

NO SIMPLE PROBLEM – PHILIPPINE EDUCATION

The state of education in this country is not a piecemeal problem one can dissect. Legislators have tried to solve our problems in education by passing laws with confusing results. And how often have educators talked about the neglect of science or the need for buildings and textbooks, all in vain? The state of education is impossible to discuss apart from the entire milieu of Filipino society. We have to view the nation as a whole, and then look at the sad state of education to arrive at a more accurate autopsy. One cannot segregate the influence of politics, of business interests, of communications media, of student concept of education, of the character of teachers in this country, and of the power elite that molds, and holds sway over the shape of education in the Philippines.

A look at the pattern of various disturbances in the field of education show that it is just not possible to consider the problems purely as one of education. There has been, for example, much talk about diploma mills but this is related to the student-population explosion, the failure of the government and existing authentic private institutions to respond to this phenomenon, and the distorted social concept of what education is in terms of diplomas. Education being the only channel available for social mobility, the social class structure has to be considered in the problem of diploma mills. Similarly, the scandals on cheating at government exams are inextricable from government graft and misconception of education; and when is a school an educational institution, and when a business establishment?

Let us take the case of teachers forming unions and of their going on strike, as has been the case in the past and is a problem right now in one institution. Could one segregate this conflict and call it a labor-management problem, stripping it completely of educational aspects? And how does one even discuss the educational significance, when the forces that will ultimately determine the conflict will be the various power influences of our society — whether political leaders, the courts of justice, the press, the educators, or public opinion? In the case of the strike going on at FEU, for example, should not education have a voice through highly respectable and objective and impartial mediators? This is not the case, and so we have instead lawyers and labor

bosses, while newsmen are strangely silent, more concerned it seems with a sex scandal in the CIS.

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Within our present society, when principles are challenged in a specific crisis at a specific time and place, the reason for action will invariably turn out to be that one rallied to the call of a relative or to acknowledge *utang-na-loob* to a powerful patron without looking at the issues and judging the case on its merits. The real struggle going on in the Filipino society is that of the individualist who stands on his own merits, his work and his talents, versus those who have to cling to one another to protect their own incompetence and their own fear in the old feudal type society. — *Alfredo R. Roces, Manila Times, March 20, 1966.*