

THE STATE OF PHILIPPINE EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION* ✓

The principal concern of this exposition is the findings and recommendations of the Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education (PCSPE) and the Commission on Reorganization.

Actually, there have been some ten major surveys of the educational system in the period 1925-1960. For the purpose of the present study, however, these surveys are too dated to serve a purpose other than as background material.

The recent studies show that many management problems are organizational and functional in nature. The listing that follows covers the most serious of these problems.

1. *Structural Complexity*. The Department of Education has been growing with a minimum of central planning. The bureaus of public, private and vocational education have been freely interpretative in the creation of their units, the formulation of functions and the assignment of personnel.

By general practice, a bureau is composed of divisions, a division is composed of sections and a section is composed of units. The major offices of the Department of Education do not see eye to eye in this respect. The result is that in some divisions the number of sections is substantial; in others, there are no sections at all. Furthermore, in some cases, sections are considered equal in status with divisions. In the office of the secretary, the Personnel, Investigation, Records and Internal Audit sections are structurally on the same level as the divisions.

Functions are not standardized. Between bureaus, similar units often vary in what they cover functionally. Some allowances must be made, of course, for the fact that the bureaus perform dissimilar functions. Yet when common divisions like accounting, personnel and records differ materially from office to office, management becomes more complicated. Top officials are likely to have a confused view of the organization below.

The greater the variation in the functions of offices, the greater the likelihood of their being isolated from one another. This holds true in the department today. It is reflected in the fact that responsibility for comprehensive high schools is split between the bureaus of public and vocational education, and in instances where the absence of one employee can disrupt normal business flow because nobody else can, or will, take over his function. The communication patterns also indicate a trend toward minimal involvement: the commission found that there is very little

*Excerpt from Presidential Commission To Survey Philippine Education Special Area Report "Educational Administration," December 1970.

interaction going on between employees of different offices.

Another problem is that administration has a dichotomous personality: it is half-public, half-private. While this assures continuity in supervision from kindergarten to college, it does not offer too good an opportunity for the control of the quality of education. Every sector tends to pursue its own thinking on curricular programs, and, inevitably, private and public schools become less and less homogenous. The problem that faces educationists, in consequence, is the assessment of the performance of the two sectors on a comparative basis. One cannot be rated against the other in the absence of a common set of standards.

2. *Overcentralization of Authority.* There is a concentration of power in the Secretary of Education. He is, consequently, greatly burdened by a variety of duties. He is active in almost every aspect of educational planning, administration and operation in and outside the department.

Left with little authority, subordinate officials – from the undersecretary – perform mostly routine or ministerial functions. Field administrators hardly have the opportunity to exercise individual initiative and creativity.

3. *Weak Policy-Making Body.* The statutory functions of the Board of National Education (BNE) are too broad and unrealistic. The result has been that the board has failed to produce a long-range educational plan and to develop a high-level staff commensurate with its powers.

Other limitations of the board include a shoestring appropriation of P100,000 annually and a membership composition that precludes persons who do not represent any particular organization.

What also serves to weaken the position of the board is the fact that it has implementing powers. The matter is evident in the provision that it can “formulate, *implement* and *enforce* general educational objectives; coordinate activities and functions of all educational institutions, carry out the provisions of Republic Act 1425 (Rizal Law) and *implement* Republic Act 1881 on the teaching of the Spanish language.”

Nowhere is the weakness of the policy-making body more evident than in the superintendencies, the implementing points of educational policies. The superintendents complain of unimplementable policies, as well as deficient regulations. The ~~list~~ of restrictive requirements is long, and reveal obsolescent practices.

4. *Political Interference.* The political hand is evident in many areas of educational administration. Lawmakers contribute to the school proliferation problem through creations and conversions which have minimal support in terms of benefits to the total school system and the availability of resources.

Politicians also contribute to the administrative problem by influencing education officials into appointing certain academic and nonacademic personnel who may not exactly be the ideal recruits.

Also, through legislative action, the Congress can introduce academic courses into the educational system through its own initiative. In specific instances, e.g., the Spanish law, this power of the Congress runs counter to the thinking of both the schools and the students.

Politicians are able to influence educational administrators through two mechanisms – the Commission on Appointments and the Congress. From either vantage points, they control appointments and the very existence of any statutory position or office.

5. *Budgetary Restraints.* Finance is always a problem in educational management. It is hard, first, to acquire funds and harder, second, to spend them. One has to be justified and lobbied for, the other has to undergo a number of auditing and control requirements. For the educational administrator, these are restraints that make him overly cautious and slow to act.

A common complaint of education officials, especially the superintendents, is that they do not receive their allotments regularly. Funds for the last quarter of each fiscal year are almost always late. This works against the pursuit of new school programs during this period, for the administrator is unsure whether he can commit himself or his office financially.

Another complaint is that field officials are usually not asked to participate in high-level budgetary deliberations. They have little or no voice in fiscal planning. Some think this is why, on certain occasions, their plans do not correspond with those of the central office and they subsequently get much less money than they actually need.

6. *Personnel Problems.* The Department of Education has the biggest complement of personnel of any department in the government. It has close to 300,000 employees, divided among eight agencies. The growth and upkeep of such a large number of personnel inevitably give rise to a variety of problems.

In its survey, the commission noted the absence of an overall program covering the numerical growth of personnel. It may perhaps be due to this that the distribution of employees in the department lacks the appearance of cohesiveness and rationality. It seems unwarranted, for instance, for the Bureau of Public Schools to maintain 97% of the total number of personnel, while two other bureaus¹ and five

¹ Bureaus of Private Schools and Vocational Education.

other agencies² divide the remaining 3%. Moreover, the Bureau of Vocational Education, which supervises 224 schools, has 20 times more people than the Bureau of Private Schools, which supervises 2,600 institutions.

The practice of employing casuals does not appear to be any more rational. While administrators justify the practice as necessary to cope with an increasing workload, in addition to the fact that not enough money is available for permanent appointments, there is doubt that the services of casuals is as necessary as it is thought to be. Observers find too many permanent appointees unoccupied for the better part of the day.

The present hierarchical scheme does not encourage professionalism in the field of teaching. Quite often, a good teacher is graduated to an administrative position, thus depriving students of his talents. Outstanding teachers aspire for administrative responsibilities, because the pay scale is better. Under present policies, a classroom teacher, no matter how long his service, may never equal the earning capacity of a school principal.

Other personnel problems include recruitment and promotion. Administrators complain that politicians intercede for applicants even for the position of janitor. On the matter of promotion, the growing consensus is that the "next-in-line" policy is preventing the entry of fresh blood where it is badly needed, and it is calcifying what should otherwise be a dynamic and fluid organization.

7. Limited Research Activities. The department recognizes the need for research programs and has created the Division of Educational Planning to take charge of this important function. Nevertheless, research has not been pursued in the department in any scale larger than that required for the preparation of the annual report. The main reason appears to be the small amount — totalling P100,000 a year — allotted for research. A further reason might well be that survey recommendations usually end up being shelved rather than implemented.

The most serious effect of the department's limited research program is the paucity of data with which educational planners, especially the BNE, can work on.

²The National Library, National Museum, National Historical Commission, Institute of National Language and the Office of the Secretary.