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Ti Similla

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An alumnus looks back

Kuwentong UP Baguio

■ Narciso Santos

The following essay was referred to *Ti Similla* by CSS Dean Raymundo Rovillos. A full copy of the essay is posted online, with Sayote Republic. Nars Santos graduated from UP Baguio in 1991, a BA in Social Sciences, major in political science and psychology. He worked as a video editor in Singapore for four years, with Xpress Multimedia, SPH Mediaworks and Mediacorps. Nars is now with GMA-7, in charge of training and organizational development at the Post Production Department.

It was a bright and pleasantly cold morning when I first set foot as a freshman at UP Baguio. UP Baguio was welcoming. The Oblation grounds were immaculately green, the weather was at its best in June, the campus was conveniently small, and the queue for enrollment was short.

UP Baguio in that morning of June 1985 remained the same until mid-1990s, when the terrible killer earthquake struck Baguio City in July 16. To this day, the lobby remains where it was, right at the center of UP Baguio's main building. It used to be smaller and unassuming. The floor was made of cement finish, a far cry from today's marble flooring and the building's "semi-alfresco" architecture. But the lobby of old was the place about which almost all those who came from UP Baguio have a special memory. It was the place for the celebration of the Linggo ng Wika, photo and art exhibits, memorial services, food sales, and militant campaigns.

Depending on the month of the year, a banner found its way to the canopy in front, welcoming freshmen or denouncing another round of tuition increase. In December, the lobby was bedecked with the lanterns and parols of Pasiklaban.

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April 2008 Science Summit

Addressing the science crisis

■ Zenaida Baoanan and Steve Obanan

In a paper entitled: "On a Low-Budget Large-Scale High-Impact Science Learning Program for Philippine Schools," Dr. Christopher Bernido, current president of the Research Center for Theoretical Physics, Central Visayan Institute Foundation, deals with current issues in science education in the country. The paper, co-authored by Marivic Bernido, attributes the Philippine educational crisis to the absence of a critical mass of well-trained highly creative people, especially of Ph.D.'s in science and engineering.

No Philippine university has likewise made it to the top 200 in the world-wide ranking of universities. We have a minimal scientist-to-population ratio: 157 for every 1 million Filipinos. This figure is below the UNESCO benchmark, which is 340. Japan produces 5,084 scientists per million. The Philippines ranked 42 out of 45 nations that took achievement tests in the 2003 TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Sciences). The Philippine average scale score was 378 while Singapore, the top performing school, garnered 605. Even Philippine science high schools have been performing below the international

mean in science. We also lack qualified teachers so that even a physical education teacher for instance is asked to handle physics.

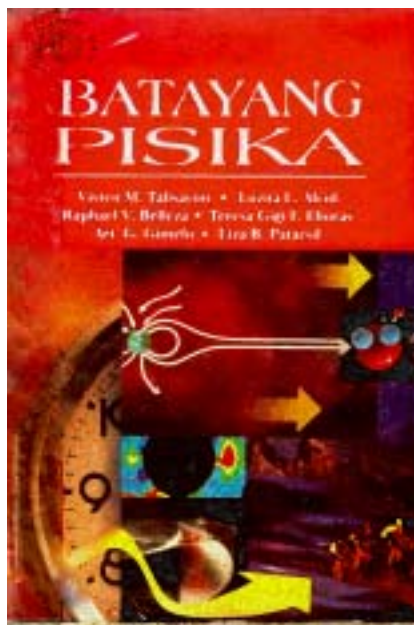
Given that scenario, is there hope for recovery from this educational crisis? Fortunately, the answer is yes, given the appropriate strategies.

Bernido cites the strategy adopted by the Central Visayas Institute Foundation Dynamic-Learning Program (CVIF-DLP) for primary and secondary schools since 2002. In the traditional learning program, 70-80% of the class period goes to lecture/discussion and only 20% to student activity. The Dynamic-Learning Program does the opposite so that learning is by doing, utilizing an in-school comprehensive

student and teaching portfolio in place of notebooks and lesson plans.

Bernido likewise addressed the large scale strategy of learning in the quickest time, with economy of resources, to get the maximum number of students with the highest levels of mastery in science and mathematics. This can be done through the "Learning as One Nation Program." The CVIF has developed a program called "Learning Physics as One

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Nation,” scheduled for pilot implementation in school year 2008-2009. In this program, 70% of the class time will still be devoted to activities while the remaining 30% will use VCD/DVD lecture-demos prepared by Ph.D. holders. This program will address the lack of qualified teachers in physics. Teachers will serve as facilitators while they get updated as well. If this program is adopted in the sciences and in mathematics, a team of experts will have to evaluate existing curricula and design one for pilot testing.

Dr. Caesar Saloma, Dean of the College of Science in UP Diliman, tackled issues in the training of MS and Ph.D. graduates in the natural sciences and mathematics. Saloma also linked the pressing crises in the Philippines to poor education. Education, he stressed, is vital to research that drives technological innovation leading to industrial prosperity.

However, the quality of education in the Philippines is obviously declining. In the 1,538 universities and colleges in the country, 59% of faculty have baccalaureate degrees, 26% with master's degrees, and only 8% with doctoral degrees. While there is one Ph.D. for every 11,621 Japanese, the total number of Ph.D.'s in the Philippines is below 2,000 in a population of about 88 million. To achieve the Ph.D. density profile of Japan, our country needs to produce more than 7,500 Ph.D.'s.

Given this profile, how can the University meet the need of training technically competent and self-assured graduate students? We can see that we really lack competent and qualified mentors in graduate schools. The lack of viable graduate programs in our local universities is also one reason for the migration of talented BS

graduates in the sciences and engineering. Very few come back to the country to get a job because they get better employment, i.e., higher salaries and benefits, abroad.

In the University of the Philippines for

recently.

While it is true that our government and the private sector are investing in more classrooms and hiring more teachers, the Research and Development (R & D) spending as of 2006 was only 0.1% while in Japan 21.5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is devoted to research and development. It is not surprising therefore that our country has low scientific productivity, which can be measured in terms of scientific publications in high-impact peer reviewed journals (ISI publications), citations of published works, ability to attract research funding or grants, the number of PhD graduates trained successfully, and number of patents.

While our country published about 500 papers in ISI-indexed journals in 2007, Singapore put out almost 8,000 in that year alone. In the 2006 ranking of best 500 universities by the Times Higher Education, the University of the Philippines ranked 299th. Cost of education is relatively low in the Philippines, tuition fees ranging from Php 200 to 2,700 per unit as of 2004. In a US private college, tuition fees for a four-year course reach \$18,273 per annum, shouldered by students without subsidy from government. In the Philippines' case, with higher tuition fees schools can likewise provide better facilities conducive to higher learn-

ing.

Several other recommendations were distilled from Dr. Saloma's talk, such as: improvement of school facilities, and the recruitment and retention of competent teachers. These will uphold viable graduate programs that will eventually increase the number of graduate students, ISI publications and patents. ■



instance, the premier University in the country, the maximum salary of a full professor is Php 361,356 or roughly \$7,374.6 while the US academic median salary counterpart is \$78,382 and \$60,809 for male and female professors, respectively. In the private sector such as DLSU, the corresponding salary is Php 27,971, which is 104.4% higher than the UP rate. Furthermore, a young Ph.D. who holds the rank of an assistant professor receives an annual salary of Php 245,184. That is not enough to support a family

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The lobby was also a comfort zone: a stalking area, dating area, getting-to-know-you area, depository of bags and books, neutral tambayan for most, a puke area (there used to be an ornamental bamboo plant growing beside the front wall of the old library where we comforted ourselves after having too many beers) and of course, the place where the latest gossip of UP Baguio was propagated. The white station wagon, the official service vehicle of the Dean, was parked at the corner of the lobby and the hallway fronting the Sec's Office (Secretary's Office). But more than these, the lobby represented the seat of "unofficial" acceptance into the UP Baguio studentry. It was welcoming to almost all students of political and social color but the lobby was strictly off-limits to freshmen, especially when such greenhorns were "barbarians." It was a mortal sin for a freshman to spend his free time at the part of the lobby facing the Oblation grounds.

At the center of the lobby was the Dean's office. The interior of the office was painted in pink but the reason for the color was never really established. But it was always a source of interesting rumors. In fact, *Outcrop* lampooned the color of the office in its issues countless times.

Manong Terry also held office there together with Manang Donna who was later reassigned to the Sec's Office and became the wife of Manong Tony, the ever helpful handyman-cum-janitor-cum-muscle man of the Spear Hall.

The Sec's Office was to your right if you were walking towards the lobby. Until today, the office symbolizes academic tribulation to me. Depending on the verdict read to you by the then College Secretary, after patiently lining-up at her office during enrollment, pink-slip in hand, you came out an ex-UP Baguio student, either on first probation or last probation. Anti-academic as it may sound, a true-blue UPian should bear the scars of academic war, with at least a 4.0 that is not removable. If you got the walking papers from the university, you were immortalized as an academic martyr. Yours truly lined-up there twice, the first was on behalf of a close friend (because he was busy attending a congress against the Marcos Regime in Cebu), and the other was because in my third year, I only passed one subject.

As a consequence, in my fourth year

(there was already a fifth, sixth and 7th year for a four-year course back then), I was on last probation and forced to pass all my enrolled courses for the year.

But the Sec's Office was where people I now sorely miss also worked: Manang Nani Mejia, Manang Violy, Manang Julie, Manang Amy, and Manang Pen. The old library, its first and second floors, was to your right facing the former Dean's Office. It served as a discreet dating area and an escape route from teachers on the hunt for students who were always absent. The escape hatch was a door in the second floor of the library that opened to the offices of the Humanities and Social Sciences Divisions.

The hallway in between the old library and the former Dean's Office led to where Prof. Delfin Tolentino held office (PIPO) and eventually (straight ahead) to the UP Palaris tambayan, kissing park, (to your right) EKITT tambayan, clinic, accounting and cashier's offices, graduate school building, the upper, lower and lowest canteens.

The upper canteen housed the tambayans (to your left as you enter) of Pi Sigma/Delta, APO, Chi Kappa Epsilon, and Scintilla Juris/Astrum Scientis and UP Ladaoan while the lower canteen housed the tambayan of Anak-UP, Tau Gamma Triskelions and the Student Council Office. The upper canteen and the lower canteen were a refuge for most of us from the cold and wetness of the monsoon rains during the months of July to November. During these times, Jun Fabian (of APO) would pass a shot of gin around (Markang Demonyo by Ginebra) to all who were at their tambayan and everyone would all have a good time getting intoxicated. Of course, there was also the lowest canteen, located a few steps



Photo from UP Baguio archives, care of Cristina Villanueva

away from the other side of the upper and lower canteens, owned by Mommy of Hillside (of the batch of the Hillside Boys that I knew – Richard Salvador, Alex Dulay, Enrico Interior, Melchor Bartolome, etc.).

From the back of Sir Delfin Tolentino's office and facing the UP Palaris tambayan, you turned left to head to the auditorium, the Luna Hall. The auditorium, as we never really referred to it as "Luna Hall," housed the many memorable events of those times: Freshman Orientations, Skit Nayts, Himigsikans, Saniwengs, Tabak stage plays, Kabute stage plays, Recognition Days, Book Sales, and the Miting de Avances. The auditorium would later become a makeshift library and classroom after the 1990 earthquake. The Property Office, until lately, was still located under the left side of the auditorium.

Facing the auditorium, you turned left and right down the stairs to the 20s. Right at the corner of the hallway leading to the 20s was the tambayan (the stairs) of Tumbleweeds, Beta Sigma and the Corps of Sponsors. Right beside the tambayan of the Beta Sigma was the old office of the *Outcrop*. The office holds poignant memories to me. This was the place where I started learning the rudiments of writing. This was also hallowed ground. The present Chancellor of UP Baguio, two incumbent Deans, countless professors and famous journalists held office here as student writers. The *Outcrop* office was also a silent witness to the love stories that blossomed within its walls. At the back of the *Outcrop* office was the of-

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fice of the UP Baguio Theatre Arts.

Turning left from that corner straight ahead leads you to the library of today and to your right the Vanguard office, the new office of the *Outcrop*, the old office of EAP and down the stairs that led to the UPCB High School of yore.

From the Vanguard office, facing the new library, you turned left to the open air multi-purpose court and the bleachers. The multi-purpose court was a silent witness to the arduous practices of the basketball, volleyball and tennis teams, and the several intramural games contested here, including the skirmishes that usually ensued when the testosterone of the players got the better of them. But usually, after every game, most players, win or lose, would head to Manong Efren's canteen, Valdez Store or the store beside the police detachment, and celebrate. The back part of the Convention Center was referred to as "the UP Baguio annex," Manong Efren's was the "20s," Valdez store was "the Spear Hall" and the store in front of the detachment was the "10s."

The (official) 10s of the Madonna Era were pretty much the same, except for the addition of the building of the College of Human Kinetics today. The office of the Natural Sciences department was to your left coming from the ever enduring workstation of the "mani monopoly," our very own Manang Mani. From the Natural Sciences offices, you turned right and straight ahead was the laboratory storeroom, and right again, you negotiate the stairs down to the Spear Hall where the room to your right served as the only classroom for P.E. classes. The hall

housed the table tennis tables, the dance area and the office of SPEAR.

If the tennis tables are still around today, approximately six of them, and if you checked under the tables you may still see our attempt at immortalizing our names by resorting to vandalism. Spear Hall was also a silent witness to a lot of love stories among Varsitarians that hung out there. There was a door at the back of that only classroom that opens to



(straight down) the archery range (now the multi-purpose court roofed building) and (to your left) a pathway that led to the lower canteen.

The parking lot is another memorable place in UP Baguio. I was here, near the big pine tree, when the earthquake of July 1990 struck. But like the lobby, the parking lot also represented some sort of social acceptance or un-acceptance. Obviously, this was where most students with cars spent their free time. Pusoy owes some, if not most, of its history here. And yes, this was the place where most "teacher's pets" congregated. The parking lot was also the place where I spent most of my Saturday mornings during my first and second

years. This was where the (in) famous--depending on your beliefs--formation of the citizen's military science training took place. A few good men -- Horacio Cruda, Paul Guimbatan, Ryan de Luna and Sindatuk Shariff Sergian Ulama -- cut formidable figures as they tried to make men out of us.

Come April, the parking lot became a festive site of banderitas and booths selling native fashion accessories, tapuey, barbecues, and hotdogs to beer in plastic cups. From the parking lot looking towards BREHA, which later had a neighboring building naughtily referred to as the FAC House (Faculty House), one could almost see anything and anyone: the Convention Center (also referred to as the "Bottle Grounds" where Ferdie Balanag celebrated his 19th birthday by drinking all the 19 beers lined-up for him and breaking them one by one), four pillars, pond, open multi-purpose court, bleachers, and the trails leading to the 20s, Vanguard office, library and BREHA. If you turned around, you would see the whole administration building, 10s and the shaded walk from the Oblation grounds where Manang Mani is still stationed.

UP Baguio then was in harmony with the Baguio City landscape. It was a sprawling system of small one-storey buildings. There was a semblance of freedom as anybody could enter the campus sans presentation of ID's. The fence surrounding the campus perimeter was not obtrusive. Students, teachers, and non-academic personnel seldom wore summer clothes. English was spoken only in classrooms, and love and camaraderie, like the scent of pine, was all around us.

UP Baguio of 1985-1991 had almost no boundaries. ■



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