



Film Screening & Talkbalk on Transformative Education

Bulwagang Bonifacio, 4th floor Ninoy Aquino Library and Learning Resource Center,
Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Sta. Mesa, Manila
April 24, 2024 - 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Beat the drums for
#GAWE2024

TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION!
**GLOBAL ACTION WEEK
FOR EDUCATION.2024**



In a remote mountainous region of the northern Philippines, an illiterate indigenous man gets fed up with being exploited by his employers and decides to go to school. With the goal of making a better life for himself and his family, 41-year old Agustin Tiburcio starts learning his ABCs. (*Letterboxd*)



I. Welcoming of Guests and Participants and Opening Ceremonies

The emcees, Moja Bleza and Alexis Alvarez, welcomed the participants and partner organizations. Moja provided a brief overview of the event, emphasizing its connection to the GAWE (Global Action Week for Education) celebration and the theme of “transformative education.” Alexis Alvarez led the singing of the national anthem, followed by a prayer and the PUP hymn.

II. Welcome Remarks

Jerome Permejo, Director of the PUP Gender and Development Office, emphasized the importance of human rights, particularly the right to education. He highlighted the significance of education in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 and stressed the need for transformative education that is inclusive for all.

III. Background and Objective Setting

Alve Berdan, National Coordinator of E-Net Philippines, provided background information on GAWE, emphasizing its role in promoting social justice, sustainable development, and radical thinking through transformative education. She discussed the challenges faced by marginalized groups, such as Indigenous People (IP), in accessing quality education.

GAWE is an annual global activity that brings together teachers, educators, and students to engage in activities aimed at achieving a better quality of life. E-Net Philippines, a civil society organization, works to ensure that education policies are equitable. Along with its members, E-Net conducts activities like this to provide equal education opportunities for the marginalized sectors. Alve emphasized that today, some may already be aware of the quality of education in the country. She urged everyone to come together to assess the quality of education beyond the classroom. Through film, she suggested examining whether education can genuinely liberate a person. The goal is to stir hearts and minds and foster a deeper understanding of societal conditions and fundamental human rights issues.

IV. Film Introduction

Cathy Manalo of the Human Rights and People Empowerment Center (HRPEC) introduced the film "A is for Agustin," which tells the story of an indigenous man striving to pursue education despite challenges. She said a talkback session would be conducted after the screening and encouraged the participants to raise any comments or questions about the film.

V. Talkback Session

The talkback session was led by HRPEC’s representative, Rachelyn Montero and Moja Bleza of E-Net Philippines. Joshua Peralta, Secretary of E-Net Philippines, was invited to comment

on the film. To start the discussion, Rachelyn asked, "What are the realities of Indigenous People when it comes to education?"

Joshua Peralta answered that the situation portrayed by Mang Agustin represents various indigenous people in the Philippines who lack access to education. He emphasized the dual nature of education, where some can attend school while others are left behind. Mang Agustin's story serves as a manifestation of those who are not enrolled in schools. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data, approximately 10 million individuals are not enrolled in school, with a significant portion belonging to indigenous communities.

Rachelyn pointed out the interconnectedness of rights portrayed in the film. Because Mang Agustin was denied his right to education, he consequently missed out on better job opportunities. His desire to pursue education stemmed from being deceived by his employer. This observation underscores the pivotal role education plays not only in securing employment but also in asserting one's rights and dignity in society. Moja agreed and gave an example about Mang Agustin's usage of the color of money because he could not read the amount.

A student from Sociology shared her insights into the human psyche, noting that when individuals are deprived of opportunities, they often gain a deeper understanding of the importance of those opportunities. For example, those who have been exploited due to a lack of education are more likely to recognize the value of education. Reflecting on her own experiences as a scholar, she emphasized the privileges afforded to her, such as access to online, face-to-face, and blended learning. She urged gratitude for these opportunities, especially that she was able to reach as a college student. She shared an important scene that resonated with her; it is when Mang Agustin saw his stepson while drawing. Mang Agustin said, "If that's your dream, do your best." She highlighted the need to appreciate the current educational opportunities as a scholar while striving for further learning.

Jona, a student from the College of Education, expressed that despite education being a right, it has become a privilege. Children in even modern areas struggle with literacy, particularly in the Aeta community. Despite their desire to learn, they face barriers. As a future educator, Jona emphasized the importance of personally reaching out to those in need. Regardless of privilege, education remains a fundamental right for all.

Joshua added that in the present time, education has become a privilege. In the context of the Philippines, education is determined by the state, as recognized by the 1987 Constitution. Article 2, Section 17 mandates the provision of genuine, free, and quality education. There's a clear foundation through initiatives like adult learning education and Indigenous Peoples (IP) learning education by E-Net. Joshua asked, "As youth or scholars of the nation, what will we do?" The Filipino people pay taxes for education. He emphasized the need to hold the

state accountable for its responsibility to provide free, genuine, and quality education. This underscores the challenge of ensuring that the state fulfills its duty.

Moja shared a scenario in the film where students were in a classroom. The teacher encouraged Mang Agustin to take the Alternative Learning System (ALS). Mang Agustin mentioned that he needs to finish Grade 6 first before enrolling in ALS which was incorrect information. One of E-Net's advocacies is to raise awareness about ALS. One of the struggles highlighted is that some students have to cross rivers just to get to school. ALS centers are often far away, located in central areas, making them inaccessible.

Joshua emphasized that the education system is colonial and repressive. He noted that academic freedom, as stated in Article 14 Section 5, is not fully exercised. Indigenous peoples often have to cross mountains and other obstacles just to access education. Only those with privilege or access can study, leading to a competitive environment where only the privileged tend to graduate. The curriculum should be nationalist, scientific, mass-oriented, and democratic to achieve transformative education.

A student from PUP, Steven, raised an important question about the marginalized sectors that are often overlooked, especially in remote areas. He emphasized the significance of telling the stories of marginalized sectors that frequently go unnoticed, paralleling the situation Agustin depicts to the broader context of societal invisibility and the urgent need for recognition and representation.

Alve responded that the film addressed the Indigenous Peoples (IP) in rural areas who lack access not only to education but also to livelihood and social protection. She referred to them as the "MEVS" or the Marginalized, Excluded, and Vulnerable Sectors of society. Alve emphasized the need to pay attention to sectors like children, parents, young parents, and persons with disabilities, who often do not receive adequate attention. She mentioned the potential of laws like the Alternative Learning System ALS Act to provide solutions for Out-of-School youth (OSY) who are working. Alve also referenced the Inclusive Education for Learners with Disabilities Act, which could establish inclusive learning resource centers to address the education needs of children with disabilities. Alve noted the challenges rural areas face in accessing education, highlighting the disparity in access compared to urban areas. She pointed out that rural communities are often not included in statistics, indicating the need for more attention and resources to address their educational needs.

Alve expressed concern about the growing perception that education is becoming a privilege. She questioned why members of the Indigenous Peoples (IP) community reached a point where they were unable to access education. This suggests that there is no specific education program for IPs in their community. She raised the issue of the lack of inclusion of IP education in the curriculum. Even if there are Indigenous children in the classroom as shown in the film, there is a mismatch in addressing their needs within the community. Alve

emphasized the importance of incorporating cultural education into the curriculum to preserve indigenous cultures. She suggested that rather than solely focusing on ALS, there should also be a spotlight on IP education to address the unique challenges faced by Indigenous communities.

Lastly, Alve shared that the part where Mang Agustin told his son to get married after finishing Grade 6 and stick with her. She highlighted the concerning trend of encouraging early marriage, particularly in Out-Of-School youth (OSY) communities. She noted that marriage is often seen as a common option after completing Grade 6, contributing to high dropout rates. This pressure to marry instead of pursuing further education is a significant factor leading to school abandonment. Alve drew attention to the need for interventions to address this issue, suggesting that initiatives like Indigenous Peoples Education (IP Ed) and the Alternative Learning System (ALS) could help shift this mindset and provide better education opportunities, thereby reducing the prevalence of early marriages among youth.

Rachelyn reflected on a scene from the film where Mang Agustin showed his emotions, particularly when he said marriage brought him happiness and support. She suggested that this thinking might stem from the belief that marriage provides companionship and fulfillment, so they would instead get married than continue their education. She also commented on the Westernized nature of education, emphasizing the need for a more transformative approach rooted in our everyday needs rather than simply following a standardized curriculum. Rachelyn highlighted the importance of recognizing different forms of intelligence that may not fit traditional standards, as demonstrated by Mang Agustin's ability to play the guitar and sing without formal instruction and the ability to read and write.

Alex expressed sadness over the disparity in privileges, realizing the importance of striving not only for personal success but also for the welfare of others. She found more profound meaning in the part of the PUP Hymn: "mula sa iyo, para sa bayan" (from you, for the nation). Alex inquired whether there have been any additions to facilities or teachers since the film's release in 2020.

Rachelyn shared that no current data regarding changes in facilities or teachers has been available since the film's release. She highlighted that the film depicted Mang Agustin's elementary life, which spanned six years in the making, providing insight into his experiences during that period.

Joshua highlighted the significant shortages in classrooms and teachers based on recent data from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) and the Department of Education (DepEd). There's a shortfall of 160,000 classrooms and 58,000 teachers, with expectations that these shortages will persist until 2028. These deficiencies extend to educational facilities such as laboratories and school equipment. Joshua attributed these

challenges to neoliberal government policies, which have shifted responsibility from the government to the private sector. The question of what has happened now may indicate a worsening situation.

Moja emphasized the efforts of E-Net in advocating for the implementation of the ALS Act, mainly focusing on establishing Community Learning Centers in barangays. Additionally, E-Net engages in budget advocacy, proposing additional funding for Community Learning Centers. However, it is still being determined whether there have been additions to these centers in remote areas based on available data.

After the discussion, the group proceeded to the singing of the GAWE jingle.

VI. Synthesis

Louie Montemar, Chief of the PUP Center for Inclusion and Diversity, greeted everyone and thanked the partners, HRPEC E-Net, and all attendees. He proposed synthesizing all the discussions by posing a series of questions integrated into larger ones. The overarching question is: **"Who is taught what by whom, how, and with what effects?"** This comprehensive question encompasses various aspects of education and learning, allowing for a classification of all the questions raised in the film.

VII. Closing Remarks

Joshua concluded the session by highlighting that the issues and sectors have been addressed, noting the interconnectedness of various sectors. He posed the question: What now? What comes next? He emphasized that as scholars of the nation, it is their challenge to continually enlighten their fellow scholars. This process should begin with them. He suggested using the five questions posed by Sir Louie as a guide to understanding the sector, stressing that the responsibility does not rest solely on them but extends beyond. He urged everyone to fulfill this responsibility.

Furthermore, he urged collective action to promote education that mirrors the Filipino people and strives for a transformative education where everyone is acknowledged. He emphasized the need to implement these changes immediately and fulfill their duty. Although a daunting task, he expressed confidence that by working together, they can achieve it.

Participants were encouraged to advocate for transformative education that ensures inclusivity, highlighting the shared responsibility to bring about positive change.

Annex I: Program

TIME	ACTIVITY	POINT PERSONS
12:30 - 1:00	Registration (GAWE Jingle Playing in the BG)	PUP-CID, E-Net Secretariat
1:00 - 1:20	<i>Preliminaries</i> (National Anthem, Opening Prayer)	E-Net Philippines
1:20 - 1:30	Welcoming Remarks	Jerome Permejo Director, PUP Gender and Development Office
1:30 -1:45	Background and Objective Setting	Alve Berdan National Coordinator, E-Net Philippines
1:45 - 2:00	Film Introduction	Human Rights and People Empowerment Center (HRPEC)
2:00- 3:30	Film Showing: A is for Agustin (2019)	Human Rights and People Empowerment Center (HRPEC)
3:30 - 4:30	Talkback/Film Discussion	MODERATORS
4:30 - 4:35	Singing of GAWE Campaign Jingle: Access here: https://tinyurl.com/2024GAWECampaignJingle	ALL PARTICIPANTS & ORGANIZERS
4:35 - 4:45	Synthesis	Louie Montemar Chief, PUP-CID
4:45 - 5:00	Closing Remarks	Joshua Peralta National Executive Board, E-Net Philippines

Annex II: Participants

The event held at PUP received a significant turnout, drawing attendees from diverse student organizations from different departments of PUP. A total of 101 individuals graced the occasion, with 63 female and 38 male participants. The majority of participants hailed from PUP itself. Additionally, notable member and partner organizations of E-Net, such as Youth for Nationalism and Democracy (YND), Human Rights and People Empowerment Center (HRPEC), and TEACHERS Inc. demonstrated their solidarity by attending the event.

Annex III: Photos

The poster features a green film strip graphic on the left, the logos of the Philippine State College of Education and E-Net Philippines, and the website www.enetphil.org.ph. The main title is "Film Screening & Talkback on Transformative Education". The event is held at the Bulwagang Bonifacio, 4th floor Ninoy Aquino Library and Learning Resource Center, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Sta. Mesa, Manila, on April 24, 2024, from 1:00 PM to 5:00 PM. A movie poster for "A is for Agustin" is shown on the right, with a synopsis: "In a remote mountainous region of the northern Philippines, an illiterate indigenous man gets fed up with being exploited by his employers and decides to go to school. With the goal of making a better life for himself and his family, 41-year old Agustin Tiburcio starts learning his ABCs. (Letterbox)". At the bottom left, it says "GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION" with the website www.campaignforeducation.org. In the center, it says "Beat the drums for TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION! #GAWEEK24 GLOBAL ACTION WEEK FOR EDUCATION.2024".











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