EDUCATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT*

By Onofre D. Corpuz

I know that CPU began like many older and distinguished and sometimes ancient universities in the world. In 1636 the people, the parents actually, of a town in Massachusettes called New Town (that was the old name of Cambridge, Massachusetts) got together and founded a school which they called Harvard College. They recorded as their purpose—"in order to save our children from an illiterate ministry." I notice that when the Junior College (Central Philippine College) was established in 1923, its primary purpose was "to train preachers and Christian teachers." I think that is all to the good that CPU has retained its Christian mission and its Christian spirit much more faithfully than Harvard. During important events in our lives such as our anniversaries; it is useful after reminiscing over the past to assess what we are and then to have a glimpse into what the future might hold.

This year as in the past many, many years now, more than one out of every four Filipinos are in school. That's how large our school is. You can virtually count them on your fingers of one hand the very few countries in the world where more than one out of every four people in the population are in school. The reason for this, I think, is our love, almost an incurable addiction, for education; in turn this love for education causes many of our most serious problems as well as offers many of our

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greater opportunities. Throughout the 1950's, our population was growing every year at the rate of 1.9 per cent. If the population growth is 1.9 per cent every year, it would take that population more than 37 years to double itself If we were growing today at 1.9 per cent a year, then our population would double in the year 2017. That 1.9 per cent rate was during the 1950's, but starting in 1960 all of a sudden our population began to increase at the rate of 3.01 a year. That doesn't seem much; but an annual growth rate of 3 per cent is the highest on Planet Earth.

The Philippines was growing faster than any other country in the world beginning 1960. Now at that rate of 3 per cent, it would take the population only 23 years to double itself. And just to show how the dynamics of population growth leads to explosive increases in population, let's take the population of the Peoples' Republic of China. It is growing only at a rate of 2 per cent a year but at that rate the People's Republic of China produces every 15 years an additional population equivalent to the population of the United States—more than 200 million.

Now at this growth rate of 3 per cent, which was the growth rate in 1970, we were projecting that by the year 2000 the Filipino population would reach the level of 94 million. The more babies we produced, of course, the more Grade 1 pupils we also had and the enrollment at every level soon expanded. This generated a need for more classrooms, books, school supplies, teachers, schools. Our economy was not growing as fast and so we began to face greater and more serious shortages. So, high population growth, slow economic development. At the same time, salaries for all kinds of school personnel, public and private, lagged behind.

Moreover, the slow economic growth meant that it took a long time before graduates were employed. This is one of the necessary consequences of slow economic growth. In 1970 we conducted a study which revealed that it took five years before all the members of the graduating class of one year could be employed. In other words if that same condition exists today, it would take until 1985 before the graduates or the members of the graduating class of 1980 would be employed. That was the situation in 1970. One result of this was that our families and our young people chose the general education and similar inexpensive courses or degree programs. This was the result of inability of the economy to absorb graduates fairly promptly. Thus the higher enrollments were always posted in Commerce, Social Sciences and Teacher Education. Because they were the more numerous, the graduates of these courses were therefore mostly unemployed immediately after graduation or they worked in jobs which were different from their own chosen fields of specialization. Today we can at least be certain that changes have taken place or are taking place because of the National Population Program begun in 1969. Our annual population growth rate has gone down very, very significantly. In fact, this year it is 2.3 per cent, a very, very significant slowing down of our population growth. It means that we will not achieve that 94 million level in the year 2000. If we continue this annual rate of growth, neither increasing or lowering it, it will take about 30 years for our population to double. At our old rate it would take only 23 years for the population to double.

We expect the growth rate to continue to go down.

The Population Commission people talk to married couples of reproductive age—so far the message has always beamed to women who are still at the height of their reproductive powers. But I personally believe that the most significant impact of the Family Planning Program is on the younger people. Since the mothers, let's say, of the year 1995 are the young people in schools today, I think that the message will be even more firmly established so we should be expecting even more significant gains as far as the Family Planning Program is concerned. We now project a population growth rate in 1985 at around 2 per cent. The importance of these statistics is that the pressure on our resources, schools, classrooms, facilities, teachers, textbooks—all kinds of expenses—relaxes. As population growth begins to slow down, the pressure on our resources needed to support our educational program will be relaxing, will become less and less.

A Minister of Education and Culture is naturally interested in population, although you realize that the problems of the Minister of Education and Culture arising out of the population problem are not within his control. A group of parents came to me. "Sir", they say, "we need classrooms for our children; they are entering Grade I this year." I tell them only half-jokingly, "I'm sorry that you had so many babies six years ago without consulting me. You did not think then of the classrooms they would need." So, you see the problems this year were generated six or seven years ago. It is not that we have no concern or responsibility for it. We're happy that the growth rate has gone down. I expect the pressure on our resources to relax gradually, as I said because the increases in Grade I pupils will be slowing down by 1985, the increases in high school enrollment naturally will be slowing down similarly four years later and so on. As the pressures relax we will be able to allocate more resources to other expense items such as books, supplies, salaries, rooms and similar items.

Now another development that has been taking place today, as compared to 1970 . . . within one year after graduation, 90 per cent of all members of a year's graduating class will have been absorbed by the economy. It will take just a year for the members of the graduating class to be absorbed by the economy or to be employed in jobs. So, as you observed, some economic development has taken place faster than before. Although those who tend to be employed earlier, those to be employed ahead of the others, are the engineers, agriculturists and technicians from a broad range of fields in technology. That is why this year engineering is among the top most popular courses in colleges and universities. In the U.P. before 1970, if you asked all freshmen about their career plans, 85 per cent of them would tell you that they would stay in the Social Sciences or Humanities, or Teacher Education. The 15 per cent would be in the other fields, including the sciences and engineering. Today the ratio is completely reversed. In June of last year, the study showed that 86 per cent of all freshmen of UP were planning to go into careers in science or engineering or technology. In a sense this reflected the high demand for engineers and scientists including agriculturists. In another sense it posed a very serious problem because if that trend continued for another five years then most of our faculty in

the the Social Sciences and Humanities would no longer be needed in UP. Then, the university has to take steps in order to redress the balance all over again. One of the most persistent requests of assemblymen from various provinces and regions is "Please, Mr. Minister, let us establish a Technician Institute in my province or in my town, in this municipality or in this city." This reflects the common sense observation about the very high relative demand for engineers and technologists.

Teacher Education, I'm sure, has been one of the casualties of all these developments. Before 1970 the annual enrollment in Teacher Education courses used always to top 100,000 a year. In 1979 the total enrollment in Teacher Education courses was 51,000. Now 51,000 seems a large number until you break it down into freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors. Let's say there are 15,000 freshmen. If nobody fails, the 15,000 freshmen going to second year make 15,000 sophomores, comprising 30,000 of the 51,000. So you have 21,000 to distribute between the third year and senior year and if by some miracle nobody fails then you will have 10,000 teacher graduates a year. And that is a very serious level—a very, very small number of Teacher Education graduates. Now, you know, that there has been a severe drop in Teacher Education enrolment and very soon with our natural population growth, even if not one of the original 15,000 freshmen fails, then naturally, a number like 10,000 teacher graduates every year will not be enough for our requirements, especially since some of them will be pulled away by the other employment opportunities available to Teacher Education graduates. So we've started a program in the Ministry, very tentatively in the meantime, to try to redress the prestige and the status of Teacher Education.

It seems to me that one way of doing this would be to require a higher percentile score in the entrance examination for admission to Teacher Education programs. Many of you might disagree with me but I choose this strange approach. Perhaps Teacher Education might have a higher status if it does not accept the lowest performers in the NCEE. There are a lot of recommendations reaching the cabinet level and I have presented several recommendations for increasing the salaries entirely partly through other fringe benefits. Then, we are introducing legislation in the Batasang Pambansa and also administrative propaganda in the Office of the President and in other Ministries for the reduction of the extra curricular demands on the teachers' time. In fact, we have an executive order requiring any agencies that utilize the service of public school teachers to pay them honoraria. I am seeing to it that all the assignments of public elementary school teachers which do not come from the MEC directly ought to be abolished. Only the jobs of public school teachers associated with their membership in Barangay Brigades will be authorized for recognition by the MEC.

Well, these are tentative steps towards trying to make the life of public school teachers a little bit more tolerable and eventually we hope to progress to a point where we make the profession very much more attractive than it is at present.

I'm also taking a personal interest in the elementary school curriculum. In addition to the general objective

of having a grade school curriculum that is a sound and adequate basis for enabling the child to acquire and develop further learning and education later on, I hope to have a more simple and a very much more straight-forward curriculum than the present one. I mean the present one is a little too sophisticated; there is not enough focus in it. I would have a sound grounding for the child in the three R's. Maybe you think I'm very, very conservative but there is a very great, unmistakable need for this in geography. (We don't teach geography as geography any more) in Character Education, in Civics, Health and Work Education. I think that package is a very adequate package. It does not reflect the theory that a child must learn everything in school but it reflects an alternative theory that the child should learn enough in school that will enable him or her to learn other things outside or after school.

I am not too impressed by the results of the curriculum that has sacrificed directness and simplicity in the guise of modernism through the concepts of Communication Arts, for instance, and Social Studies. No matter how good in theory these are, I think we should make it very, very clear to the children that we are teaching reading, we are teaching geography, we are teaching civics, because the child will never understand when you tell him or her "I'm teaching you Communication Arts or Social Studies." *Kay mabudlay ang* Communication Arts *kag* Social Studies. No matter how good these approaches sound in theory, in application there is a great deal that is missing because these concepts are not direct, they are not straight-forward messages to the pupil. The only reason why I do not stress immediate adoption of my concepts is that when you try to work and revise your curriculum you are also dealing with very important problem areas outside of, but related to, the curriculum; that is to say, your textbooks, other learning materials, your teacher education curriculum and lastly your language of instruction.

I would expect in connection with curriculum making and curricular development that our Regional Directors—I think that this is the nth time I've told this to our Regional Directors-would adopt curricular features that reflect the culture, the economic conditions and other requirements of the communities. Unless the Regional Directors do this, it is as if we were a perfectly homogenous people from Aparri to Jolo. On Camiguin Island just north of Mindanao, almost every square meter of ground is planted to coconut. I do not see why they are learning about rice agriculture. It's the same thing in various regions. I'll have to take action on the inaction on the part of Regional Directors on this matter.

When we consider adopting important changes or programs, the most important thing is to relate these to our national priorities and values. In other words, we don't go into a change just because it is new. Some times, I have criticized the Ministry of Education and Culture for adopting techniques in the school system just because they were recommended by some agency like the UNESCO. They do not understand that many of the ideas of UNESCO are generated after studies in Africa. In Africa, for instance, their school facilities are so very limited. Sometimes a country like Ethiopia cannot even produce thirteen high school teachers in a year, so they

go all over the world, usually to the Philippines, to recruit these teachers. But programs based on the conditions of school systems in Africa, which are often the basis for UNESCO "innovations," should not be automatically adopted in the Philippines. They should be considered or taken up in a seminar of graduate students so that they will know what is happening in the Dark Continent, but they may not be good for application here. In the school system in Africa they say that it is wasteful for a child to remain in the same grade in school for two years because if a child remains in the same grade he is depriving another child of that place. So if a child spends two years in Grade IV, another child who is in Grade III now who will be in Grade IV next year will not have a position because the first child is occupying that. That is the justification for automatic progression.

Now, you can see that automatic progression (Bless its soul! it's gone now) is not applicable in our country. I suspect that our generating in the mind of the child a notion that real life does not discriminate between satisfactory and unsatisfactory performance, is a very, very serious mistake, psychologically, because life outside the classroom is a very strict arbiter of performance. If you fail, you fail. We would be developing in the mind, in the emotions, in the psychology of our pupils a notion that it really doesn't matter too much how you perform because anyway everybody will be promoted. Automatic progression was formerly implemented on the ground that if somebody is not promoted, his emotional and psychological balance will be affected. But, life, as I said, never gives any concessions. Life outside the classroom rewards and it withdraws reward.

Two of our highest priorities today which are a continuing theme of all the cabinet discussions with the President are (1) Productive Efficiency and (2) Social Justice. I'm letting you in on themes that govern, that always reappear in, our cabinet meetings. The values corresponding to these priorities will be stressed in work education, if we look for an anchor in the elementary school curriculum. Productive efficiency, with its values reflected in work education, and social justice with its values reflected in character education and in civics, should be components of the elementary school curriculum in my view.

The Ministry is preparing the final touches of a program that is designed to reduce the inequalities amongst our schools with respect to three factors: (1) accessibility to young people, (2) the holding power of the school and (3) the quality of schooling. We define accessibility as the degree to which schooling is accessible to young people, the degree to which the school accommodates everybody of school age. You might find a community where the school facilities are so limited that they cannot accommodate everybody of school age. Holding power is the degree to which the school is able to retain the child in the school. Let's say, the degree to which the school retains everybody who enters Grade I until he finishes Crade VI. This has something to do with the dropout rate. A school, therefore, is marked high if it has minimum rate of dropouts or no dropouts amongst those who enter Grade I, or if everybody or almost everybody, who enters Grade I finishes Grade VI. Finally, quality. Well, obviously, it is the performance of elementary school finishers according to a national standard, maybe a test.

Now, on these bases the schools in all regions of the Philippines will be rated. They will be marked accord-

ing to their degree of accessibility, their level of holding power, and their level of quality. We will rank the regions from the highest to the lowest; then we will identify the median region. The median, as all teacher education students know, is that point which divides the entire population into those above the median and those below the median. We will identify all those schools in the Philippines and all the regions that are below this median. And then our program will consist in providing support, providing (stimulus) and assistance for improvement so that the gap between these schools and the median will be minimized and eventually all of them will reach the median level.

Now I've been talking about schools but actually this is intended for the community. In effect, we're ranking communities in the Philippines on the degree to which the children in the community enjoy accessibility and acceptable quality of schooling. In other words, this national program reflects our desire that all Filipino children who are disadvantaged by lack of accommodation or by inferior school learning facilities will be enabled to attain schooling performance commensurate to their effort, to their ability rather than be deprived of them because of social or community neglect or inability.

Now when I was talking about the inequalities among the school systems and communities (I was giving you an example) of the national priorities. Another important national priority is productive efficiency. It is nice to talk of higher ideals like liberty, education, justice, peace and so forth. It is nice to talk of all these things but what is not often realized is that for all these beautiful ideas there is a social or an economic cost; somebody has to pay for them just as every item in the Bill of Rights of our Constitution has an economic cost. Let us take the right to property, the right to be secured from arbitrary searches and seizures, the right to free expression or printing, the right to property--all of these things have costs. We have law schools, we have a police department, we have prisons even, we have an entire judiciary and the Filipino people spend millions and millions of pesos for all these agencies that are supposed to protect these rights once they are violated. The trouble is that even the poor people who do not own properties still have to pay for the cost of maintaining property or those who cannot even read and write have to pay the cost of maintaining the system for protecting the freedom of correspondence. The farmer who does not know how to read and write, who never sends a letter, who never receives a letter has to pay for the cost of maintaining all of these rights. The point is that all of these beautiful things entail social and economic costs. And in order to defray the cost we have to work and (develop) values which will be converted into financial resources to defray the cost of maintaining these beautiful things.

Now the Ministry, with the President's approval, has just started a production program. I visited one of these projects before I came here this morning. All our vocational institutions now will have to have a production program. And I'll tell you later why this has become more and more necessary. The project I visited is a chalk-making program. I think we spend too much for chalk and teachers complain so often about having no chalk; we really cannot be happy maintaining a school system where we cannot even give chalk to our teachers.

We have discovered that we have schools that have the capacity for

making chalk. We have two in Luzon right now. We have this one in ISAT that has begun its chalk-making program. In fact, I hope to be able to organize some government corporation which will include these institutions and the people who are involved in these production enterprises so that they can generate surpluses instead of other people getting the profit.

Just over six months ago, I was almost charged in court because I refused to pay, on the basis of a contract, for garden tools that were delivered to the Ministry. I looked at a rake. I'm not Hercules but I could bend the rake with my two hands because it was made of *lata* and the price was very high. They threatened to take me to court and the President ordered me to pay but I said, "I don't think the President knows (the facts) about this," so I refused to pay.

Now, at least, if we manufacture tools in our schools, our school personnel will be subject to our monetary, our supervisory, our quality control procedures and I'm sure making rakes or shovels or spades that bend will not happen again. In fact, I have also issued an order that our schools cannot buy from external suppliers until we have bought out all the products of our own school production facilities to give them a market and to train the students, to give the students actual working exposure.

Now the reason for our having to go into production is the economic condition forced upon us by chronically increasing oil prices. The future ahead of us insofar as this is affected by crude oil prices is a very, very difficult future. In 1970 a barrel of crude oil cost $1.30. This year I think every barrel costs $30 only because our government is able to negotiate with other governments—the oil-producing governments—for this oil. If we are not able to negotiate, then we will have to buy from what they call spot or free market where every barrel costs $44 each. Can you imagine from $1.30 to $30; I think within 60 days it will cost $33.

That is why a lot or all of these commodity prices have gone up. South Korea and the Philippines buy oil at identical prices but gasoline in South Korea today sells at ₱6.35 a liter. We're paying ₱4.50 in this country because the government subsidizes all these prices. In 1979, every day for 365 days, the government spent ₱17 M every day just to subsidize the price; otherwise, the customer had to pay the whole price; then he would have to pay a lot more, just as much as they pay in South Korea.

Now, that is why, as you will soon read in the newspapers, the President is talking about transferring some funds from the budget of all the other Ministries and putting these into the Ministry of Energy. As usual we'll try to fight this because you know more than 90 per cent of the Ministry of Education and Culture budget is for school teachers' salaries. So, once you reduce that budget, you affect salaries. (It would be) a good thing if our budget had a lot of items for non-salaries. The President this year, 1979-1980, said. "Let's have a 10% reduction of all the budgets of the Ministries." I said, "Go ahead, Mr. President, but we cannot do it in the Ministry of Education and Culture because 10% is more than ₱390 million, and that means you will have to reduce the salaries of our school teachers." So naturally he retreated; he cannot do it in the Ministry of Education and Culture. But you can see the President's view when he said at our last cabinet meeting that we would have to confront this oil price problem almost on a war-footing.

We have not yet completed the

system in the Ministry of Education and Culture but we will see to it that the offices in the Ministry should be the first to demonstrate the seriousness about using every drop of energy in the wisest way possible because we cannot ask our people to sacrifice if we ourselves do not sacrifice ahead of them.

The seriousness given to energy development and energy production, of course, becomes very necessary, not just sensible, in the light of these price increases. This year, fortunately we have the capacity to produce 20% of our total oil requirements. In 1979, we produced 17% of our oil requirement. That was why we did not suffer too much when Iran stopped their exports of oil to the Philippines; they were providing us less than 4% and we were able to accommodate it from our production of 17%.

But other sources of energy have to be developed very quickly. We have some coal, not too much, but a reasonable amount. We are going into alcogas. Our problem with alcogas is that, we have to convert sugar into alcohol. And we probably cannot plant enough hectares to sugar. This means that we have to look for sources other than sugar, like our starch products. A lot of people talk about cassava, but you cannot convert starch directly into alcohol—first you have to convert starch into sugar then into alcohol, But we have a team of, I think, some of the most brillant young Filipino scientists. We have cornered them, we're putting them to work. You can be very proud of these very young scientists. They say they can discover a process and then develop that process by which you shortcut the steps so that you can convert starch directly into alcohol.

Then we have hydroelectric power which is a very good source of energy. It is abundant in Mindanao right now. It should be also very accessible in all parts of the Philippines because of our natural conditions like very high precipitation—high rainful rate, in other words. If we could catch all the water, then we will have surplus energy in the Philippines because we have tremendous rainful here. So water impoundment, reservoir projects are being planned, are being studied and planned very seriously. The last main source of energy we are developing is geothermal energy. Region VIII composed of Leyte and Samar, which are among the most depressed areas in the Philippines today, is now becoming very blessed because the richest geothermal wells in the world have been discovered there. One well in Tubungan, Leyte, certainly is the richest; it has the richest potential anywhere in the world. There are similar wells discovered in the island of Biliran. So we should be able to develop a significant portion of our energy requirement and that is the reason for this sudden and very accelerated interest in the Ministry of Energy. All of these struggles or all of these campaign for energy production are related to production in general.

Aside from giving you just a few details of what we in the Ministry are doing and what we plan to do, I have tried to show to you how connected all our schooling and education programs are with actual and concrete requirements and problems of our nation. In other words, we are not talking of education as if it were in a vacuum; we are talking of education as part of the community life, as part of the national life which all share and which we want to enrich and develop.

So much of the development that our country has achieved throughout the years has been, to a large measure, part of the contribution of our good schools in the country.

Our good institutions of schooling and learning, and education and technology (have contributed much to our national development.) I have not talked about the Education Act of 1980 which we filed in the Batasang Pambansa because of lack of time. But there is in that Education Act the principle formally establishing on record, through legislation of the total education sector in development, whether it is at the community level or the national level.

We share your happiness during this 41st anniversary of the College of Education and during the CPU Diamond Jubilee.