

NATIONAL INTEGRATION OF ADULT EDUCATION

The work of improving the rate of literacy should be the introductory part of adult education in the broad sense of this concept. This is so because teaching an adult how to read and write should not be a terminal course but the first step in teaching him subjects necessary for his work as a responsible individual, a better bread winner, and an intelligent citizen.

The scheme to advance literacy may thus cover the plan of improving the education of adults. It is, of course, true that the two activities may be undertaken separately by two different groups of teachers. That may be an uneconomical procedure; but it is necessary for in the higher stages of adult education, those who are to take charge of the work it involves require a different and highly

advanced educational qualifications.

The program of action for literacy naturally begins with the teaching of people who have not been to school to learn how to read and write. Once this is accomplished, the next step is adult education proper. This is but the logical thing to do for education is the purpose of literacy.

Adult education may also be reasonably classified as extension education or continuation education. These two terms are, of course, broader in scope and are usually intended to mean college or professional studies offered and pursued outside the classrooms of the college. It may be done through correspondence or through special meetings between a teacher and people who desire to improve the knowledge they acquired during their student days.

The concern of adult education, on the other hand, is the training of people of 18 years old and older in things which they need for intelligent, practical living. While the emphasis is vocational or occupational, it should be broad enough to include the fundamental problems affecting the economic needs, the health needs, the civic needs, and the recreational needs of a person. The goal is the development of conscious citizenship in a democracy.

But this group is even more fortunate than the thousands of children who have never had a chance of attending school at all. In adult life all of them need training for useful citizenship. They form a large portion of the entire population. To neglect their education is as harmful to public welfare as to neglect the education of children. Hence, adult education is of supreme importance to the country.

To establish and maintain a democratic government and society is an extremely difficult undertaking. Its requirements are not simple or easy

to practice. A democratic government is a delicate and complicated instrument. It could serve its purpose only when it is employed by those who know how to use it. That is why the people, as a whole, have to be well prepared through *proper* education before a real and working democracy in their government and society could come to life with all its advantages to the people themselves. The crucial problem is, therefore, that of teaching the people how to act as masters of themselves and as builders of their own destiny.

The framers of the Constitution of our country had the right idea when they expressly included in that basic instrument the last five words in the following provision: "The Government shall establish and maintain a complete and adequate system of public education, and shall provide at least free public primary instruction and *citizenship training to adult citizens.*" It is clear that *adult education* is here given as much emphasis as free public primary education. Both pri-

mary instruction and adult education are given priority in the organization and maintenance of the educational system to be supported by the Government. One is as important as the other; and it is so understood and declared in our Constitution. But our Government so far has failed to comply adequately with this constitutional mandate. The reason might be more oversight; but it could be a lack of appreciation of the value and importance given to it by our Constitution. We have been doing as much as we think possible the work of organizing primary schools. The bulk of the Government educational budget is devoted to this purpose. We have even gone to the extent of opening secondary schools, nationalizing these institutions without paying enough attention to adult education. Colleges and universities have been established in the form of public and private institutions. They are not necessary in many cases. Oftentimes they are largely intended to add personal glory and prestige to their political found-

ers. But the primary duty of giving adult education has received but scant notice and care.

Whatever attempts at implementation this constitutional provision has received so far is pitifully inadequate. In fact, the nature and concept of adult education do not seem to be very widely understood and appreciated. This is not entirely the fault of the few men who are supposed to take charge of this work. The fault largely lies in the failure of our Government to provide sufficient funds for this particular obligation imposed upon it by the Constitution. And yet the Government could set aside funds for activities which are considered neither essential under our Constitution nor desirable by thinking men and women in our country. To cite one glaring example: The Government at one time, not long ago, has appropriated the huge amount of 100 million pesos for the so-called Emergency Employment Administration. Instead of throwing away large sums for these and like

purposes which are not indispensable to the social, political, educational, and economic growth and strength of our country, the Government would be fulfilling its obligation to strengthen our democratic institutions if it should instead devote such enormous sums to the establishment of an effective system of adult education for citizenship training.

It is a well-known fact that thousands are not able to continue schooling beyond the primary or intermediate grades. And there are thousands, too, who do not finish even a mere 4-year primary education. They are classified as dropouts. But even they should finish the elementary school courses, they still need more education for good citizenship. Experience shows that elementary education alone is an inadequate preparation for life in a democratic society. It could perhaps help in eliminating simple illiteracy. It may give the child some acquaintance with elementary science, arithmetic, and social studies. But all these are given to children between 7 and 13

years of age. After that time, they go to work or stay idle and forget whatever little education they have acquired, so that upon reaching adulthood or even before that, they return to a condition approaching illiteracy. Under such circumstances, it is obvious that the millions spent for primary schools are just so much precious treasure thrown into a bottomless pit. The purpose of creating an educated citizenry is thus defeated.

While the concept of adult education as the training of citizens or individuals who have failed to receive an adequate education in the elementary grades is necessary and important, it should also be considered and it should serve as a continuation of training for a broader and more useful educational and cultural development program.

In this sense, the term citizenship training should not be interpreted as meaning merely ability to read and write or mere knowledge of some skilled trade or vocation. It is more than that. It is the education that makes

a person a responsible man, a moral and cultured individual, one who is sufficiently informed about the history of his country and his people, about his government and his social, political, and legal rights and obligations, considering that we have established a democratic government and are expected to maintain and protect democratic institutions. Adult education, in a word, should lead to the acquisition of a general liberal education involving basic knowledge of the humanities and the social and natural sciences.

The second stage refers to what may be called *continuing education* which presupposes the education for those who have completed their formal studies in the regular schools, colleges, and universities. For many of those who finished high school or college stop learning and growing culturally and intellectually not realizing that knowledge nowadays is not static but is fast expanding, changing, and increasing. Thus continuing education envisages a process of men-

tal, cultural, and social improvement that should last throughout the entire life of the individual. This is the wider concept of adult education, the education that men and women in adult life really need if they are to understand the conditions of this fast changing world in which we now live and if they are to remain as enlightened workers, observers, and active participants. The International Committee of the UNESCO for the Advancement of Adult Education in December, 1965, said:

"The idea that education does not stop with the end of childhood or adolescence but continues throughout life and meets a permanent need of individuals and societies is steadily making progress. The term 'continuing education' has taken its place in the vocabulary not only of education specialists but also of planners and men concerned with technical or political action."

Adult education in the Philippines needs for its satisfactory development the integrated efforts of the differ-

ent public or governmental agencies and of the private educational, social, and economic organizations of the entire country. In addition, individuals should take an open and active interest in encouraging the enlistment of all elements in the work of education for our democracy.

To carry out a program contemplated on this national scale, there are obviously two things required: One is a specific appropriation of public funds to be made available for the training of teachers and for their salaries and other expenses, for reading materials, and for other educational devices; and the second is the establishment of a well-organized national body in the form of a board, council, or commission under the auspices of the Department of Education but with a sufficient degree of autonomy to adopt measures it deems necessary and desirable. There should be a number of well-coordinated centers scattered in different regions all over the country. They should include not only government-operated agen-

cies but also privately organized *study circles* such as those found in Sweden where there are almost one hundred thousand of them involving over one million Swedes or about one-eighth of the country's population. They should be under some form of supervision by a regional office to which appeals for certain types of assistance or cooperation may be presented for certain types of adult education.

It is obvious that continuing education in essence signifies a recognition of the constant growth and changes of knowledge and ideas resulting from new discoveries in scientific and scholarly advances. Vocational and even professional education to enable men and women merely to learn specific skills and techniques is far from adequate in the dynamic environment of the world today. The rapid mechanization of jobs and the introduction of automation are fast reducing the need and utility of manual dexterity except in a very limited area of human labor. The value of liberal

education rises higher and higher in the preparation of every individual for the ever changing conditions of this age.

If education is to be frankly and sincerely employed, as it has to be, for the development, the protection, and the maintenance of democratic institutions in this country, the idea of continuing education as a life-long process covering from childhood to the last days of a man's active life is absolutely necessary. We don't need to prove this other than to show that the ignorance of the population that make up the voters of our country today is the cause, the primary and basic cause, of the insufficiency and poverty of the prevailing material conditions of most of our people and of the social and political evils now facing our country. The lack of appreciation on the part of most of us have for liberal education is one of the serious causes of the absence of the sense of values and the paucity of a keen sense of responsibility noticeable in our private and public life.

One of the biggest obstacles in the educational progress of the masses of our country is the language used in our schools. In discussing the question of language, the wise and mature person sets aside superficial arguments arising from considerations of politics, nationalistic attitudes and personal pride. In my opinion what the country needs is a language for popular adult education and an additional language for advanced learning and higher scientific improvement. The nation's slow march in popular education has been caused by the fact that we have been using a foreign language for our primary and elementary schools all over the country. I do not say that we have not acquired some education through the use of a foreign language in learning the rudiments of education. What I want to say is that the success of our efforts at mass education in our country has not been high enough because we have not made use of our vernacular languages. It is too obvious to need a long explanation that when.

one has to learn a language other than his own mother tongue to acquire even the elements of learning he has to double the amount of his energies and the length of his time to succeed.

In conclusion, I wish to submit this idea for serious consideration: The entire educational system of the country could be made to produce results that could really be depended upon to raise the level of the economic and social improvement of the whole nation if it should be organized and treated as one vast establishment covering all educational work, public and private, formal and out-of-school, from the kindergarten to the highest institution of learning. The purpose is not to control the educational activities in their various forms

and stages nor to put up an educational Czar and dictator but rather to coordinate their functions to avoid wasteful duplication and to make sure that education could be made the most vital factor for the improvement of the individual and the nation. The aim should be to make education the largest industry in a sense for the transformation of the Filipinos into a nation of good and productive citizens deserving the respect of the whole world. And incidentally, this would be the only way and the best way of changing the prevailing notion, not pleasant or complimentary or respectable, that politics is the largest Filipino industry. — *Vicente G. Sinco, Delivered at the Round Table Discussion of Life-Long Education under Unesco Philippine Auspices, March 21, 1968.*