

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

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**Too Much Manila:  
Educational Engineering  
by Dr. Domingo Soriano**

Review Author: Frederick Fox

*Philippine Studies* vol. 3, no. 3 (1955): 319–321

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ment. It is, then, scarcely to General Romulo's discredit if in this regard, along with so many of his illustrious contemporaries, he falls short of Thucydides.

H. DE LA COSTA

### TOO MUCH MANILA

EDUCATIONAL ENGINEERING. By Dr. Domingo Soriano. Manila: Bookman. 1954. Pp. xviii-151. ₱4.00

Commenting upon the administrative structure of certain European countries, particularly that of France, Kandel has these illuminating remarks to make:

Neither the contribution of centralized control to building up systems of education nor their efficiency up to a certain point can be denied, but the defects of centralization outweigh the advantages, for while it secures uniformity it breeds inertia and destroys that spirit of initiative which keeps education alive... (*Comparative Education*, p. 210)

Like numerous other thoughtful Filipinos, Dr. Soriano considers the intense centralization of our own Philippine public school system a deadweight that has outlived whatever value it may have possessed in 1900. For more than ninety years now the government schools have been conducted largely by edict from Manila with increasingly serious ill-effects both upon the Philippine people's personal character and upon the nation's over-all development.

Conspicuous among these pernicious consequences is passivity. Our public school teachers, for example, have become, under the pressure of the prevailing paternalistic autocracy, mere receivers-of-orders. Indeed, so thoroughly dominated by their superiors do they seem to be that they cannot manage even their own guild, the Philippine Public School Teachers' Association. The Superintendents must do it for them. A similar type of coma appears to have settled over the children; for, under the rigid restrictions of nation-wide uniformity imposed by the Central Office in philosophy, curriculum, and in methods, the progress of the country's individual children, even in the basic knowledge areas and skills, has dropped to an appallingly low level.

Several rather serious errors, the reviewer regrets to note, mar Dr. Soriano's volume. Two may be mentioned. He states, for example, (p. 69) that a plan to establish a public school system here during Spanish times "was never realized." A most cursory glance through Alzona, Bazaco, Barrantes, or Grifol would have informed him otherwise. The last-named reports (*Instrucción primaria*, p. 364) for 1894 more than 2,000 actually functioning government supported and controlled public elementary schools. For 1863, just five years after the inauguration of the system, Barrantes records no fewer than 745. (*Instrucción primaria*, p. 152). These and other data offer irrefragable proof that a public elementary school organization operated in the Philippines thirty-seven years before the American Occupation forces laid eyes on the Archipelago.

Graver than this historical error, in the opinion of the reviewer, is Dr. Soriano's uncritical and unqualified acceptance of the so-called "community school." One would like to learn by what norm he judges the "community school" to be superior to that which preceded it. Shall we rank schools in excellence according to the size of the chicken and hog production in their respective neighborhoods? The reviewer has always been under the impression that the primary purpose of schools in a Christian democracy is to assist each individual child develop as broadly and fully as each one's talent and opportunities warrant. He consequently regards any attempt to subordinate that primacy of personal individual development to the community's economic advancement as a dangerous perversion.

A choice must be made; for while theoretically both goals, each in its proper place, might be striven for by the school, in practice here and now in the Philippines, we cannot do both. Our present educational system with its six-year length, its double-single sessions, and its severe limitation in personnel and equipment cannot with any prudent hope of success attempt both. We educators, therefore, would be wise to leave to the Health and Agriculture departments the jobs which are properly theirs and concentrate all our time, funds, and energies upon our own—the mental, physical, and moral development of each individual Filipino child. God knows that's enough to keep us occupied.

FREDERICK FOX