

UNLEARNING THE OLD TO LEARN THE NEW: ISSUES IN EDUCATION

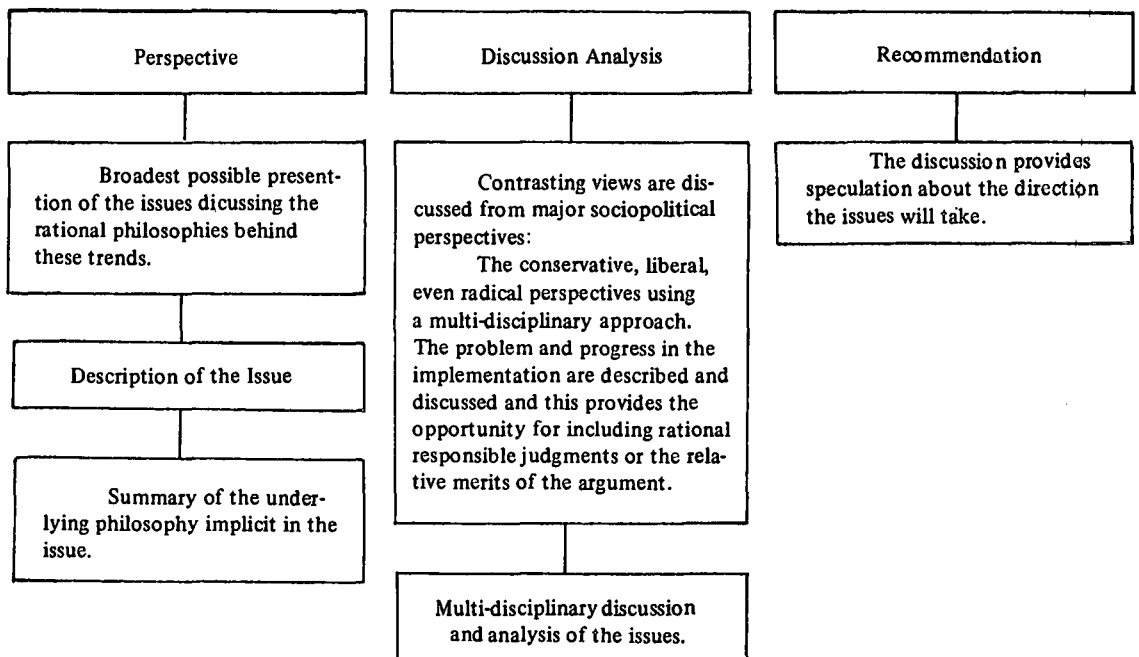
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In the past Filipinos have made significant efforts to upgrade the quality of education. The objectives as well as the strategies of education have been the subject of constructive discussions. As a result changes such as the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), shortened college curricula, the ISOS approach, and the continuous progression have been introduced in the educational system.

What is common among the remedies to edu-

cational problems is their criticism in varying degrees of the present state of Philippine education. The dilemma of the public is obvious: which are the soundest strategies for improving Philippine education? The answers to the question will be best sought in an analysis of educational issues which have become focal points of major debates. Below is a three-dimensional scheme for examining the issues.

Balanced View of the Issues



The NCEE

Perspective

On March 9, 1973 President Ferdinand E. Marcos promulgated Decree No. 146 which required all high school graduates seeking admission to post secondary degree programs necessitating a minimum of four years study to pass a national college entrance examination. The objectives were to seek the highest quality of education not only in the third level of education but also hopefully down the educational ladder and to ultimately maintain a healthy and viable balance of all types of workers in the manpower stock of the country. The Philippines is the only country in the world with such a system of a national admissions policy.

The policy was one of the educational reform measures recommended by the Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education Survey Report, 1970, the Department of Education and Culture (DEC recommendations, 1959 through 1972), the Higher Education Research Council (HERC Report 1972) and some private national associations such as the Philippine Psychological Corporation.

The new system of admission is expected to ensure the training of those persons best qualified academically to pursue higher education. A better allocation of students to programs with higher manpower priority should also be an outcome of this policy.

This policy was prompted by the following:

1. an acute imbalance between the number of college graduates and the number of workers the labor market can absorb;
2. a swelling of college enrollment due to the general open system of admission of colleges and universities;
3. a great need for trained middle level manpower as well as for well-trained professionals, the over supply of graduates in education, liberal arts and commerce fields, notwithstanding;
4. an increasing mobility of students which made it necessary to apply a common measure for admission to a university;
5. a need for a forum of discussion which could serve universities as well as secondary

schools, educational associations and other educational institutions;

6. a hope that institutional research and other research related to higher education could gather data through these initially administered tests;

7. an attempt to improve the interpretation of student records and to help with the awarding of scholarships through this testing program;

8. a great need for the training opportunity to be given to someone who can successfully complete the program and who will become a contributing member of the Philippines' manpower resources.

In contrast to the Philippine situation, the United States and Canada experienced a dramatic decline of student enrollment which led many universities into a position where their capacity exceeded the number of applicants. Such universities are no longer concerned with the problem of selecting and screening applicants, but seeking out as many students as possible to fill their classrooms. Thus, apart from some notable exceptions sheer economic necessity has imposed upon most universities the need for a policy of open admission.

Discussion and analysis

The problem and progress of its implementation. The first NCEE, on November 25, 1973 was administered to about 332,000 students, of which about 249,000 were allowed to pursue four-year degree courses and about 83,000 were made to take short-term courses.

When the policy was implemented for the first time, there were misgivings and anxieties generated by the students, parents, concerned citizens and educators. The public then was uncertain about how the policy was going to affect them. In its current form, the conflict that has emerged in its fundamental level is one between the traditional, concept of equality of opportunity and a newer, more modern view of it. The traditional position is that government and societal institutions should not intervene in the natural competition among individuals for whatever forms of success they seek. This is to

say that government should not interfere in the individual's quest for advancement by helping one and hindering another.

The newer concept of equality of opportunity and so embodied in the new Constitution is that the government may intervene in a subsidiary role to prepare those who can profit from the training.

These questions called forth a series of different answers from traditionalists and from social critics. Their basic attitude towards any objective testing were marked by mistrust, anxiety, and refusal. Educators know that attitudes cannot easily be overcome. However, it is very gratifying to note that now the opposition during the initial implementation of the Policy has been resolved and procedures and policies which are now acceptable to the majority have been implemented.

The second NCEE on November 24, 1974 was administered to about 400,000 students simultaneously all over the country. The DEC through the NCEE Center utilized the 125 Division and City Superintendents as Local Examination Committee Chairmen. The operational machinery included about 35,000 examiners and proctors representing both public and private schools and there were 1,137 examination centers distributed in all parts of the country, each headed by a Chief Examiner.

Recommendation

On the one hand, differing scholastic standards and differing measures on the secondary school level make it necessary to gather normative data in order to interpret more reliably the different high school records. A large variety of educational opportunities and academic standards on the higher educational level make it advisable, on the other hand, to give specific information to the students. There is a need to develop instruments which can help the distribution of students into the different institutions and programs. The complexity of the modern educational system requires the development of additional new tools and those who participate in it have to learn how to use and how to control them.

The Shortening of College Programs

Perspectives

Worldwide inflation has pushed up the cost of education along with the prices of goods and services. The DEC has taken cognizance of the need to bring down the cost of education by shortening relevant programs without necessarily sacrificing the quality of education.

The rationale behind the proposed strategy are the following:

1. the present situation of the apparent overlaps and duplications that unnecessarily prolong the requirements of various collegiate curricula;
2. the extent of the requirements makes higher education unnecessarily expensive;
3. the institution of the NCEE which is likely to improve the quality of education;
4. the revision of the secondary school curriculum which hopefully will improve the quality of secondary school training;
5. the possibility of interaction of some existing collegiate subjects and the elimination of some unnecessary ones.

In response to Secretary Juan L. Manuel different national associations have presented programs. Task forces have been created by the Secretary of Education and Culture composed of leaders in different areas and their Programs are being deliberated on by the National Board of Education, the highest policy making body on matters pertinent to education.

Private Schools Director Julian Yballe, and the Deans and Council of Deans appear to have arrived at a consensus of shortening the collegiate curricula as follows:

Medical education. Medical education is covered by existing laws, R.A. 2582 as amended by R.A. 2224 and further amended by R.A. 5946. It is the consensus that the curriculum of the medical course proper shall remain unaltered, while the pre-medical education would require either a bachelor's degree in science or arts or a completion of 86 units in four semesters and two summers or two and a half years.

Nursing education. The existing nursing education programs are regulated by R. A. 4704, which provides that applicants desiring to enter any hospital, school, college or institute of nursing must show evidence of completion of at least one year of college work in a recognized educational institution. Areas of study should include courses in physical, biological, social, and behavioral sciences including chemistry, psychology, zoology and humanities.

The task force came up with a proposal of one year of college work as a requirement for admission to nursing. The proposed curricula shall remain three years General Nursing and four years Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Teacher education. The Philippine Association for Private Technical Education – Philippine Accrediting Association for Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAPTE-PAASCU) and the Task Force proposed an integrated teacher education curriculum and for the shortening of the program to three or three and a half years so that the cost (money, time and effort) of education will be cut down to a workable minimum at the same time maintaining the desired and expected quality and quantity of teachers needed in the schools. In general, the trend is the shortening of all other collegiate courses by about a year or so.

Recommendation

The curricula of our schools and colleges have always been in a process of change, but the change usually has not been fundamental. New courses were added; old courses were discarded. More often than not, however, the new courses looked much like their predecessors. The current curriculum reform movement is marked by a reorganization of subject matter with the objective of avoiding overlaps and duplications, and of updating content. Tomorrow's curriculum reform will need schools that enjoy the same freedom of research as do university-affiliated hospitals that serve as laboratories for medical inquiry. These schools will serve as laboratories for educational and curricular inquiry.

One important question would be: what kind of persons do we wish to produce from our medical schools, our teacher training schools, our engineering schools, etc.?

Teaching Strategies

In-school-off school approach

A new teaching method to bring down the cost and upgrade the standard of primary (Grades I to IV) education was introduced by Director Liceria B. Soriano and will be launched in three pilot areas next school year by the Bureau of Public Schools. The "In-School-Off-School Approach" involves the assignment of 80 pupils to one teacher, 40 to do in-school work of formal instruction and the other 40 to undertake off-school work for one week alternately. It is at present under experiment in selected schools in Manila, Bulacan and Iloilo.

To assure satisfactory results Director Soriano stated that at the start of school term it would be necessary to:

1. redesign the curriculum and revise the instructional material;
2. restructure class organization;
3. adopt imaginative and effective ways of meeting individual needs;
4. redefine the roles of the teacher and the administrator and train them for efficient performance of their roles.

The strategy is a community-based approach to education and makes optimum use of community resources. Thus it reduces the costs of primary education. It also broadens the concept of the classroom to include the entire world of the learner.

Community resources may be grouped into human, material, institutional and cultural. Human resources include parents, older students, youth leaders, professionals and groups that may be able to assist the school in educating the young. Material resources include buildings, parks and playgrounds, machinery, and newspapers that may serve as educational materials or laboratories. Institutional resources refer to organizations, associations, churches, clubs and industrial establishments. Cultural resources are the libraries, museums, dramatic

guilds, glee clubs, reading centers, and the like.

An alternative approach to the problem of providing mass primary education is Project IMPACT initiated by INNOTECH and operates to bring down the cost of education.

Educational reform is a vital topic of current and widespread interest. The subject is of increasing concern as students, teachers, parents, and concerned citizens question educational processes and results. If educators are to maintain their optimum effectiveness and relevance in a changing social structure, their course of action is clear. They must continue to innovate and experiment on new approaches for nation building as a solution to educational problems. The strategies discussed constitute only some of

the many avenues that might be pursued.

The Department of Education and Culture is performing the leadership role and private associations like the Philippine Sociological Society should be congratulated for doing their part in nation-building focusing on programs and structures being evolved and utilized by the government and the private sector to achieve the nation's developmental goals.

Notes

This is a revised version of a paper read February 6, 1975 at the Public Lecture Series of the Philippine Sociological Society. The author is Executive Director of the National College Entrance Examination, Department of Education and Culture.

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