

Why education should be parental responsibility and not government responsibility

Bienvenido S. Oplas, Jr.
November 2007

When my wife was still pregnant, she and her 2 friends who were also pregnant (they all gave birth on different days of October 2006) were already discussing the kind of early training or schooling they will give their kids when their child is 2 years old, 3 years old, and so on. And in these 3 mothers' minds, they sometimes have different preferences or plans for their respective children at a young age, much more when the kids reach college level.

Which brings us to the fact that when given the choice and resources, parents will have varying plans for their children. For instance, aside from the basic skills of reading-writing-math, some parents would want their elementary-level kids focus more on arts, music and dancing; others would want their kids to be good in European or Asian (Mandarin or Japanese or Korean) language; others would want their kids to be good in science and math; others would want their kids to be good in Catholic (or born-again, or Islamic or Protestant or Buddhist) virtues and religion; others would want their kids to be good in household care like cooking and home care; others would want their kids to be good in soccer or basketball, ballet or swimming, and so on.

Can government-sponsored public education respond to dozen-plus different needs by parents, say on a single municipality alone? I really doubt it. Government only gives uniform and general education. And when things are made uniform, what usually follows is mediocrity. Because uniformity discourages excellence, explicitly or implicitly; it just make things and people go "uniform, equalized and generalized".

The only way to cater to these varying needs and priorities by parents is to have very diverse educational system, and only private schools that cater to the needs and whims of parents can respond to this. Those schools that fail to respond to parental needs will close shop, while those schools who do will become big.

Privatization of education (ie, abolition of public education system at all levels) is a long-term vision. And this "devolution" of responsibility from the state to the parents, the individuals, should be complemented with the abolition of certain taxes and government fees, those forced confiscation of income and savings of parents, so that the latter will have more disposable income to spend for their children's education and other household needs.

For the meantime, we can start with the privatization of all state universities and colleges including UP, and allow the state to run public elementary and secondary education.

What about the poor? Parents who are responsible will never run out of opportunities to improve their lives and the future of their children. Parents who are irresponsible and would rather spend their time drinking and gambling, and discussing how much subsidies they expect from government, will go poor, even starve. They deserve this because they chose this. But what about their children?

Humanity is filled with endless examples of charity. Pure, voluntary charity that requires zero taxation and zero political grandstanding. Their support to fellowmen, especially poor children and the aged, the physically and mentally handicapped, the victims of natural disasters, is endless. There are hundreds of civic and service organizations, church organizations, private enterprises and foundations, even sports associations, who are more than willing to provide charitable work to their fellowmen who have the dignity of showing ambition and aspiration to improve their lives in the future.