

# TRAINING TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE TODAY

by

LEMUEL M. MIRAVALLES\*

Manpower mobilization as a tool of national development is one of the stepping stones towards a country's progress. In most Third World countries especially, it has become of prime importance to mobilize the country's human resources to achieve the dream of progress.

In its bid for industrialization, the Philippine government has recognized the important role played by the technician at this stage of the nation's development. In recognition of this, President Ferdinand E. Marcos issued Letter of Instruction No. 79 on December 28, 1978. It called for the establishment of "a national polytechnic system on technical/technician education through the integration of all state-supported institutions in the Philippines". The national polytechnic system (NPS) was organized and established with the Technological University of the Philippines (TUP) as the apex of the system. The three prototype technician institutes in the Philippines (the Manila Technician Institute of Taguig, Metro Manila, the Bacolod Technician Institute of Talisay, Negros Occidental, and the Iligan Institute of Technology at Iligan City), the ten regional manpower training centers (RMTCs) of the National Manpower and Youth Council (NMYC), as well as all other state-supported institutions engaged in similar programs, are the other components of the system.

Based upon the NPS, occupational training follows a triangular diagram where manipulative skills (semi-skilled workers) are at the base, followed by machine skills (skilled workers), then measuring skills (technicians) and at the apex, designing skills (engineers).

There is a bottom gray line in the machine skills area to which persons with manipulative skills can go up as a result of changing technology and demands upon the workers. Also, there is a gray line at the top of the machine skills area to which technicians can move about to learn additional skills and prepare them for better employment opportunities.

The development of manipulative skills at the broadest spectrum of training is especially intended for the out-of-school youth. The NMYC – the main government agency on human resource development under the Office of the President – has been assigned a unique and challenging role: that of assisting the out-of-school youth whose main problems are employment and economic security, and providing for a continuous influx of skilled and semi-skilled workers. Created through Republic Act 5462, known as the Manpower and Out-of-School Youth Development

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\*Deputy Director General, National Manpower and Youth Council.

Act, the NMYC came into being on March 19, 1969. With the creation of the NMYC, the primacy of self-reliance as a means of accelerating human fulfillment was upheld. This also meant the development of the young people who comprise the greater bulk of the population. The NMYC has set up Ten Regional Manpower Training Centers (RMTCs) all over the country to cater to this need. Each RMTC offers vocational skills training in at least ten trade areas such as automotive, diesel heavy equipment, electricity, electronics, machine shop, plumbing, refrigeration and air conditioning, sheet metal, welding, and basic pre-entry courses in industrial sewing machine operation (ISMO) and printing. All of these courses are offered free and on a short-term basis. Each course is conducted on the modular approach for greater flexibility. Under this approach, a trainee can stop any time and still have employable skills to help him earn. For out-of-school youth in areas remote from existing centers, the NMYC has off-center training programs. One good example of this novel approach to training is the mobile training program (MTP). Using fully-equipped training vans, training is conducted right in the barangays by a team of skills instructors. The courses offered in the MTP are specially tailored to suit the immediate needs of the community, such as village technology, food production, food processing and preservation, cooperatives, construction trades and entrepreneurship. Last year, the program graduated 2,032 trainees from eight regions throughout the country.

In its efforts, the NMYC is working closely with private industry. Being tripartite in nature, the three sectors represented in the Council – the government, the private sector and the trade unions – are all concerned with the development of human resources. The New Labor Code, Presidential Decree No. 442, mandates the establishment of an industry board (IB) to unite these sectors. The IB is a tripartite group composed of representatives of employers' group, workers and government. It serves as the forum through which these groups can effectively pool technical expertise and financial resources for manpower development purposes. So far, six IBs have been established. These are the Construction Industry Board, the Automotive Industry Board, Land Transportation Industry Board, Apparel and Textile Industry Board, the National Power and Electricity Board and the Hotel, Restaurant and Allied Services Industry Board. The establishment of these IBs have been beneficial in increasing not only the volume but also the quality of training in the industry.

Another of NMYC's joint-effort programs is the Batarisan In-Plant Training Program. This program is a community effort designed to provide the out-of-school youth necessary orientation and job skills which are required for placement in industries or establishments in their respective localities. The Batarisan program is a tripartite undertaking which involves the Kabataang Barangay (KB), NMYC and private industry. In this program, private and business establishments provide resources and facilities for training. NMYC provides technical assistance in setting up the program, while the KB recruits out-of-school youth to be trained. Records show that some 5,557 trainees have graduated during the period 1978 to June, 1980. This includes 2,341 graduates from Metro Manila. It is expected that the number of graduates for this year will increase as the member companies in the program also

increase. Short-term courses such as electronics, automotive mechanics, machine shop operation, wood pattern making, garment sewing and embroidery are offered. These courses respond mainly to the needs of the industrial sector. A participating company in the Batarisan program gains many advantages, one of the more important being those offered by the Tax Incentive Scheme (TIS).

Article 52 of the New Labor Code of the Philippines states that "An additional deduction from taxable income of one half of the value of labor training expenses incurred for development programs shall be granted to the person or enterprise concerned provided that such development programs, other than apprenticeship, are approved by the Council and the deduction does not exceed 10% of direct labor wage." This provision – the tax incentive scheme (TIS) – is aimed at encouraging the private sector to actively participate in manpower training and to help regulate the supply of skills in the economy. To date, some 93 certificates of eligibility for tax deduction have been issued by NMYC to some 35 private firms. These certificates covered 201 training programs costing P8.5 million. At a 30% tax rate, the approximate revenue foregone by the government is P1.3 million.

Another lesser-known fact about the NMYC deals with the establishment of a national system of trade skill standards, testing and certification for the country's industrial workers. Skill standards are established by the NMYC in consultation with the different workers' organizations, employers, and concerned government agencies.

A trade skill standard is a written specification of the knowledge, experience and practical skills needed by an individual before he can be certified as a skilled worker in a certain trade. Before he can be issued a trade skill certificate though, a worker has to first pass the trade test. The trade test measures the worker's knowledge and skills against the established national standard for a particular trade. Trade skills are measured in three levels: first (highest), second, and third classes.

Government approbation of this scheme is ensured by Presidential Decree No. 1572 which requires technical personnel of repair and service shops in the Philippines to be tested and certified by the NMYC before such shops could be accredited by the Ministry of Trade. Through this accreditation scheme, the general public is assured that only competent technical personnel are employed to serve them.

The agency also has several courses all aimed at meeting the needs of private industry. Training programs for exportable manpower will be expanded. These training programs are designed to develop new skills for overseas jobs and upgrade existing ones to approximate international standards. The new training strategy consists of three types of programs. These are retraining and skills upgrading for existing workers; basic skills training for young people to fill in the jobs left by those recruited for overseas work; and special training courses for women. The construction industry will probably be the highest beneficiary of the exportable manpower training program. It is expected that employment will grow at an annual rate of 6.9%. According to the exportable manpower study, the 1980-1990 decade could expect an average yearly labor force addition of roughly 683,000 persons. Last year, as many as 75,000 persons had indicated their desire to be placed abroad. The Middle East conflict notwithstanding, Saudi Arabia remains the principal coun-

try of destination for construction workers. Through the second type of exportable manpower program, the NMYC hopes to supply local industries with the necessary manpower to counteract the effects of brawn and brain drain.

Also in the pipeline are training programs for tungsten inert gas and metal inert gas (TIG-MIG) welding. Each program is expected to last for 72 hours. These courses are aimed at training skilled workers to work with special alloys and steel fabrication as well as in ship building. A digital laboratory is also in the offing. This is especially important in the control of industrial processes in the age of automation.

Training, however, is but one of the NMYC's three interdependent tasks; the other two being manpower planning and vocational guidance.

To support its planning functions, the NMYC engages in many research-oriented programs. Access to pertinent data from the agency's different divisions and regional offices is made possible by the management information system (MIS). Recently, the NMYC came out with the *Bibliography of Human Resources Development Materials, Volume I*: a list of information materials relevant to manpower development. The listing of materials is a part of the human resource development bibliographic information system (HRDBIS), a new project introduced by the agency. The project aims to develop an aggregate information scheme that shall systematize the management of information on human resource development activities in the agency, in the Philippines and in the Southeast Asian region. The bibliography is also designed to reach various end users, specifically, agencies and individuals involved in manpower development.

The manpower planning effort includes the formulation and evaluation of a National Manpower Plan (NMP) and regional manpower plans (RMPs), the introduction of functional measures and concepts concerning manpower planning and development, determination of priority areas for manpower development and, eventually, the formulation of policies and operational guidelines. At NMYC, regional operations are results of combined research and planning aimed at developing better programs aligned with the region's needs.

From the "training center approach" originally utilized by the Council's Office of Vocational Preparation, the Vocprep delivery system has evolved a fresh, new thrust: the manpower guidance system (MGS). The MGS aims to provide the essential inputs of proper work attitude development among the youth. At the same time, it hopes to redirect cultural values towards a better understanding and appreciation of blue-collar occupations.

As the Philippines moves towards industrialization, the demand for blue-collar or industrial workers is certain to soar. The Philippine educational system is aiming towards the correction of some misconceptions towards vocational skills training. Since the government is looking after the welfare of the Filipino, more and more attention should be given to manpower training. More basic functional mass education and skills training should be provided to the population who cannot take advantage of the formal school system. The NMYC remains at the forefront of this task. Through its training programs, the agency hopes to be instrumental in producing skilled citizens who are responsive to the changing needs of the Philippine economy.