



## **Br. Armin Completes Term as Secretary of Education**

Today, Br. Armin Luistro FSC finishes his term as Secretary of Education of the Republic of the Philippines. He will proceed to have well deserved one year sabbatical. Allow me to show my gratitude and give a simple tribute for his service to Filipino learners by sharing excerpts and photos of a Facebook post of Rey Laguda (biological brother of Br. Ricky Laguda) who served under Br. Armin as Undersecretary for Finance and Administration:

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*It is simply difficult to describe Br. Armin Luistro FSC in a single post. To talk about Br. Armin for the last six years, will probably require a lifetime. I remember when I first met him almost thirty years ago when I expressed my intent to apply for the La Salle Brothers' Aspirancy program. He advised me that vocation should not be solely anchored on the admiration of persons that we see in Brothers. In short, I was rejected. But it turned out to be a crucial milestone in my life that has led me to where I am today. And I must share with Br. Armin that what he said is not always true. The irony is that my admiration for him and his leadership is what has sustained me all these six years.*

*Br. Armin is the only DepEd Secretary who has finished a full six-year term since 1986. In fact the last senior officials who stayed for six years or more as Secretary were Onofre D. Corpuz and Juan Manuel during the Marcos Presidency. This is critical when you look at education reforms as requiring a long-term view to take root, grow and bear fruit.*

*On July 1, 2010, he picked me up early before going to the DepEd central office. He gave me very little information since there was no benefit of a transition briefing prior to his assumption. By mid-morning, he was already hot copy for making a statement about media not being helpful after being badgered by questions on sex education. Imagine forcing him to give an opinion just a few hours after the Agency flag turnover. After an hour, we left to head to Malacanang [Presidential Palace]. But before getting there, we passed by Rafael Palma Elementary School along Zobel Roxas St.*

*That was our first official school visit. Nobody really knew who we were. But what struck me was when a SPED [Special Education] teacher approached him. She said she was a graduate of DLSU and that she was so happy hearing that Br. accepted the post. She was in tears.*



*There have been countless ups and downs in the last six years. Many have cracked (myself included) but Br. Armin has always taken it upon himself to be the shepherd. He will not stop until all his sheep are back into the fold. I have seen him tired like any average person but his resilience and inner strength is unequalled. He needed three Executive Assistants to match his energy and very hectic schedule. This kind of drive would translate to an almost obsessive drum beater engaging everyone he encountered and winning every single person to his side. He would keep on setting the pace and lead the pack. He knew from the start that there was so much to be done in six years. There was no time to waste.*

*He would fill up his weekends. Once, he flew all the way to Paris for an important UNESCO meeting only to fly back to Manila by the end of the day without even sleeping for a night there. When we*

*assumed office in 2010, the Philippines Minister of Education was the elected President of the South East Asia Ministers of Education Organization. In the remaining six months of the term, he visited all 20 Regional Centers across South East Asia. It was a feat that had never been done before. Many times, he would have 6-8 meetings in a day. There was no time to waste.*

*Despite the toxicity of the work though, he found time. He found time for his siblings and his nephews and nieces. He found time for young De La Salle Brothers and would join them in visiting their parents. He found time to meet congressmen and senators, local government officials, and national officials. He found time to meet with partners from private sector, special interest and advocacy groups and other Civil Society Organizations. He found time to meet with his former students and friends.*

*Immediately after Typhoon Sendong, we visited several wakes and also those who survived and were hospitalized. We did it all in a day. By the time we drove back at night from Iligan to Cagayan de Oro, we were both quiet not because we were simply exhausted. We were also just overwhelmed by grief.*

*When an armed group kidnapped 11 teachers in North Cotabato, he dropped everything and immediately flew in wanting to be the one to directly negotiate for their release. Cooler and saner heads prevailed and we managed to contain him in the military camp as negotiations for their eventual release ensued.*

*I think he is like this because he is a person who takes his job seriously and that he sees his work as part of his chosen vocation. He knows that the President has given him the full trust and confidence and he is not one to disappoint. More so, he believes that one should always pass on an institution that is in a better state than when he received it*

*The kind of work ethic and leadership that he demonstrated was so infectious that it inspired me to give as much as I could too. I also did not want to disappoint. He would challenge and push me to do things that I could never imagine doing and I would actually end up being successful. Many times he would have no immediate answers to the myriad of problems we faced. But his faith moved him forward and so did we.*

*His genuine love for the Filipino child and for our nation propelled him to make huge personal sacrifices and exude a rare aura of humility and compassion towards others.*





*I will always cherish the many occasions I have had with him. I keenly observe him during school visits and I am always amazed by the way he approaches people and inspires them to be good. I can go on and on and talk with great level of detail. His interviews about his accomplishments are really a drop in the bucket compared to what he has actually done to people's lives and to the organization and the sector as a whole.*

*After six years, I know he is tired. He is definitely leaving behind an institution far better and stronger than when he came in. He has great faith in the people of DepEd to continue the reforms. Now that his term is ending, he will have time for himself. I strongly suspect his sabbatical will be short and people will hear him venturing into new things again. But for now, I would like him to have time to waste so he can recover and recharge.*

*Thank you is not enough to express what I feel, Br. Armin. But I am sure millions of Filipinos will find it in their hearts to express gratitude to their God for the work that you have done. And I am sure that will be enough for you. (Rey Laguda FSC, Former Undersecretary for Finance and Administration, Department of Education)*

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Fraternally,

Edmundo Fernandez FSC