

Address of Vice-President Sergio Osmeña at the Rotary Club of Manila, March 19, 1936

I am glad of the opportunity to be present at a meeting of this civic organization, and to speak before its members, men who approach public questions with an open mind and with an earnest desire to help in their solution. Though a private organization, established through purely voluntary effort, Rotary stands for service. It has no ax to grind; no prejudices to serve. The atmosphere is most conducive to a free and enlightened discussion of important public problems. Among these problems, the re-shaping of our educational system in order that it may be better adapted to the new conditions should claim our attention. It is not my purpose nor have we the time to discuss all the phases of this problem. I shall confine myself to the examination of one of its most important aspects with economic opportunities and requirements.

Classical View

From the standpoint of educational theory a school system may be organized on either the classical or the utilitarian ideal of education. The aim of classical education is mental discipline and cultural development. The students are to live in a world of their own,—a special world, as it were,—and to be given such training as would develop their minds and spirits without regard to the needs, the requirements and the realities of the work-a-day world which they would enter after finishing their

studies. Such a theory was dominant in the old days and still has its advocates.

The Vocational View

The opposite view holds that the schools should prepare the students principally to earn their living and should keep in mind always the necessity of fitting them for the needs and requirements of the world which awaits them after the termination of their studies. While the classical theory emphasizes the development of the logical faculties, familiarity with the masterpieces of literature and of the arts, and that mental discipline which relies upon the inner resources of the individual to meet the problems of life, the utilitarian theory seeks to impart to the students those specific skills and attitudes that fit them for some definite vocation.

Combination Of Two Views Best

It is not necessary in my opinion to embrace or to exclude wholly one or the other of these theories. It must be admitted that the training which fits a man for the ever-changing conditions of life around him develops the mental faculties, the insight into the cause of things and problems, and those habits of discipline which give to his character an elasticity sufficient to meet the need for adjustment to those changes which time and fortune may bring to him. On the other hand, to send the graduates of our schools into our economic world without giving them an adequate preparation to meet the problems immediately ahead results in a maladjustment for which both they and society must pay very dearly. It should be possible to so combine training for definite vocations with cultural education as to give the students a better chance to fit into the world in which they must labor and at the same time to give them mental discipline and intellectual flexibility as a preparation for the changes in conditions that inevitably arise.

Economic Needs Make Change of Emphasis Urgent

For a number of years already many students of our educational system have felt that its usefulness could be increased by giving a greater emphasis to what is termed vocational education. The changed conditions brought about by the establishment of the Commonwealth and by the modification of our economic relations with the United States have made this problem more important and its solution more urgent.

It may not be amiss, therefore, to consider a few thoughts on this subject. Vocational education covers a wide field. However, since most of our people are engaged in agricultural pursuits, instruction in agriculture and its subsidiary industries must occupy a prominent place in our system of vocational education.

Agricultural Education may also be Linked with Cultural

Agriculture in any country is not one but includes many industries. Different training is required for the cultivation and production of different crops. Mechanics and engineering are needed in the study of the use of farm implements and other appliances utilized in scientific farming. The study of plants and animals requires familiarity with biology and related subjects. Food products cannot be handled and processed without the aid of modern methods of manufacture and of such sciences as nutrition. The marketing of crops cannot be successfully done without knowledge of economics, banking facilities, and advantages of cooperative or competitive methods. Farm policies cannot be decided without considering changing conditions within and without the nation. Thus, it can be concluded that agricultural education, which includes within its scope the greater part of the field of human knowledge, may be developed so as to teach our youth the methods of scientific agriculture.

and give them at the same time the opportunity to study other subjects that would round out their culture.

Vocational Guidance must be in our Educational Program

Vocational education involves vocational guidance. Through vocational guidance much waste in time and money on the part of both the government and the students can be avoided. I am glad to note that the Rotary Club, through its Vocational Service Committee, has for some years been interested in this problem, and I wish to congratulate the Club for the splendid work that its members have done and are doing in this direction.

Vocational Education Challenges School, Economic and Business Leadership

Vocational education, to be successful, must be the result of close cooperation between the schools and economic and business leaders. The theoretical instruction given in the classroom should be supplemented by actual experience in the business or industrial fields, if the most satisfactory results are to be attained. I realize that in carrying out this idea many difficulties must be met and, if collaboration with business and industry proves to be necessary, the patience and civic spirit of our business leaders may be taxed to the utmost. Yet, you will agree with me that the best way to make vocational instruction effective is to give the students opportunity to gain the practical experience that will complete the theoretical knowledge obtained in the classroom.

Far Seeing Vision Required to Correlate Training of Youth with Economic Structure of Nation

Inasmuch as vocational education means training for existing economic opportunities and requirements, flexibility must ever be its dominant principle. I mean by this the flexibility required properly to correlate the work of the schools with changing economic needs and requirements. Vocational education, unlike the classical type

of education, would have no justification whatsoever if it should result in the graduation of many who cannot find suitable places in the economic structure of the nation. In view of the complexities of the modern world, this adjustment to ever-changing circumstances is a most difficult aim to accomplish. Yet it has to be done. It is nothing less than a tragedy for a student to graduate prepared to enter a particular vocation only to find that his whole training has been useless because the opportunities have disappeared or the field is already overcrowded. Far-seeing vision and an almost prophetic insight into the economic structure that ought to exist five or ten years hence are needed if tragedies of this kind are to be avoided.

Situation Calls for Educational Reforms

It follows from these considerations that reforms in our system of vocational instruction should be adjusted to the national plan for economic development. Our schools must be ready to train highly skilled workers and technicians as soon as comprehensive plans for our agricultural, industrial, and commercial progress are formulated and adopted.

Rotary Club Praised for its Help in Facing Difficult Problems

In this field of investigating the requirements of, and the opportunities offered by, our economic life, of foreseeing probable trends in the economic world in the future, and of further correlating the educational system with economic and social needs, the cooperation of the members of this Club will be invaluable. Our new education policies must be evolved out of the combined wisdom and experience of the different elements of the community. Similarly their successful execution will depend upon the cooperation of all. I confidently hope that in this important task we can count upon the assistance of the members of the Manila Rotary Club.