

NEW DIRECTIONS IN EDUCATION

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The title of this session, "Unlearning the Old to Learn the New," seems to imply we made mistakes in the past be they honest or dishonest mistakes. The question is, did we make mistakes from which we can take lessons? Or was it rather that we made omissions to plan education more rationally? A review of the various aspects of education production would probably show that there were not so many mistakes as there were omissions. Let me give a brief history and description of the educational system and point to the omissions and mistakes we made. Then I will go on to what are being done or planned to improve the system.

There has been a lot of dissatisfaction at each level of education. At the elementary level, it is felt that the content, the process of delivery and the material complement such as books and supplies are very defective and meager. These problems have a historical basis. The curriculum is an American copy having been brought here by the Thomasites. Then our Constitution provided for achieving universal elementary education. This was a tall order for a country whose per capita income was in the range of \$100-200. These are two seemingly independent factors yet they explain the problems in elementary education that we have now. Having borrowed the curriculum of the United States containing a long list of subjects, not all of them adapted to our culture and needs, expansion of the system to meet the objectives of the Constitution resulted inevitably in the decline in educational effectiveness at this level. It was not possible to provide the American elementary system universally without a thinning out of the quality of teachers, of the teaching materials, and the like.

The omission of educators here is their not proposing alternatives to achieve the edu-

cational aim of the Constitution by the best possible alternative education production process. Most of past efforts were spent coping with the room and teacher requirements of the growing enrollment. The alternatives of providing basic education by a different course content, and by different combinations of room, teacher, book, other materials and activities have been considered. There is also the alternative of combining formal schooling with nonformal education through mass and other media. Given the rigid budget constraints and small staff of good teachers, these alternatives must be examined because they might provide the mass basic education at lower cost, or a better quality education at the same cost.

The Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education (PCSPE) recommended a study of the curriculum, and the International Labor Organization (ILO) Mission, a study of how to provide more books and to consider using nonformal media of education. An "in thing" in education literature is on recurrent education through nonformal channels. There is also the question of the age at which to begin education. The latter is a very real problem. If we are to give a limited amount of education such as what we give now where 60 percent of children stop at Grade IV, would it be more effective to start them at age older or younger than the traditional seven. I have attended seminars where the issue was brought out repeatedly. But I still have to hear any basis from studies for answering the question.

We hear of innovations in the elementary education sector such as the work-study program, the in-school-out-of-school schedule, the new grading system, the new social studies and the new math. These are attempts to find new ways of delivery. But non-educators, like I,

think that the prerequisite to most of these techniques is the availability of books to read, to see pictures of new things such as maps, flora and fauna, anatomy, machines for plowing, irrigation system, sewage system, etc. I hope Dr. Perfecto will have some concrete things to say about the book project being undertaken by his office such as how many books will be available this year, next year, and the year after.

We are more familiar with college education. We all know there is unemployment, that this will probably continue in spite of the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE) as long as we have over-all unemployment in the economy. We also know that there is differential unemployment and earnings among graduates and not just by field but from which school they obtain their degrees. We have data to show that there are more unemployed business and education graduates than engineers and doctors.

How do we solve this problem? Let me describe the strategy suggested by the PCSPE: 1) NCEE, 2) accreditation, 3) assistance to private colleges particularly by the Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE) to improve the quality of their education, and, 4) scholarship and loan program for qualified students. The ILO Mission endorsed all these but added that the strategy adopted must be one where all these PCSPE recommendations be developed and implemented as one package. The necessity of implementing these as a package rather than independently is understandable. In the NCEE seminar we had in this hall two years ago, a representative from the private schools said why place all the burden of solving unemployment and the quality of college education on students. Why not improve the schools first before you select the students for college. Here is where the NCEE, the accreditation and the assistance to schools come in as a package.

If we stop at this package, however, the distribution of our education, especially at the higher level, will be highly discriminating against the poor. There is a long chain of effects of family income on the entrance examination

score. Income determines the quality of elementary and high school education. It also determines the nonformal education in the home and in the social environment through availability of learning materials in the home and participation in educational activities. The newly published results of the NCEE support this as well as the study on the U.P. college entrance test (Alano and Collantes 1973).

The income bias is not easy to solve for the solution must include providing good high school and elementary education to children from poor families. Otherwise a loan and scholarship scheme for college students would tend to go to the affluent who score relatively better in the NCEE.

Very little research has been done on secondary education. May I just state some of the issues on the subject:

1. How well do different types of high schools prepare students for college? This might have been answered already by the FAPE analysis of the NCEE.

2. Do we need general high schools or vocational high schools which provide some preparation for specific occupations requiring middle level skills?

It is known that middle level skills are acquired in many places outside schools. Some are acquired through an informal apprenticeship in the shop of parents or relatives. Most skills are acquired on the job. (The technical term "learning by doing" arose from this form of training). Yet there are some skills, possibly electronics, electrical, typing and bookkeeping that are best acquired in schools and other institutionalized set-ups. It is an empirical question, then, to find which skills should be left provided on the job, which ones in schools. This is really the main issue in vocational education. It is meaningless to say we need craftsmen more than professionals. This statement does not give us any policy guidelines.

Let me summarize the paper. I talked mostly on efficiency and equity problems – efficiency in producing elementary education and vocational training; equity and efficiency in college education.

Note

At the time she read this paper, Edita A. Tan was associate professor of economics at the University of the Philippines System.

Reference

- Alano, A. and C. Collantes
1973 Determinants of scores in the U.P. college entrance test. Undergraduate thesis. University of the Philippines.

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