

## EDUCATION AND THE EDUCATION COMMUNITY

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What is education? Do Filipinos have a common understanding of this term such that those responsible for formulating and implementing policies in this area are more less assured that the educational needs of the Filipinos are being met?

In the search for a definition of education, one is reminded by a line from a song in the Broadway play, *The Sound of Music*: "How do you catch a cloud and pin it down?" How, indeed, does one go about defining a concept or an abstraction which "education" is?

Scientific research has a way of dealing with this problem and that is to provide an operational definition for such a term so that it can be observed and measured. A definition has two main tasks to perform: to convey the essential meaning which is to be the ground of understanding, and to mark out its limits with sufficient precision for the purposes in view. There are three ways of approaching a definition: to give an example, to state the class to which it belongs, and the characteristics which distinguish it from others of its class and to stipulate the sense in which one proposes to use the term.

To define education, we have to choose where to start on the basis of where understanding is needed. Do we share a common understanding of what education is? where it comes from? what it should accomplish? for whom it is? Many of the definitions of education are nothing more than statements of its purposes. To illustrate and drive home this point, let me share with you my own experience. Every semester, on the first day of my class in educational planning, the first question I would ask is — "what is meant by the term 'education'?" I never cease being amazed by the variety of extremely ambiguous answers that this question gets from a class composed of teachers, school principals and middle-level officials of public and private schools throughout the country, examples of which are: "to develop a person's potential to the fullest," "to

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release one's intelligence," "to mold the mind and character of the young" and similar related vague answers. Definitions by authorities representing various disciplines are equally fuzzy. Anthropologists view education as —

...in its widest sense, every process, except the solely genetic, that help to form a person's mind, character, or physical capacity...more narrowly, education is the inculcation in each generation of certain knowledge, skills and attitudes by means of institutions, such as schools deliberately created for this end.<sup>1</sup>

Alfred North Whitehead defined education as

...the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

Educator such as J. Goodlad, view education as a —

...process through which behavior — ways of thinking, feeling and acting, changes or is modified over time.<sup>3</sup>

On the basis of these statements however, it may be said that education is both a process and a product. But as a process and a product, the term education, requires operational or working definitions. As a product, what is it and what are its distinguishing characteristics or properties? Under what conditions may these properties be observed? measured and quantified? As a process, what go into the process as raw materials? What technology (software and/or hardware) is employed to convert the raw materials into desired finished products? How is this process effected? Who effects and sustains the process? Where and when does this process begin and end? Where does this process take place? A series of probing questions such as — "what do schools do that cannot be done by other educative agencies?" would usually bring us against a big, solid wall. Indeed, what is it that schools can claim as their unique and exclusive function? Teaching? Learning? But teaching-learning processes are not confined to schools, these are occurring almost everywhere — at home, in church, on-the-job, in the army, in the park, via the mass media, etc.

It is hoped that a careful study of these questions would lead to a recognition of the importance of starting a definition of education as a product, for unless there is a consensus on this important dimension of education, there can be no agreement on where to begin, how to effect, what are needed to sustain, to end the process

<sup>1</sup> KNELLER, EDUCATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGY 11 (1965).

<sup>2</sup> WHITEHEAD, THE AIMS OF EDUCATION 16 (1929).

<sup>3</sup> GOODLAD, THE CONVENTIONAL AND THE ALTERNATIVE IN EDUCATION 3 (1975).

of education and finally, to evaluate the outcomes of the process *vis-a-vis* the desired product.

Those that view education as a product or outcome of a process define it as a desirable *change in behavior* brought about by *learning* or the acquisition of new knowledge, attitudes and skills. Education is, therefore, *learning*, regardless of where, when and how it occurs, that leads to changes in the behavior of the learner. An individual exhibits three categories of behavior — *cognitive* or *intellective* (observing, knowing, generalizing, interpreting, analyzing, problem-solving); *affective*, such as believing, feeling, valuing and preferring, and manipulative or *motor skills*. Knowledge, attitudes and skills, if learned, inevitably find their expression in the learner's behavior. In this context, there is no education if there is no change in any one of these categories of behavior. Some readers may object to this definition, but how else can one say that education has taken place unless the individual exhibits what he has learned in his actions and behavior?

However, while education is learning, not all learning is education, for learning can result in either desirable or undesirable, useful or useless behavior. A change in behavior is desirable if it results in increasing the capabilities of the individual for self-actualization, for the betterment of his life and that of his fellowmen. Learning is undesirable if it does not lead to any of these or if it brings about the reverse situation. In order to prevent the occurrence of undesirable or useless learning and for the purpose of seeing to it that useful learnings are not left to chance, societies have organized and established educational or learning systems.

A society's primary learning system is its formal educational or school system. Every society, however, in addition to its formal educational system has other organized sources and modes of learning. These organized sources and modes of learning outside the formal educational system can be referred to as the non-formal learning system. In other words, every society may be said to have two learning sub-systems which together constitute that society's educational system, namely:

1. The formal educational system or school system which provides learnings that are hierarchically structured and sequenced. It is education that corresponds to our general concept of primary, elementary and third level schooling, where after each stage, the learner is certified for entrance to the next grade or higher level.
2. The non-formal educational or non-school system refers to any organized learning activity outside the sequentially structured

formal school system, intended to serve identifiable clienteles and specific learning objectives. The non-formal education system could serve as an alternative and/or a supplement to formal schooling for some learning goals and objectives, and as a form of continuing education for individuals in a society. Non-formal education can take place in school or non-school settings, such as on-the-job, apprenticeship, short-term training programs, etc.

Learning acquired outside the formal and non-formal learning systems is called informal education. This kind of learning is not planned, therefore, its process and outcomes cannot be specified or predicted with great certainty. It is not a system and for this reason, it is not covered in this paper, however, its educational impact on the individual and society should not be ignored. In this sense, education is a lifelong process, and the entire society, in a very broad sense is the *supra* source of learning.

These observations regarding a society's learning sub-systems — formal and non-formal and how both interrelate with each other and with the larger system — society and its other sub-systems, is illustrated in Fig. 1. The paradigm focuses on the educational community, the "core" community corresponding to the learning system and the various groups involved directly and indirectly in the process of education as well as those utilizing the products of education.

The paradigm shows that an educational community consists of:

(1) those that are directly involved in a society's organized learning systems, namely: the formal school or formal educational system and the non-formal learning system. This is the "core" of the educational community;

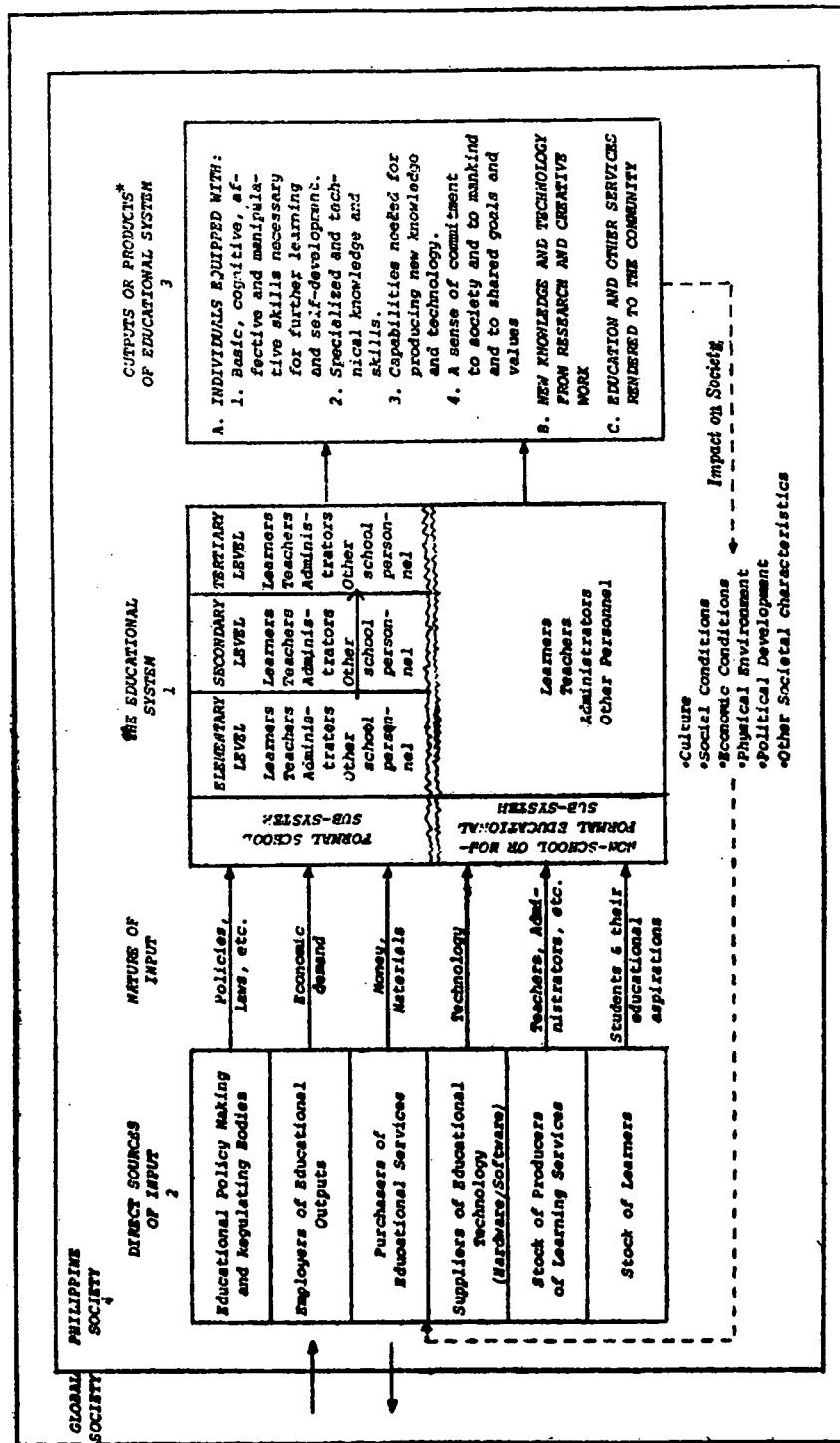
(2) those that directly influence the flow of inputs into the two learning systems or direct sources of inputs for the learning system;

(3) the outputs of the learning systems which consist of "educated" individuals, and new knowledge and technology resulting from the learning system's instructional, research and development activities; and

(4) the "larger environment" or society which indirectly influence the flow of inputs into the two learning systems.

The "core" of the educational community includes the learners, teachers, administrators and support staff of the different levels

FIGURE 1. EDUCATION AND THE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY  
A SYSTEM'S VIEW



\* Based on Phil. Constitution and P.D. 6-A.

of organized teaching-learning activities in both the formal school system and non-formal school system. The dividing line between the formal and non-formal educational systems are blurred because these two are reciprocally interacting. The sub-groups of learners, teachers, administrators and support staff of the two learning systems are interacting, receiving and sending information between and among themselves.

The learners in the formal school system are selectively processed for entrance to higher grade levels within this subsystem. This is shown by the unidirectional arrow that runs from the elementary to tertiary levels in the formal system.

The learners in the non-formal system do not follow a grade-specific and sequentially-structured learning program, although it is possible that the content of the learning programs in the non-formal system may find their equivalents in the content of the sequentially and hierarchically structured learning programs of the formal school system. Again this is suggested by the blurred lines connecting the non-formal learning system to the formal school system.

Both the formal and non-formal learning systems are organized primarily to foster and produce desirable learnings in the learners. These learnings can be categorized into the outputs/outcomes indicated in the model. Other products of the learning systems are new knowledge and technology which may emerge from the research and development efforts of the learning system, as well as technical services rendered by the system to other agencies/groups.

There are no "dropouts" from the learning system because anybody who goes through the learning system somehow acquires some new knowledge, attitudes and skills. Moreover, those who leave one learning system, e.g. school system, may go into other learning programs in the non-school system or may continue learning via the informal modes. At this point, it is important to recognize that the school system, by its organization and structure, cannot possibly pursue the entire educational goals and objectives of society. There are certain educational objectives of society that are best left to the non-school system to attain. For this reason, the role of non-formal education in pursuing the non-school educational objectives of society must be recognized and appreciated.

The outputs of the educational system are in effect the system's inputs or contributions to the larger society. The value that society attaches to these educational contributions determines to

a large extent the resources that society, through the direct beneficiaries of these educational contribution, e.g. employers, learners, suppliers and purchasers of the educational system services, allocate or give to the learning system. (This is indicated by the arrow emanating from the educational system outputs or products and the feedback loop from society toward the source of inputs.)

It has been observed that the school system has been inefficient and ineffective in performing its assigned educational functions and in attaining its objectives. A good example is the report of the survey of the outcomes of elementary education by the Department of Education and Culture (now Ministry of Education and Culture) which underscored the fact that elementary schools are failing in making children learn, at desired levels, the fundamentals, i.e. communication and numeracy skills. The imbalance between the economic demand for educated manpower and the manpower produced by the secondary and collegiate levels has likewise increased society's dissatisfaction with the performance of the formal school system. A continuing failure of the school system to attain its educational objectives is likely to result in its receiving less and less resources from society and consequently, the flow of more resources into other non-school systems. In the Philippines, the signs in this direction are beginning to surface, and unless the formal educational system take cognizance of these signs, the road to alternative non-school systems will be rather short. The viability of either learning system — the formal and non-formal, thus depends very much on its responsiveness to the changing educational and training needs of individuals and groups in a society that is in constant flux, as well as in its increasing ability to discern and pursue educational objectives that are achievable within the system's distinctive resources and capabilities.

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