

SOME ASPECTS OF THE PHILIPPINE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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It is important that missionary educators should bring to their task a background of the best educational experience of the world. We cannot be fully Christian in our work as long as we mediate to other lands educational systems or methods that are far inferior to the possible best. There is therefore a growing feeling that missionary societies have an obligation to enable those who are in responsible charge of their educational work to keep abreast with the best modern developments in education through study and travel, especially during their first furlough. Of peculiar interest to the missionary educator is the system of education in the Philippine Islands. True it is a governmental, tax-supported system, serving only 11,000,000 people, and in an area extremely small compared with China or India. Yet the ways in which difficulties and conditions have been met by a foreign agency seeking to develop a curriculum suited to the needs of Filipino life and beginning with teachers most inadequately equipped for their task, have their lessons for us. The object of this article is to describe certain aspects of the Philippine system that may prove most suggestive to missionaries.

THE THREEFOLD AIM. So explicitly threefold is the aim of the Bureau of Education that they sometimes speak of their 'three-phase system.' They set out to help each student academically, industrially and physically. Having once taken this as their aim, they arrange for specialization

to take place amongst teachers and supervisors along these three lines. It is evidently a little difficult to attain an ideal balance among these objectives. There was a time when the new and striking undertakings in industrial and athletic training caused the academic side to be relatively neglected. Again, leaders on the industrial side would be transferred to academic work under the influence of an enthusiast for that side of the task. But difficulties in adjusting and balancing three such aims are to be expected in the problem of curriculum making. The noteworthy thing is that definite aims had been formulated and that each aspect of the goal was pursued with such directness and virility that a process of adjustment was necessary.

The threefold aim may be illustrated in connexion with the primary schools. The majority of the pupils never get beyond the fourth grade or standard and so it is felt that something toward each of these aims must be done for each pupil. Academically, the aim is to give the great mass of the population elementary instruction in reading and writing English, in home and world geography, and in sufficient arithmetic for simple business transactions and to avoid imposition by exploiters. Industrially, they aim in the primary to instil a respect for labour. In particular they want to help the Filipino boy to cultivate a home garden, and to do simple carpentry for the home, to weave hats, mats, slippers and baskets from local materials, and to handle simple business affairs. They aim to help the Filipino girl to prepare a wholesome meal, to make her own clothes, to weave hats, mats, etc. Physically, they aim to impart the rudiments of home and village sanitation, to improve the quality and variety of food through developing gardens, to abolish poor and unsanitary cooking through classes in domestic science, and to correct physical underdevelopment by inaugurating group games and athletics. There is, it is true, a very definite moral aim worked out in the course on 'Good Manners and Right Conduct,' in

which an effort is made to instil habits of rectitude and courtesy and a knowledge of the rights and duties of citizens. Specialization, however, has not developed in the pursuit of this aim.

The dominating idea back of this education is the training of the masses for citizenship rather than the education of a few to govern the masses. Hence the Bureau of Education has regarded the maintenance and extension of the system of primary schools as of first importance. The approval of the Director is necessary for the opening of a new secondary school, and before permission is given he must have reasonable assurance that its maintenance will not require funds needed for the support of primary work.

BRAINS AT THE CENTRE. In order to carry out their threefold aim a well-manned central office has been developed. There is a Director, two Assistant Directors and eight differentiated departments. Their field force consists of some fifty division superintendents with supervising teachers under them. Undoubtedly one factor making progress possible in the Philippine educational system has been the provision of brains at the centre where control is exercised over one complete system. It has been the business of the central office to profit by the Spanish experience, study the desires and needs of the Filipino people, institute economic and industrial surveys, consult foreign countries having similar conditions and to make first hand experiments. An adequate central office is expensive, but every modern successful educational system pays the price. Can missions hope to succeed when their units work in isolation?

SUPERVISION. One of the most prominent aspects of the Philippine educational system is the emphasis placed on supervision. This was especially necessary at the beginning because of the deficiency in professional attainments on the part of the available teachers. Each of the fifty educational sections into which the territory of the

islands is divided has its superintendent. Under these are 447 supervisors, as follows:¹

	Academic.		Industrial.		Supervising.		Total.
	Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.	
American . . .	9	2	17	3	49	2	82
Filipino . . .	10	2	43	37	272	1	365
Grand Total . . .							447

Supervision in the Philippines is not mere inspection but is a form of continued teacher training. The supervisor's work has changed with the evolution of professional attainments on the part of the teachers. At the beginning, twenty years ago, when the majority of the teachers had little more in the way of qualification than attendance at an elementary school, the supervisor had to give the teacher elementary academic instruction. Later they gave attention to details of organization, methods of instruction and school management. At present they are able to discuss with their teachers broad ideas of aim and of method and are placing on them more responsibility for the working out of details. Even yet, however, many young men and women with little education and no training must be taken into the teaching force. The only way of rapidly developing efficiency in such recruits is through supervisors who give criticism lessons and otherwise aid in solving school problems.

In the beginning the supervising districts were made too large. Experience showed that no supervisor, however energetic, could do effective work when frequent visits to each school were impossible. They have also found that the most successful superintendent of schools is a man

¹ *Twentieth Annual Report of the Director of Education* (1919), pp. 114-7.

who is more skilled in supervision than in administration. Fortunately, supervising ability can be developed through education more readily than ability in administration. Missions which place all supervision of schools on the shoulders of missionaries or pastors already overburdened or without any preparation for this work have much to learn from the results that come from an investment in more thorough professional supervision.

SUMMER TEACHER INSTITUTES. A very important factor in the after-care of teachers is the system of summer teacher training institutes. Beginning about 1905, a Vacation Assembly has been held annually for Filipino teachers at Manila. Still more appreciated is the Vacation Assembly at the mountain resort of Baguio. These assemblies are held for five weeks. Each province sends certain of its leading teachers; others go at their own expense. The combined attendance at these two assemblies averages 1700 persons. They value the complete change of environment, the advantages of study along special lines, and the opportunity of mingling with others engaged in the same profession but under different conditions. Noted lecturers give courses on educational and other subjects, and conferences are held for supervising teachers, for industrial teachers and for high school teachers and principals.

These two vacation assemblies are definitely preparatory for the divisional normal institutes which are held in practically all the provinces. Those who attend the central assemblies are called on to teach in the divisional schools. These are held in the various divisions at the same time for five weeks, using two weeks of vacation time and three weeks of the regular school year. All teachers are expected to attend these divisional institutes, for they provide the only training apart from supervision that a large number of village teachers receive. In the early days service in conducting this institute was part of the requirement of all American teachers. It is significant that 80 per cent of the total teaching force actually attend these institutes.

Through the two central assemblies and the divisional institutes, a new plan or method can be made to pervade the whole school system in a single year. For example, some approved design in lace-making, embroidery or basketry will be taught in the vacation assembly, transferred by its students to the divisional institutes, and from these taken to every school in the islands. One year they may concentrate on training the teachers in directed play; another on some improvement in teaching English.

Still another plan for developing teachers is the arrangement for them to visit wideawake, progressive fellow-teachers. Professional libraries for supervisors and for teachers have also been started in most divisions as a part of the office of the divisional superintendent or as a part of the high school libraries. A reading course designed for all instructors in intermediate schools has stimulated professional reading among teachers. The Bureau of Education issues as suggestions for teachers a large number of bulletins and circulars, covering such subjects as domestic science, drawing, manners and right conduct, school buildings and grounds, embroidery and athletics. The great importance of the school library is recognized and a beginning has been made in training teachers in library management.

PARTICIPATION BY SUPERVISORS AND TEACHERS IN DEVELOPING THE SYSTEM. As has been seen the Philippine system of education is very highly centralized. Yet in actual practice provision is made for receiving suggestions from supervisors and teachers. Many of the accepted policies of the Bureau have been the outcome of conferences of industrial workers, of supervising teachers, of school principals or of divisional superintendents. For a week annually the divisional superintendents and head teachers are brought together for discussion. Ideas voiced in the supervisors' classes, divisional normal institutes and in the two summer vacation assemblies are taken under consideration by the central office.

One gets the impression of an active circulatory system, with ideas, plans and methods, both going to and coming from the centre. For example, in some area of the field a local economic or industrial survey will be made; or a teacher will develop some original idea, article, or use of a new material. Through assistant supervisors and supervisors this information is rapidly passed on to the general office. Here experts do creative work in improving the materials, designs, dyes and methods; revise and standardize the product; introduce it into the general course for industrial work; send standardized designs to the schools; and organize advice, exhibits, publications and materials in such a way as to include the new idea or process. Thus articles and designs originating in the field are perfected and standardized in the general office and returned to the field in prescribed courses. The participation by the field has produced *esprit de corps*; the centralized control has produced efficiency. In some of our mission fields, notably in India, immense loss in efficiency has resulted from the fact that there has been no such circulation of the results of the best experiments.

PHYSICAL TRAINING. The Service Manual says that students of all grades and courses should be required to participate in organized games and athletics for from thirty to forty-five minutes daily. It is noteworthy that the system aims to provide physical training for all, rather than that a selected few should go through games for the entertainment of the many. Before the American occupation there was little of the play spirit and athletic sports were practically unknown. Now popular interest is very great and it is said that crowds of enthusiastic spectators attend every meeting of importance. Interest in cock-fighting and gambling has manifestly decreased.

Only gradually did they find the games which were suited to the Philippine temperament and climate. Indoor base-ball (played outside), volley-ball and tennis are played much more than base-ball or basket-ball. To help in the

development of play, an athletic handbook has been issued by the Bureau of Education; summer teacher conferences have given instruction to all teachers on the supervision of play, the teaching of group games and the teaching of calisthenics; and a grand athletic tournament is held annually, beginning with each village and going up to the general interscholastic meet in connexion with the Philippine Carnival. Furthermore, a school is not classified as having a 'standard' site unless it has a certain minimum area for playgrounds and gardens. Thirty-five per cent of the schools have attained this classification as regards their sites.

INDUSTRIAL WORK. After the centralized system of control and the elaborate system of supervision and after-care, the most distinctive feature of Philippine education is its emphasis on industrial work. Of all children in the schools 91 per cent are doing some form of industrial work every school day in the year. At first there was great objection to manual labour. In many regions the people were prejudiced against industrial work because they thought it was a plan by which the teachers meant to supplement their salaries through selling the products of the school. Parents protested that they sent their children to school not to learn how to work but how not to work. It is noteworthy that it was by the introduction of industrial activities into all types of schools and practically into every grade of each school that the old prejudice against manual labour was broken down.

An attempt has been made to root the industrial work in the soil. Local available materials, local needs, local inclinations to a particular kind of industry, the manual dexterity characteristic of the Filipino have been considered. In the earliest days when the Bureau was too busy with details of organization to give much attention to details of the curriculum each teacher was allowed to work out the local problem as he saw fit. In 1905 the Bureau formally prescribed industrial work but left the

details to the local areas. It was not until 1914 that the amount of industrial work required of all pupils was prescribed, special industrial courses were outlined, and the various recognized courses which could be conducted in each division and municipality and school were determined upon by the general office on the basis of economic information concerning commercial possibilities.

INDUSTRIAL WORK IN THE PRIMARY. Five recitation hours a week are given to industrial work in the primary. The courses open to boys in the first grade are macramé and hand-weaving; in the second grade additional choice may be made from courses on the making of mats, baskets, brushes, brooms and gardening; in the third grade are added courses on hats, sedge slippers and hand-bags; in the fourth grade the range of choice is made to include bamboo, coconut and wood carving; wood-working and bamboo and rattan furniture. As the interest in education spreads, the average age in the primary decreases, and more and more the use of the heavier tools must be postponed to the intermediate. The courses open to girls in the first grade are the same as for the boys except that sewing is added. In the second grade they may take sewing and any one of the following: bobbin or filet lace, tatting, elementary Irish crochet, macramé or mats. In the third grade sewing for two periods and any one of several other choices for three periods. In the fourth grade cooking and housekeeping for one period, sewing for one period, and any one of several other choices for three periods.

VOCATIONAL WORK IN THE INTERMEDIATE. In the intermediate there is distinct specialization along vocational lines. The following six courses have been organized, although any one school may not arrange for all: general, teaching, trade, farming, housekeeping and household arts. The teaching course was discontinued last year having served a very pressing need during the early years, for even after ten years only a fourth of the teachers had received

any secondary training whatever. With more material available from higher grades, training at the intermediate stage is not now needed. In the trade and farming courses three consecutive periods are given daily to shopwork and farmwork respectively, in the others five periods a week.

AGRICULTURAL TRAINING. There are three classes of schools giving training in farming. An 'agricultural school' is one which emphasizes agricultural instruction by cultivating an extensive farm throughout the year, and which furnishes subsistence and dormitory accommodation to pupils wholly or in part at government expense. A 'farm school' is a provincial school which emphasizes intensive farming, and offers a course in farming for boys and a course in housekeeping and household arts for girls. It does not provide either subsistence or dormitory accommodation. A 'settlement farm school' is a non-subsistence primary school established in a sparsely settled region as the nucleus of a permanent settlement, the farmwork being handled throughout the year on the communal plan. It will be possible to describe one school only.

THE CENTRAL LUZON AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL. The Central Luzon Agricultural School is an example of the first class mentioned above. It aims to train boys to secure practical results in farming under conditions that they must meet later on and to supply agricultural leaders and teachers. Students enter after having completed the four years of primary work. All grades are divided into two sections, one of which recites from 7.30 to 11 a.m., and the other from 2 to 5.30 p.m. This arrangement allows each student to spend one half the day in the classroom and the other half in practical outdoor tasks. The teachers have five hours of class-work and four hours of supervision. There are seven American and six Filipino teachers on the staff, besides twenty scholarship helpers. About 120 of the 800 pupils are called 'farmer students' and live in small detached dormitories here and there over the farm area. Students are allowed to take responsible charge of

given areas in pairs, so that one may be in school and one working all the time. Thus the school animals and implements which are loaned to the students are not left unused during academic periods. The main emphasis is placed on farming and on hog and chicken raising. Students, however, may get additional training in such activities as carpentry, blacksmithing, running machinery, etc., and may continue their training in specialized courses after they have completed the intermediate. The school is organized so that the students share very largely in the management. Each type of work has its student foreman, or class captain, recruited from the advanced classes. Given the men, materials, tools, and implements, these captains are expected to get results and to record them in terms of materials and costs. It is found that the poultry and other projects of the school fail if carried out by student work at so much an hour. The students should own their projects; or if the work is such as can be measured, the contract system is used.

A school bank is managed by the students. Careful accounts are kept of advances to students for running expenses, and credits are given for extra work. The students are expected to give four hours' work (or its equivalent in cash) per day for subsistence. Space forbids a description of the garden day celebrations started in 1912, the preparation and distribution of planting calendars, the maintenance of nurseries, the popularization of the new receipts for vegetables, the carrying on of food campaigns and the introduction of new and better kinds of crops. Nor can one give further detail with reference to the important subject of teacher training. Perhaps enough has been said to justify missions in recommending to their societies that one or more of their leaders in education be given the time and the means for enriching educational equipment through observation of methods and results in the Philippines.

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