



The Teachers' Contribution to the Re-Orientation in Education *

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Dear Colleagues and Friends:

As I stand here, I surmise that you are wondering what I feel at the moment. For the first time, I believe your guess will be wrong even if teachers are reputed to be good at divination. You expect me to say that I am happy to be at your convention. And if you tell the truth and nothing but the truth your second guess is that I came here as the Director of Public Schools. When I greeted you Dear Colleagues and Friends, I meant every word of it. The greeting is warm, hearty, nay pregnant with assurances that we are one and all in the service of our people. This then is **our** convention, and I came as one of you, to meet you all in pleasant camaraderie and faithful counsel, and to pledge with you once more the high purposes for which the teachers of our Republic stand one and undivided. When the Bureau of Public Schools cannot hold a teachers convention, and the teachers themselves do it through their chosen delegates, they manifest a high sense of responsibility and an undoubted ability for self-direction. I am exalted by their devotion to duty. I am proud of the PPSTA.

The theme of the convention is Re-orientation in Education. I should like to contribute to the

thinking on this well-chosen and timely subject by appraising what the teachers have contributed to it.

For three years now, we have continued to vitalize our community-school service program. Much of the progress we have achieved may be attributed to the untiring efforts exerted by the teachers under the leadership of school officials in the field. There has accumulated ample evidence that our teachers have accepted a new outlook in their profession consistent with our new educational program. Teachers have realized that education is more than teaching children to master subject matter and confining their activities within the school building and its premises. Now the greater demands of education have disposed the teachers to take active part in community activities and projects such as improving health practices and facilities, raising the moral tone of the community, cultural uplift, recreational program and practices, beautification of the town including homes, discovering new ventures and techniques calculated to increase the economic productivity of the individual as well as of the community, increasing food production, organizing cooperatives, and developing greater neighborliness and civic responsibility among the people.

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Our teachers have realized that they need proficiency in group thinking and the disposition to respect decisions arrived at through democratic processes. They have learned to analyze community resources which can be utilized to enrich the learning materials and activities of the children. They have acquired the ability to interpret the work of the school to the public with a view to keeping community interests and participation in the educational program continually alive and fresh. They have acquired proficiency in evaluating their work in the educational program on the basis of the effects of such program on the growth and learning of both children and adults as well as on the improvement of community living. Our teachers, therefore, have fully assumed the responsibilities inherent in the work of teachers in a community—responsibilities designed to improve life in rural areas through the agency of the school. Under the competent leadership of our field administrative and supervisory force the teachers have achieved a progress in our educational work that has exceeded the expectation of many people.

We are happy to note from considerable evidence, that the community school idea has gained general acceptance to the people because they have felt with gladness its beneficial impact upon their lives. Thanks to your cooperation and splendid work, and to the faith of the people in your sincere concern over their well-being, we have accumulated by now a record of educational achievement so vital to the lives of the Filipino people that I believe it to be unparalleled in the history of Philippine education. Our education has by now become such a

part of the people's life that I cannot but point with justifiable pride to the rise of a new vigorous and intelligent civic spirit through the service clubs and other lay groups, which proves that we among our people, as expressed can solve many a local problem, however seemingly difficult it may be, by keeping education in close touch with the people and by husbanding our total resources for the achievement of the common good.

We have noticed ample evidence that we are undertaking our community school program by using the native approach. This is to say that not only do we study the needs and problems of our people, but also learn their ways of thinking, their methods of doing, their hopes and fears, their customs and mores, and even their idiosyncracies. Knowing these, we identify our schools with the people, an act which I consider a basic policy in any educational reform. The "Samahang pampurok" or "little democracies" of the Division of Bataan are an example. They are built upon the age-long spirit of neighborly cooperation which is inherent among our people and which is far from dead as some people seem to believe. These "Samahang pampurok," organized and managed by the people themselves at grassroot level through school leadership, have brought the rural folks face to face with their own problems and needs. They launch their own project activities and strive to realize them with the resourcefulness and enthusiasm characteristic of their lives in the good old days.

Among the activities and achievements of the community-centered schools under the "purok" organizations are: (1) Improve-

ment of health and sanitary conditions in many towns of the province; (2) Establishment of reading centers; (3) Revival of home industries, such as embroidery, weaving and dressmaking, gardening and poultry and piggery; and (4) establishment of community playgrounds.

The organization on the provincial or zone level such as exists in many school divisions has raised the percentage of literacy and has improved family income through the revitalization of home industries and intelligent thrift. Through the parent-teacher associations, conferences with townspeople, teachers' home visits and school-community visits, and school-community assemblies, the school has succeeded in arousing community consciousness to an appreciably high level. The people are now obsessed with the desire to improve their living conditions and their action to realize this has been most gratifying. Evidences of this resurgent spirit are the improved home conditions, the neat and clean surroundings, the well-kept orchards, backyards, poultry and swine projects, and the recreation and reading centers in many provinces.

The community-centered school finds also great success in adult education work. In many divisions, this work has passed the literacy level and is now on the vocational plane. Courses in dressmaking and tailoring, poultry and swine, and soy bean growing are being attended by eager and interested adults, many of whom are housewives. In Bohol, for instance, at the end of the first semester of last school year, there were engaged 26,839 adults in poultry raising, 14,096 in pig raising, 11,485 in homecrafts, 6,613

in truck gardening, and 573 in trades, in addition to 5,144 adults enrolled in literacy projects.

Community-school projects are as extensive in the Visayas and Mindanao as they are in Luzon. The areas of work are as varied as the community problems and the interest and capacity of the people will permit. Hence, while the movement is nation-wide, there is a variety of projects and a diversity of procedure which reflect the fine adaptability of leadership to local conditions. Common to all such projects is the philosophy that school leadership must make a dent or difference for the better in the life of the people. In the matter of organization, be it through the Community School Council, the Parent-Teacher association, or as in some divisions, thru the expediency of division directives, the general plan is to get the people to participate in the planning of school-community programs on grassroot levels, and gradually transfer school leadership to the people themselves in all civic matters which directly affect the general welfare of the community. It is obvious that training in lay leadership is part and parcel of the program and should receive careful attention from administrative and supervisory officials. Iloilo, which has pioneered on the approach to the community-school idea and has contributed immensely to our knowledge of the problems, has discovered the efficacy of what is called the **native approach**, that is, the approach from the point of view of the people of the locality with full consideration of their conditions and practices.

In our work, a similar native approach is applicable to the rest of the areas for the improvement

of living. The exploitation of the native approach cannot be too strongly emphasized in our effort in building an educational pattern based on the native soil. It has arisen from local thinking on pressing local problems, and is confirmed by foreign experts and by our observation of how local problems in Europe, America and Asia are being solved in consideration of their native settings. In our country, therefore, we are building a program of education which we may call indigenous. It is to our credit as a people that we do so. What we have done so far manifests our educational maturity.

Now that we have found that our reorientation is along the right direction, we expect to proceed in high gear with greater confidence and clearer vision of the future. We have crystallized so far some basic principles: namely, (1) the community-school program needs to have an effective organization in order to guarantee permanence and continuity; (2) it must start from and be directed to the urgent needs of the people, and gradually encompass all areas of living; (3) it must make a difference for the better in the life of the people, otherwise the people would not have anything to do with it; and (4) the community-school must employ democratic processes.

The achievements of some divisions which I have cited make only a portion of the over-all achievements in all other divisions. This is a tribute to the cooperation, leadership and statesmanship of our field personnel. From this point in the development of the community-school service program which has for its start

wisely begun in the minds of the teachers, let us briefly survey some advance posts which our present status indicates as necessitating study and experimentation for the ensuing year.

In the field of instructional materials, we might explore the possibilities of developing resource units and supplementary teaching materials that will bring the realities of social living to the attention and concern of children. In the light of the needs of our people, such materials will help greatly in improving sanitation, health, nutrition, social life, and recreation. Some beginnings along this line have been reported from Bulacan, Iloilo, Bataan, and Cagayan. This step obviously brings the problems of social living closest to the level of children and within the immediate interest of adults. In order to complete the identification of school instruction with life, which is the basic link between the school and the community, it is necessary that school children also observe the process of social living and participate in it.

Our concern over the implementation of our work in the field has accentuated the need for group action. The support and cooperation of other lay groups, including non-school services of the government, have been most encouraging. More and more the public schools are becoming truly the schools of the people and a vital instrument in promoting civic action and improving the life of the masses. Our joint labors have placed the public schools on the forefront of national endeavors. We must keep this position now that the schools have as-

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