

MESSAGE OF MINISTER MOHAGHER IQBAL
Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education

Mass Graduation – TESDA
Regional Manpower Development Center
December 18, 2019

Asalaamu Alaikum warakmatulahi taala wa barakatuh. May Peace and Mercy and Blessings of Allah be Upon You.

I want to thank the BARMM-Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), led by its OIC Executive Director Ruby Andong, for their kind invitation to this significant event. I always look forward to speaking in graduation rites or commencement exercises because it is an excellent opportunity to relay a message of hope and solidarity to future managers and industry leaders.

Furthermore, it is always inspiring to participate in events that commemorate hard work, discipline, and, more importantly, the accomplishments of the graduates. Allow me, therefore, to applaud all of you present today for completing your respective training programs. I also would like to thank your instructors and facilitators for their guidance and commitment.

Whether it is a traditional academic institution or a professional training center, a school is where we encourage critical thinking, nurture ideas, and teach vital skills and life lessons. Your graduation from this training institute is rightly called a commencement exercise because, in truth, you will begin to enter another stage in your professional life. A life wherein your contributions to society are anticipated, with good reason, by your family, peers, and other members of the community.

Advancing professional education and technical skills development in the Bangsamoro is part of the Ministry of Basic Higher and Technical Education's responsibilities. We promote education not only as a fundamental right of the Bangsamoro people but also as an indispensable segment of the ideology of Islam. While we aspire to instill mental acuity among students, we want more to introduce the critical and universal values of our faith. I often say that seeking knowledge or improving one's mental acuity is another form of worship. Education, therefore, addresses both the temporal and spiritual needs of a person.

At present, the Education Ministry is working steadily to set the foundation that would expedite the creation of a “complete and integrated system of quality education” in the Bangsamoro. As mandated by Article 9 of the Bangsamoro Organic Law, the BARMM through this Ministry shall establish an educational system that exemplifies a high standard with a balanced, comprehensive, and inclusive academic program supported by robust infrastructure, including better school facilities and competent teachers and education managers. As mentioned earlier, included in our mandate is to improve or strengthen the “vocational, technical, non-formal, and special education” in the Bangsamoro. We hope to provide vocational students the opportunity to reach the highest level of competency in their chosen technical expertise. We also want to deal with the perception that professional training is of lesser quality than traditional academic education. We will see to it that every trainee shall be a “jack of all trades” and not a “master of none.”

Admittedly, the current state of education in the Bangsamoro calls for drastic reforms. Since assuming the role of the Education Minister, we have made significant changes. Our good intentions are felt in the hiring of teachers, the bidding process for the construction of classrooms, reshuffling of school division superintendents, increasing the salaries of contractual employees, and the BARMM's participation in the 2019 *Palarong Pambansa*. We will not squander the goodwill, respect, and trust gained from our early endeavors. Guided by the principle of Moral Governance espoused by the Chief Minister, we will continue to serve the children and people of the Bangsamoro with vigor and integrity. Hopefully, we will be able to meet our goal of producing at least one professional in every Bangsamoro family.

After you have graduated, you will now enter the Philippine workforce, which can be competitive. Do not allow yourself to become a statistic, ending up in the underemployed or unemployed list. You are given the tools through your training, and we hope you will seek business and employment opportunities that would further enrich yourselves like professionals and effectively contribute to our nation’s long-term development and prosperity.

Meanwhile, the Ministry shall push for strategies and programs that would create higher esteem for the vocational curriculum and promote professional training as a viable option for potential learners. We shall also encourage all technical vocational education and skills training institutions in the BARMM to improve their curriculum and update their training programs to ensure employability. It seems an impossible task, but with your support, I am confident we will make strides and effectively address the needs of the population in terms of professional training.

I want to assure all of you that meaningful change is coming in the BARMM, *Insha' Allah*. It began when we promised to pursue Moral Governance in the Bangsamoro.

I want to thank TESDA-BARMM for their kind invitation to this event. Moreover, I want to congratulate all of you graduating today and sought to acquire quality skills development. I pray for success in your respective career paths.

Magandang umaga sa ating lahat at maraming salamat po!



MBHTE