

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Basic Issues in Educational Policy

Thomas R. Fitzpatrick

Philippine Studies vol. 23, no. 4 (1975) 454–457

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

BASIC ISSUES IN EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Thomas R. Fitzpatrick

While financing the educational system is, and will remain, an important issue both for the government and for the private educational institutions, there are several other more basic issues which should not be overlooked.

NARROW VOCATIONALISM

The first issue, which I shall label "narrow vocationalism," may be illustrated by the following quotation from the Education Sectoral Study prepared by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) in 1974:

In the Philippines, education is viewed as a manpower resource conversion process where the principal input consists of students, whose supply source is population, and where outputs are destined to be absorbed in any of the following sectors . . .

I would like to raise the question: who views education in the way just described? Granting that one of the many desired results of education is that the student, upon graduation, will find gainful employment; and even granting that such a desired result may be located on a higher priority scale in a developing country; does any informed person look upon the entire education process in this narrow vocational framework?

The Constitution itself recognizes that the State shall aid and support parents in discharging their natural right and duty in rearing youth for civic efficiency and the development of moral character; the State is also to promote the physical, intellectual, and social well-being of youth. Educational institutions shall aim to inculcate love of country, teach the duties of citizenship, develop moral character, promote personal discipline and scientific, technological and vocational efficiency. Surely these expressions imply that the purpose of education is more than just a narrow vocationalism.

One might envisage a system where there was, in the terms of

the NEDA study, a perfected manpower resource conversion process; and yet within the same system there might be lacking much that contributes to civic efficiency and moral development, as well as to the intellectual and social well-being of the youth.

From the viewpoint of private educational institutions, education should clearly be viewed as much more than just a manpower resource conversion process. The objectives therefore of the private educational system are much broader than the objective of manpower development.

Gainful employment is the normal means by which a person supports himself and his family so that they may seek together the fullest human and spiritual development consistent with their responsibilities toward their fellowmen. Gainful employment is thus a condition or, if you wish, a means to higher objectives, and not an end in itself.

If the State, because of the limited resources available for education must concentrate on manpower development, it should not do so, in my opinion, to the detriment of other and higher objectives. Private as well as public institutions should receive encouragement and moral, if not financial, support, from the State in the accomplishment of these objectives.

The educational institutions, on the other hand, while striving to attain their broader objectives should also achieve in an adequate way the manpower development objectives on which the government currently is placing so much emphasis.

ROLE OF PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

The second issue is the way in which the government conceives the role of private educational institutions.

Granting that the government is right in concentrating its limited resources on manpower development, will it do so in such a way as to recognize the strengths of the private institutions and act on the principle of subsidiarity? That is to say, only where the private sector is unwilling or unable to provide such development does the government step in and do so itself. Or

will it do so in such a way as to imply that private institutions have, in the mind of the government, merely a *residual function*; that is, their efforts will be recognized, tolerated, and perhaps supported to some extent by the government, but only until such time as the government itself has the required resources to do the job?

The first approach, that of subsidiarity, is based on concepts that support the rights of parents rather than supplanting them, that insure freedom of choice, pluralism, and a system supportive of academic freedom. The second approach, in my opinion, is fraught with dangers of a monolithic structure and limitation of freedom of choice, and constitutes a serious danger to the continued existence of academic freedom.

Traces of the second approach are found in the sectoral study cited above. Thus:

The national government has been constrained to default in assuming major responsibility in higher education in view of the Constitutional commitment to elementary education. [Part VII, A. 1, p. 8].

Equivalently this is to say that if it were not for the demand placed on our resources by the Constitution, and provided we had sufficient funds, the national government should have assumed major responsibility in higher education without any recognition of the efforts of the private educational institutions. Is this not the "residual function" concept?

In fairness, however, to the sectoral study, the section quoted above goes on to say:

Hence, it should be recognized that the private schools need new funds to meet the projected increase in enrollment in the coming year . . .

But the basic issue remains, to my mind, unsettled. Is this an *ad hoc* remedy to be resorted to until such time as the national government has the necessary resources (residual function)? Or is it rather an endorsement of the first approach, the approach of subsidiarity, which conceives the government and the private sector as partners in education, with the government supporting (and at the same time supervising) the efforts of the private sector?

Assuming that the private institutions are looked upon from the first approach (subsidiarity, partnership), rather than the

second approach (residual function), how are they to interpret these recent government measures: (1) the imposition of some form of property tax on *all* private institutions, (2) the subjection of even non-profit private schools to a ten percent income tax (supposedly in the name of equalization), and (3) the virtual discouragement of importation of scientific and educational equipment by the private schools? With regard to (1) — why has the government imposed a property tax that serves to decrease rather than increase available school funds, when the sectoral paper states that “. . . it should be recognized that the private schools need new funds . . .”? With regard to (2) — why has the government extended the coverage of the ten percent income tax, when what is needed is tax exemption of *all* income (aside from that paid out in dividends — which is subject to tax anyway), so that available funds of private schools may, as stipulated, be augmented rather than diminished? With regard to (3) — why has the government, while decrying the lack of advancement in the nation's science and technology, for all practical purposes refused to grant educational and scientific institutions the same tax exemptions for importing scientific and educational equipment as granted to industry for importing machinery?

The conclusion to be drawn from these and other measures is that while we can point to any number of statements from the government that appear to support the role of the private educational system, in fact, the government appears to be saying one thing and doing just the opposite.