

Science and technology in philippine context

Science



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Science & Technology in Philippine Context Science has been described as "the means of understanding the natural environment", while technology is "the means of controlling and managing it". Hence Science and Technology together cover the gathering and generation of information about the material world and the application of that information for the welfare of mankind. Changes in science and technology cause changes in individual people that can make them look at their society differently, and sometimes, to improve it. The advanced countries of the world are where they are today primarily because of their ability to use science and technology as effective tools for achieving their national objectives. These countries have changed the life-styles of their peoples through the cultivation and application of science and technology. The developing countries have fallen behind primarily because of their backwardness in this respect. The limitation of resources, shortage of skilled manpower in many areas, inadequate research facilities and skill development programmes, lack of coordination among scientific organizations, outmoded science curricula in the educational institutions, dependence on foreign technology, brain drain and emigration of trained manpower and poor social consciousness of the role of science and technology in national development-all of these factors have conspired to keep us backward. It is now generally realized that the inherent strength of a nation lies in the skills of its people which can be acquired and enhanced through the practice of science and technology in every field. The promotion of scientific knowledge and development of technology, through their increasing application, create the necessary conditions for socio-economic uplift of a country. Technological progress is thus the crucial determinant in the realization of the twin objectives of eradication of poverty and

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acceleration of socio-economic development. Philippines have been struggling to meet the basic needs of its people and to substantially raise the living standards throughout the country. In order to achieve these goals and to keep up with the rest of the world, Philippines, too, must harness science and technology to reach its national goals. It is only through the use of S & T as effective instruments of change that a happy future for the people of Philippines can be ensured. While I do see a few difficult years ahead I am extremely optimistic about the future of science and technology in this country and, indeed, in the world. Those of who have been privileged to call themselves scientists and engineers have been part of the greatest adventure that is accessible to humans. They have made major contributions to the quality of life for all of us and I am confident that there are many more such developments waiting just over the horizon. One of our major challenges will be to make the improved quality of life that has resulted from scientific and technological developments available to a much larger fraction of the world's population than now enjoys them. There are still major problems facing our civilization. They include population growth, hunger, disease, destruction of the environment, and many more. It has become traditional to lay most, if not all, of these problems at the doors of science and technology. But if we look more closely at the situation, we will find, I believe, that in each case the science that we require is already at hand. What we do not understand are the behavioral, economic, and social consequences of the various possible scenarios that science lays out for us, nor, indeed, do we have any agreement on the value system within which some of the most difficult decisions will necessarily be made. To give a single example — modern medical technology has advanced at a remarkable rate

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to the point where a great many individuals who in the past would simply have died can now be kept not only alive but fully productive. Unfortunately, in some cases the costs can be enormous. While only a few can afford this, most cannot and among the most difficult decisions that lie ahead is that of who will receive the medical technology and to whom will it be denied on economic grounds? If we are to have any hope of addressing the kind of problems that I have just mentioned, then it is absolutely essential — and long overdue — that the everyone make common cause and begin to consider jointly how best to address such problems. The only place where such interaction seems feasible is in colleges and universities and, in my opinion, we have long been remiss in going our separate ways in splendid isolation. The time has come when we must face up to what we can and, should, do together. I am confident that any solution will necessarily involve a complex mixture of science, of technology, and of politics and for this to happen we simply must work together much more than we ever have in the past. There will be serious difficulties but the stakes are high and the potential returns are enormous. What we need to do is to continue our improvements in government handling of science, where public trust is particularly low. All departments need strong systems for managing research and handling advice. Scientific information and advice to government should be freely available and accessible. We need to go further in our drive for successful knowledge transfer. Our goal is prosperity for all through successful use of science and technology. We need to ensure that the government, scientists and the public are fully engaged together in establishing the central role of science in building the community we want. I alone could not achieve a nation-wide scale of improvement. But together

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with the entire populace of this country, as a single entity, nothing is impossible.