

ROLE OF THE PHILIPPINE RURAL HIGH SCHOOL

RICHARD W. COLLER

Today we hear and read a great deal about the problems of the "community school" program for rural improvement utilizing the rural elementary school system as a base of operations. Then, on the other hand, we also find much discussion concerning possible alterations in the professional training given in colleges and universities with the goal of rural improvement in mind. However, a growing conviction has come to the writer that the most critical area of education in regard to rural improvement lies neither in the elementary nor collegiate realms, but in the field of rural secondary education. Accordingly, the social role of the rural high school is presented for analysis in an effort to elucidate the bases for this apparently uncommon view of rural education and its relationship to rural improvement.

As Loomis and Beegle rightly observe, the rural high school serves as an agency for the reduction of rural-urban differences, usually by the transmission of urban culture traits to the rural folk.¹ This means that the rural high school represents a transitional period in the life of an individual in which he passes from the familistic, tradition-minded, intimate pattern of rural life to the individualistic, rapidly changing, secondary pattern of urban living. This would seldom occur in the life of the individual during the elementary school years because the influences of home and neighborhood are still strong at that time. Moreover, the elementary school is generally more sensitive to the home environment of its pupils—it must be if it is to accomplish its task. This is why we find that the "community school" movement has been placing emphasis on the work of the elementary school. However, the idea of a "community high school" is not only seldom considered, but may also be of doubtful practicality for reasons which will be considered.

Education on the college and university level has been well-known for its almost complete adherence to the urbanized, secondary type of culture pattern. This has been observed repeatedly, particularly in the Philippines. The reasons for such a definite pattern of higher education in this country have generally been given as the effect of a curricula which emphasizes the professions which flourish in cities, (such as law), and the emphasis on the acquisition of an education as a means of escaping the low status and physical exertion of agriculture. Interestingly enough, as many writers have observed, this extremely urban atmosphere is even prevalent in the agricultural colleges. Thus it has been found that the great majority of the agricultural graduates also have not gone into agriculture. Hence, the unique position of the rural high school, is quite clear. It stands mid-way between the barrio elementary school with its traditional familistic pattern and the college or university with an orientation which is almost entirely urban. In addition, the rural high school serves as the bridge between these two contrasting culture patterns.

The geographic position of the rural high school is also of considerable social significance. As McMillan and Rivera noted, about 86% of the

¹ Charles P. Loomis and J. Allan Beegle, *Rural Social Systems* New York, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950, p. 491

barrios in the Philippines have elementary schools; whereas the public high schools are generally located in the cities and larger municipalities.² This has several important social implications. First of all it means that there will be a tendency for barrio youth who are distant from the high school to omit secondary education altogether. This behavior would be especially pronounced in rural areas of low income, since both public and private high schools in the Philippines now usually charge tuition fees.

Secondly, the geographic location of the rural high schools means that for those rural youth who *do* attend them, there will be a period of separation from the close family and neighborhood ties which are such a prominent part of Philippine rural life. The young person is thereby placed in a position in which he can feel "emancipated" from the traditional familistic culture pattern and acquire a liking for the constant change and individualism of the urban pattern. Therefore, in such cases it is attendance in the rural high school which has afforded the student a glimpse of the so-called glamor and excitement of urban life and, furthermore, given him opportunities to actually sample such a mode of existence. The opportunities for such sampling arise from the fact that usually the rural high school student finds himself away from the customary restraints of home and neighborhood and in addition has a certain amount of pocket money, (perhaps for the first time in his life), plus the normal stirrings of adolescence—and all of this in a community which may offer many new and tantalizing experiences compared to the home barrio. It is thus no wonder that rural youth who attend the type of high schools now extant are so often reluctant to return to farm life, especially when farming is assigned such a low prestige rating in the Philippine culture.

This also explains why it is that the bulk of the migrants to cities are, in many areas, the graduates of rural high schools. For these are the very persons who have been "emancipated" from the stable matrix of the traditional rural culture and so have developed a craving for urban living, which they promptly try to satisfy by moving city-ward. Further, it explains why many rural folk have a deep suspicion of secondary education, though they may be unable to give any adequate exposition of their attitude. They apparently realize, often unconsciously, that high school, as it now exists, "urbanizes" their children and so renders them unwilling or unable to engage in agriculture. Thus the belief of the "Old Order Amish", (an isolated religious sect in the U.S. which refuses to engage in any non-farm work), that secondary education is a threat to both the agricultural abilities of their members and their cohesion as a community is not without justification.

IMPLICATIONS

Since the end of World War II the Philippine cities have been confronted with large numbers of migrants from the rural areas who have all too often augmented such urban problems as unemployment, the housing shortage, and poor public health conditions. The Philippine cities are thus receiving migrants which they can not absorb, and so the process works to the detriment of both the city and migrant. It seems

² Generoso F. Rivera and Robert T. McMillan, *The Rural Philippines* Manila, Office of Information, Mutual Security Agency, 1952, p. 147.

to the writer that in such a situation the rural high school plays a key role.

As noted, the rural high school often serves, inadvertently perhaps, as a center of "emancipation" and urbanization for rural youth. This then means that those who become reasonably well-educated and hence potential leaders of the rural community are those persons who are most likely to leave it. Therefore, as it now exists, the rural high school, (whether academic or agricultural seems to matter little), apparently serves as a syphon which draws off potential rural leaders and directs them city-ward. This of course handicaps the rural community improvement programs. Thus an increase in the number of rural high schools could quite conceivably result in a *decrease* of rural community improvement if the high school system and the general culture remain unchanged.

The implications then are two-fold. First of all come the problems of trying to make the rural high school less of an "emancipating" and urbanizing mechanism. Some may argue that such a change is neither desirable nor possible—that high school training by its very nature would and should always have an urbanizing effect. They may be correct in this argument; little or no research has been done on this subject as far as the writer knows. The other type of problem would be the question of trying to guide those who insist on leaving the rural areas. They are in need of special orientation to city life, particularly in finding employment, housing, and a satisfying group life in the urban environment. Such training could be afforded in the rural high school if it is deemed desirable.

The foregoing passages have tried to depict the social role of the Philippine rural high school as an agency of transition between the rural and urban culture patterns, and to relate this analysis to recent trends in rural community improvement. From this analysis it appears that the unique social role of the rural high school makes it the most critical area of education in regard to rural improvement in the Philippines today.

THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF AGRARIAN REFORM

FIDEL GALANG

A Social Theory is Needed

Society is never static. It is always constantly changing, sometimes at a slow pace, and at times rapidly. Today we are living in an era of violent social change. In the Philippines this fact is accentuated by the terrible destruction of the last world war and by the gaining of political independence in 1946. Social change is not automatically a change for the better. Desirable goals are achieved only by intelligent social engineering. A willingness to work and to cooperate is most important, but it is not enough. There is need for a social theory to guide and to coordinate the various activities of the government, voluntary civic organizations, and individual citizens.

As a matter of fact, there are already on the Philippine scene two social theories competing for the opportunity to direct the much needed social reconstruction. These are the theory of class collaboration and the theory of class conflict, the latter representing the Communist viewpoint. Briefly stated the Communist social theory is as follows: Present society is *class society*. The few, who own the instruments of production, have control of the total machinery of society, while the many, who do the actual work that keeps society alive, are denied their rightful share of the fruits of industry and their privilege to participate in the control and use of social power. To remedy this highly anomalous situation, Communism would organize the exploited majority to dislodge the privileged few from their favored position and to wrest social power from their hands. This entails violent *class struggle*. The victory of the working class may be long delayed, depending on how soon the masses of a given country can become class conscious and organized for a revolutionary action, but it will finally come. The victorious working class will then use its newly acquired power to smash the state machinery of the deposed exploiting class, and put in its place its own government. It should be the function of the new state to socialize all the property which has anything to do with production and exchange. It shall employ science and technology to bring production to its highest possible level. Under this new set up the fruits of industry will be enjoyed by all the creative members of society in the form of better wages, improved community services, and increased investments in projects that will increase productivity. The masses, thus freed from the fear of unemployment and assured of a just share in the fruits of industry, are for the first time truly free to attend to the cultivation of their higher and finer nature. When man learned to stand on his hind-limbs, thus freeing his fore-limbs to devise tools, what a forward step that was! When man will learn to control the social forces around him, thus wisely utilizing industry to provide for his material needs, then he becomes truly free to live as a man and to freely commune with his fellows.

The class collaboration social theory may be briefly presented as follows: The class nature of contemporary society is affirmed. But it denies the inevitability of class struggle, as pointed out and claimed by