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FEATURE

GRADUATE STUDIES IN THE PHILIPPINES: PAST AND FUTURE

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I am honored to have been invited to address this group of distinguished educators in higher education.

The Past

A quick sketch of the higher education system in the Philippines shows that during the Spanish Period from 1565 - 1898, there was only one university conferring degrees in the whole archipelago, namely, the University of Santo Tomas.

After the arrival of the Americans, in 1908, the University of the Philippines was founded by the combination of a medical college at Philippine General Hospital and an agricultural college in Los Baños, with the core arts and sciences from the program at Philippine Normal School.

Private colleges and universities were allowed by the American Colonial Government in addition to the University of Santo Tomas, with institutions such as Philippine Women's University, Far Eastern University. These private institutions expanded after World War II in keeping with the demand and the population increase, so that what were formerly elementary and high schools opened college departments and even developed to become universities.

The Present

The table on the following page summarizes statistically the present status of higher education in the Philippines:

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DISTRIBUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS BY REGION AND SECTOR

REGION	PUBLIC				Special HEIs (SHEIs)	PRIVATE		TOTAL
	State Universities/ College (SUCs)	CHED Supervised Institution (CSIs)	Local Uni College (LUCIs)	Other Government School (OGS)		Total		
01	5	2	2			9	57	66
02	5	7	1			13	32	45
03	13	2	1	1		17	123	140
04	13	15	4		1	33	151	184
05	8	9	9			26	87	113
06	9	27	6	2		44	65	109
07	5	2	1	1		9	81	90
08	12	18	1		1	32	37	69
09	6	6				12	30	42
10	5	1	2			8	51	59
11	4		1	2		7	77	84
12	6	4				10	68	78
NCR	7	1	9		2	19	223	242
CAR	6	4			1	11	15	26
ARMM			1	7		8	14	22
Caraga	4	4				8	36	44
Grand Total	108	102	38	13	5	266	1,147	1,413

Notes: Satellite campuses of SUCs are excluded in the counting
The number of SUCs and CSIs is based on GAA 1999

Distribution of HEIs As of July 1999.xls

A quick characterization of the system indicates the following:

1. All but a handful of our colleges and universities are teaching institutions with little or no research.
2. Because of the success in students numbers and the cheap tuition rates, the system has had to hire many teachers without the required academic preparation. Only 32% of our faculty have master's degrees and only 4% have doctor's degrees.
3. We have the shortest period (10 years) of pre-college training and hence our college students really belong to a senior high school in other systems.
4. Thus, the quality of our colleges and universities is inadequate and will not improve unless we can take care of the three items above.
5. Because college offerings are ruled by the market, some courses are oversubscribed, and some are undersubscribed. Forty percent of our two million college students are enrolled in colleges of business while priority areas needing talented students such as mathematics, science, and vocational-technical have few good students. There is thus a mismatch between

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what we produce and what we need, resulting in shortages and in oversupply, the latter going to outside countries to get employment. We are spending our precious resources to train individuals who leave us and whose training is availed of by other countries that have not helped to pay for their schooling.

6. We have too many of the youth in the 17-25 age bracket in schools. Not all need a college degree; some can be trained in 6 months, 12 months, or 24 months. But we spend 48 months for the training, making it more expensive, because everyone wants a largely useless proper degree.

Over-all the results are poor quality amidst large quantity; our lack of highly trained people in certain professions has caused us to lag behind other countries in our part of the world because we do not have the trained manpower for a scientific culture which is already with us and which will become more demanding in the next century.

Many of these problems have been with us since the War and were called to our attention in 1969 by the Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education. I am sorry to say that many of the suggested remedies were not really accepted or have failed to be implemented, so that the problems pointed out in 1969, thirty years ago, are still with us in 1999.

The Future

In the future, the population will continue to increase before it stabilizes. We expect a population of 100 million by 2020. This will bring in larger needs for classrooms, teachers, textbooks, and desks for basic education, and more places for colleges and universities. Presently, among the state colleges and universities, the Department of Budget and Management is asking that college students carry the burden of 50% subsidy as a maximum.

Unless private institutions are given greater leeway with regard to tuition, many will refuse to expand and make room for the population which the state system cannot handle.

Tuition will become more expensive as salaries rise because of inflation and because our teachers will be better qualified and will be able to demand more by way of salaries.

A few research institutions will be added and many of our college and universities will improve in quality as university administrators have a clearer vision of quality.

The majority will continue to emphasize irrelevant knowledge of a repetitive nature, and continue the custodial or "baby-sitting" role of keeping a substantial number of the age 17-22 group away from the streets and idleness for some resemblance of university experience. The brain drain will continue.

The CHED and DECS answer to this situation is to improve quality on a selective basis, because selection is the only way we afford to train the necessary manpower we need to keep our society moving. As society becomes more affluent, then the rest of the schools may be in a position to attain better quality.

We have to determine in which professions, and in what numbers we need people. Then we can make sure, through assisted programs, that certain institutions all over the archipelago will train gifted individuals. The task is for both public and private schools; then instruct them and make them the leaders of our society.

Although the future is thus not very bright, it is not hopeless. But we need to have the political will and firmness to make some hard decisions. Otherwise we shall continue to flounder and worse, coast along, wasting both human and financial resources.