

problem in using quantification in the Philippine setting: the lack of data! Many of the graphs are incomplete, owing to the absence of figures; in other tables, the variance of available data becomes a problem.

Manila 1900 - 1941 is a first in local scholarship in its scientific analysis of Manila society and social change, and for that it must be commended. While Doeppers acknowledges the tentativeness of some of his conclusion owing to lack of data, he has laid the groundwork for further study.

One may find, however, one fault in the study. As a dissertation or a thesis, it is excellent; as a book, however, it

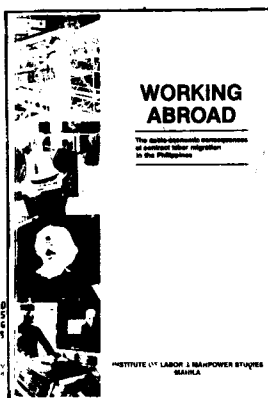
makes for very difficult reading. The language is, in many cases, highly technical (with an insufficient glossary!); to the general reader it will be almost impossible to follow. The graphs are also sometimes difficult to follow, as the axes' labels are not simple. Figure 13, for example, plots "percent aged 15-24" versus "percent illiterate" in showing the major occupations of 1939. Would it not have been simpler to have graphed age versus literacy instead?

Of course, the study as published is not aimed at the general reader; but with the timeliness of his analysis, Doeppers could have simplified portions so his conclusions could reach a larger, interested audience.

The Need For A Critical Approach In Government Research

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**Working Abroad: The Socio-economic Consequences
of Contract Labor Migration in the Philippines**
by the Institute of Labor and Manpower Studies, Ministry
of Labor and Employment. 1984. 302 pp.



Research is an integral component of policy-making. Especially for government, research provides for the empirical bases - the feasibility, the viability and the implications - of its major undertakings. As such, it is always crucial that government programs be based on and adapted to the findings of research. But as data can never stand alone, the research study should not be empirical for empiricism's sake. Rather, data-evaluation should operate within a framework of a holistic and root-seeking analysis. Indeed, as an integral part of government programs, research should not be regarded as external to the subjects of the research and policy formulation.

Working Abroad: The Socio-economic Consequences of Contract Labor Migration in the Philippines is one research study which fails to meet these criteria. A "technical report" of the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MOLE)'s research arm, the Institute of Labor and Manpower Services (ILMS), this study, conducted in 1982-1983, is nevertheless a pioneering attempt by government and its agency to "draw up a comprehensive set of empirical evidences on the sending economy". The study of temporary labor migration was made to further investigate and to control labor migration through policy formulation and recommendation.

As a product of 17-month long research, the study reveals wide-ranging and detailed information regarding the general conditions of the Overseas Contract Workers (OCWs) before their departure up to the time of their return to the Philippines. There is a demographic and socio-economic profile of OCWs; data on their work history; descriptions of the process of overseas job search; evaluation of overseas working conditions and job satisfaction; identification of the personal difficulties experienced by the OCWs as well as of those related to them; data on the nature of remittances, consumption, saving, asset accumulation and business investments; an assessment of present attitudes to overseas work, as well as their opinions on the services rendered by the MOLE.

Commendable up to this stage is the initial effort towards a more rational program for implementation. And yet, despite the mass and maze of data, the research is not really able to explain the phenomenon of overseas labor migration. The research merely describes it as it manifests itself now, accepting overseas labor at its face value.

If the research promises to be comprehensive, then more basic questions should have been answered, such as: What gave rise to labor outmigration as a whole? What is the real cause of unemployment and balance of payments (BOP) deficits which the export of Filipino manpower is said to be a solution to? Why does the government have to assiduously promote labor outmigration? In the end, who benefits and loses most from the present arrangement? All these would become clear once research departs from the limited, confining, and reactionary perspective of positivist research which is the framework of this current study.

The current labor migration is a phenomenon that is better understood within the framework of world capitalism where the close interaction between capital and labor is inextricable. Capitalism, which thrives on capital, accumulation and expansion, seeks the cheapest and most productive labor in order to gain the greatest profit. Thus, capital goes where there is cheap and productive labor or instead demands for it. On the international plane, one prerequisite to capitalism is the high mobility of capital and labor among countries. This is facilitated by their government's tolerant or promotional policies. Capital-rich countries invest in or demand labor from labor-surplus economies, which are usually the underdeveloped Third World Countries (TWCs), the Philippines included. These countries, whose governments operate within the parameters of western-oriented, neo-classical economy, more than welcome the opportunity to employ its labor force abroad in its attempt to gain foreign capital in order to im-

prove its BOP status and to ease its unemployment condition. This leads to the next question: Why is there unemployment and BOP deficits?

Unemployment and BOP deficits are but two of the numerous problems springing from the TWCs' deep integration within the World Capitalist Order (WCO), wherein the Philippines and the rest of the TWCs are placed at the disadvantaged end of capitalism's uneven development.

Because capitalist production is not premised on meeting social needs, the labor force suffers from the disability of the absence of its fullest ability. Employment depends upon the whims of capital expansion. In order for capital to self-expand, a reserve or unemployed labor force must always be on the sidelines to be tapped only when conditions become lucrative. Capitalism, whether on the local or international level, means an unavoidable unemployment, more particularly when there is a shortage of capital.

Within the aegis of the WCO, the effusively sought-after capital by an underdeveloped nation like the Philippines makes the country vulnerable to economic domination by developed countries. Capital is entreated and enters through the form of foreign investment, foreign loans and double-faced foreign aids. Added to these is the foreign exchange earnings from external trade. The present government economic strategy is to direct local production and resources toward the world market. The diversification of export earnings from this strategy is said to be the fuel for industrialization. This is dangerous as it all the more tightens the grip on the country's economic lifeline that is strangled by the chain of world market fluctuations. Historically, the developed countries-dominated terms of trade has been barely favorable to the country. The country's primary export products hitting well in the world market is as rare as the sighting of Halley's comet. The raw materials and traditional products like sugar, coconut, wood and copper suffer from extremely low prices. Non-traditional manufactured goods such as the electronic products face stiff competition in the world market and stand to suffer the same fate. The local economy further regresses with the expropriation of profit by foreign companies. With this imbalance on trade, the government is oftentimes forced to go on deficit spending and to beg for foreign loans to temporarily equilibrate the BOP deficits, thus propelling the debt cycle.

Why the government exports Filipino manpower falls within the principle of pragmatism. As the Philippines, traditional and non-traditional export products are devalued in the world market, the rapid expansion of Filipino OCWs came as a timely tool to the government. It was seen as an immediate lifesaver from rising unemployment and increasing deficits. Recognizing the immense potentials from OCWs, the government implemented measures to better coordinate and to systematize the growth of labor outflow. The result is the creation of the Philippine Overseas Employment Authority (POEA), which is given more coordinating power compared to the tripartite agencies of OEDB, NSB and BES. The move is at first glance appropriate. However, viewed as conforming to the government's economic strategy, the export of Filipino manpower program requires much more serious attention with regard to its long-run implications.

Determining the main beneficiaries and losers from labor migration must be seen in this context of world capitalism

which also provides a glimpse of the long-term effects. This is where the study is deficient. It only scratched the surface in its bid to determine the socio-economic consequences of contract labor migration. When the question "what are the economic, social, emotional, cultural, physical and psychological problems emanating from labor migration" is scanned, it is inseparably fitting to ask why these problems have to happen. Only then can deeper underlying problems be unmasked.

In this regard, the present research, and most of government research programs, is a long way off the real target. For so long as researches see only the surface, not the substance, and for so long as only the manifestations, not the central issues, are examined, policy formulations which putatively base its decisions from research findings can only have a tunnel-vision of the problem, that is, even with the presence of sincere intention on the part of the policy-makers.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the policy recommendations of the research follow the same myopicism by unscrupulously endorsing the present government's strategy. Stated to be a rationalization of the labor export program, the recommendations entirely miss the issues of the country's dependence on foreign capital and domination of the local labor force by foreign employment. Contrary to the statement, the recommendations are a virtual acceptance of the irrationality of the WCO. Proposals ended with stop-gap palliatives for the problematic features of exporting manpower, like improving the process documentation, stressing pre-departure orientation on how to cope with problems accompanying foreign employment, setting acceptable placement fees, promoting further government-to-government agreements on overseas employment, developing comprehensive training programs for future OCWs, and tightening the screening of applicants on the bases of productivity and skills. Other general proposals like developing information systems, welfare and livelihood projects can be good starting points for long-term programming.

Another but equally important criticism of the research concerns the relationship between research-policy formulation and its subject, the OCWs. A decisive weakness of traditional and positivist research method and policy-formulation, as employed in the study, is that it treats the subject-respondents as mere objects of investigation, similar to treating human individuals as commodities for exports. Consequently, the study overlooks the importance of workers' representation in the research and policy-making processes in the same manner that it was short of comprehending the primary interests of the workers as a common lot. This has been the missing backbone of government projects: From the start of the government's export of Filipino manpower program, workers' representation is yet to be conceptualized by policy-makers. This inability further dims the claim that the government embodies the workers' or people's interest.

It is unfortunate that the study failed to recommend a basic measure by which the workers, through strong and autonomous associations and unions, can directly represent themselves, air their grievances, participate in the formulation of the very policies which will affect them most and consequently broaden their role in charting their own lives. Given the scattered and temporary nature of their employment, the

workers need not only be represented in institutions like POEA. In fact, these associations and unions must be encouraged as a step towards securing the workers' bargaining power and collective strength vis-a-vis not only the Philippine government but more importantly with foreign employers anywhere. With the significant participation of the workers through

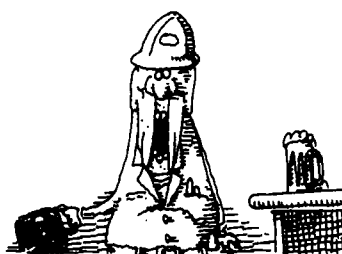
their organizations, research can be made easier, richer and more responsive to the workers' sentiments, as it ceases to be isolated from the dynamism of reality. Only then can research begin to be an integral part of policy formulation that is attuned to the times and sensitive to the active subjects' needs and interests.

New Internationalist

IT'S NOT TRUE THAT THE MULTI-NATIONALS
IN THE WEST ARE UNCONCERNED ABOUT
THE HEALTH OF WORKERS HERE...



THEY ARE CONCERNED !



WHY, AT THE FACTORY I WAS WORKING
AT IN TEXAS, WORKERS WERE GETTING
CANCER, DIARRHEA AND CRAMPS...



SO CONCERNED COMPANY REPS.
MADE A BOLD AND INNOVATIVE PLAN
WHICH COMPLETELY ELIMINATED ALL
THESE ILLS!



THEY MOVED THE FACTORY TO THE
3RD WORLD...



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