIPINOS OVERSEAS, THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT; THE MULTILATERAL INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES (THE WORLD BANK, THE INTERNATIONAL

MONETARY FUND, THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM); THE PRIVATE SECTOR (BANKING, MANUFACTURING, TECHNOLOGY); OR SOCIAL ENTERPRISES, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS; OR AS ACADEMIC PIONEERS AND TRAILBLAZERS IN MULTI-CULTURAL STUDIES – FOR EXAMPLE, WHY NOT ARAB STUDIES WHICH IS SO CRITICAL FOR OUR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS?

F. PSO ALUMNI NETWORK

THE TEST OF AND TASTE OF PSO SUCCESS LIES IN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ALUMNI TRACKING. I BELIEVE THAT *ESPRIT D’CORPS* IS CULTIVATED WHERE BONDS ARE FORGED THROUGH THE GRADE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL FORMATIVE YEARS. A CASE IN POINT I AM PERSONALLY MOST FAMILIAR WITH AS A PARENT AND FORMER FACULTY MEMBER -- IS THE ATENEO SPIRIT WHICH FINDS EXPRESSION IN THE...“*FABILIOH*”... AS A RALLYING CRY THAT REVERBERATES IN SPORTS ARENAS (WHICH REALLY DOES NOT MEAN ANYTHING, PER MY JESUIT BROTHER, A FORMER CHEERLEADER); AND WHAT THEY CALL...“*MAGIS*” OR “MORE” ... WHICH AWAKENS THE DESIRE FOR EXCELLENCE; AND THE MOTTO... “*MENS SANA EN CORPORE SANO*” OR “SOUND MINDS IN SOUND BODIES” ... THAT IS FURTHER INFUSED IN GRADUATES WHO ARE “MEN AND WOMEN FOR OTHERS.” THESE, LIKE THE CHEERS, BECOME EVIDENT AND MOST POPULAR IN THE RAUCOUS BASKETBALL GAMES, BUT THEY ARE JUST AS EVIDENT IN THEIR *TULONG DUNONG* PROJECT AND IN THE “JESUIT VOLUNTEER PROGRAM” (JVP) WHEN THE STUDENTS ARE CALLED TO “COME DOWN FROM THE HILLS OF LOYOLA.”

THESE DAYS, AFTER 150+ YEARS OF EXISTENCE, THE DYNAMIC ATENEO PARENT AND ALUMNI COMMUNITY IS A FUSION OF BROTHERS, FATHERS, GRANDFATHERS, AFTER CO-EDUCATION, NOW INCLUSIVE OF SISTERS, MOTHERS AND GRANDMOTHERS. THEY CONSTITUTE AN EVER WIDENING NETWORK OF RELATIONSHIPS INFUSED WITH THE “3 P’S – PRIDE, PRESTIGE AND PAYBACK.” SO, WHY NOT “4 P’S” -- PSOS, PRIDE, PRESTIGE, AND PAYBACK” -- GOING INTO 21ST CENTURY?

IV. CONCLUSION

IN CLOSING, ALLOW ME TO SHARE A PERSONAL MANTRA THAT MAKES OUR VISION AND MISSION AS PSOS MOST IMPERATIVE: WE -- YOU AND ESPECIALLY I – WILL NOT BE AROUND FOREVER! THEREFORE, AS WE ENGAGE IN STRATEGIC PLANNING AND DESIGN OUR FORWARD LOOKING INITIATIVES IN THE REMAINING YEARS OF THE AQUINO ADMINISTRATION -- LET US GIVE THIS SERIOUS THOUGHT. AND FOR SURE, THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.

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