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REYNALDO C. NICDAO, MM Doctor of Philosophy in Education - UA Graduate School Curriculum Development and Program Evaluation, 2nd Semester, 2012-2013 Arnel T. Sicat, PhD. — Professor REFLECTION: Back to the Future by Jesus C. Palma, Ed. D. I absolutely concur that present-day education is irrelevant because of the continual use of a “ sabertooth” or antiquated curriculum in a cybernetic age. Eminent historian Dr. Ambeth Ocampo revealed that we still confront the basic problems identified in a 1925 report of the Monroe Commission on Philippine Education. We can look at the Monroe Report in two ways. One approach is to praise the Commission for its foresight, because like clairvoyants they were able to see our present problems many years ago. The other manner to interpret the report is to accept the sad fact that Philippine education has not changed very much since 1925. It is a time-honored reality that education has always held out hope for the future because it creates an idea or illusion that it is a means for upward mobility. Education provides the means to go up the social and economic ladder based on merit and achievement, it is seen as a means to break the status quo and it tells us that things do not have to be the way they are. The indispensable role of education was encapsulated by Kim Jones, CEO of Curriki, who affirmed that “ No matter what global problem you are dreading, whether it’s the elimination of poverty, whether it’s the creation of peace, whether its solving environmental energy problems, the solution always include education, never is it without an education component and sometimes cannot be done without education. ”

Nonetheless, even with the indisputable conviction in the importance of educating Filipinos, current performance indicators show a dismal picture of

the quality of education in the country. Participation rates have worsened, dropout rates remain high, graduates of high school are inadequately prepared for the world of work or entrepreneurship or higher education and the Philippines continues to perform poorly in both national and international assessment tests. Dr. Palma proffered two highly-sensible questions: How can schooling better prepare the young for a meaningful life in the society of the future?, and What skills and values must the schooling equip the young with not only to survive but more so to participate effectively and contribute significantly in such a milieu? It is my conviction that the challenge for educational institutions is to accentuate the advancement of “ functional” skills that graduates need to be gainfully employed and significantly contribute to national competitiveness and productivity. Traditionally, most schools in the Philippines focus only on academic skills which are associated with subject areas (Mathematics, literacy, English) and generally measured through standardized scores and job-specific or technical skills which are related with one’s profession - generally a mix of specific knowledge and skills to perform jobs. For education to be holistic and serve its real purpose, schools must likewise give emphasis to life skills: a broader set of aptitudes important in our daily existence and transferable across jobs including thinking (critical and creative thinking, problem solving) and behavioral skills (communication, organization, teamwork, and leadership skills). I similarly hold the impression that reforms in the educational system are essential to solve this predicament. Unquestionably, the system of basic education in the country is in dire need of an overhaul. Former Department of Education Secretary Jesli Lapus emphasized that the task of nation building is

intertwined with our need to solve the crisis in education. Enhancing the quality of basic education in the Philippines is urgent and critical that is why the implementation of the K+12 program is a timely step in the right direction. This new approach will decongest the existing curriculum, prepare students for higher education, suitably train graduates for the labor market and enable them to be compliant with international standards such as the Washington and Bologna Accords. As we prepare for our nation's future, educators like us are challenged to play a vigorous role in developing an empowered, educated and economically productive Filipino citizenry. Our main calling must be to cultivate individuals who possess the foundations for learning throughout life, the competence to engage in gainful work and be productive, and the ability to coexist in prolific harmony with local and global communities.