

UPF, PWPA and IAAP Philippines Holds Its Second Peace Talks Webinar Series

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In celebration of the United Nations International Day of Families, the Universal Peace Federation – Philippines in partnership with the Professors World Peace Academy (PWPA) and the International Association of Academicians for Peace (IAAP) successfully concluded its 2nd Peace Talks webinar series on Friday, May 15, 2020 at 6:30 – 7:30 pm. The theme was, "A Vision for World of Peace: The Need for Universal Values" and there were seven speakers and panelists, along with 80 participants from the academe, including scholars, educators and other Ambassadors for Peace from various sectors of society.

This webinar was timely and significant as educators play a crucial role in nation-building by inevitably becoming the second parents to children. Teachers take on parental responsibilities in nurturing students in their mental, social, academic and spiritual development. This webinar provided an avenue for discussion related to the implementation of the Senate Bill 1224, the "Comprehensive Values Education Act" (CVEA).

A draft response letter to the CVEA along with a pre-recorded video presentation and a Powerpoint presentation were sent out to the participants several days before the actual program. This gave more time for discussion and brainstorming.

The program started with warm greetings and introduction from the moderator, Dr. Venus G. Agustin, Ph.D., President, Professors World Peace Academy – Philippines.

The Chairman's Remarks given by Dr. Chung Sik Yong, Regional Group Chairman of UPF Asia Pacific. He said that the life and legacy of the UPF Founders, Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, have been devoted to resolving the fundamental human problems that challenge the achievement of peace. "As academicians, you are truly front liners when we talk about nation building," he said. He encouraged further cooperation among UPF, PWPA and educators to promote international cooperation among the molders of the young minds in order to realize a peaceful and sustainable future for the sake of the young people. "Our educators and educational system," Dr. Yong continued, "should cooperate to deliberate collaborative efforts in order to provide historic and sustainable solutions to the growing critical problems that our young people face." He emphasized that it is time that we focus on raising up values-oriented youth and addressing the problems that affect families such a breakdown, teenage pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, drug abuse and poverty.

The Welcome Remarks were delivered by Dr. Thomas Selover, International President of PWPA. He said that as the COVID19 virus spreads all over the world, this has given us the time to really think about what really matters in our lives and what we are teaching our children. He said that this is why the universal values that we all share play a vital role. As we discuss the universal values, it will also lead us to a deeper appreciation of the values themselves. "This initiative on the CVEA Proposal is very serious and very important and I'm so proud of my colleagues in the Philippines for taking definitive action on this matter," he said.

Dr. Robert S. Kittel, International Chairman of Youth and Students for Peace and Education Director for UPF Asia Pacific, presented a summary of his pre-recorded presentation. He began his talk by reading from the statement of the Secretary General of the United Nations in celebration of the UN's International Family Day: "We need an inclusive multilateralism based on deep interaction with civil society, businesses, local and regional authorities and other stakeholders... where the voice of the youth is decisive in shaping our future." Next, Dr. Thomas Walsh, Chairman of UPF, was acknowledged through a statement honoring this day saying, "Although families all over the world have transformed greatly over the past decades in terms of structure and as a result of global trends and demographic changes, the United Nations still recognizes the family as the basic unit of society."

Dr. Kittel then proceeded to discuss a few points mentioned in the CVEA. There were five points where the UPF and PWPA could contribute in the development of this K to 12 program: 1) Universal Principles, 2) Goodness (interreligious), 3) Good Character (patriotism and nationalism), 4) Gender Equality, and 5) Moral Behavior.

He said there were two fundamental "underlying principles" that act like pillars and beams of a building. These are the Dual-Purpose Principle (mind and body) and the Pair-System Principle (male and female) respectively. These two principles coexist together and make up the unchanging "underlying principles". If the pillars and beams collapse then the building will implode. It is the same for individual, families, societies and nations; they too will implode if the pillars and beams breaks down. That is why it is so important that we have a clear understanding of these fundamental "underlying principles" which CVEA calls for.

In his second point which is Goodness, Dr. Kittel said that it is important that we define goodness from an interreligious perspective in order to find common values. According to Father Moon, the principle of goodness is to live for the sake of others and this concept of altruism is found in the holy books of all religions. It is to live a life where we abandon our selfish desire and seek the public good.

The third point, Good Character, extends to patriotism and nationalism. Children live for the sake of others, i.e., initially for the sake of their parents. This is called filial piety. This is also the foundation for the cultivation of our conscience. This is also the underpinning of patriotism where a child willingly can sacrifice for the sake of his nation. In this case, businessmen, lawyers, teachers, religious leaders, politicians, in fact everyone, needs to be a patriot.

Gender Equality is the fourth point. Instead of trying to make genders equal, often through external means, a better idea is gender complementarity. A man thinks his wife is more valuable and more needed than himself and vice versa. A man needs a woman to be fully man; a woman needs a man to be fully woman. Together they complement and complete each other in God's image.

Finally, for his last point which is Moral Behavior, Dr. Kittel stressed the importance of the value of purity where the culture of free sex should be eliminated from society because it promotes selfishness and negates the institution of marriage.

The first panelist to give his comment was Hon. Anthony Bravo, Congressman of the House of Representatives. He talked about Peace Talks Initiatives of the Philippines Government where he discussed how the nation was tackling armed conflicts. In solving armed conflicts and hastening the peace processes, the civil society was a powerful force that can either escalate conflict or facilitate its resolution. "Civil society engagement in addressing societal problems strengthens social, economic and political development," he said.

The next panelist was Dr. Raymund P. Arcega, with the Association of Local Colleges and Universities Commissions on Accreditation (ALCUA). He said that it is important to understand our vision of world peace. He spoke about 'multilateralism' wherein each and every sector of the society has an important role to play in the attainment of sustainable peace. The education sector has a big contribution for this vision and there is nothing wrong with the curriculum. "It has been introduced and revised several times. The problem lies in the function of delivering that curriculum," he stressed. "Do we have the right people to implement this curriculum?" Values education is more of the function of the schools than in the families because unfortunately we cannot define the status of families in the Philippines. This is where educational institutions come in. "Unless and until we accept within ourselves and accept with full humility that there is something wrong in the delivery of instructions for values education, our vision of world peace will only end up as a vision and will never be a reality."

In his parting words, Dr. Arcega thanked UPF for spearheading such a noble initiative. He also said that becoming moral and ethical is a choice regardless of where you went to school. "Becoming good and godly is a decision and you can be what you want to be as a matter of choice," he quipped. "As educators we are just assisting students to be good citizens. What we're trying to do is to help you choose what is best and to see world peace during our lifetime," he ended.

Dr. Amado Magsino, President of the Philippines Association of Colleges and Schools of Business (PACSB), spoke about how PWPA can administer proper comprehensive values education in relation to Peace Education. He said that in other schools, in the tertiary level, values education is a stand-alone, one-unit course. While in some, it is incorporated in social science subjects and other general subjects. The challenge of PWPA as we seek to partner with CHED and DepEd in the proper administration in educating students with regards to value education is to look for credible teachers. "Values Education is a critical subject and not just anybody should be qualified to teach this. I highly recommend the UPF, PWPA and the International Peace Leadership College (IPLC) as an avid promoter of peace education to start this." He added, "In the IPLC we offer six subjects on Peace Education and this is infused in all programs of IPLC. This constitutes six units. The students are imbued with Peace Education and I can recommend some of our faculty members to be part of the training team to train trainers for values education." He believes that this would be for the successful implementation of this program in school.

He concluded by challenging school administrators in the delivery of values education to scrutinize the teachers/instructors very well. "Their behavior is a reflection of what and how they deliver and sometimes, this distracts the learning mode of our students if we don't choose the right teachers." He encouraged administrators and program heads to go over the integrity and credibility of the CVE teachers very well for the effective implementation of this program.

QandA

Question: As we look at the bill, it focuses on character building activities for children in schools on the K-12 level, can institutionalizing PTA as collaborators in character building be helpful to realize the purpose of the Bill?

Answer by Dr. Arcega: I agree 500% that parents should be involved. Sending their children to school should not excuse parents of their responsibility. Educating their children should be a partnership between the school and the parents. It may be a drastic proposition but I would like to suggest that parents should sign a contract with the school that they will be part of rearing and educating their child. It is a joint responsibility as stated in the Philippine Constitution.

Answer by Dr. Alicia G. Eleazar, Department of Education (DEPED) Palawan: Once it is passed through a bill, DepEd and the school will just follow it. Character building should be found in the curriculum guide used by public school teachers. Character building is also integrated in all subjects in Dep Ed. It has to be suited and appropriate in the cultures even of the indigenous people. Parents play a huge a part in preparing students for the education to be received in schools.

Question: Please enlighten us on the efforts that have been laid so far for this proposed law. Has this been deliberated or is still scheduled for deliberation? What is the next step of CVEA?

Answer by Dr. Kittel: Cong. Bravo said this bill has already been submitted and will be most likely to be signed by the President before this Session ends which is in the beginning of June.

Question: While the tool used in this conference is particularly for K to 12, may we know how Values Education is integrated in the Higher Education (HE) sector? How effective are they?

Answer by Dr. Arcega: While in basic education, we are more competency based, in Higher Education, we use a more outcome-based model or framework. In HE, it was emphasized that values education has to be integrated across all subjects. All subjects in HE are opportunities for teachers to integrate values. Even in the grading system, you will find the matrix allotted for character of the child while inside the classroom. NSTP installed in colleges which integrates nationalism, patriotism, love for God, etc.

The webinar ended with a Closing Song, *Heal Our Land*, sung by all participants, speakers and panelists together.