

# **The Myth of Equity of Distribution of Educational Subsidy: The Case of the UP Grant-In-Aid Program**

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*Using the Grant-In-Aid (GIA) program of the University of the Philippines as a case, the distribution in educational subsidy may be said to favor the rich at the expense of the poor who need it most. Instead of promoting equity, the program has selective biases that work to initially disadvantage the poor from receiving the GIA grants. The GIA has functioned merely as a confidence mechanism to keep the system sufficiently "open" to enable the poor to participate. To correct this, it is proposed that subsidies for higher education be substantially reduced and the amount be channelled instead to primary education, particularly in areas where majority of residents are poor.*

## **Introduction**

Today, the prevailing development agenda for less-developed countries is centered on the enhancement of equity and eradication of poverty. The pursuit of these two ends has been a source of mutual enmity among leaders and scholars who find difficulty in arriving at a consensus on why the few have so much, why many have so little and what should be done to correct the unequal situation. With ideologies wanting, the models and approaches designed towards achieving these noble goals have only succeeded in creating diversity rather than unity of ideas. Poverty and inequities still abound in less developed countries and it looks as if these are here to stay.

In an effort to find an excuse for their failure to assault poverty and enhance equity, some leaders and scholars argue that the difficulty in correcting the situation could be traced to the social maladjustment which has been there from the time society came to exist. In other words, poverty and

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inequity are society's fault. Others, however, went farther. As if the miseries and sufferings of the poor are not enough, they added insult to injury by blaming the poor for their inability to improve their living conditions. In short, these leaders and scholars denounce the poor for being poor; poverty is an individual responsibility; hence, poverty is the fault of the poor.

And what have the poor to say about this? The poor, as they are, are resigned to their fate. They are smitten by the thought that poverty is "bearable" (one can always bear his cross); that poverty is "alterable" (there is still hope for upward mobility); or that poverty is "preferable" ("blessed are the poor," and "God must have loved the poor; otherwise, he would not have created so many of them). Whatever their justifications, however, the fact remains that the very unequal opportunities in all aspects of society make the poor stay poor. There is inequality of opportunity for social benefits, and of particular concern in this paper is the area of educational services.

It is the principal task of this paper to look into the Grant-In-Aid Program as implemented in the University of the Philippines and to examine its equity content. It will attempt to show that this study grant is a form of "confidence mechanism" employed by those who are in power to make the poor believe that they are given the opportunity to gain access to education. Specifically, it will endeavor to answer the following questions: (1) Is the UP GIA Program really for the poor? (2) Does it promote equity, or is it just another form of "confidence mechanism"?

Statistics reflected in annual reports and position papers prepared and published about the program, and the minutes of the meetings of the Board of Regents, form the major source of data for this paper. Other sources are interviews conducted with a purposive sample of people involved in the Program's policy formulation and implementation.

### Confidence Mechanism

This paper adopts the theory of confidence mechanism as espoused by Charles Elliott<sup>1</sup> to explain disparities in the distribution of educational subsidy, using as case study the Grant-In-Aid program of the University of the Philippines.

Charles Elliott likens the inequities in society to three goldfish bowls of different sizes, positioned in such a way that one is on top of the other with the largest bowl at the bottom and the smallest on top. With access cones that vary in shape, diameter, and position, the bowls are connected in such a way that it is possible for the small fish in the lowest bowl to pass through the middle bowl to reach the top. However, because of the keen competition, only few are able to get through. Unknown to the small fishes is a control mechanism whereby the fishes in the higher bowls can intervene with the dimension and direction of the cones to regulate the access of the

small fishes. There is no reverse passage down the system because the fish that are able to go up become so big that they can no longer pass through the cones to go down. The intervention of the big fishes extend even to the supply of nutrients which could be transferred from the bottom bowl to the higher bowl or vice-versa.

This three-bowl system is managed with the tacit collusion of those in the middle bowl, such that the manipulation of the access cones and the distribution of nutrients are regarded by the vast majority of fishes as acceptable, regardless of their highly competitive character. Despite the outward horizontal appearance of the system, vertical channels of communication are also possible between individual fishes, like passing food from one bowl to another or helping a small fish pass through the access cones.

This model illustrates very clearly three problems: the access from one bowl to another; the competition within any one bowl for resources; and the competition between bowls for available resources.

Elliott relates this bowl system to three processes of enrichment and impoverishment: the process of selection which determines socio-economic status; the intra-group competition that determines which individuals within the group acquire control over resources; and inter-group competition which determines how resources are divided between groups with obviously different interests. The author argues that both exclusion and downward mobility, which are no more than the processes of relative and absolute impoverishment, are most frequently reverse images of the enrichment of another group resulting from direct personal confrontation between individuals with differing bargaining skills and power, or from structural biases that are introduced and maintained in order to serve a particular common interest of a specific group that has the power to impose its own preferences upon that structure.

However, the author explains that even the most biased processes of selection are not entirely closed. In fact, in some cases they appear more open (or more fair), and that despite the biases, some manage to pass through. This is the magic component of the model which legitimizes the position of those at the top and at the same time gives confidence to those at the bottom that somehow they can get to the top. The preservation of legitimacy and confidence depends on the sufficient upward mobility that the structure allows.

From this concept flows Elliott's theory of confidence mechanism as drawn from the characteristics of the process of differentiation. He mentioned six processes, but for the purposes of this paper, only three processes are relevant, namely: 1) selective biases within the competition; 2) selective biases that are not obvious to those who compete; and 3) a system sufficiently "open" to retain competitor's confidence and or bestow legitimacy to those who compete successfully. By the nature of their commonality, the author

calls any process manifesting such differentiation as a *Confidence Mechanism*, or more conveniently *Con Mech*.

The implementation of the GIA program in the University of the Philippines can be examined within these parameters. Whether the program is contributing to the enhancement of equity in the distribution of educational subsidy or whether it is just another form of confidence mechanism shall be the main thrust of this inquiry. Equity as used in this paper is defined as that which "aims at equality among equals and inequality among unequals. It corrects certain disparities without challenging the framework of inequalities."<sup>2</sup> It is the kind of social equity which makes available the benefits derived from any undertaking, and which provides greater equality of opportunity and access to the less fortunate members of the society.

### The UP Grant-In-Aid (GIA) Program

The need for educational reforms was felt as soon as the country was able to recover from the ravages of World War II. These demands were, however, more in form of increasing state support to education and making the curricula more responsive to social needs and demands. President Ferdinand E. Marcos, partly in response to the issues raised by student demonstrations, signed Executive Order No. 202 on December 4, 1969, creating the Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education (PCSPE). Among others, the Commission recommended the establishment of student assistance programs. However, these assistance programs were only implemented when martial law was declared in 1972. P.D. No. 1 or the Integrated Reorganization Plan embodied in its declaration the Educational Development Decree of 1972 or P.D. No. 6-A. This decree sought to insure maximum contribution of the educational system to the attainment of national development goals within the purview of a free and democratic system. To realize this end, the Ten-Year National Development Program was drawn which emphasized not only the democratization of access to education and training opportunities but also the responsiveness of higher education to national and regional development needs.<sup>3</sup>

One important reform measure that was passed, which was also recommended by the Commission, was the requirement of an entrance examination for high school graduates seeking admission to a four-year college degree course. P.D. No. 146 provided the legal mandate for the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE). From a policy of open entry therefore, there was now a shift to selective admission. Expectedly, the requirement of an entrance examination reduced college enrolment, but the government promised to concentrate its efforts towards providing more access to tertiary education through the expansion of scholarship grants and the establishment of the Study-Now-Pay-Later Plan.

The University of the Philippines, responding to the call of giving more

access to the poor but deserving students, established financial assistance programs in the form of student scholarship, placement programs and grant-in-aid.

### *Rationale and Objectives*

In 1971, upon the instruction of Dr. Salvador P. Lopez, then incumbent President of the University,<sup>4</sup> a committee was created composed of faculty and student representatives to study and consider the adoption and implementation of a graduated scale of student fees in the University based on the capacity to pay. The capacity to pay principle is directed towards subsidizing the education of poor students. Students from low-income families who are admitted to the University shall then be assessed according to their capacity to pay.

Giving due consideration to financial figures and student opinion, the committee recommended the establishment of a Grant-In-Aid Program (GIA) to provide *free* or *reduced* "single" fee for students coming from low-income families. This proposal was finally given its legal blessing by the University's Board of Regents when it was approved through a referendum on May 5, 1971. The program was first implemented during the Academic Year 1971-1972.

### *Selection Standards*

The GIA program, in its initial stage, instituted the following criteria for qualification:<sup>5</sup>

- (1) For incoming freshmen and transfer students, they must be qualified for undergraduate admission based on current admission requirements; for currently enrolled students, they must have passed a minimum of 12 academic units during the regular semester immediately preceding the date of application;
- (2) They must not have been adjudged guilty of any offense requiring disciplinary action;
- (3) They must not be recipients of study grants or financial assistance or holders of scholarships, government-sponsored or otherwise;
- (4) They must show financial need under either of the following cases:
  - (a) Their parents or legal guardians have a combined annual gross income of ₱4,000 or less; or
  - (b) If their parents or legal guardians have a combined gross annual income of more than ₱4,000, the per capita gross

annual income of the family is ₱1,000 or less, e.g., for a student whose parents or legal guardians have a combined gross annual income of ₱5,000 with three dependent children, the per capita annual income of the family is computed as follows: ₱5,000 divided by five (3 children plus parents) which is equal to ₱1,000.

Four years after the implementation of the program, the GIA committee presented recommendations to the Board of Regents in an effort to "revitalize" the program.<sup>6</sup> The Board acted favorably to this and for the first semester 1974-75, the qualification criteria for the program was revised. Henceforth, an applicant to be eligible:

- (1) must be a Filipino citizen;
- (2) if an incoming freshman or a transfer student, must be qualified for undergraduate admission on the basis of current admission requirements;
- (3) if currently enrolled, an undergraduate student must have passed a minimum of either 12 units or 3/4 of the total units he was enrolled in on the last day of late registration, whichever of the two alternatives is higher, during the regular semester immediately preceding the date of application; a graduate student must have passed a minimum of either 6 units or 3/4 of the total units he was enrolled in on the last day of late registration, whichever of the two alternatives is higher, during the regular semester immediately preceding the date of application;
- (4) must have never been adjudged guilty of any offense requiring disciplinary action of more than a five-day suspension and must never have been adjudged guilty of perjury or falsification of documents;
- (5) must not be a recipient of study grant or financial assistance, or holder of a scholarship whether government-sponsored or otherwise.

Furthermore, a financially needy applicant had to provide the following additional information:

- (1) the total actual income of the gainfully employed members of the applicant's family or household;
- (2) the total value of property or assets, real or personal, of the applicant's family or household;
- (3) the total value of scholarships, if any, enjoyed by members of the applicant's family, including the GIA of other members of the family as well as the scholarship of the applicant himself;

- (4) considering the number of members of the applicant's family, as well as the locality (whether rural or urban) in which the family resides, the total amount the family needs for the basic necessities of food, shelter, clothing utilities, transportation and other expenses;
- (5) considering the number of family members in school, the total amount the family normally needs for the education of the children.

A year later, the number of units that a GIA grantee must pass was further revised as follows:<sup>7</sup>

- (1) a freshman undergraduate student of the University must have passed a minimum of either 12 units or 3/4 of his total load for the semester immediately preceding the grant, whichever is higher;
- (2) a sophomore undergraduate student must have passed a minimum of either eleven units or 70 percent of total load;
- (3) a junior undergraduate student must have passed a minimum of either ten units or 65 percent of total load;
- (4) a senior undergraduate must have passed a minimum of either nine units or 60 percent of total load.

### *Benefits of the Program*

As expressed in the objectives, the program was primarily intended to provide *free or reduced* "single fee" for students from low-income families. Single fee includes tuition, laboratory, entrance, registration, medical, athletic, and donations to the community chest. Full grant is awarded to students whose parents or legal guardians have a combined annual gross income of ₱4,000 or less and partial grant is awarded to students whose parents or legal guardians have combined annual income of more than P4,000 but the per capita gross income of the family is ₱1,000 or less. The year after, recipients of full and partial grant-in-aid became entitled to ₱200 and ₱100 book allowance per year respectively. The College of Agriculture students in Los Baños however, are not granted the same benefit as "they seldom require textbooks for their courses; instead, the GIA benefits shall be spread to more students . . ."<sup>8</sup>

Effective the schoolyear 1973-74, the GIA grantees were again blessed with additional benefits when the Board of Regents approved the monthly stipends of P 600 per month for 10 months for full grantees and ₱400 per month for 10 months for partial grantees in addition to single fee and book allowance.<sup>9</sup>

The radical revision of the program in 1974 abolished the full and

partial classification of grants. Instead, the committee instituted the category system in order to have a more detailed distinction of income levels. Each category carries the corresponding amount of tuition discount, book allowance and stipend. There are now 84 categories in the GIA program.

### *Strategy of Implementation*

The implementation of the GIA program is under the overall supervision of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and is administered in collaboration with the Office of the University Registrar and the Computer Center. Together with the Director, the officers of these units constitute the GIA Committee chaired by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs. It is implemented system-wide with the exception of the UP College in Clark Air Base.

The funds of GIA is partly derived from an increase of 15 percent in the assessment of single fee for UP students. Entrance, college, and university scholars are no longer entitled to tuition privileges; but other things being equal, they are given priority in the GIA award should they qualify. The remaining bulk of the budget comes from the national coffers.

So that more financially needy and scholastically deserving students could benefit from GIA, the Board of Regents approved a resolution that grantees shall enjoy GIA benefits for the completion of only one curricular program whether baccalaureate, masteral, doctoral, or non-degree. Furthermore, a GIA grantee who completes one curricular program shall be disqualified from enjoying another GIA even for mere enrollment in additional courses, e.g., a BS Hygiene graduate who enrolls in higher English, Physics and Zoology courses to satisfy the requirements for admission into the College of Medicine.<sup>10</sup> This rule was later amended such that a student whose completion of non-degree courses qualifies him for admission to the regular degree program in the same college can still avail of the GIA.<sup>11</sup>

As soon as the qualified freshman student has been selected through the UP College Admissions Test (UPCAT), he receives a notice which includes among others, a GIA application form that he can accomplish within a given deadline to meet the start of the semester. For transferees and other categories of students, the GIA is prominently advertised in the campus bulletin boards and in the handbook of information or catalogs. Screening of applicants is by a computer system using all the data provided by the student to prove that he is really in need of financial assistance.

### **Problems and Issues**

Problems and issues regarding the GIA Program as implemented in the University of the Philippines can be categorized into (1) that of verifying the question of whether the GIA is really a program aimed at helping the poor

and therefore promotes equity; and (2) that of validating the proposition that the program is just another form of confidence mechanism. This analysis will start off with the latter consideration as the verification of the former would automatically become academic as soon as the theoretical assumption is validated. The three processes of differentiation, each of which constitutes a confidence mechanism, will be used extensively as the central issues in the GIA Program.

### *Selective Biases Within the Competition*

At the initial implementation of the GIA program, the plan that was drawn to help financially needy students go through college was too general, and the criteria, too simple. A student who is qualified for admission to the University can avail of the benefits of GIA by presenting the income tax return of his parents or legal guardians showing an annual income of ₱4,000 or less for full grant and more than ₱4,000 or the per capita gross annual income of the family is ₱1,000 or less for partial grant. No less than the members of the committee in charge of the program admitted its defects and deficiencies. Ironically, it took them almost four years to correct the "chronic imbalance", and the first radical revision of the program sought to remedy the following:<sup>12</sup>

- (a) the unrealistic nature of the cutoff points in the criterion for financial needs,
- (b) the mathematical arbitrariness of the cutoff points in the criterion for financial needs;
- (c) the mathematical arbitrariness of the cutoff for awarding full and partial GIA;
- (d) the incompleteness of applicant-supplied information as bases for GIA decisions;
- (e) the inadequacy of the provisions for verifying the applicant-supplied information;
- (f) the adverse effects of the increase in tuition fees on students who are neither well-to-do nor qualified under the present program of GIA.

The Board of Regents approved the recommendation of the committee and effective the Academic Year 1974-75, the requirements of citizenship, number of units passed, clearance from disciplinary cases and prohibition from enjoying other study grants, were implemented.

In the determination of financially needy students, specific data were required to be furnished, like income of the gainfully employed members

in the family, total value of property or assets, total value of scholarship enjoyed by the members of the family, expenses for basic needs of the family, and the amount needed by the parents for the education of the children.

There were other revisions which came after this one, all in the name of achieving equitable distribution of the aid. However, the modifications of the selection criteria as implemented — from qualification to retention in the program — have not been effective in insuring that only the poor would be the recipient of GIA. There are indications that the same group of students belonging to affluent families are being accommodated into the program year in and year out. This seems to point out that *the selection standard is based on efficient but not necessarily valid way of determining financial need*. The presentation of the income tax return and the declaration of property and other assets of the family is not a guarantee that a student is in financial need. Incomes may be “doctored” and assets “undervalued”. Income statements, especially among the wealthy, may be grossly undervalued and misdeclared to avail of tax deductions. On the other hand, parents of poor students are usually ordinary government employees or employees of small private firms, who received fixed compensation incomes which are recorded up to the last centavo. Hence, it is harder for them to misdeclare their earnings. Under this screening process of the GIA, a student whose parents or legal guardians earn much more, but who can present documents which do not reflect their real earnings, can be a GIA grantee. On the other hand, a student whose parents or legal guardians earn less, but whose recorded income reflects their real earnings, may not make it within the required GIA income cutoff.

This reliance on income and assets statements also allows for a situation where the few poor students in the program receive less benefits if they fall under the category that would allow only a single fee discount while the rich who have “declared” lesser income and property are granted not only the single fee but also the stipend and book allowance.

The administrative system of GIA is not equipped with a mechanism that could detect irregularities, and even if they were, it is doubtful whether it could do something about falsification of public documents. Administrators of the program admit that they have received a lot of complaints about GIA grantees coming from well-to-do families. But since the bases for qualification are supported by documents, they cannot do anything about it. They cannot prosecute on mere hearsay. They have, however, conducted random spotchecking. Unfortunately, this has so far not been effective. Even those who were caught lying about their income and assets were not properly dealt with. Punishment of “cheaters” range from mere disallowance of the grant to verbal reprimand or blacklisting. The punitive aspect provided for in the program is very minimal. There is no clause whatsoever that would prevent or discourage the students or their parents to lie about their incomes. By this alone, the system encourages the “cheaters” to try their

"luck" as there is nothing to lose but everything to gain. Their "luck" will definitely continue for as long as the required documents can be "manipulated" and there is no foolproof mechanism which would allow the program implementors to detect which documents are true and which are falsified. So far, despite the safeguards instituted in the program to ensure that only the poor will qualify, the selection criteria not only seems to be biased against them but also does not constitute a valid determinant of financial need.

#### *Selective Biases not Obvious to Competitors*

The root of all the biases within the competition for GIA seems to lie in the opportunity of access itself — the admission requirement of the University. The fact that the program has to screen applicants coming from a group of students who have initially qualified through the University's admission criteria, makes the whole selection process biased *ab initio*, since the University's admission requirement has been proven to be socio-economically biased in favor of the rich. Now it can be told that students who are admitted to the University come from exclusive high schools which cater only to children of well-to-do families. The University itself, in its studies, admitted this sad reality that its students are not representative of the country's population, and that largely, they belong to the higher socio-economic classes.<sup>13</sup> Table No. 1 shows that for the year 1976 only, 24.32% of those who applied for admission and 40% of those who finally admitted belonged to the ₱20,000 and above income bracket. All through the years, the University has pursued a discriminatory policy against the poor students, albeit unintentionally, but discriminatory, nonetheless.

The only criterion for admission is the UP entrance test (UPCAT). The rich and the poor, the graduates of rural public high schools and the graduates of exclusive Metro Manila high schools, join in the competition. Graduates of private and exclusive high schools are initially advantaged because they have better books, better facilities, generally better teachers, and are therefore, better prepared for college, as against graduates of public and rural high schools who have to contend with antiquated books, dilapidated school buildings that are blown off every time there is a typhoon, and the high cost of living (food, transportation, etc.). What makes the competition doubly difficult for the poor, is that, despite the increase in the number of examinees every year, the University maintains the same quota for admission, which is around 5,000 per year. Inevitably, examinees are strictly filtered because the qualifying score becomes higher, and only those who are highly qualified, based on their UPCAT scores, are taken in. Once inside the University, they can now avail of the State University's assistance programs of which the GIA is one.

The inability of the University to expand and therefore accommodate more students has compounded the already sad plight of the poor competitors. Each year, less and less children of the poor are taken in as they find it

Table 1. Distribution of Applicants and Admissions  
According to Annual Family Income

<i>ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME (In thousands of pesos)</i>	<i>APPLICANTS</i>		<i>ADMISSIONS</i>		<i>RATIO Adms/Appl</i>
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	
0.0 - 0.5	375	2.06	24	0.15	6.40
0.5 - 1.0	417	2.29	26	0.56	6.24
1.0 - 1.5	474	2.60	43	0.92	9.07
1.5 - 2.0	495	2.72	51	1.09	10.30
2.0 - 2.5	428	2.35	45	0.96	10.51
2.5 - 3.0	417	2.29	41	0.88	9.83
3.0 - 4.0	892	4.90	125	2.68	14.01
4.0 - 5.0	867	4.76	126	2.70	14.53
5.0 - 6.0	790	4.34	115	2.46	14.56
6.0 - 8.0	1,654	9.09	334	7.15	20.19
8.0 - 10.0	1,691	9.23	357	7.65	21.24
10.0 - 15.0	2,742	15.06	737	15.78	26.88
15.0 - 20.0	4,408	9.36	592	12.68	34.74
20.0 - ---	4,428	24.32	1,898	40.65	42.86
Uncoded Income	841	4.62	155	3.32	18.43
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18,205</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>4,669</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>26.65</b>

Source: 1976 UP College Admissions Test, UP PDS Working Paper on Democratization of Admissions.

difficult to compete with highly qualified and better schooled, better equipped students. The poor students are relegated to the sidelines to give way to students who have exhibited favored qualities. They neither harbor recrimination against their rich counterpart, nor resent their being disqualified in the admission. The poor students accept their being losers in what they regard as a "fair" fight. They attribute their not being able to make it to their own individual limitations — they are not as intelligent as their competitors. Indeed, "the more obviously and overtly competitive the mechanism, the more the individual is likely to attribute failure to his own shortcomings, . . ." <sup>14</sup> The competition therefore is regarded as acceptable by the poor; they are oblivious of the existence of selective biases within the contest. The last thing that the mechanism would ever allow is making these biases overt to the competitors. Their survival, as a process, is dependent on "their ability to retain the belief among competitors that they have a chance — not necessarily an "even" or "fair" chance, but an acceptable chance of winning in the competition."<sup>15</sup> Anything that would threaten the existence of the system will be entirely rejected.

#### *A Sufficiently "Open" System*

At first blush, the University does not seem to discriminate against the poor in terms of the opportunity of access. From the beginning, it has always prescribed a policy that all are allowed to take the entrance test by not requiring any cutoff average from high school graduates. Lately, it has even adopted a liberalized application fee so that more poor students can apply for the test. Applicants coming from a family with an annual gross income of ₱6,000 or less are exempted from payment of application fee. Representative regions are also utilized as testing centers so that those in the rural areas can take the test at the center nearest their place.

However, despite these measures aimed at making admission to the University more accessible to the majority of the poor who live in the rural areas, there is evidence to show that this has not been the case. An examination of examinees for the 1976 UPCAT shows that half (49.5%) of those who applied for admission came from Metro Manila high schools. (Please see table 2). If other urban areas are included, the figures for applicants for admission add to a high 74%.

The figures are even more startling for examinees who were finally admitted to the University. Eighty-eight percent of admissions come from urban high schools, with 65% coming from Metro Manila schools. Examinees from the rural areas who are finally admitted to the University comprise merely 11% of the total admissions. Considering the fact that the rural population constitutes 70% of the total population, the disparity becomes more glaring, especially because majority of the poor live in the rural areas.

Nevertheless, the poor are able to participate in a sufficiently "open" system, regarding "the system as competitive but acceptable,"<sup>16</sup> bestowing it

Table 2. The 1976 UPCAT. Distribution of Applicants and Admissions According to High School Location

HIGH SCHOOL LOCATION	APPLICANTS		ADMISSIONS		RATIO Adms/Appl
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Metro Manila	9,012	49.50	3,014	64.55	33.44
Other Urban	4,506	24.75	1,106	23.69	24.55
Rural	4,527	24.87	507	10.86	11.20
Uncoded	160	0.88	42	0.90	26.25
TOTAL	18,205	100.00	4,669	100.00	25.65

Source: Democratization of Admissions: UP PDS Working Paper.

with confidence and legitimacy. This recognition is preserved by making the system "open" to everyone, rich and poor alike.

### A Decade of Promoting Inequity

The initial launching of the program in 1971 seemed at the time to be the appropriate response to the demand for more equity in the distribution of educational benefits. It was a plan engineered by officials of the University, together with student representatives, that would allow the rich students to subsidize the education of the poor students. The GIA was conceived as the implementing mechanism, funded by the tuition fees collected from university and college scholars who were supposed to be exempted from payment, and the tuition fee increase of students. The idea was regarded as a balancing strategy because scholars coming from wealthy families would be deprived of their privilege in favor of the poor.

However, as the above analysis shows, it is the children of well-to-do families who are likely to be benefitted because of selective biases present in the system. Despite this, the GIA continues to be the biggest financial assistance program in the University. In 1972 when it was launched, it had a budget of only ₱200,000. Ten years later, the budget reached ₱5.7 million, 52% of which came from tuition fee increase and the rest borne by the national government.

What do these figures amount to? Just an expensive expression of a decade of promoting inequity in the distribution of educational subsidy.

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The rich certainly cannot be faulted if they eventually emerge as beneficiaries of the GIA. However, the poor should not be blamed if a system envisioned to help those "who have less in life" did not grant them "more in law" either. Moreover, they should not be branded as less intelligent because they cannot afford the education offered in exclusive schools. Finally, it is unfair situation that the poor who are deprived of the benefits of GIA, have to shoulder part of the educational subsidy for the rich.

### Promoting Equity Through the Basic Needs Approach

After all is said and done, a couple of nagging questions need to be answered. Should the UP be the venue for implementing programs like the GIA? If not, what then is the role of UP as an institution of higher learning in promoting equity among the people?

Must the UP be an elitist institution on the ground that academic excellence must be maintained? The UP has produced most of the country's top leaders and its graduates earn on the average the highest salaries.<sup>17</sup>

As a university of the People, the UP has responsibility to correct social inequities. The President of Tanzania summed the role of universities in developing countries when he said:<sup>18</sup>

The university in a developing society must put the emphasis of its work on subjects of immediate moment to the nation in which it exists, and it must be committed to the people of the nation and their humanistic goals ... We in poor societies can only justify expenditure in a university — of any type — if it promotes real development of our people . . . The role of a university in a developing nation is to contribute; to give ideas, manpower, and service for the furtherance of human equality, human dignity, and human development.

The UP can perform these roles. Firstly, it can extend its helping hand to the very few and really poor students in the University. Once they present themselves to the UP door and are able to legitimately enter, it can assure these students the benefits of a university education by extending assistance from financial to learning assistance aids. Secondly, the University is complemented with highly trained and educated manpower who can develop concepts and modules that can be utilized for primary or even secondary education of the rural poor without necessarily using the UP as the implementing site. And thirdly, it can inculcate among its graduates the value of giving a part of themselves to the less fortunate members of the society. It can even enforce "compulsory public service to its graduates."<sup>19</sup> These schemes will certainly go a long way in justifying the claim of the Presidential Committee to Study State Higher Education in 1975 that "1) the University of the Philippines incurs the highest cost per student at ₱4,000 to ₱5,700 depending on the course of study; 2) not a single state school approximates that of UP's per capita cost; 3) only three schools are able to spend half of this cost; and that 4) the remaining state school's per student cost is less than a quarter of UP's."

In the context of the larger society, the emerging option for uplifting the conditions of the poor is going back to the initial question of the basic needs of the people. Government resources may be concentrated towards meeting these identified needs rather than spending them for the higher education of the rich. Leaders and scholars have been engaged in a generation of debate about approaches to the eradication of poverty, distribution of income, and generation of employment, so that the ever elusive goals of growth and development shall be achieved. One of these is the basic needs approach. It was found out that "only societies that have been successfully in meeting basic needs are those that have also reduced inequalities."<sup>21</sup> One of the basic needs that has been identified is education.

In the order of Philippine priorities in education, primary education comes first because of its particular role in overcoming absolute poverty. Further, studies have hypothesized "that primary education helps people to obtain and evaluate information about improved techniques and new opportunities to keep records and estimate returns of past activities, and the risk of future ones."<sup>22</sup> The effects of primary education in the promotion of equity has also been confirmed.

As the primary education become more widespread, additional spending will be increasingly concentrated on backward rural areas, girls and the poorest boys. In general, primary education tends to be redistributive toward the poor. In contrast, public expenditures on secondary and higher education tend to redistribute income from poor to rich since the children of poor parents have comparatively little opportunity to benefit from it. Primary education, especially of girls, has favorable effects on the next generation's health, fertility and education. Finally, it enriches people's lives. Many would regard this as sufficient justification for universal primary education, independent of its other benefits.<sup>23</sup>

There are some communities in the rural areas who are engaged in the activity of providing education to the poor with the assistance of the schools in their place. In Palawan, a community-funded *bayanihan* concept of schooling is under the supervision of the Palawan National Agricultural College. They bring education to the doors of farmers so that they "may earn while they learn."<sup>24</sup> In Nueva Ecija, they have the so-called Tech Pack Projects supervised by the Central Luzon State University. It enjoys limited funding from a foreign funding agency and technical manpower is provided by the students of the University. However, both programs suffer from lack of funds and this is an area where the government can very well help.

### Conclusion

In the past, we in the developing countries have always been "fascinated" by big and expensive modes of development. More often than not, however, these models have not been useful nor practical for our purposes. It is high time that fascination for these models be curtailed. Not that big is bad, but "small is beautiful."<sup>25</sup> Big projects have only resulted in an increase

in poverty and inequity. The budget for this should instead be allocated to more productive use of neglected sectors like primary education in areas where majority of residents are poor.<sup>26</sup> In the educational sector in particular, so much value is placed in the pursuit of higher learning on account of its economic "returns."<sup>27</sup> But this approach for a time has been proven to be inequalitarian, as "when government may pay the full cost of tuition fees as well as provide university students with bursaries. Since most students already come from higher income brackets (and were so selected at the secondary level), university education, highly subsidized from public funds which are often extracted from taxation of the poor, can represent a subsidy or transfer payments from the poor to the wealthy in the name of 'free' higher education."<sup>28</sup>

The radical transformation of society's value in education cannot take off if the government does not come to the rescue in terms of relevant policies.

Government policies can come in the form of substantial cutoffs in the subsidies for higher education. Another may be in the reduction of programs of specialization (fortunately, the UP is already doing this), which are expensive. Moreover, only very few students are enrolled in such courses. Higher education should also be made a private responsibility, the cost to be borne by the students themselves.

These proposals will definitely meet tight snags along the way. Government policies are ticklish issues because they involve priorities perceived by our leaders.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Charles Elliot, *Patterns of Poverty in the Third World: A Study of Social and Economic Stratification* (New York: Praeger, 1975).

<sup>2</sup>Ma. Aurora Carbonell-Catilo, "The Social Justice Content of Agrarian Reform Policies and their Consequences on Rural Development," DPA dissertation, College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines, 1981.

<sup>3</sup>"Equalization of Educational Opportunities in Higher Education," *FAPE Review*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (January 1979), pp. 11-12.

<sup>4</sup>Then UP President Salvador P. Lopez proposed a plan wherein the assessment of fees will be based on the student's ability to pay. The rules governing the plan was approved by the Board of Regents.

<sup>5</sup>Appendix W of the Agenda for the 810th Board of Regents Meeting, June 22, 1971.

<sup>6</sup>"Towards the Revitalization of the University's GIA Program," a position paper submitted by the committee on GIA and approved by the Board of Regents on February 28, 1974.

<sup>7</sup>Minutes of the 859th Board of Regents Meeting, April 10, 1975.

<sup>8</sup>Minutes of the 829th Board of Regents Meeting, January 25, 1973.

- <sup>9</sup>Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting, June 28, 1973.
- <sup>10</sup>Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting, November 29, 1979.
- <sup>11</sup>Approved by the President on January 6, 1982.
- <sup>12</sup>"Towards a Revitalization of the University's GIA Program," *op. cit.*
- <sup>13</sup>"Admissions and Enrolment: Towards a More Equitable Distribution of UP Educational Benefits," a concept paper prepared by the UP Program Development Staff, 1976.
- <sup>14</sup>Elliot, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
- <sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup>"Higher Education and the Labor Market Studies," *FAPE Review*, Vol. 10, Nos. 3 & 4 (January/April 1980).
- <sup>18</sup>President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, in Michael Todaro, *Economics for a Developing World* (London: Longman, 1977), p. 264.
- <sup>19</sup>"Education in the Year 2000," *FAPE Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (October 1977).
- <sup>20</sup>"Higher Education and the Labor Market Studies," *op. cit.*
- <sup>21</sup>Paul Streeten *et al.*, *First Things First: Meeting Basic Human Needs in the Developing Countries* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1981), p. 21.
- <sup>22</sup>*World Development Report, 1980* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1980).
- <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup>"PNAC Bayanihan Concept of Schooling," *FAPE Review* (January/April 1981).
- <sup>25</sup>E.F. Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973).
- <sup>26</sup>Joel Bergsman, *Growth and Equity in Semi-Industrialized Countries* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1979).
- <sup>27</sup>Theodore Schultz, *Return to Education in Bogota, Columbia* (Sta. Monica, California: The Rand Corporation, 1968).
- <sup>28</sup>Todaro, *op. cit.*, p. 278.