

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN PUERTO RICO

One of the vital factors in the changing economy of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is the rhythmic expansion of its system of vocational training. The establishment of more than 200 new industries in the past three years has had a tremendous impact on the Island's hitherto agricultural economy. The transition to a more balanced economy in just a few short years has been possible largely because of a flexible system of vocational education. This system has made it possible for the schools to keep pace with the manpower needs of new industries and the auxiliary services necessary to meet their needs.

Through steady growth, during the last two decades, the present program of vocational training has matured to such an extent that it was able to meet all the demands placed on it by industry. From a program with a budget of \$155,000 and an enrollment of 5,700 students in the 1931-32 school year, the 1952-53 budget of \$2,750,000 served an enrollment in excess of 90,000.

The "Battle of Production" which is a companion phase of "Operation Bootstrap" are both aimed at expanding Puerto Rico's basic productive capacity. The diversification and intensification of agricultural and industrial production is the only solution to increased employment opportunities and a higher standard of living for all the people. Trained manpower essential to wage a successful battle and to meet the objectives of the economic improvement plan did not exist, it had to be provided. The Department of Education through its Division of Vocational Education had been, over a period of years, preparing to meet the demands of modern agriculture and industrialization. Careful planning paved the

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way to a speed-up in the tempo of vocational training to the extent that it is able to keep pace with the growing demands of the changing economy.

A thoroughly integrated program of education, which provides for the cultural as well as the vocational development of the individual, is the keynote of Puerto Rico's remarkable achievements during the past several years. A modern system of education which has adapted the best of current educational practices provides a systematic, yet functional and flexible plan of education for youth and adults.

In vocational education the two most important phases during the present period of transition are agricultural education and industrial education. The other phases, which include, home economics, business education, distributive education, and occupational information and guidance, are also rendering an invaluable service in the preparation of individuals to adapt themselves to their changing environment.

Vocational agriculture is making its contribution to the changing scene by emphasizing increased food production, mechanization, diversification of crops, pasture improvement, livestock breeding, soil conservation and other modern practices which lead to greater agricultural productivity. This training in addition to increasing food production is preparing our rural youth and adults for better living through improved farming methods and the improvement of farm homes. During the present year approximately 8,000 boys and adults are receiving instruction in the previously mentioned agricultural activities.

Industrial education is provided throughout the Island in eleven area

222-1892

schools and in approximately twenty other secondary schools and special training centers. During the past year a total of approximately 14,000 students were enrolled in the program.

The regular day school program is organized to offer two types of courses. Major emphasis is given to one of these which is called the Type B program. This course is organized on a three-year basis including both academic studies and shop training. Graduates of this course receive a high school diploma and a certificate of proficiency in their occupational specialty. These students are eligible for admission to the University of Puerto Rico and outstanding students are encouraged to continue their studies on the engineering level. The other program, called Type C, is organized in short units of instruction which prepare workers as machine operators or as specialists in one or more aspects of a trade. For example, in the machinists trade, a student might learn to be a milling machine operator, a boring mill operator, or a lathe operator. In auto mechanics, he might learn to be an ignition specialist, a brake specialist, or a specialist in automatic transmissions. The length of the Type C course is variable and may cover a period of a few weeks or several months and students may enroll at any time during the year. In these two types of programs training is provided in twenty-five different trades such as: aircraft engine mechanics, autobody repair and painting, auto mechanics, baking and pastry making, bricklaying and masonry, carpentry, commercial art, cosmetology, drafting, diesel mechanics, dressmaking, electric wiring, electric motors, furniture making, machine shop, ornamental ironwork, plumbing and pipe fitting, power sewing, printing and

222 18 228

linotype, radio repair, refrigeration and air conditioning, television repair, upholstery, practical nursing, and watch repairing.

A special phase of the industrial training program is known as the Accelerated Training Program for Industry. In this program special attention is given to training operators for new industries. This type of training, usually of a break-in type, requiring anywhere from several weeks to several months is provided either in the industrial plant or in special training centers. Since 1949 this program has trained approximately 26,000 operators at a cost of \$420,000 which represents a very low per capita cost of \$16.00—a small investment for the excellent results the program has produced.

Another service of industrial education provides training for supervisors and also supplementary training for employed workers who wish to improve their skills or technical knowledge.

Thus through vocational education, "Operation Bootstrap" is realizing its goals of providing a better balanced economy, a higher standard of living, and employment opportunities for all employable individuals.
