**Don Alvaro del Portillo and service to society**  
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**PROVISORY TEXT**

**DON ALVARO IN THE PHILIPPINES**

Philippines. 1987. Dilapidated shanties. Civilian unrest. A society recently marred by the harrowing aftermath of Martial Law. Reforms were just in the pipeline after a historical People Power. The sight was haunting to anyone who watched a country of then 57 million Filipino people struggling to get back to their feet from unspeakable poverty and political oppression. While others spoke of the terror, one man spoke of change. Don Alvaro del Portillo.

**CHALLENGE TO HELP THE POOR**

During his 1987 pastoral visit to the Philippines, Don Alvaro, the first prelate of Opus Dei, was baffled by the paradox of socio-economic plight that beset the country. He witnessed a social fabric torn asunder by inexplicable disparity between the rich and the poor resulting from chronic corruption. In his visit to the Philippines, he said "I have seen enormous wealth and enormous poverty," while addressing a throng of audiences who attended his get-together. It was a challenge well accepted by the audience comprised of people who ran personal undertakings in poverty reduction programs and civic groups that addressed socio-economic concerns. They all agreed on one thing: poverty alleviation must start with education and not on a shortsighted solution.
In a study conducted by UP School of Economics, educational attainment is seen to be an important contributor of differences in the living standards of Filipino households. The Philippine Human Development Report in 2000 found out that 33% of Grade 1 pupils in public schools dropped out before reaching Grade 6 and relatively the same percentage of high school students dropped out before reaching fourth year. Most of the dropouts come from families belonging to the least economically advantaged sector who prefer food than books on the table. The World Bank then concluded that "because of the decision to drop out of school is permanent, a new generation of undereducated adults may well result". This vicious cycle brought about by the lack of education has now put 37% of our younger population at a losing streak.

While the figure of poverty incidence reached sky high at 29.7% in 1991, an increasing number of out-of-school youths or OSY have forfeited their opportunity to earn a better education let alone lead a better life. Some OSY are in the thick of the race with those who have remained unemployed due to the lack of entry-level skills resulting from proper training and education. Sixteen percent of the estimated 39 million Filipinos 6 to 24 years old are Out-of-School-Youth (OSY), according to the results of the 2010 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey or APIS. The report refers OSY as family members 6 to 17 years old who are not attending formal school and family members 18 to 24 years old who are currently out of school, not gainfully employed and have not finished college or post-secondary course.

Among the regions, the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao has the highest percentage of OSYs of about 24 percent of the population aged 6 to 24 years, followed by Davao (19%) and Caraga and Central Luzon, with 18 percent each. One-fifth of the total OSYs belong to the bottom 10 percent per capita income stratum.

**CITE CAME INTO BEING**

Back in Rome, Bishop Alvaro has sought the help of an Italian organization of international cooperation to study the possibility of helping to start a school in Cebu, Philippines. Four years later, in June 1991, the Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise or CITE opened its door to 97 students.
CITE is an industry-based and socially-oriented institution which plays a relevant role in the economic and social development of Cebu, the Central Visayas, and surrounding areas. The school was established with the aid of its proponents prominently in the forefront of education and training; namely, Instituto Per La Cooperazione Universitaria, Italy; Associazione Centro ELIS in Rome, Italy; MFI Foundation, Inc., Pasig City, Philippines; and University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P) Foundation, Inc., Pasig City, Philippines.

CITE provides top-quality technical training to high school graduates who belong to the lower-income stratum of society by means of scholarships.

The school's centerpiece program is called the Industrial Technician Program or ITP which is offered for three years under scholarships to high school graduates who have fervent interest in pursuing technical-vocational courses. Applicants undergo a rigid screening process called the Summer Technician Orientation Program. This training provides a foretaste of the three-year program.

Every school year, CITE receives more than 1500 applications from students from public and private high schools in the Visayas and Mindanao regions. Due to its limited resources and constraints in space and capacity, CITE can only accommodate 450 students per school year.

Once accepted, a student can specialize either in Electromechanics Technology or Information Technology under the Dual Training System or DTS. This type of program delivery combines theoretical and practical training. It is called “dual” because the training happens in two venues - the school and the company partner. Students learn the ropes of the trade in the school for one and half years and apply their technical knowhow in the industries for another one and half years.

The program embodies a strong cooperation between CITE and the company and aims to benefit both components and the students. Students benefit from in-plant training exposure as the company partner makes use of their skills and potentials to heighten productivity. The program is carried out through a training plan.
Industry partners become a sponsor to the students by contributing to his partial cost of education in CITE in the form of training subsidies. Throughout this period, the students acquire relevant knowledge and skills as their training progresses and as they become more productive. Both students and industry partners are protected under the provision of Philippine Republic Act 7686 also known as “The Dual Training System Act of 1994”.

Under the Industrial Technician Program, students receive formative activities vis-a-vis their academic preparation. The Industrial Technician Program is carefully farmed out to address the industry need for globally competitive middle-level manpower with skills-specific competencies.

Students are imbued with values formation as a result of co-curricular interventions and support systems such as one-on-one mentoring chats, advisory classes, active student clubs, and close coordination between industry supervisors and faculty members to ensure that their holistic development receives the best attention.

Parents and guardians of the students also play a significant role in the cooperative education. CITE initiates a monthly parenting seminar series and teacher conferences with class advisers to ensure that parents are updated on the performance of the students in academic, attendance, and behavior. In a span of three years, a parent will have attended 30 sessions of parenting seminars before they are awarded with the certificate of completion during graduation rites. Over 6000 parents have benefited from the parenting seminar series and other parenting formative activities such as recollections and retreats.

**CITE THROUGH THE YEARS**

During its pilot offering in 1994, CITE has produced 83 technical vocational graduates. Twenty-four years later, the number of graduates has reached 3264 strong, most of whom are gainfully employed in the country and overseas and have made an impact in the lives of their families and to the community. The current employment rate of CITE graduates is 98%.

The faculty and staff also undergo long-term training to keep them abreast with the ever changing landscape in technical-vocational education and assist them in their role in loco
parentis. Upgrading courses, activities on formations, and viable options for professional development are afforded to keep them stay in course and embrace their vocation. At present, CITE has now 72 faculty members and support staff. About 75% of them are alumni of CITE Industrial Technician Program.

CITE's strong ties with the industries boost the success rate of graduates in terms of their employability. The industries through the company supervisors, plant personnel, and industry coordinators have long provided the avenue for students under their watch to experience real-work exposure while learning the tricks of the trade. CITE has 55 partner industries in manufacturing and service sectors who are lending their resources to hone the skills of the students and prepare them for their future careers.

Other linkages that provided support systems are the scholarship grantors and benefactors, both from local government units, civic groups and individuals who look after the welfare of the poor and by whatever means necessary extend their reach to them through scholarship grants in the form of pledges, transportation and meal allowances, tuition and fees, and board and lodging expenses to keep the students stay in the program. CITE has 74 perpetual and non-perpetual scholarship grantors notwithstanding one-time donors on special occasions.

With all forces combined, students are kept in the program despite all the odds. A retention rate of 93% of students in the program is ensured through bridging programs, multi-level performance monitoring system, mentoring chats, close coordination between parents and teachers, and well-coordinated support systems to identify students at risk before they become one.

CITE’s unmitigated passion for excellence and commitment to help the underprivileged have earned recognition from its peers. Its undertakings have caught the attention of national and local organizations that put premium on technical-vocational education and training. In 2008, CITE became a two-time recipient of the Kabalikat Award from the country’s national regulatory board for its successful implementation of the Dual Training Program. CITE was also recognized as a center of excellence by the Association of Southeast Asian Nation HRD Working Group for its implementation of youth programs. The local government where CITE is located considered the school as outstanding institution in the field of technical vocational
education. These awards among others have drawn partnerships and grants for capability build-up from various funding institutions both local and international.

**CITE IMPACT**

As CITE nears its silver year celebration in February 2015, we at CITE are anything but baffled how a small school like ours has withstood the odds and setbacks despite the trying times that saw us buried neck-deep into our relentless struggles for funds and lack of resources just to stay afloat. Anyone would still wonder how a simple request from a soft-spoken prelate, Bishop Alvaro del Portillo, became a marching order for us to respond to the needs of those who have less. His words still resonate until now on the lives of its stakeholders who draw inspiration from him.

First, CITE continues to stand by his words and continues to do what it does best. It has realigned its program and quality management system to the standards of International Organization for Standardization (ISO) to send a strong message of credibility and reliability to our partner industries and prospect partners. In so doing, CITE increases the chances of its graduates to leap in the workforce.

Secondly, CITE has been part of the poverty alleviation program by providing one family at a time a technical-vocational graduate equipped with competitive skills and good work values who can readily fill talent-hungry industries. These graduates would have a profound impact on national competitiveness.

Lastly, CITE is able to develop multi-stakeholder system in training students by involving the parents, industries, teachers, benefactors in the holistic development of our manpower resources who are molded into good citizens.

Philippines. 2015. Food on every table. Opportunities for the poor. Quality education for the youth. All is possible as shown by an ordinary man who stood by his passion to serve the poor, moved people into action, and inspired everyone to live a life of fortitude and trust in Divine Providence in order to make a difference.
SOURCES

http://www.cite.edu.ph

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