

A RE-APPRAISAL OF CHED'S REVISED GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM FROM THE LENSES OF KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND ECONOMY OF KNOWLEDGE

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Two underlying paradigms may guide the design of a tertiary curriculum. First, is the knowledge economy framework, which believes that learning is earning. Second, is the economy of knowledge model, which teaches that education is for education's sake. The authors subscribe to the second model, maintaining that while education prepares students for their professional careers, the market economy should not exploit them. It is the authors' firm conviction that the main goal of any worthwhile education, and for that matter, any curriculum, ought to be based on the economy of knowledge framework. It is in this model that a student imbibes knowledge for knowledge's sake and assimilates eternal values that a human being is worth. This research was inspired by events and discussions that took place a few months ago, when some politicians and policymakers proposed removing more General Education subjects from the current tertiary curriculum. The authors believe that a proper perspective can be gained by conducting a descriptive-qualitative study that traces the evolution of the concept of curriculum over the years and its current state. They noted that the shift from an economy of knowledge to a knowledge economy occurred during the Industrial Revolution, a trend that has also reached new heights in the present day due to the effects of globalization. The authors argue that the intentions of the knowledge economy model take precedence over its goals.

Keywords: curriculum, economy of knowledge, education, knowledge economy, philosophy

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The World Bank, in cooperation with UNESCO, published a report in 2022, stating that the Learning Poverty in the Philippines was at an alarming stage. It reveals

that ninety-one percent of children in the Philippines at a late primary age fail the reading proficiency test (World Bank-UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2024, 1). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD¹) released a study through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2022, which ranked the country very low in reading, math, and science (OECD 2023, 1-2). These empirical studies by international groups only point to one thing regarding Philippine education: that there is an urgent need to study, analyze, and reform our education system.

In July 2022, Republic Act 11899 was signed into law, thus creating the Second Congressional Commission on Education 2, better known as EDCOM 2.² Its mandate is to provide a thorough assessment of the education sector as the Philippines faces a learning crisis, evidenced by the above-cited statistics. Spearheaded by senators and congressmen, EDCOM2 is composed of the best and the brightest in the public and private education institutions and is assisted by some non-government groups. This think-tank aims to evaluate the ills plaguing our education sector and is tasked to make recommendations on how to transform and reform our education system, and pull it out of such a mire of a learning system. There is a need to improve the basic education system because its quality will determine the students' competence in successfully engaging in college education.

On June 5, 2025, Giselle Ombay reported in GMA News Online that Senator Jinggoy Estrada filed a bill that seeks to remove the Senior High School, which is part of the K-12 program. The K-12 law, otherwise known as Republic Act No. 10533, or simply, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, was the basis for adding two more years of Senior High School. She writes that the senator believes that twelve years after it was implemented, the said program has not lived up to its *raison d'être*, which was to produce skilled high school graduates who are ready for the industry (Ombay 2025). Accordingly, the senator believes that the Senior High School program has become repetitive, inefficient, and unproductive because only few employers hire these graduates as they prefer college graduates. This bill caused an uproar among different sectors, including school administrators themselves. Instead of shelving the program altogether, different sectors would want to revisit, study, and see how to improve it.

A week before this bill was filed, Llanesca T. Panti reported that the Department of Education (DepEd) proposed that three courses, namely, Ethics, Art Appreciation, and Contemporary World, be removed from the tertiary curriculum, which follows the Revised General Education Curriculum (GEC) of the Commission on Higher Education. Panti (2025) reveals that some people from DepEd believed that there were too many general education courses in college, which, for them, were simply duplications of other courses in the lower levels. This suggestion was met with a severe reaction from the Catholic Education Association of the Philippines (CEAP). To demonstrate their opposition, CEAP issued a statement on June 5, 2025, in which they maintained that "Ethics should remain an essential part of the college curriculum because it forms the moral and spiritual foundation of holistic education." Aside from CEAP, other sectors like philosophy groups, such as the Union of Societies and Associations of Philosophy in the Philippines (USAPP), which sent a letter to CHED on May 29, 2025, reaffirming the central role of Ethics in the tertiary curricular

programs, and thus insisting on its retention (USAPP 2025). Instead, these groups suggested revisiting and fine-tuning the whole Revised GEC.

Quo vadis, Philippine education? What do all these conflicting observations and findings on how to better our education system redound to? Why are there crisscrossing ideas from different schools of thought on how to transform and reform the Philippine education system? What was the theoretical framework that was followed in designing the Revised General Education Curriculum? The researchers posit that behind the various recommendations on how to better our tertiary curriculum is a clash between two education frameworks – *economy of knowledge* and *knowledge economy*. In this article, the researchers hope to shed light on the conflicting viewpoints by tracing how these two frameworks evolved through the years. Ultimately, based on the exposition on the history and evolution of the curriculum, this research seeks to determine which of the two models the Revised GEC would best adhere to.

A closer reading of the philosophical background behind which these two educational frameworks stand would allow us to see things in their proper perspectives. It would be enlightening if we tackle first the connection and a little bit of history between philosophy and education. This will serve as a springboard in delineating the interests of the economy of knowledge school of thought versus the knowledge economy school of thought. After all, there is always a philosophical hand that guides the framing of all educational programs. We hope to illustrate this by showing the inextricable link between philosophy and education.

PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION

Alan Ornstein (1999, 13) elucidates the connection between philosophy and education:

Without philosophy, educators are directionless in the what's and how's of organizing and implementing what we are trying to achieve. In short, our philosophy of education influences, and to a large extent determines, our educational decisions, choices, and alternatives.

Clearly, the centrality and indispensability of philosophy in the field of education are seen. In his book *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916, 328-329) stresses that “philosophy may be defined as the general theory of education, . . . education is the laboratory in which philosophic distinctions become concrete and are tested.” Ozmon and Craver (2003, 2) share a similar view with a different slant, remarking that since time immemorial, education has always been associated with the development of civilization. Concerns about life are the concerns of education, and education is seen precisely as a way of improving life. Education is for life, and education is life!

Before the K-12 program³ was implemented, there were 9 to 12 mandatory units of philosophy courses that all students must take: *Logic*, *Ethics (General and Special)*, and *Philosophy of Man*. When the K-12 law was implemented in 2015, the

complexion of the philosophy courses was altered because only Ethics remained in the tertiary curriculum and the other two courses were assigned to the senior high school level. For the record though *Philosophy of Man* became *Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person* was brought down to Senior High School, no separate subject for *Logic* was ever incorporated in the 2016-2017 curriculum of SHS. Instead, *Logic* lessons were merely incorporated into SHS *General Mathematics* subjects as one of the last sessions in the course. This is quite sad because aside from diluting the subject matter of *Logic*, students are now deprived of critical thinking skills which they need in the face of disinformation, misinformation and even historical revisions.

As earlier mentioned in a news report, DepEd suggested that *Ethics* be removed from college. The overarching question here is this: What is the basis of determining which subjects will be taught and which will be axed? Again, there is an undeniable link between philosophy and education. Ornstein and Horenstein (1999, 13) beautifully thread the tie that binds the two disciplines:

Philosophy provides educators, especially curriculum specialists, with a framework for organizing schools and classrooms. It helps them answer what are the school's purposes, what subjects are of value, how students learn, and what methods and materials to use. Philosophy provides them with a framework for broad issues and tasks, such as determining the goals of education, subject content and its organization, the process of teaching and learning, and, in general, what experiences and activities to stress in schools and classrooms.

At the college level, the vision-mission, aims and objectives, the kind of graduates the school intends to mold, and the priorities and educational infrastructures that the administrators have in mind will all be represented by the curricular offerings. The list of courses to be included in the curriculum basically speaks of the underlying philosophical orientation that a department, a college, or a school subscribes to. The curriculum is the heart of the mission to educate. Along this line of thinking, an excursus about the historical link between philosophy and curriculum is in order.

PHILOSOPHY AND THE CURRICULUM

The foregoing citation provides us with a substantial description of the role that philosophy plays in the educational arena. It penetrates deeply into every nook and cranny of educational life. Diluting, or worse, excluding, philosophy courses from the tertiary curriculum is doing a serious disservice to the holistic formation of students. Albela (2024, 283) opines that “shortchanging philosophy and its process in education may lead either to learning by short-term memory and soulless sophistry; and would deprive opportunities for organic thinking.”

Gerald Gutek (1997, 5) opines that the curriculum has been the center of the sharpest controversies because it is the epicenter of the school's educational efforts. Before going any further, a clear grasp of the meaning of the term curriculum is essential. A curriculum is not simply a collection of preferred subjects. The curriculum

is a carefully designed set of subjects contained in the program of studies, which comprises the school's formal instructional program in view of the aims and objectives that the learning institution hopes to develop in the students. It is carefully designed because its framers, designers, and theorists only want to offer the most relevant and appropriate courses to students. Gutek (1997,6) discloses:

There can be no question that curriculum designers, regardless of their philosophical convictions, attempt to seek that which is of the greater worth to the learner. The problem lies in identifying and agreeing on what is of the greatest truth, beauty and goodness. This question has metaphysical, epistemological, axiological and logical dimensions.

This is where the controversies set in. A deeper study of the curriculum would yield the impression that, behind all the courses to be offered, there is a primordial presupposition, an underlying philosophical question, that is both metaphysical and epistemological.

There are two opposing camps, according to Gutek (1997, 6), when it comes to educational policy-making. On one side, there are the Idealists, Realists, Scholastics, Essentialists, and Perennialists who prefer a subject matter-oriented curriculum. This group holds that the curricular aim is to transmit and preserve the cultural heritage to the next generation, and that the civilization's survival hinges on the transmission of these time-tested truths. On the other side are the Experimentalists, Progressives, and Reconstructionists, who are inclined towards a process-oriented curriculum design, which puts a premium on activities, experiments, and problem solving. The effect of the push-and-pull between these two camps is felt in the tug-of-war between economy of knowledge and knowledge economy.

For the past two or three decades in the Western world, there has been an antinomy between subject matter-based curriculum and process, and experience-based curriculum. The former is more focused on input, while the latter is more open and developmental. This redounds to the debate about content vs. process, product vs. process, or objective vs. development (Moore 2015, 54). A cursory survey of the two polar opposites, which is reflected in the drafting of the curriculum, is necessary to fully grasp the wisdom, as well as the tension, between the two paradigms.

On one hand, there is the pole of "aims and objectives-input-content-product" pole, which focuses on imparting hard knowledge handed down from the previous generations. They are ingrained in the minds of the students with the hope that when examinations come, they can answer some pre-designed questionnaires. On the other hand, there is the pole of the process-experience-development, which focuses on the open-ended search for knowledge. Lambeir (2006, 43) opines that "learning, and with it education, are redefined in terms of a process, given that what was once perceived as knowledge, has now become information." This curriculum values students' personal exploration in finding out for themselves some practical inputs to guide them every day.

This contrast of approaches in the curriculum is quite akin to the deductive and inductive methods in philosophy, and the sunrise theology vs. sunset theology

approaches. In the deductive-sunrise pole, a student is bombarded with hard content and knowledge, and it is up to him or her to apply this knowledge in everyday life. In the inductive-sunset approach, a student is exposed first to everyday realities—soil his or her hand, wrestle with whatever the world may throw at him or her—and at the end of the day, he or she must look for some theoretical framework behind his or her experiences. The contrasting schools of thought and curriculum approaches delineated earlier are precisely within these distinctions.

The two opposing strategies give us an idea on how to approach and achieve our educational aims and objectives through the curriculum. If knowledge through the curricular offerings is what we hope to impart to our students, how is it that we cannot agree on which courses are best offered and which are best removed? With all our best intentions to produce quality graduates, what makes educational theorists and policy-makers unable to agree on certain matters? What causes this great divide on how to advance and attain that thing called knowledge, which we hope to impart to our students?

Johan Muller (2012, 115), quoting Burke's book entitled *A Social History of Knowledge: From Gutenberg to Diderot*, opines that "the disciplines we know today only arose in the 18th and 19th centuries." Accordingly, the curriculum was made uniform for two reasons: first, it was because of the fact that the institutions for learning were dominated by the powerful Catholic Church of the Medieval Period in the 14th to the 16th century. It was aptly referred to as clerical because it was modelled from the monastic educational tradition. The second reason is that the organization of knowledge in the medieval university was distinguished between "liberal" and "practically useful" (mechanical) knowledge. What happened was that only the seven liberal arts (*trivium*: grammar, logic, rhetoric, and *quadrivium*: arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music) were taught in the universities. The seven "mechanical arts" – cloth-making, shipbuilding, navigation, agriculture, hunting, healing (later surgery), and acting – were left out. Curricular offerings in different universities were made similar and unified in order to attract both students and masters as they transfer from one school to another. They called this practice *perigrinatio academica*. As for the faculty of higher studies, Wise (1964, 131) claims that they employed *studium generale*, which later on came to imply *ius ubique docendi* or the right to teach anywhere in Christendom.

The heart and soul of the medieval curriculum revolved around the distinction between the liberal and mechanical course offerings. Those who favor the liberal side showed their obvious distaste for practical knowledge that employed the inductive and experimental method. The secular Humanists pushed away the elitism, conservatism, and disdain for "handwork" of the Scholastics, who were known to espouse the so-called *avant le lettre* or the pursuit of the mastery of word and letter. These Scholastics comprised the aims and objectives-input-content-product group. Later on, as Muller (2015:116) relates, the *trivium* became *studia humanitatis* to include grammar, rhetoric, history, ethics, and poetry.

As fate would have it, the pendulum swung to the other side. A new wave of thinkers in the 17th century was spearheaded by Roger Bacon. According to Wise (1964, 143), Bacon complained that there was too much philosophy in teaching and not enough experimental science. We note similar observations these days in the

Philippines, where some policy-makers are complaining that there are a lot of General Education courses in the current curriculum and not many professional courses. With Bacon's leadership, the artisanal traditions of empirical, procedural, and mechanical knowledge gained the upper hand. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, a new species of intellectuals who embraced the analytical leaning of some university-trained scholars paved the way for the age of the scientists and the new philosophy of self-discovery. Aided by the invention of the printing press, these experimental and analytical-minded intellectuals gained so much ground and sped up the cause of the process-experience-development group. The *quadrivium* eventually eclipsed the *trivium*. Muller (2012, 116) rounded up his tracing of the origins of the great divide, stating that "in the eighteenth century, the application-driven heritage of the crafts asserted itself, and useful scientific knowledge became both valued and respectable."

A paradigm shift has occurred. The old has been supplanted by the new. The *a priori* method of attaining truth of the ancient-medieval period, as espoused by Aristotelianism and which reached its apex in Scholasticism, has been eclipsed by the new philosophy of mathematical and scientific truth, which was reflected in its *a posteriori* method. Before, man was the measure of nature; now, he is dethroned, and the sciences have replaced him. With this shift, knowledge was to be attained through progression towards a not-yet attained truth; hence, process and development (Muller 2012, 117). Where before the outer world only had meaning when seen within the perspective of and in relation to inner and higher realities, better yet, sacred realities, now, this has been set aside in favor of the purely outer, external, and mundane realities. Muller (2015, 119) contends that while this happened in the previous centuries, this push and pull between two contrasting schools of thought still "continue to exert their influence on the pattern of the disciplines in the contemporary university, and on the curriculum." Rightly so, as its effects are very much felt up to our times.

The Contemporary Curriculum: *Quo Vadis?*

After having pointed out the origin and cause of the pendulum swing in the curricular direction and design of higher institutions of learning in the past, we are now in a position where we can understand the contrasting focus of our country's current education policy-makers, theorists, and curriculum designers. The tug-of-war lies on which to put a premium and which ought to take the back seat. Should it be on the content or the process, the product or the development? We ought to be very clear about this because this is where the whole problem arises in Philippine higher education institutions. The questions are, in fact, epistemological, even metaphysical, in character because they involve knowledge: What to teach and not to teach? What kind of knowledge should be taught? What courses should be retained and removed from the tertiary curriculum? What graduates do we intend to mold? What kind of schools do we wish to be? These seemingly simple questions have far-reaching implications as they go into the very identity, the *raison d'être* of our schools. These questions, among the many, include: What is the curriculum for? How should it be designed? Who should design it? What competencies and values should we inculcate in our students in our tertiary curriculum? The answers that we give to them should be

carefully examined. To answer the question, what the curriculum is for is relatively easy. But to address the question of how it should be designed is where our roads will diverge, as other stakeholders might not share the same philosophy. In direct reference to the current tertiary curriculum of the country, where would our differences of philosophy lead us? Hence, *quo vadis*?

Schools exist for a reason. The reason could be articulated by the original founder of the school, who had that zeal and passion for education when he established it. It could also be by a group or religious community like those schools established by religious men and women who intend to reflect the charism of their religious order or congregation. Whether a higher education institution (HEI) is sectarian or non-sectarian, and whether a school was established by a private individual or by a group, the founders have a specific aim in mind for what kind of graduates they wish to mold their students into. Definitely, there will be commonalities in their vision and mission. However, the manner by which they intend to achieve these ideals may diverge. Robert Rice (1989, 161) claims that, on one hand, non-sectarian or secular institutions are focused on the individual who is a being in this world and nothing awaits whatsoever in the afterlife. On the other hand, sectarian or religious schools view the individual as having an eschatological end. The glaring difference is obvious in how they perceive their students. With this contrasting perception, the manner by which they aim to educate their students and train them to become good citizens and productive and globally competitive professionals also varies. Certainly, this contrasting mindset will have an enormous effect on the manner they design their curriculum and even organize their school activities.

Another factor is who decides what courses and programs to offer. It would be myopic to think that only the school's administrative officials, as well as the government's agencies like CHED or DepEd, and ad hoc committees in charge of education like EDCOM2, contribute to the design of the curriculum. There are also external influences that have an indirect but influential role on what to offer and not to offer. I am referring here to the employers and businesspersons who hold the reins of the industry. These people decide whom to hire, what kind of graduates they should employ, and from what school they should be. Without a doubt, schools listen to them, and in all likelihood, schools would want to cater to their "suggestions and recommendations." Now, the situation becomes more complicated because we have a group of people who might not share the same zeal and passion as the school founders, given that their primary concern is productivity. In other words, these employers are primarily after revenue and profit. Is it not alarming that there are people who are outside the strictly educational enterprise, but have the upper hand in deciding which programs to offer and what kinds of graduates they wish to hire? Moore (2015, 60) shares this concern:

If curriculum selections are made by a certain group of people, who are these people? Are they really able or willing to adopt scientific, 'objective' methods of arriving at their selections? And if they are not, then what exactly are their 'vested interests' and what exactly are their intentions?

The answers to these questions are of paramount importance because they will address the pressing question as to who decides what courses to include and to exclude. If education is all about knowledge and skills, who decides what kind of knowledge and skills should our students imbibe and practice? In connection with the task of EDCOM2 and its overall aim to address the learning crisis in our country, who has the final decision on the direction of Philippine education, what programs its schools should offer, and what curricular design should be created? Otherwise worded, who holds the highest authority in such decisions?

THE REVISED GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM⁴

The Commission on Higher Education or CHED Memorandum Order No. 20 Series of 2013³ states that the new GE curriculum “aims to expose undergraduate students to various domains of knowledge and ways of comprehending social and natural realities, developing in the process, intellectual competencies and civic capacities.” These are the overarching aims of the Revised General Education Curriculum. By intellectual competencies, CHED means critical, analytical, and creative thinking, and multiple forms of expression. By civic capacities, CHED refers to those roles demanded of membership in the community, country, and the world. Section 1 of the said CMO provides the Goals and Context of General Education:

General education thus lays the groundwork for the development of a professionally competent, humane and moral person. It also prepares the Filipino for the demands of 21st century life and the requisite abilities to anticipate and adapt to swiftly changing situations, to think innovatively and create solutions to problems. General education enables the Filipino to find and locate her/himself in the community and the world, take pride in and hopefully assert her/his identity and sense of community and nationhood amid the forces of globalization.

These provisions raise two perspectives. The first paradigm accentuates and is geared towards a knowledge economy, and the second framework follows the tenets of the economy of knowledge. The former is associated with the notion that our Revised GE Curriculum is an offshoot of the demand of the market economy, which prefers graduates who are competent, skillful, and can compose the immediately productive workforce. This paradigm revolves around the process-experiment-development model. The latter veers towards education for education's sake and knowledge for knowledge's sake, and adheres to the content-input-product paradigm.

Let us now focus on the first perspective – the knowledge economy. Moore (2015, 24) asserts that whenever schools advocate for the process-developmental model and prioritize specific work-related knowledge and skills, it is precisely the knowledge economy that they promote. Hugh Lauder et al. (2012, 1) state that this mindset rests on the belief that “knowledge was assumed to be at the heart of economic competitiveness and hence, better educated nations would have an edge in the global economy; . . . knowledge economy would usher in an increasing proportion of well-

paid ‘knowledge’ jobs.” Kemal Gürüz (2011, 7) enthuses that knowledge and people with knowledge are the main drivers of economic development and growth, and a crucial contributor in terms of competitiveness in the international economic arena.

Looking from various angles, there seems to be nothing amiss with this mentality. A person goes to school to get a good education. After finishing college, he or she looks for a good-paying job. Is that not what going to school means, to get a job afterwards? This is precisely the aim of our Philippine government, which is to be able to produce graduates who can successfully land a job after graduation. This is also the exact reason why Senator Jinggoy Estrada wants to remove the Senior High School level—because most of its graduates cannot get a job, for the reason that many employers prefer college graduates. To make matters worse, there are many college graduates who suffer the same fate.

As in the past, there is a nagging problem about job mismatch, which means that the competencies acquired by our graduates in school are not the ones required by the employers. This makes the education sector and the business industry engage regularly in discussions on what programs to offer and what kind of graduates they need. Industry stakeholders generally believe that education should lead a person to land a job and earn a good salary.

On January 6, 2010, former US President Barack Obama mentioned in his speech that “the nation that out-educates us today is going to out-compete us tomorrow” (Obama 2010). The usage of the term “out-compete” suggests that former President Obama subscribes to the notion of the utilitarian ends of education. While schools primarily aim at educational ends, it cannot be denied that there are schools that put a premium on the utilitarian aspect, i.e., the business component. In a nutshell, knowledge economy simply means that learning is earning. Obviously, it means that those who scout for well-paid jobs should pay attention to surveys that recommend top-earning professions. Conversely, could this be the reason also why some notable businesspersons in our country venture into the business of education knowing fully well that Filipinos treat education as a means for social mobility? It is common knowledge that Filipinos would go to great lengths to obtain a good education because of the remuneration they can get from businesses that are critical of what is contained in their curriculum vitae.

Lurking behind this narrative is a trap. Lauder et al. (2012, 11) claim that while academic knowledge is, indeed, different from the type of knowledge needed for many kinds of jobs in the industry, it nevertheless promotes generic skills that are essential in the workplace. This is because education and the labor market operate in separate fields with their unique rules, norms, incentives, and systems of thought. This being the case, we now go back to the question posed earlier: “Who decides what kind of knowledge to include and exclude in the curriculum and, more importantly, what is the basis of such decisions?”

The trap is real. Even so, we cannot deny the idea espoused by human capital theory that learning is earning. With this theory deeply rooted in the psyche of the people, some schools, unfortunately, become pragmatic and utilitarian, turning business-minded by acquiescing to the recommendations of the employers and businesspersons on what programs to offer and the definition of the “ideal” graduates that schools should produce. Sadly, these school administrators sometimes tend to

forget the nobler and loftier goals and aims set forth by their founders. Consequently, they will design their curriculum in such a way that they will then produce these “ideal” graduates. This sad reality is elucidated vividly by Baker (2012, 97):

Schools used to be for educating people, for developing minds and characters. Today, as jobs depend more and more on certificates, degrees, and diplomas, aims and motives are changing. Schooling has become more and more a ritualized process of qualification-earning . . . ritualistic, tedious, suffused with anxiety and boredom, destructive of curiosity and imagination; in short, anti-educational.

This is the reality that we are facing today. Jobs and financial sustainability have gained more ground in the educational aspirations of our students. Parents would want their children to pursue careers where they can be employed right away and earn good pay. Employers would prefer to hire graduates who are adaptable and require less training so they can immediately contribute to the productivity of the company, thus increasing profit and efficiency. Seeing this trend, schools would like to cater to the inputs and recommendations coming from employers because that earns them some bragging rights that their graduates are hireable and in demand. It will create the impression from stakeholders like parents and future students themselves that such schools are “good” schools. When this happens, schools then hope to increase the number of their enrollees, which is something all schools desire. This is a win-win situation, and everyone is happy. Quite unfortunately, however, our schools in this instance are dictated by the industry, by the market economy. Is this what schools should be? Is this the purpose and end of education? Ringor (2025, 336), quoting Josef Pieper, cautioned that whenever economic ends of education like productivity and marketability overtake the noble formative and even contemplative aims of education it may result to an inversion of progress.

The other side of the pole that the authors wish to explicate is the paradigm called the economy of knowledge. Briefly, and as mentioned earlier, it simply means education for education’s sake and knowledge for knowledge’s sake. The authors are of the conviction that this paradigm should be the underlying framework in any curricular and program offering of any school, or, for that matter, the Revised General Education Curriculum of CHED.

In his book entitled *The Idea of a University*, St. John Henry Newman relates that he was asked what the purpose and end of university education is, or, notably, liberal or philosophical knowledge. Newman (2014, 82) professes that liberal or philosophical knowledge has a very tangible, real, and sufficient end, though such an end cannot be divided from that knowledge itself. He asserts that knowledge is capable of being its own end; that the mind is constituted in such a way that any kind of knowledge is its own reward.

The researcher believes that the Revised GE Curriculum should be anchored on the economy of knowledge framework, which is education-for-its-own-sake in contrast to the education-for-work perspective of knowledge economy. In our humble observation, the educational theorists and framers of the Revised GE Curriculum and

those who still want to modify it subscribe to the knowledge economy paradigm. We take the side of Newman, the Idealists, Realists, Scholastics, Essentialists, and Perennialists. In the same book, Newman (2014, 89-90) presents a very appealing elucidation about this liberal or philosophical knowledge and how to acquire it:

... it is an acquired illumination, it is a habit, a personal possession, and an inward endowment. And this is the reason why it is more correct, as well as more usual, to speak of a University as a place of education, than of instruction

But education is a higher word; it implies an action upon our mental nature, and the formation of a character; it is something individual and permanent, and is commonly spoken of in connexion with religion and virtue.

Quite interestingly, Newman (2014, 89-90) distinguishes between “instruction” and “education.” Instruction for him is associated with trades, business, and use. Instruction seems to be merely handing down technical information and developing expertise that a person can use in his or her field of work. The kind of education that Newman promotes is one of a lasting kind. For him, true education is allied with the formation of character. This is a deep-seated kind that goes deeply into the very core of the person. Should our educational theorists, policy-makers, curriculum designers, school administrators, and even parents not go for this kind of education?

It is safe to say that our current stakeholders are determined to uphold the framework of knowledge economy. Their pronouncement and press releases about the present curriculum, that there is a need to remove some more general education courses and replace them with professional courses, are clear proof in this regard. Professional courses are those that our students will need in the workplace. General education courses are intended for liberal education, the kind of education that Newman is promoting.

Moore (2015, 78) distinguishes between useful and powerful knowledge. Useful knowledge is understood as functional, productive, and a type of education dedicated to the national economy or as preparation for the world of work. Powerful knowledge is understood as that type that is emancipating and empowering, and goes beyond mere employability. Such can only be acquired in a kind of curriculum theory and design that puts a premium on individual opportunity and growth, transmission of perennial values, as well as holistic formation. Undeniably, this framework belongs to the economy of knowledge. Newman (2014, 89) puts it succinctly: “You see then, there are two methods of education; the end of the one is to be philosophical, of the other to be mechanical; the one rises towards general ideas, the other is exhausted upon what is particular and external.” So, whose authority does the Revised GEC recognize in deciding whether curricular offerings should cater to either useful or powerful knowledge?

Let it be clear that we are not in any way trying to hierarchize powerful knowledge and useful knowledge, or, economy of knowledge and the knowledge economy. The distinctions that we are putting forth are simply a tool and a frame of reference on how to conduct our reappraisal of CHED’s Revised GE Curriculum.

Schools nowadays have taken a different track. Stromquist and Monkman (2000, 12) believe that because of globalization, formal schooling is affected in four ways. First, the criteria being used in the corporate world are being applied to schooling, albeit improperly. Second, economic ends take priority in the design of the curriculum now, when previously, the student was the center of the curriculum. Third, the idea of education as a public good is weakening as it is rather perceived as an instrument of the market economy. The fourth is that the autonomy and independence of the teachers in implementing their work decreases, which in turn increases the administrator's control and decision-making powers in the workplace. In this instance, schools will be more oriented toward responding to the needs of the market rather than responding in the pursuit of truth.

The second and third perspectives are highly disturbing. What kind of schools would we have when economic interests take precedence over the best interests and long-term welfare of students? Also, how would schools be viewed when they become instruments of the market economy? What would happen to the loftier goals of authentic education? Where would the noble intentions of the founders of a school be placed? When it is the industry that dictates what course or program to offer and not to offer, when the school simply acquiesces to the whims of the employers and businessmen, what would that make of our schools? Are they still the primary conveyors and trusted agents of preservation and transmission of our nation's tradition and culture, or have they become a diploma mill of the marketplace? Lambeir (2006, 43) affirms this impression and straightforwardly states that "education has become merely a tool in the fetishization of certificates." Similarly and regrettably, Gürüz (2011, 19) laments that the university has become a knowledge factory and is conspicuously situated at the center of the knowledge economy.

From a more philosophical perspective, what would happen to the upliftment and nourishment of the spirit if the focus is limited to the economic and material ends of the person? Would we not produce graduates who are skilled barbarians and amoral robots? Rice (1989, 161) asserts that a sound educational program ought to take into account the nature and end of the human person. Lourdes Custodio (2009, 149) agrees with Rice when she discloses that, as much as we need highly trained and skillful technical persons, we also need such persons to have a sound humanistic formation. We can only achieve this when we adhere to the ideals of economy of knowledge.

It is without doubt that these days, there is a commodification of knowledge, which is what knowledge economy is all about. Stromquist and Monkman (2000, 14) lament that "guided by a climate of knowledge as production, the university may become hostile or indifferent to subjects dealing with ethics, social justice, critical studies, and gender studies." This is exactly what is happening in our Philippine tertiary education. Humanities courses that aim to make an individual more humane have been removed from the tertiary curriculum and transferred to the high school levels, where students are not ready for them. Instead of improving the values of human beings, some schools and stakeholders are keen on making our graduates mere cogs and pawns of the market economy. Ringor (2025, 339) was unwavering in his stand when he wrote, "A university that abdicates the teaching of *Ethics* abdicates its responsibility to nurture that which makes us human."

Lorraine Pe Symaco (2013, 220) maintains that there is nothing wrong with adapting the education system to the signs of the modern times, which is characterized by globalization. In fact, this should be the case should schools want to make themselves relevant and significant to the holistic formation of human persons. However, economic and material interests ought not to be prioritized over the nobler and loftier goals of education, which is the education of the soul. Moral education must be foremost in the minds of our educational policy-makers, school administrators, and other stakeholders. As much as we need skilled and competent graduates who will run the reins of the economy, we also need graduates who are imbued with a moral compass to steer the future of the next generation. This is achievable in the economy of knowledge framework.

CONCLUSION

The Revised General Education Curriculum is not perfect. It can still be finetuned. Instead of removing some General Education courses, like philosophy, in particular, and adding on more professional courses, our stakeholders would be best circumspect by looking at the bigger picture of what schools and genuine liberal education stand for. Newman (1996, 92) puts it clearly:

I have called the perfection or virtue of the intellect by the name of philosophy, philosophical knowledge, enlargement of mind, or illumination . . . , but whatever name we bestow on it, it is, I believe, as a matter of history, the business of a University to make this intellectual culture its direct scope, or to employ itself in the education of the intellect.

It would be unfortunate to set sight only on the economic and material interests of the graduates. While we appreciate the effort to build a robust economy and attain sustainable development by wanting to have graduates who have the technical knowledge and expertise, a human person is more than just a material and economic entity. Education is more than that. True education is moral education.

There is a document from the United Nations entitled *Global Education First Initiative* (UN GEFI 2012, 22). A paragraph says,

It is not enough for education to produce individuals who can read, write, and count. Education must be transformative and bring shared values to life . . .

Technological solutions, political regulation, or financial instruments alone cannot achieve sustainable development.

We want to give the best life to our children, good-paying jobs to our graduates, the best and the brightest minds to the industry, and an ever-increasing number of enrollees in our schools. However, it should not be to the detriment of the noble and lofty ideals of education. As to the final design of the Revised General Education Curriculum, a dialogue among all stakeholders is the order of the day. Politicians will

always be politicians, businesspersons will always be businesspersons. They will always have vested interests. What is needed are the inputs of our well-meaning educators who are happy to see their students graduate, cross paths perhaps again one day, and know that while they are earning well from their jobs, they still practice the values and ideals that were taught to them in school.

In the past months, our country has been in the limelight due to shameful cases of corruption by our government officials. Some of them studied in the country's premier Catholic schools. What has gone wrong? Are we not reaping the fruits of focusing only on their professional competencies? There is so much that liberal education, most especially philosophy courses, can offer in terms of instilling human values that enable a person to acquire a strong moral backbone. Dewey (1961, 328) is unequivocal when he says that "if we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellow men, philosophy may even be defined *as the general theory of education*." Aguas (2023, 176) echoes this view of Dewey when he avers that aside from forming fundamental dispositions and providing explanations, philosophy also shapes our worldview, our mental frame of reference about life, not just in the here and now but even life beyond. No one ought to tinker, therefore, on the centrality and eminence of philosophy in human endeavors like education.

The time is ripe and right to return to the economy of knowledge paradigm in our education system. After all, education is education of the soul.

NOTES

1. The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) is a non-governmental organization that gathers information by doing research regarding economics, education, governance, health, energy, science and technology, and many other more featured topics related to social development.

2. The website of EDCOM 2 says that "The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2) is a national commission tasked to undertake a comprehensive national assessment and evaluation of the performance of the Philippine education sector. It is tasked with recommending transformative, concrete, and targeted education reforms in the sector, with the end in view of making the Philippines globally competitive in both education and labor markets."

3. The K-12 program was enacted through Republic Act No. 10533, also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. In its aim to better the condition of the country's education sector, and also in compliance with international standards, the original 10 years of basic education (6 years in the elementary grade and 4 years of high school were changed into 12 years (6 years in the elementary level, 4 years of junior high school, and an additional 2 years of senior high school).

4. The Revised General Education Curriculum consists of 24 units of core courses (*Understanding the Self, Readings in Philippine History, The Contemporary World, Mathematics in the Modern World, Purposive Communication, Art*

Appreciation, Science, Technology and Society, and finally, *Ethics*), 9 units of elective courses, and 3 units of *Rizal*, which is mandated by law.

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