

**PRESENTATION**  
**BY DENNIS DE PEIZA, GENERAL SECRETARY, CTUSAB**  
**TO THE OPENING SESSION OF**  
**THE 2009 SECONDARY SCHOOLS DEBATES,**  
**(National Productivity Council)**  
**22 September, 2009**  
**Solidarity House, Harmony Hall, St. Michael**



Let me join with the National Productivity Council, the organizers of today's event, in welcoming you to the Solidarity House. As I understand it, this is the second year that the Council has organized this Secondary Schools' Debating Competition. The Council is to be commended for having started this programme and for its efforts in developing it.

I believe that those of you assembled here are either active participants in the debating exercise, or are supporters of your respective schools. It would interest me to know how many of you have given any thought to the significance of this activity within the context of your learning experience.

You may start by asking yourself the pertinent question.....What is the purpose of a debate?

The simple answer I will share with you is that it is meant to engage students in critical thinking.

For your information **Critical Thinking as Defined by the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking (1987), is, and I quote**

*“the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness”.*

You should take careful note that debating is a means of exposing students to social issues. This therefore provides an avenue for you to be engaged in critical thinking.

As you participate in this year's debates, I wish you to know that competitive debating is a challenging and highly rewarding activity. However, I must warn you not merely to see this activity as a competition. It is not all about winning. You need to go beyond that and to identify with the benefits of being on the debate team.

First and foremost, remember that you are here to have fun. Enjoy the camaraderie of your teammates, and use the occasion to make new friends and lasting relationships.

See this as an opportunity to enable you to improve your self confidence, so that you may eliminate any inhibitions you may have when it comes to public speaking. You must be mindful that your level of confidence and ability to express yourself, will serve you in good stead; particularly when you face a job or scholarship interview.

What are some of the skills that you will learn and develop? To start with, the training you receive will enhance your communication skills, not only when debating, but in other situations. Remember that the effectiveness of your communication will be reflected in your organization, analysis and delivery, Tied to these will be the presentation of a strong and logical argument.

It is important that you focus on developing your analytical skills, considering that one of your greatest challenges will be your ability to critically analyze a problem and propose a workable solution.

The ability to conduct research is invaluable. In this modern age, you need to utilize research skills, ranging from those applicable to traditional library research to that of the Internet.

Debating requires that you become a careful listener and good note taker. These are skills that you ought to develop.

As smart and quick thinkers, I will give you full credit if you called attention to the fact that the qualities and skills which you learn through being exposed to debating, are those which good leaders exhibit.

I now briefly turn my attention to the subject of practicing ethics in debating. It starts with the recognition that ethics is an extremely important issue within the communication process, and in a competitive academic debate. The point is to be stressed that 'Ethics is about a code of behavior.'

It starts with honesty. This is the principal standard that should be observed in debating. How do you demonstrate honesty when debating? It begins with presenting facts and information in a fair manner and without distortion. You are therefore required to provide facts and not untruths and myths. Added to this, it is the correct thing to identify your sources of information.

Refrain from copying the bad practices you may have observed being exhibited by politicians during parliamentary debates. I urge you to be polite, even in the instance that your opponent breaches the rules governing parliamentary procedure. Don't make the cardinal mistake of shouting across the floor to call your opponent a liar. You may have recently seen the footage on television where such a disgraceful act was perpetrated by a United States Republican Congressman, against President Obama.

As I conclude my remarks to you this afternoon, I cannot but offer a comment on the topic to be debated. The topic reads: **Employers have the right to monitor employees' internet usage considering its potential to negatively impact on productivity.'**

I believe that the topic is an appropriate one. As products of today's technological age, you are the ones who are directly and / or indirectly, responsible for developing and managing the ever changing technology. You are therefore asked to consider three principal things that should inform best practice regarding the use of technology within the workplace. These are ethics, standards and professionalism. In speaking to the issue of standards, I want you to be aware that it is important to set standards, for these guide your ethical behaviour and the professional approach you adopt in both your social and working life.

Finally, I wish to thank the National Productivity Council for having invited me to address you this afternoon. It is my wish that you have a successful debating series. I urge all participants to give of their best, keep the standard of debate at a high level, and represent your school with pride and dignity.

Remember that the key to winning lies within your team's ability to effectively communicate.

**DENNIS DE PEIZA**

General Secretary