



A·P·O *news*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE ASIAN PRODUCTIVITY ORGANIZATION

SPOs in the Philippines: a breeding ground for future leaders

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The Productivity Program for Students (PPS) was conceived after a succession of brainstorming and strategizing sessions between the APO Society of the Philippines and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), the umbrella organization of the private business community. Those two leading productivity advocates signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in May 2001 which aims, among others, to: 1) promote and develop productivity and quality consciousness and skills among students; and 2) strengthen linkages between academia and industry by developing working partnerships with colleges and universities. Under the MOU, the formation of student productivity organizations (SPOs), particularly in colleges of business, engineering, and arts and sciences in universities, is a strategy to make academia more responsive to the requirements of industry. The underlying philosophy is that half the task of ensuring longer-range productivity will be achieved if students are inculcated with a culture of productivity and quality.

The idea for the two parties to work closely together on productivity promotion and development stemmed from the realization that in an era of stiff global competition, it is everyone's responsibility to raise productivity and competitiveness, not only of firms but also of individuals, to global standards. Industry can no longer afford to invest in training (and retraining) new hires who were not adequately prepared for work by college or university.

To give flesh to the MOU, the APO Society initiated a series of meetings and workshops of deans and officials of colleges and universities in Manila's "university belt" (U-belt) to identify workable strategies for academia-industry linkages. Manila's U-belt produces the bulk of the Philippine industrial workforce. An offshoot of those workshops was the landmark symposium "Academe and Industry Exchanging Notes on Globalization and Productivity: Visions and Strategies" held on September 7, 2001, at the University of Santo Tomas (UST) and participated in by students, deans, and officials of U-belt schools. Representatives of the government, international agencies, and foreign embassies were also in attendance. During the symposium, a memorandum of cooperation was signed between UST, the PCCI, and the APO Society.

One strategy identified during the PPS conceptualization workshops was short productivity training courses for students who excel academically and/or are leaders of student organizations to prepare them to face the challenges of globalization. After completing at least four courses, the students will be issued ID cards. Upon presentation of the ID cards to PCCI member companies, the students will receive priority in hiring. These students who are predicted to become future leaders of industry and government are targeted to ensure multiplier effects since they will form the national core of productivity practitioners of their generation.

The student-trainees from the various PPS schools formed SPOs to share learning experiences and develop networks. Each short course is known as a batch, and members of each batch formed an SPO to maintain close contact even after graduation. Batch SPOs in each school/university are encouraged to organize themselves as an SPO chapter, drawing into the circle their school friends.

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**"I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember.
I do and I understand."**

Confucius

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SPOs in the Philippines:(Continued from page 1)

Over the next two years, the program hopes to train 1,000 students from Metro Manila. To date, seven productivity courses have been conducted with some 150 participants from 15 colleges and universities in Metro Manila, and seven batch SPOs organized. The APO Society has also forged partnerships with the Employers Confederation of the Philippines and the Philippine Quality and Productivity Movement to expand PPS activities and reach.

Although the PPS was initiated in Metro Manila, it is envisioned that batch SPOs and SPO chapters will be organized nationwide, forming SPO Philippines. Already, leading universities in Mindanao and the Bicol regions

have indicated intentions to adopt the program. A proposal has been submitted to prospective funding institutions to enable the PPS to be “nationalized.”

To develop other interests of SPO members and strengthen the SPOs, the PPS publishes *OPTIONS*, the official newsletter of SPO Philippines, and has offered trainer’s training to 10 SPO members. Those 10 are expected to serve as junior trainers when the PPS is expanded to other regions. SPO Philippines members were among the delegates to the ASEAN Student and Youth Conference on Fighting Terrorism held in Jakarta, Indonesia, in August 2002. 