

A STUDY OF THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND CERTAIN DIMENSIONS
OF INSTITUTIONAL FUNCTIONING OF THE NINE MEMBER
COLLEGES OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN
SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Higher education in the Philippines today is faced with the great responsibility of providing necessary leadership to bring about national development and progress. Former Undersecretary of the Department of Education and Culture, Narciso Albarracin, said, "higher education shall concern itself with the transmission and extension of human knowledge, with the preparation of leaders in the arts, sciences and the professions and with the preservation and enrichment of Philippine culture."¹ College education to most is terminal and considered as the shortest way to economic security. It is therefore imperative that college education be of high quality since it is directly related to occupational and professional performance.

When the program of higher education in the country was assessed, it was found out that "the correlation between the expansion of higher education and national economic development is negative to a high degree."² The institutions

¹Narciso Albarracin, "National Goals and Higher Education," FAPE Review, 2(1):4 September, 1971 .

²Alfredo T. Morales, "Higher Education in the Philippines," Bulletin of the UNESCO Regional Office for Education in Asia, 7(1):115, September, 1972.

of higher learning have something to do with this problem. Hence, it is incumbent upon the educational institutions concerned to review their programs through self-evaluation.

In this regard, there is a need to assess school environment as well as institutional functioning of the schools so that their respective administrators and faculties will know their strong and weak points. To respond effectively to the needs and conditions of the changing times, institutions will have "to grapple with improvement of instruction, long range planning, improvement of society in general, satisfaction of local demands, selection of qualified personnel, maintenance of high morale and encouragement of research and development."³

It is, indeed, deplorable to note that many of our colleges are still sub-standard. They fail to comply with government regulations for reasons which may sometimes be beyond their control. In most cases, for example, the faculty are not well-qualified. Most college teachers are only holders of a bachelor's degree instead of a master's degree as required by Republic Act No. 4670. This is so because better qualifications are hard to attain locally.

³Macario B. Ruiz, "The Assessment of College Environment as an Approach to Institutional Self-Analysis," (Iloilo City: Central Philippine University, 1973), p. 2 (Mimeographed).

To make the situation worse, the teachers are ever burdened with heavy teaching loads which hinder them from improving their preparation. Besides these, most schools lack the necessary teaching and learning facilities such as laboratory equipment, books, audio-visual aids, and the like.

Realizing the deteriorating condition of higher education in the country, the Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education gave a strong impetus to accreditation, in 1970, in order to improve the quality of college education. Among its recommendations was the encouragement of private colleges and universities to join or form associations, for accreditation and matters of common interest. It also recommended that "institutions that fail to be accredited shall be directly supervised by the Bureau of Higher Education."⁴

Presidential Decree No. 6-A, otherwise known as the "Educational Development Decree of 1972," gave accreditation legal cognizance as a means for upgrading academic standards. It recommended the formulation of a ten-year national education development program, one of the guiding principles of which is "upgrading of academic standards through

⁴Conrado P. Aquino, "Accreditation in the Philippines: An Overview," FAPE Review, 6(4):3 April, 1976 .

accreditation schemes, admissions testing and guidance counselling."⁵

There is no doubt that accreditation is one of the accepted means of improving the quality of education. The private schools have expressed their willingness to make necessary efforts toward upgrading their standards. As proof of this, private associations, such as the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, College and Universities (PAASCU), the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities (PACU), and the Association of Christian Schools and Colleges (ACSC), established their own accrediting programs to bring about self-development so as to meet government requirements and raise the standards of their member schools.

On the part of the government it has declared that the educational system should aim to "develop the high-level professions that will provide leadership for the nation, advance knowledge through research, and apply new knowledge for improving the quality of human life."⁶

To attain this end, several reforms were introduced in the field of education right after the declaration of martial law in 1972. These reforms have featured "government re-organization, curricular restructuring and the

⁵Amado C. Dizon, Presidential Decrees on Education and Related Laws (Quezon City: Rex Printing Company, Inc., 1976), p. 49.

⁶Ibid.

adoption of innovative approaches."⁷ In the field of higher education there are projects for democratization of access to higher education, a high-level manpower development program, a research and study program, and a rural and agricultural education program.

The educational leaders of the nation believe in the need for change and reform in the educational system itself and in the educational institutions. However, higher education in the Philippines has become so complex and costly that the institutions could hardly afford to introduce changes without first having necessary information on which to base such change. Part of such information is to be obtained from a self-survey: a school's taking stock of itself. Such self-analysis enables a school to know its strengths and weaknesses in connection with its function as an educational institution.

With the advent of the New Society, the institutions of higher learning are directed by the government to implement the changes as prescribed in the laws of the land and such other directives designed for national and local development. President Marcos, in his keynote address at the opening of the general conference of the International Association of

⁷Philippine (Republic), Ministry of Education and Culture, "Ten-Year Educational Development Plan 1978-1987 of the Philippines," Education In Asia and Oceania, Nov. 1979, p. 1.

Universities at the Philippine International Convention Center, said that "nothing is more incongruous, and more reflective of the sensitivity of imbalance of underdevelopment than a fine and handsome university seated in the midst of a poor, disorganized and often blighted neighborhood."⁸

In view of the demands of the new era, it is imperative that our institutions of higher learning re-appraise their entire practices and ascertain whether they are moving along with the goals and ideals of the New Society or not. To remain unconcerned about the recent developments and trends in the educational and socio-economic field is for the institution to be alienated from the community and the nation. Institutions must know where they are failing so that they may be able to improve themselves and face the challenges of the times.

Accrediting associations base their appraisals of applicant schools on easily enumerated characteristics of school plant and personnel, such as faculty degrees, salary schedules, library and laboratory facilities, buildings and grounds, and the like. However, there is a need to know more about the qualitative variables, which are revealed in "the environmental characteristics of the institutions themselves, the flexibility of policy-making machinery,

⁸Daily Express, August 26, 1980, p. 1.

adaptation to the changing needs of society, the patterns of communication of the students, faculty, and administration communities, and in a host of factors inherent in any effective institutional planning."⁹ These qualitative characteristics can be evaluated by means of assessment scales which elicit the perception of students and faculty about the environment and functioning of their institutions.

The present study focuses its attention on the member colleges of the Association of Christian Schools and Colleges (ACSC) as they assess their capabilities to help achieve the nation's goals. Specifically, this study is to help them assess their school environment and institutional performance, which are qualitative aspects of the institutions. As mentioned by Lino Q. Arquiza, "The ACSC is concerned not only about buildings, budgets, floor space, equipment, number of volumes, etc., but also about the impact which the school has had on students and faculty alike."¹⁰ Since the ACSC, through its accreditation program, aims to strengthen its member schools, this study can be a helpful instrument for self-analysis in the determination of some strengths and weaknesses.

The need for evaluation instruments to help improve

⁹Macario B. Ruiz, "The Assessment of Certain Dimensions of Institutional Functioning as an Approach to Institutional Self-Analysis." Iloilo City: Central Philippine University, 1973, p. 3. (Mimeographed)

¹⁰Lino Q. Arquiza, "The ACSC Accreditation Experience," FAPE Review, 6(4):20 (April, 1976).

schools like ACSC schools is made imperative by the fact that private education has had a tremendous role in Philippine society. It has always been an important part of the educational structure of the country. In fact, private institutions have dominated higher education in this country all through the years. This is proof of the people's high regard for, and deep confidence in, private education. The essential contributions it has made to the socio-economic and political development of this nation cannot be overemphasized.

In answer to the need for proper evaluation instruments, Macario B. Ruiz has developed the School Environment Assessment Scales (SEAS), which measures such aspects of the college environment as achievement orientation, orderliness, supportiveness, welfare orientation, impulse control, and restiveness. This scale is to be answered by students. In addition to this, he also developed an instrument which is to be answered by teachers and administrators. The latter instrument is to gather information on the directions of the institution's functioning. He called this the School Functioning Assessment Inventory (SFAI, 1973), which aims to enable administrators and teachers to have a broader perspective of the school and, consequently, to help them obtain a valid basis for decisions. These two instruments have been used in the author's study of the college

environment and institutional functioning of colleges and universities in Western Visayas.

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem. This study is an attempt to find out students' perception of the school environment of their respective colleges, as well as the teachers' perception of the functioning of their respective institutions regarding improvement of instruction, democratic administration, co-curricular stimulation, self-study and planning, autonomy and institutional freedom, innovation and change and morale. The institutions included in the study are the nine member colleges of the Association of Christian Schools and Colleges (ACSC).

Aside from assessing the school environment and institutional functioning of each of the said colleges, the study includes comparisons of institutions grouped according to (a) size of schools in terms of college enrolment, (b) location, and (c) size of full-time college faculty. The study also aimed to discover the relationship between the school environment scale scores and the individual scores of students when they were grouped according to age, sex, or course being taken. Moreover, the study tried to determine whether such variables as (a) salary, (b) number of years of teaching experience, (c) sex, and (d) age are associated with the extent of concern for the seven

dimensions of institutional functioning. Answers to the following questions, therefore, were sought:

1. What are the general perceptions of students about the environment of their schools?

2. Are there significant differences in the ways the institutions are perceived when viewed from the angles of the six dimensions of school environment, when such institutions are grouped by size of enrolment? by location? by size of full-time college faculty?

3. Are such variables as student's (a) age, (b) sex, and (c) course being taken associated with his perception of the six dimensions of school environment: achievement orientation; orderliness; supportiveness; welfare social; aggression, restiveness; and impulse control, restrictiveness?

4. What is the perception of the teachers of each institution of the functioning of their institution on such concerns as (a) improvement of instruction, (b) democratic administration, (c) co-curricular stimulation, (d) self-study and planning, (e) autonomy and institutional freedom, (f) innovation and change, and (g) morale?

To what extent do these institutions show concern for these areas of institutional functioning?

5. Are there significant differences among the teachers' perceptions when institutions are grouped according to (a) size of school in terms of college enrolment,

(b) location, and (c) size of full-time college faculty?

6. Do the teachers and administrators differ in their perceptions of the seven dimensions of institutional functioning?

7. Is there any significant difference among the teachers' perceptions of the seven dimensions of institutional functioning when these teachers are grouped according to academic preparation?

8. Are such variables as (a) salary, (b) number of years of teaching experience in the institution, (c) sex, and (d) age associated with the extent of concern for the dimensions of institutional functioning?