

## **EDUCATION: ITS SALVIFIC AND TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE IN BRINGING DEVELOPMENT TO THE FILIPINOS THROUGH PHILOSOPHY**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Power is not synonymous with popularity. One may be popular, but it does not necessarily follow that one is also powerful. Can education bring one power? What about popularity?

This paper is divided into three parts, namely, (1). Education's role as salvific; (2). Education's role as transformative; and (3). Education's role as developmental to the Filipinos. All these aspects are pursued in the context of philosophy.

### **EDUCATION'S ROLE AS SALVIFIC**

In what manner can education be deemed salvific to Filipinos? What is in education that Filipinos believe to have the glorious, mystical, and practical power that can help them be carried into the apex of salvation? Literally, is education necessary for salvation? In other words, what is this salvation which the Filipinos associate with education? To shed light on this, it is good to go back into the basics of the meaning of education.

The perpetual definition of education is its being "the result produced by instruction, training, or study."<sup>1</sup> Or it is the sum of all the qualities which the learner has acquired through his/her own maturation and social training. The postulate here is that the learner is not as yet mature so that education will assist him/her to earn maturation. This of course is aided and being made possible in the ambit of the learner's training on how to relate to others. In the same breath, education is understood as "An aggregate of all processes by which a person develops abilities, attitudes, and other forms of behavior of practical values in society."<sup>2</sup> From the same source, education is taken to mean as the "Social process by which people are subjected to the influence of a selected and controlled environment, especially that of the school, so that they can obtain competence and optimum individual development."<sup>3</sup>

In the above definitions, the key words are social training, social process, development of abilities, attitudes, and behavior that bear practical values in society, school, and individual

development. Precisely, in education we talk of an individual; and this individual is related to others. That is why his/her behavior and attitude must be shaped or be polished and eventually be deemed fitting to relate to others. But this individual is expected to attain some spirit of competence to optimize his/her individual development. Yes, quite a continuing process. No wonder why the Latins talk of education as something which is intrinsically embedded in our respective journey of life so that it is logical for them to argue that education is life, which simply means that all of us are classmates – classmates in learning how to live life. For this, John Dewey is quick to say that education is a continuous process of experiencing and of revising or reorganizing our lives.<sup>4</sup>

## EDUCATION'S ROLE AS TRANSFORMATIVE

In his report to UNESCO in 1996, Jacques Delors, the Chairperson of the International Commission of Education, posited that education is securely anchored on four firm pillars, namely, (1) Learning to know; (2) Learning to do; (3) Learning to live with others; and (4) Learning to be.<sup>5</sup> The very essence of these claims overhauls the substance of education, i.e., to come to terms with building the whole person. It is not enough that one knows. One must also come to grips with doing or applying what one knows. This is well elaborated in Greek moral philosophy: “Do what you know!”<sup>6</sup> But the capacity to know and implement what one knows may be deemed futile if it is not done in the context of solidarity and capability to be more than what one can know and learn. This is probably the primordial role of education: To be able to transform the learner from the crude facts of the quiddity of the givenness of his being to be a person who is healthily growing and transforming with other learners in society.

True enough, teachers must actively play the role as transformers. For all we know, teaching is an arduous profession that requires a lot of things like content knowledge, mastery of the teaching skills, ability to express (thoughts, impressions, oneself), energy and enthusiasm to convey knowledge, impart one's learnings, drive to demonstrate empathy/understanding on the part of the students, openness to contextualize or adopt any situation, openness to the ideas of others, including those from the students, ability to humbly and objectively accept criticism. With all these stuff, it is postulated that teachers can successfully become transformers. But practically how?

The truth is education is sadly structured in the paradigm of “a little bit.” This explains why Howard Gardner's theory on Multiple Intelligences can hardly find its way in a full scale application in the academia. Yes, all of us here are “experts” of the so-called “a little bit” school of thought. It is a little bit of mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, zoology, sociology, psychology, philosophy, history, political science, physical education, religion, and the like. All these have to be taken as essential minute dosages and components of some tidbits of information conveyed by the respective teachers for the students to come to terms with knowledge. So, all these a-little-bit things have to be willfully injected by the teachers under the skull of the students. But, is this truly knowledge? Can this helpfully lead students to learning?

Can there be knowledgeless learning or learningless knowledge? What did Confucius say for this? Once he argued: “He who learns but does not think is in danger. But he who thinks but never learns is in greater danger.”<sup>7</sup> Clearly, to Confucius there is learningless knowledge. And obviously, there could be no knowledgeless learning. Hence, learning presupposes knowledge. But do we really learn? According to Adam Urbanski, we learn 10% from what we hear, 20% from what we see, 40% from what we discuss, and 90% from what we do<sup>8</sup>. Without any cloud of doubt, a true-blue teacher can discern that this has semblance to the views of John Dewey who insists that students learn better, if not best, through doing, or experimentation or “doing by learning” method of teaching.<sup>9</sup>

The trouble with education is teachers require students to forcibly consider something as a problem even when such thing is not their personal problem. Do all students consider mathematics, or physics, or chemistry, or biology, or botany, and the like problems? Obviously not. Only those who aspire to be professional nuts in the air conditioned laboratories of scientists and mathematicians do. Thus, anybody who desires to be a learner must willfully reduce himself/herself to the category of a “basket” so-to-say that is open enough to be filled with items even when these items may not be fitting to his/her intrinsic intellectual capability.

Hence, is there curricular freedom in education? Grossly, none. The learner cannot legitimately design a curriculum that will prove effective to him/her type of personality nor can a learner validly just attend to his/her duly enrolled subjects according to his/her moods, temper, and taste. So far, records show that there is yet no academic institution in this planet Earth that adopts a no-holds-barred policy or a free-for-all structure of any curricular line-up.

Thus, inasmuch as our educational system and structure is notably designed to be holistic (construed in the ambit of a-little-bit of this and that) then teachers have to shoulder the herculean task of transforming their students, i.e., from “nothing” to “something.” There must be a variance, glaring or merely observable, of the kind of person or learner the students are from the first time they entered in the classroom of the teacher and at the time when the academic program is over.

For all we know, there are no dumb students. There are only dumb teachers. The reason why a student fails is because the teacher is himself/herself a failure as a teacher. A teacher who is quick to lambast a student with harsh or derogatory remarks like “you are a dull student” is duller than the student he/she believes to be. If the teacher is convinced that the student is a slow learner, it is his/her sublime duty to make this learner a fast learner. Hence, if the teacher believes that he/she is intelligent, then he/she must make the “not intelligent” to be elevated to the most dignified status as “intelligent.”

## EDUCATION'S ROLE AS DEVELOPMENTAL TO FILIPINOS

In this part, the researcher wishes to use Maria Montessori's insights on education.

What is the Montessori Method? (Maria Montessori, Italian physician, born on 1870 and died on 1952).

- This system of education is both a philosophy of child development and a rationale for guiding such growth.
- It is based on the child's development needs for freedom within limits, as well as, a carefully prepared environment which guarantees exposure to materials and experiences. Through this, the child develops intelligence as well as physical and psychological abilities.
- It is designed to take full advantage of the child's desire to expose him to the possibilities of his life, but the child must determine his response to those possibilities.<sup>10</sup>

### C. What makes Montessori Education Unique?

#### 1. The Whole Child Approach

The primary goal of a Montessori program is to help each child reach its full potential in all areas of life.

Activities promote the development of social skills, emotional growth and physical coordination as well as cognitive preparation for future intellectual academic endeavors.

The holistic curriculum, under the direction of a specifically prepared teacher, allows the child to experience the joy of learning, the time to enjoy the process and ensures the development of self-esteem.

It provides the experience from which children create their knowledge.

#### 2. The Prepared Environment

In order for self-directed learning to take place, the whole learning environment, viz.: classroom materials and social setting or atmosphere, must be supportive of the child.

The teacher provides the necessary resources, including opportunities for children to function in a safe and positive environment (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montessori>. Accessed 20 May 2009).

Together, the teacher and the child form a relationship based on the trust and respect that fosters self-confidence and a willingness to try new things (This is also well developed by a Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire).

### 3. The Montessori Materials

Montessori's observations of the kinds of things which children enjoy and go back to repeatedly, led her to design a number of multi-sensory , sequential and self -correcting materials to facilitate learning.

### 4. The Teacher

Originally called a “directress,” the Montessori teacher functions as a designer of the environment, resource person, role model, demonstrator, record keeper, and meticulous observer of each child's behavior and growth. The teacher facilitates learning,

## III. FEATURES/PRINCIPLES OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD OF EDUCATION

### 1. It is non-traditional.

	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Facilitating</b>
Teacher is	autocratic	democratic
	curriculum-centered	student-centered
	direct	indirect
	dominative	interactive
	formal	informal
	informative	inquiring
	prescriptive	reflective
Instructional modes	abstract learning	concrete learning
	teacher-centered discussion	discussions (socialized)
Lectures		peer & cross-age coaching
	competitive learning	cooperative learning

2. It has three essential elements namely, the child, the teacher and the prepared environment.

3. It is child-centered.

4. It follows the curriculum of love (This is also well entrenched in the thoughts of a prominent American teacher, Leo Buscaglia).
5. The core of the curriculum is” the Story of Creation.”
6. The approach used is interdisciplinary.
7. It allows for maximum unfolding and development of the human potentials.
8. The underlying principle is interdependence based on the Cosmic Plan of Education.
9. It employs the Individualized instruction scheme.
10. It develops order, concentration, coordination, and independence.
11. It uses indirect teaching which allows the child to explore and discover.
12. It is more process than result - oriented.
13. It allows freedom with responsibility in sensorial learning.
14. It uses didactic materials for children to manipulate and learn from.
15. The training includes the enhancement of the child’s sensitivities for order, language/communication, movement/walking, minute details, and social graces/refinement.
16. Children learn from their own pace and according to their capabilities.
17. Ground rules are observed.
18. The system respects the spiritual being of the child.
19. The program involves the home in the educational process.
20. Subjects include: The Story of Creation and Practical Life, Montessori Language, Math, Culture, Sensorial Training.<sup>11</sup>

Observably, the Montessori school is gaining prominence in the preparatory, elementary, and high school programs. In fact, currently many Montessori schools in the North, specifically in Manila, have offered courses in the tertiary level. This proves that this kind of educational system plays a pivotal role in the development of Filipinos, specifically the young ones. Bluntly, however, it is deplorable to note that not all Filipinos can afford to send their children to a Montessori school or any other high end schools. True enough, only the children of well-off parents can amass the merits and benefits of this caliber of academic institution. If only the Department of Education will also make its best to come to terms with some designs and methods of learning that can justifiably compete with the performance of private institutions, most probably, all our politicians will send their kids the public schools.

Whatever the case maybe, it is likewise evident that the kind of school one has attended serves as a catalyst in the development of the learner. Sadly, whether it is a Montessori, a UST, an Ateneo, a De La Salle, a USC, a UP, an HNU, or a San Beda academic culture, the terminal and sole factor is the learner himself/herself. Look at corruption that has contaminated all of us. Look at the politicians? Our leaders in society specifically the President down to the Senators, Congressmen, Governors, Mayors, Barangay Captains, almost all of them are graduates of prominent Christian or Catholic academic institutions. But why in heaven's name they are deeply embedded in the eddy of corruption, ineptitude, apathy, and irresponsibility? Why are the Bureau of Internal Revenue, Bureau of Customs, Department of Public Works and Highways grossly rated as the most corrupt government agencies.<sup>12</sup> What happened to the Fertilizer Scam and the ZTE Scandal? Why was Jalosjos gloriously freed despite the gravity of his offense? PDI, March 19, 2009, Banner Story). Why were the Aquino-Galman convicts likewise freed (PDI, March 15, 2009, Banner Story)? What has the government done to SEC Chairperson Barin and USEC Martinez with their blatant involvement with the Legacy Scam? What has the government done to Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez with all the lapses she made.<sup>13</sup> What swift move has the government done to come to the rescue of Red Cross workers who were kidnapped but sent corrupt government negotiators (PDI, May 19, 2009, Banner Story)? What about the "Euro Generals"? The "Alabang Boys"? The conviction of Maj. General Carlos Garcia? All these came to the fore because of the negligence and apathy of the government.

And what have all these to do with education? The educated Filipinos should have been the savior, the transformer and the developer of our country. But look at our graduates. Our doctors are working abroad as nurses. Look at our science and math teachers, our engineers, including our clerics? They all disappear from the Philippine soil and provided their best talents to aliens. Some teachers even go abroad and become maids and nannies to our neighbors in Asia. No wonder why an Asian journalist tagged us as "country of slaves." Probably, he is telling the truth, though the veracity of his personal observation is so painful to us.

## CONCLUSION

"Filipinos have a deep regard for education, which they view as a primary avenue for upward social and economic mobility."<sup>14</sup> However, "In times of crisis, Filipinos tend to prioritize basic needs for survival like food, shelter and utilities; and education is often relegated to the sides."<sup>15</sup> If this will not be given serious attention, it will lead to further deterioration of our educational system which will further lead to bankruptcy of our global competitiveness.

The truth is: "The most effective way to surmount poverty has always been education, and it remains to be so. But how can we help our country hurdle poverty if it is poverty itself that is hindering [us] from getting quality education?"<sup>16</sup> Salvation can be construed as "to be free." But what is that which we Filipinos may be free from? In Buddhism, the word salvation means to be free from ignorance. In another perspective, salvation can be understood from its Latin derivation which is *salus* meaning "health." In this case, salvation is understood as something

that has to do with the healing or wholeness on the total human person. <sup>17</sup>In this regard, knowledge acquired through education truly acts as a saving force to Filipinos, especially those who are poor. Hence, knowledge must not only inform us. Above all, it must transform us. If so, how has the Philippine educational system succeeded in transforming us Filipinos to become authentically conscientious, responsible, loving, and truly God-fearing?

Not that education must save us only from the pit of poverty, incapability, shame, inferiority, ignorance, and the like; it must also transform us to be better citizens of the republic, to be better children of God, to be better brother or sister, father or mother, neighbor or friend. Only when education succeeds to transform us to be confident, secured, socially concerned, and morally upright can we truly say that it has authentically brought us to the ambiance of development.

Finally, it is to our advantage if we hearken to what Mahatma Gandhi said on students. To Gandhi, the student is the most important visitor of the school. It is we who are dependent on him/her not he/she on us. Each student is the ultimate reason why we become teachers. Thus he/she must never be construed as interruptions of our work. The student is not alien to the educational system and organization; he/she is intrinsically embedded on it. We teachers do not do him/her a favor by serving him/her. He/she is rather giving us the opportunity to do so.<sup>18</sup>

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**ENDNOTES**

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<sup>1</sup> Random House Webster's College Dictionary, p.419.

<sup>2</sup> Dictionary of Education, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Brubacher, *Modern Philosophies of Education*, p.325.

<sup>5</sup> HNU Catalogue, Vol. 5, p.vii.

<sup>6</sup> Babor, *The Human Person: Not Real, But Existing*, 2007: p. 48.

<sup>7</sup> Confucius, *The Analects*, p. 78.

<sup>8</sup> Available at [http://www.aft.org/about/officers/vp\\_bios/urbanski\\_bio.htm](http://www.aft.org/about/officers/vp_bios/urbanski_bio.htm). Accessed 25 May 2009. Also at <http://www.edgateway.net/cs/wrel/view/cp/37>. Accessed 25 May 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy\\_of\\_education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_education). Accessed 21 November 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Available at <http://www.montessorri.edu/maria.html>. Accessed 22 May 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montessori>. Accessed 20 May 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Philippine Daily Inquirer, March 24, 2009, p. A2.

<sup>13</sup> PDI, March 07, 2009, p.A2.

<sup>14</sup> Available at <http://countrystudies.us/philippines/53.htm>. Accessed: 04 December 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Available at [http://www.senate.gov.ph/press\\_release/2008/2008/1203\\_angara1.asp](http://www.senate.gov.ph/press_release/2008/2008/1203_angara1.asp). Accessed: 04 December 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Available at [http://www.senate.gov.ph/press\\_release/2008/2008/1203\\_angara1.asp](http://www.senate.gov.ph/press_release/2008/2008/1203_angara1.asp). Accessed: 04 December 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Available at [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What\\_is\\_salvation](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_salvation). Accessed 09 May 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Available at [http://www.gandhi-manibhavan.org/gandhiphilosophy/philosophy\\_education\\_aspergandhi.htm](http://www.gandhi-manibhavan.org/gandhiphilosophy/philosophy_education_aspergandhi.htm). Accessed 25 May 2009

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