

AN OPEN LETTER TO FILIPINO PARENTS OF SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN IN ATHENS

1 June 2009

Sa mga mahal kong kababayan sa Athens,

As the Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines in Greece, it is my duty to provide our countrymen accurate information I may have access to, especially as such information involves their welfare. Not to do so would mean that I am not doing my duty as your ambassador.

In the past year I have received many inquiries regarding the legitimacy a “Philippine Cultural and Educational Association” (PCEA) whether it is indeed a school authorized by the Philippine government, the Greek government, or both.

The queries are quite valid and need to be answered, since I had been informed that the students are charged from €100 to €150 a month each, which would total €10,000 a month in income for PCEA.

Our countrymen needed to know the legitimacy of this entity, as indeed, they would be wasting their money if the grades of PCEA are neither recognized by our Department of Education and by the Greek Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs.

I cannot reply to such queries that “I don’t know”, as this would mean dereliction of my duty, for which I can even be charged. The queries are not different from a query back in Manila if a recruitment agency is legitimate or not. If the POEA for instance knows that a particular agency is not registered, its failure to tell OFWs that this agency is bogus means dereliction of its duty.

Therefore, I inquired from both our DepEd and from the Greek education ministry (coursed through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) on the status of an entity carrying any of the following names: Philippine Cultural and Educational Academy, Philippine Cultural and Educational Association, and Cultural and Educational Association of Filipinos Residing in Greece.

The replies of the Philippine and Greek ministries of education are the same: PCEA is not authorized to operate as a school in Greece.

Both the Philippine and Greek authorities noted that only the Katipunan Philippines Cultural Academy (known as the Philippine School in Greece) is recognized both by the Philippine and Greek authorities. I was also informed by the DepEd that no entity going by these names have filed any petition with it for recognition as a school.

The DepEd also specifically noted: **“The grades of any student studying in PCEA will not be recognized by the DepEd or any duly authorized school in the Philippines.”**

While you are enjoined to seek your own legal advice on this matter, I was also informed that according to Greek law (L.1566/1985, art. 2) primary education (six years of elementary school and 3 years of high school) is mandatory for all children residing in Greece. Foreigners living in Greece are not exempted from this provision.

According to the same law, parents who do not observe this rule will be prosecuted. The law warns only pupils who attend schools recognized by the Ministry of National Education meet this requirement.

I hope this accurate information would guide your decisions involving the education of your children in Greece.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

RIGOBERTO TIGLAO
PHILIPPINE AMBASADOR TO GREECE