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THE ILOCOS TIMES 11

The Education Service Contracting (ESC) and Education Voucher System (EVS) Goes Online and More!

(First of two parts)

By Est: G Naciso

PERHAPS the most pressing problem that our educational system suffers perennially is overcrowded public schools due to the shortage of teachers and classrooms. When the classroom climate is no longer suitable or conducive to learning, the quality of education that Filipino children receive is compromised. It is on this premise that the government has devised the ESC or Education Service Contracting and Teacher Salary Subsidy in 1982 through Republic Act 8545 also known as the "Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education or GASTPE" wherein participating schools are given slot allocations. In 2006, the Education Voucher System (EVS) was also started as a pump-priming program of the Office of the President. The goal of the ESC and EVS programs is to provide grants for deserving elementary graduates to pursue secondary education in a private high school of their choice as means to decongest overcrowded public secondary schools by utilizing excess capacities in private schools. Grants are awarded in the first year level which is a 4-year funding commitment by the government to beneficiaries covered through ESC and EVS program participating private high schools. Grants are not awarded at higher year levels and no individual beneficiary can enjoy both ESC and EVS programs. Grant Amounts are uniform nationwide which is Php5,000.00 per year from first to fourth year level, except the National Capital Region wherein grantees receive Php10,000.00 for the first and second year and Php5,000.00 for the third and fourth year level, respectively.

Requirements for participating private high schools:

- must have government recognition;
- must pass DepEd-FAPE (Fund for Assistance to Private Education) certification program or has a level 1 accreditation from any accrediting agency belonging to the Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP).

- Certification/accreditation must be specific for the site/campus where beneficiaries are actually enrolled;
- must have submitted or willing to submit complete DepEd Basic Education Information Statistics (BEIS) over the past four (4) years;
- must form a School Committee composed of:
 - a) School Head as chairperson;
 - b) representative of the PTA and
 - c) representative of the faculty association.

- The School Committee shall be responsible for screening and selecting the grantees of the school.
- must have a Drop-out Reduction Program that shall include special counseling for grantees, if needed;
- must have a current 3-year School Improvement Plan (SIP) that has official approval from the school owners.
- should keep a copy of the guidelines and explain the pertinent provisions to the grantees and their parents.
- must be willing to accept a monitoring and evaluation visit within the school year by a joint DepEd and FAPE team.

Requirements for new applicant schools:

- Send letter of intent to respective DepEd Division Superintendents who shall:
- Endorse the same to the FAPE Regional Coordinator (RPC)

- A DepEd-FAPE National Certification Program team will schedule a visit to the school.
- A certification rating will be issued. The school:
- If school passes, it is already eligible to participate, subject to availability of program funds.

Conditions of the ESC/EVS Grant:

1. An applicant of the ESC or EVS grant, once selected by the School Committee, only becomes an official grantee of the school when:
 - the school inputs the grantee's name in its Online Encoding System at www.pnec.fape.org.ph
 - include data supporting the Billing Statement

2. The grant covers four (4) years of high school, begins in the first year and remains valid if the grantee is promoted to the next year level.

3. The grant is terminated for any one of the following reasons:
 - Grantee fails a year level or is retained in the same year level.
 - Grantee drops for non-health reasons.
 - Grantee has not applied for an official leave and does not re-enroll the following school year.
 - Grantee is dismissed or expelled or suspended for more than two (2) weeks by the school for disciplinary violations.
 - Grantee transfers to a non-ESC and non-EVS participating school.

4. An application for leave submitted by a grantee for reasons of health is due to force majeure events that is approved by the School Committee entitles the grantee to resume enjoying the grant the next school year.

5. A grantee may transfer to another ESC or EVS participating school for valid reasons.

6. Due to the grant amount difference between the NCR and other regions (Php 10,000.00 and Php 5,000.00, respectively),
 - Grantees in the regions are not allowed to transfer into the NCR.
 - Grantees in the NCR may transfer to the regions but will be paid the lower Php 5,000.00 grant amount prevailing in the regions.

Guidelines Specific for the ESC Program:

1. Allocation of First Year Slot Allocations/Quotas for SY 2009-2010
 - a) For schools already participating in the program, the first year ESC slots shall be equal to the number of first year grantees in School Year 2008-2009.
 - b) For schools participating for the first time in School Year 2009-2010, the first year ESC slots shall be fifty (50)
 - c) Additional slots, if available, shall be given to participating schools:
 - in areas with serious overcrowding in public high schools
 - priority shall be given to FAAP accredited schools and those rated "Above Standard" in the DepEd-FAPE Certification Program.

2. Grantee Selection
 - Participating schools shall campaign for applicants to fill their ESC slot allocation in such a way that:
 - a) At least 60% of slots to be selected shall come from public elementary schools.
 - b) The remaining 40% may come from private elementary schools.
 - Exception: If there is no public elementary school within a 1.5 kilometer radius of the participating school, the 60% minimum for grantees from public elementary schools shall not apply.

- The School Committee (SC) shall screen applicants and select grantees on the basis of the following criteria:
 - a) The applicant meets the admission requirements of the school
 - b) A favorable assessment by the School Committee with regard to the applicant's parent's/guardian's commitment to support the potential

- grantee's completion of high school under the program.

Guidelines Specific for the EVS Program:

1. Voucher Distribution
 - The Regional Program Committee (RPCCom) chaired by the DepEd Regional Director shall determine the distribution of vouchers allotted the region by the DepEd Central Office.
 - Government-recognized private high schools that passed the ESC-EVS Certification program and wish to apply for vouchers may do so by submitting a letter to their respective DepEd Division Superintendents indicating the names of applicants for the vouchers.
 - The RPCCom shall determine the allocation of vouchers among the schools that applied for the vouchers giving priority to those in areas with serious overcrowding in public secondary schools.

2. Grantee Selection
 - EVS vouchers are exclusively for:
 - public elementary school graduates
 - FEPT passers
 - ALS first year qualifiers of high school age
 - Note: Graduates of private schools are not eligible as grantees for EVS vouchers.

3. Expiration Date of EVS Voucher
 - An EVS voucher issued for School Year 2009-2010 shall be valid only until October 15, 2009. By the said date, vouchers must be awarded to valid beneficiaries.

Documentation and Processing:

- a) Beginning this school year, all grantee information must be submitted electronically into the school's account in the ESC-EVS Online Encoding System found at www.pnec.fape.org.ph.
- Schools are provided with:
 - A unique FAPE School ID number and
 - Password to access their school account on the website where their continuing grantees are listed (2nd to 4th year) and where they shall input the names of their incoming first year grantees.
 - Schools that do not yet have or are unaware of their school ID and password may call FAPE at 892-1466 or 894-2475.
- b) The school's accomplishment of all the necessary information on its grantees in its online account will result in a system generated Billing Statement to be printed in five (5) copies to be signed by the School Committee.
- c) The school must attach a complete set of BEIS forms, at least for SY 2008-2009 to the Billing Statements and submit this to the FAPE-RPCCom by deadline.
- d) The FAPE-RPCCom shall check the documents and facilitate the signing of schools' individual Billing Statements by the DepEd Regional Director or his/her representative.
- e) The signed Billing Statements shall be turned over by the FAPE-RPCCom to FAPE Central Office.
- f) Upon receipt of School Billing Statements with attached BEIS forms, FAPE shall process the documents for consolidation into batches for submission to DepEd Central Accounting Division for payment on a first-come, first served basis.
- g) To inquire about the status and batch number of the school's Billing Statement, schools may call FAPE at 892-1466 or 894-2475.

Payment of Grants:

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Brilliant Agca, 'Stupid' Quezon

BY ALL MEASURES, Dr. Aurelio S. Agcaolil is a brilliant man.

Prior to his joining University of Hawaii, Agca held tenured appointment at the University of the Philippines-Diliman. He is a creative writer and social researcher who has reaped prestigious awards. Above all, he is a well-meaning iconoclast.

Last July, he was one of the presenters in the first Mother Language Education forum in Ilocos. On that same occasion, the NAKEM Conferences also launched *Sukimat: Researches on Ilokano and Amianan Studies*, a publication Dr. Agcaolil co-edited with two professors from MMSU.

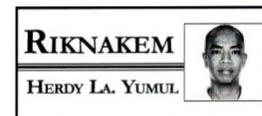
I am quite a big fan of the man known by many as "Agca". In fact, after the MLE forum, I requested him to autograph my copy of *Dangdang*, his award-winning novel. My admiration for the man's writing prowess is matched by my adulation for his ideas. His courage and candor are awe-inspiring.

The other week, however, Agca shocked me with his Letter to the Editor published in this paper. He demanded, in very strong words, that Mark Limon of DepEd Ilocos Norte, issue a public apology for contributing a news item which the former considers as "flawed, inaccurate, and lacking in good and acceptable journalistic exercise. Limon's news was headlined, "University of Hawaii prof calls Quezon 'stupid.'"

Agca went ballistic with his counter-article which has a longer version published in his blog and in other websites. Citing factual and grammatical flaws in Limon's work, Agca wrote, "*Maasiak kadagiti adalan dloytoy a maestro a dim sa met nakasarsaro.*"

"The writer does not know how to write properly. Just check his sentence. Which one is modifying which? Is he supposed to be a teacher telling the right things to his students? If he is a teacher teaching students to write, he should get out of the classroom sooner," fumed Agca, reacting to part of Limon's work.

Agcaolil also made a big fuss when Limon called "Sukimat" a compilation.



He reacted, "Sukimat is not a mere compilation. 'To anthologize' is not the same as 'to compile'. Limon, certainly, can compile with his clear books and binders. But with the kind of writing that he displayed with this questionable news account that put me in a bad light, I doubt if he can anthologize... Certainly, with his kind of writing and way of thinking, he cannot be included in this list of the best minds."

"And to think that we are paying for his public school teacher's salary, his action is most abominable."

"Yet Agcaolil never clarified whether or not he called Manuel L. Quezon, a former president venerated as hero by many Filipinos, "stupid."

Did he? If he did, why?

I was in that forum, and, yes, Agca called Quezon "stupid." I am trying to reconstruct what I remember he said, and it goes this way, "The 'One nation, One language' policy is a stupid nineteenth-century measure imposed by this stupid Quezon."

I am perfectly aware of the context where Agca made the remark, but I am restraining myself from expounding, hoping that Agca himself will write another piece explaining what exactly he said, and why he said what he said. It's enough for me to say that Agca's remark was made, not in a spur of the moment. He has been researching on and advocating Mother Language Education all these years, and it's been a difficult battle, no thanks to Quezon's language policy which marginalized, to the point of death, other Philippine languages, Iloko included. I therefore understand, even

sympathize, with Agca's exasperation.

While I write a regular column here in THE ILOCOS TIMES, I never found Agca's remark as headline-worthy. I would have written about it if I felt offended. Leilanie Adriano, a staff reporter of this paper, was there, too, and she did not, and rightly so, sensationalize the issue.

But that Limon, though an outsider and not exactly a good writer, took pains to write a news article, means that the issue is really important to him, and may be to his fellow teachers as well. Agca offended the sensibilities of some members of his audience, and unnecessarily.

Now, Agca demands for a public apology, which I do not see coming, if only because in our culture, it matters less who is write or wrong than who offended.

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US Department of Justice to train Laoag police

From page 12

police director Benjamin M. Lusak.

Fariñas, for his part, thanked the US DOJ for choosing the Laoag PNP as one of their pilot police stations in the conduct of investigative training as he added that he hopes that with this training, elements of the local police would learn more and be better equipped in their investigations.

During his visit to Laoag, Barker also paid a courtesy call to Laoag Mayor Michael V. Fariñas as well as to Ilocos Norte

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I am quite a big fan of the man known by many as “Agca”. In fact, after the MLE forum, I requested him to autograph my copy of *Dangadang*, his award-winning novel. My admiration for the man’s writing prowess is matched by my adulation for his ideas. His courage and candor are awe-inspiring.

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Agca went ballistic with his counter-article which has a longer version published in his blog and in other websites. Citing factual and grammatical flaws in Limon’s work, he wrote, “*Maasiak kadagiti adalan daytoy a maestro a din sa met nakasursuro.*” (I pity the students of this teacher who seems to have not learned.)

“The writer does not know how to write properly. Just check his sentence. Which one is modifying which? Is he supposed to be a teacher telling the right things to his students? If he is a teacher teaching students to write, he should get out of the classroom soonest,” furthered Agca, reacting to part of Limon’s work.

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And so, while I write a regular column here in The Ilocos Times, I never found Agca’s remark as headline-worthy. I would have written about it if I felt offended, but I was not. If at all, entertained I was with his theatrics. Leilanie Adriano, a staff reporter of this paper, was there, too, and she did not, and rightly so, sensationalize the issue.

But that Limon, though an outsider and not exactly a good writer, took pains to write a news article, means that the issue is really important to him, and, chances are, to his fellow teachers as well. Agca offended the sensibilities of some members of his audience, and unnecessarily.

Now, the good professor demands for a public apology, which I do not see coming, if only because, in our culture, it matters less who is write or wrong than who offended whom.

Agca could have driven his point home sans the ‘stupid’ remark. If he were addressing a group of progressive university professors, his words would have been tolerated, even applauded. But he was speaking before an audience that included elementary and high school teachers, who are known to be a conservative lot.

What is sad is that because of this incident, the issue of MLE has been, to some extent, trivialized, at least in these parts. The mere fact that DepEd teachers attended the forum speaks of their interest for MLE. They are, certainly, not the enemy.

And neither was Quezon. I would like to believe that the president acted in good faith when he identified Tagalog as THE national language. He may have committed a terrible mistake, but who does not? Not Limon. Not Agca.

Agcaoili is getting a lot of flak from his fellow Iluko writers because of this word war. Some of the comments are so rude and hostile, I deem them unprintable.

But then hostilities among Iluko writers are not exactly new and isolated. If at all, they have become usual. You only have to visit dadapilan.com or iluko.com to understand what I mean. Even the corkboard of Ilocos Times online is filled with violent, even filthy messages.

Language is supposed to unite people, but why is Iluko failing to get many of our writers together? *Linnaingan? Pinnangasan? Pinnangatoan ti isbo?* (Pagalingan? Payabangan? Pataasan ng ihi?) I am not, of course, making a hasty generalization. Severino Pablo is my uncle, and Peter La. Julian, a granduncle. Both of them legit writers I consider as true gentlemen.

Some observers suspect that the Agca-Limon clash is only a microcosm of the large-scale intramurals in the community of writers, particularly between GUMIL and TIMPUYOG.

Elizabeth Raquel, president of GUMIL Filipinas, is a supervisor of Deped Ilocos Norte, where Limon belongs. Agca is said to be one of the brains behind TIMPUYOG. Speculations are rife that Raquel may have used Limon to discredit Agca.

If you ask me, however, Agca's defense did himself much more harm than Limon's error-laden news article ever could.

By attacking the person, and not the issue (Argumentum ad Hominem), Agca showed traces of a brilliant-but-arrogant academic who alienates, and without remorse, the very people he should be locking arms with in the linguistic and cultural struggle for freedom, for autonomy, and for authenticity.

I posit, at the risk of being branded as "pretender of a writer" like Limon, that Aurelio Solver Agcaoili, PhD, blurred the divide between brilliance and stupidity.

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