



## The Greater Objectives of the Community-Centered Schools\*

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*Secretary of Education*

Chairman Maceda,  
Delegates of this Annual  
Convention of the PPSTA,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am happy to note from the program of this 1951 convention of the Philippine Public School Teachers Association that the theme on which you have decided to bring to bear the weight of your collective experience and your cumulative judgment, is "Re-orientation in Our Education Effort" with particular reference to the development of the community-centered schools. For your choice I must offer you my warmest commendations. Under present circumstances, I do not believe you could have selected a timelier or, for that matter, a more vital topic.

For ours, indeed, is a decisive day and age. Humanity everywhere seethes with a desire for better things, and strives continually to make its dreams come true. Unfortunately, there lurk among us subtle and unprincipled men who, taking advantage of the inadequacies and imperfections in the machinery of society, have utilized that desire for their ignoble ends. It is therefore left for teachers and educators who have the faculty of reason to distinguish between fact and fancy, the

power of vision and the sense of mission to meet the challenge hurled by these scheming men. And the best place for that, I agree, is our rural communities. One of our most potent agency is the community school.

I am satisfied that in the quiet, effective way characteristic of the methods of their profession, our teachers are now grappling with this urgent task. Even before my appointment as Secretary of Education, but especially during the last convention of division superintendents held in Baguio, I learned that among the activities and achievements of the community schools are: (1) the improvement of health and sanitary conditions in the rural areas; (2) the establishment of reading centers; (3) the raising of the percentage of literacy; (4) the revival of home industries, such as embroidery, weaving and dressmaking, silkworm culture, truck gardening, and poultry and pig raising; (5) the establishment of community playgrounds; and (6) the promotion of community assemblies through which the people learn of their rights and duties as worthy citizens of our country. These are truly worth-while accomplishments, and it is with justifiable pride that our able Director of Public Schools has spoken

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of them as without parallel in the history of Philippine education. I sincerely wish to share in that pride.

These activities of the public schools synchronize all too beautifully, as it were, with the plans and policies of our national government. You have the PACSA among whose guiding principles is that the humblest man in the community is as much a part of its activities as the most important member, and that he has same rights to the benefits of any community project and the same responsibility in the execution of that project. I am glad to know that in one of his memoranda to division superintendents, Director Pañgilinan has underscored the need of integrating the PACSA project with the community school idea and with the program of adult education of the public schools.

There is also Executive Order No. 345, Creating the Peace Fund Campaign Commission. As the head of our Republic, President Quirino naturally expects the cooperation of every inhabitant in the task of eradicating the subversive elements of our population, persons who, by deceit and violence, are spreading terror, conflict and confusion in our outlying communities. Another executive order provides for the Organization of Barangay Associations. In this order the President calls for the formation of barangays since, like their counterpart of old, these social units could best represent the solidarity, cooperation and loyalty most needed to protect and preserve the free institutions which our people have come to cherish all the more passionately

in these days of doubt and distress. Section 2 of the second order shows how close the tie-up is—or should be—between the objectives of these associations and those of our community schools.

Like Dickens who can see the romantic aspect of familiar things, I like to think that there is more in the community-centred school than what its definition gives. Of course, I know that a community school is "one whose program is designed for useful and effective learning on the part of the children; one which helps to improve the quality of living in the community, one which serves the total population of the community." Set against the background of the community it evolves its purposes out of the aspirations, interests, and needs of the people of such community. It utilizes in its program the whole gamut of community resources—economic, social, cultural, psychological, or ethical. Through democratic processes, it extends the areas of group or social living. In short, the community school reflects the everyday mood, talent, and goodness of the people it is intended to serve.

But while it is all these things, while it does all these things, I wish it would not, on that score, lose sight of greater and grander aims, namely, (1) to develop the highest capacities of our common people and (2) to develop in their hearts the deepest loyalties of which they are capable.

With regard to the first aim, we may ask with candor whether the rank and file of our rural population have risen to their full stature as creative individuals. In an outburst of patriotic sentiment, we may answer offhand that they



have. But then the realities will at once stare us in the face and belie this spontaneous assertion. The truth is one cannot live up to his highest capacities, if he basks in the sunshine of the past, if he sees in practically every misfortune the mysterious hand of an inscrutable fate, or if, in his economic or gainful labors, he is content to receive merely marginal returns. Nor can he live up to his highest capacities if he wants to attain his goal through sudden, sporadic efforts, instead of through tested and time-honored process of evolution.

Sometimes I doubt, and I do this with keen regret, whether many of the people in our rural localities are really free—that is, free from the bondage of ignorance, of superstition, of indolence. If they are not, then it follows that our community school takes on an enhanced social character and its teachers, for all their grinding duties in the classroom, become entrusted with the major task of helping our masses to know themselves, to rise above the limitations of their environment, and otherwise to realize that, in so doing, there is bound to come an enormous accession to their dignity and freedom.

In respect to the second aim, we may inquire, again with frankness, whether many of our common people understand fully the relation that every man should bear to his environment. If they do, why all this present suspicion between brother and brother, why all this current dissension among certain sections and segments of our population?

The sad fact seems to be that not a few of us, particularly those who have not had the benefits of a thorough education, measure the world by themselves, by their ideas and idiosyncracies, and thereby lose their power of tolerance, generosity, and understanding. No enduring loyalties can subsist in such circumstances; no abiding love of country can thrive on such shifting sands. It seems to me, therefore, to be a supreme function of the community school to develop among our rural folks a cheery attachment to their immediate soil of origin, for it is where practical patriotism begins; it is there more than in any other place, where they can be said to achieve their destiny.

Ladies and gentlemen of this convention, every age has its message to deliver. If ours today is an age of portent, it is likewise an age of promise, especially for our people who by now possess all the enthusiasms engendered by their newly-found freedom. And the message, I submit, is one of greater peace, of greater prosperity, of greater power, for all our people. Through re-orientation in our educational efforts, indeed, by means of the community school which finds its meaning and sustenance in the grassroots of our country, I plead with you to go to our great unwashed, in their homes and hamlets, and find your part in their lives. With them and under the inspiration of our national leader, President Elpidio Quirino, whose one passion is the welfare of his people, we may yet give utterance to the idealism of our race in this age and disseminate the message in their hearts.