

OPENING REMARKS

eSkwela Turnover Ceremonies

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Good Afternoon and Welcome to the eSkwela Turnover Ceremonies.

Thank you for choosing to be at this event and not the Royal Wedding. At the very least, what we are doing here is as important to the future of education in the Philippines as the Royal Wedding is for the future of the monarchy in the United Kingdom.

In previous talks, I've referred to eSkwela as the future of Philippine education. By this I mean that eSkwela is a “disruptive innovation”. In business, “disruptive innovations either create new markets or reshape existing markets by delivering relatively simple, convenient, low cost innovations to a set of customers who are ignored by industry leaders.”¹ In the case of eSkwela, the use of ICT in alternative learning has given rise to a new, powerful model of effective lifelong learning to the out-of-school youth and adults in the country.

When I say eSkwela is the future of education, I do mean that future all schools will be exactly like eSkwela's present form.

eSkwela is the future because it is NOT based on “time served” model education. It is the future because it is NOT patterned after nor does it serve the interest of the industrial society.

eSkwela is the Future because it is Learner Focused. It is the Future because it is Life Skills Oriented. It is the Future because it is ICT empowered. It is the Future because it makes learning fun!

Like other disruptive innovations, eSkwela was created by 'outsiders' – people from CICT not DepED. Outsiders who have no vested interest in sustaining a old and arguably failed model of education.

But if CICT created such a good product in eSkwela, why transfer it to DepED?

I believe that for eSkwela to continue to grow, it must be transferred it to DepED.

eSkwela is like growing a potentially sturdy tree from a seed.

When one is starting from seed, one gives the seed the best possible chance to grow. One uses potting soil and fertilizers. One gives it the necessary amount of water and lot of tender care.

But one also knows that eventually the seedling has to be transplanted to the garden because it is crucial to the plants development.

1 <http://www.innosight.com/documents/diprimer.pdf>

The difficult question of course is - *“how do I know when my seedlings are big enough to transfer to the garden?”* Seedlings transplanted to the garden before they are ready may have a hard time surviving the elements. But waiting too long has negative consequences as well --- the seedling may no longer survive outside its original container.

Gardeners are lucky, they have a rule of thumb to determine when to transplant. The general rule of thumb is “when a seedling has 3 – 4 true leaves, it is large enough to plant out in the garden”² (For those interested “true leaves grow shortly after the cotyledons” or the first leaves to growth after a seed is planted.)

So does eSkwela have enough 'true leaves' that we are now transplanting it to DepED?

Yes and eSkwela's true leaves are the partners and stakeholders who have made it the success that it is.

As we all know, eSkwela is a collaborative undertaking. eSkwela works because government offices like CICT HCDG, DEPED BALS, and LGUs, work with SUCs, Socio-Civic and Community groups, as well as parents and concerned individuals to provide the out of school youth with the skills that would make them productive and responsible citizens. eSkwela's “true leaves” are the partners who work together to provide the less privileged among us with ICT-enabled lifelong learning.

Of course, it is not only the presence of true leaves that matters. There is also the question of quality of the soil in the garden.

I would suggest that DepED BALS has become a fecund ground. I do not know of any DepED bureau that is as committed to ICT in Education than BALS.

So, yes we can now transplant eSkwela to DepED BALS and feel confident that it would continue to grow.

But before we transplant the seedling, it is important that we give due recognition to the gardeners. Those who tended the plots, those who had fought off the weeds and battle the elements to grow eSkwela from seed to seedling with true leaves – the eSkwela team led by the constant gardener – Mel Tan.

(May I ask the eSkwela team – past and present – to please stand. And may I ask all of you to please join me in giving the eSkwela team a round of applause)

In closing, I would like to remind ourselves that while we celebrate a new beginning, it is important to remind ourselves of the continuing challenge we face.

For all of us who are here today, the challenge is to grow eSkwela into a grove of trees that covers the entire Philippine archipelago.

² <http://www.gardeningknowhow.com/vegetable/when-to-transplant-a-seedling-plant-into-the-garden.htm> most of the information on gardening are taken from this site

What is asked of us is not easy. We need courage. We need skills. We need resources, dedication and passion. We need commitment. And most of all, we need a certain amount of madness. Why, madness? Because, to quote a martyr of the struggle for Africa's total liberation: "*You cannot carry out fundamental changes without a certain amount of madness.*"³

Thank you for your patience and, once again, good afternoon.

³ http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Thomas_Sankara