

GEARING EDUCATION TO PRODUCTION

Senator GERONIMA T. PECSON



We must do more than increase teachers' salaries, issue a code of relationships between teachers and supervisors, or establish more effective services for training in educational leadership. We must remember that less than fifty per cent of the children of school age are in school and that among those that enter the first grade most of them drop out before completing the elementary grades. Our government devotes more than a third of its total income to education, a percentage which is much higher than the figure for other civilized countries. This amount cannot be further increased without affecting the other essential services of the government. And yet, we must put all the children of school age in school, otherwise we would fail to discharge our obligations as ordained by the Constitution; namely to provide educational opportunities to all the youth of our country. In fact, even if we use all the funds of the government to pay the salaries of teachers at the present rate, still we cannot comply fully with the mandates of the Constitution on education.

Under the circumstances, what must we do? Indeed, what can we do? The only alternative that I can see is to increase the national income and the per capita wealth of our people. Only

then will we be justified in increasing the appropriations for the schools, for then the taxing capacity of our people will be correspondingly improved. This means concretely greater and better production; more and better trained workers; increased working hours for the great majority of our able-bodied adults on the farm and rural areas who are idle eight months of the year; better work habits and attitudes; more and better vocational guidance; and more varied opportunities for productive employment.

I therefore propose the thesis that *the key to equality of educational opportunity for all youth of our country is greater economic productivity.* This we must help bring about by gearing our educational system to production. Only as our youth are able and encouraged to work and produce goods and services can they be strong in body, mind and character. And to be strong, they must be productive. We should lay down the policy therefore that the school — be it elementary, secondary, or college; academic, vocational, or professional; public or private — should, at the end of every school year justify itself on three counts, namely:

First, by the extent to which it has given useful knowledge to the students and developed in them health, character, and work habits and attitudes that will enable them to live happy and useful lives.

Second, by the extent to which it has improved the standards of living of the people in the community which it serves by the pupils participating directly in home and community betterment projects.

Third, by the extent to which it has developed and employed work power in the pupils and increased the national wealth and the per capita income of the people.

If we are to attain high standards of civilization we must make education a causal factor in creating wealth. The higher the educational level of a nation, the greater the earning power of individuals and the total national income. The experience abroad should teach us that high income and high level of education and technical skill are interrelated.

The evidence is impressive that education is a causal factor as far as income is concerned. In other words, if a country will increase the amount of education and technical training, the income will increase. In the light of the information available, we are justified in saying that the income will increase far more than the cost of education. The more the education increases, the higher the income rises. In this sense we are justified in saying that more education will cause an increase in the income of a country. (*Schools for a New World*. Twenty-fifth Yearbook of the American Association of School Administrators. N.E.A., 1947, p. 32)

Let us cite some evidences from the same authority.

There is Switzerland with poor resources — a mountainous country, poor soil, little land fit for cultivation, severe climate, and few minerals — but with good education and one of the most highly trained industrial populations of the world. Switzerland has a high income; in fact, it has a higher per capita income than the wealthiest country in the world — the United States.

On the other hand, take Rumania

with rich and abundant resources — fertile land, rich forests, abundant oil, good climate and good rainfall — but with a poor educational system and limited technical training. Unlike Switzerland, Rumania is a low-income country.

Again, take Denmark and Norway which have poor resources but a high income because of well developed educational systems. On the other end we find the examples of Brazil and Colombia (S.A.) with great resources but low incomes because of low education and technical training.

It is no secret on what side we belong. Our resources are as rich and varied as the most favored country in the world — fertile land, fabulous forests, abundant minerals, good rainfall, no winter — but our income is among the lowest in the world. Our per capita wealth is only one-twelfth of that of the United States, and our tax burden is one thirteenth as large. Can there be any other cause than low education and ineffective technical training? During the time of the Monroe Survey Commission in 1924 we were then a nation of second graders. We are down to the first grade now. On the average, our formal education amounts to the very low figure of 100 school days, with the added distressing fact that up to the fourth grade the school day is only a half day of less than 3 hours.

The remedy, as I have said, is to gear our system of education to the late President Roxas' program of industrialization. There are two ways to do this.

First, the schools should take it upon themselves to train skilled workers for various industries and occupations so that the output of the industries and the wages of the people who work in them may be correspondingly in-

creased. This may be done, in the case of adult citizens, through the organization of large numbers of extension courses in which will be demonstrated improved methods of production. In the case of able-bodied youth, the way out is to vitalize vocational education which is, for the most part, too academic to serve the high purpose of training skilled workers for the various industries and occupations.

Second, the pupils in all the grades above, say, the fourth grade, should engage in productive enterprises — in fabricating articles for sale. This is no new venture for in my school days many years ago the industrial arts classes produced bags, baskets, hats, embroideries, bamboo and rattan furniture, and other articles which were exported to the United States. From these school-industries we (the pupils) derived no small income and the incentive and training for work. Many of our home industries today are the result of those activities. Imagine what a million and a half able-bodied youth, twelve years old and older, can turn out in a day, in a week, in a year, to say nothing of five or more years.

A work-study plan should be worked out in every school — public or private. Even little children can do something to help their bigger brothers and sisters without hurting their health or depriving them of play and rest. All pupils should be given work assignments along with book lessons, depending upon maturity, physical fitness, and aptitude. The twelve thousand or more public and private schools should be converted into productive factories a part of the day and on week ends. The four million Filipino homes should teem with home industries just as the thousands of homes in Switzerland are factories of watches, medical instruments, food products of various kinds, and others that are

too many to mention.

This may sound utopian, but why should it be impossible to attain it here where we have all the resources and mental power and the desire to enjoy all the blessings of modern civilization. Give this plan five or ten years to work itself out, and you will indeed be a hopeless pessimist if you still remain unconvinced. Continue the present emphasis on verbal learning and in fifty or one hundred years we shall still have to be satisfied with carretela civilization, perhaps a little better but not much better. Television has been invented, but the radio is still a luxury to most of us. Think of the possibilities of atomic power if we have the skill and knowledge to convert it into electric and mechanical power with which to run machines to make us beds, homes, food, clothing; to rid us of disease and filth; and to do our chores while we use our higher powers for more worthy ends. No longer will many of us have to toil in drudgery and spend our days serving others. Everybody will have a chance to live the good life, and not merely a few who happen to have the economic advantage and social position which are denied to a great majority of our people.

The implications of the foregoing position for the selection, education, and function of the teacher are far reaching. We have time only to mention a few of them.

First, the qualities needed to succeed in teaching will include not only academic intelligence and broad knowledge of the subjects that the teacher is expected to teach, but also leadership qualities and work experience. A teacher cannot teach what he does not himself have.

Second, the training of teachers should include, besides the fundamen-

tals of psychology, child study, and principles of teaching, preparation for guidance and counseling, supervision of home and school industries, and participation in work activities.

Third, the teacher's function will not be confined to teaching subjects and giving examinations. It will center primarily in teaching the children and youth to live and in leading in home and community improvement. On this new teacher's function, President Roxas made the following statement only a short time ago on the occasion of the convention of the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities:

"I wish to express a conviction which is borne out of the recent developments in world affairs that education can and should do more than mirror society. The time is long past due when the schools should serve as a decisive social force to help reconstruct society. Instead of merely acting as the handmaiden of the State, a view which I believe is becoming obsolete, the schools should enrich the State, improve the conditions of its people, and make possible its optimum development. Statesmen and political leaders need the help of leading educators to save the world from self-destruction. A new world order must be constructed that will champion, not war, but peace. A correspondingly new mentality is needed to do this, and the schools, above all else, should take it upon themselves to develop it. Unless they do, the race between education and catastrophe will end, as was predicted many years ago, in the undoing of civilization."

It is my hope that our teachers — public and private school teachers — will heed and keep this most timely

advice of our late President. They should, of course, teach their pupils the fundamental tools of learning. Our people must, first of all, be literate. In addition, they should teach their pupils to apply these tools to the solution of their multitudinous problems — personal or otherwise — in the school itself, in their own homes, and in their wider contacts in the community. They should, I believe, endeavor to lead the adults and young people, to improve the sanitation of their homes and yards; to select seeds, irrigate the soil, plow the land deeply, and use fertilizers; to provide their homes with some comfort and convenience, and with privacy; to utilize their spare time to produce articles for sale — hats, mats, baskets, slippers, *bakias*, jars, to name only a few of the many home industries that can be established or expanded — in order that they may be able to buy more and better food, to engage a physician or a nurse if a member of the family gets sick, and to send all their children to school and keep them there long enough to be really educated.

Incidentally, your teaching your pupils to work and leading the adults in the community to improve their living conditions, will redound to your ultimate improvement. The community cannot give you more than it has in its possession and power to give. It is your job to create that power. Then and only then will we really have a system of education that will truly minister to the people's needs, a system that will do more than teach the children the tools of learning; namely, equip them with the fundamental skills, attitudes, appreciations, and ideals to live in a society of free men and women.