

DISJUNCTURES IN PHILIPPINE HISTORY EDUCATION SINCE THE K TO 12 REFORM

John Lee Candelaria, Ph.D.



**ROSA
LUXEMBURG
STIFTUNG**
SOUTHEAST ASIA
MANILA OFFICE

Disjunctures in Philippine History Education since the K to 12 Reform

is published by Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung

4th Floor Dusit Thani Manila, Ayala Center, 1223 Makati City, Philippines

www.rosaluxmanila.org

Editorial deadline: September 2023

Editing/Proofreading: Marjohara Tucay

Layout and Design: Nonie Florenda

This publication is part of the Rosa Luxemburg-Stiftung's political education work.

It is distributed free of charge and may not be used for electoral campaigning purposes.



**ROSA
LUXEMBURG
STIFTUNG**
SOUTHEAST ASIA
MANILA OFFICE

This publication is sponsored by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung with funds of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany. This publication or parts of it can be used by others for free as long as they provide a proper reference to the original publication.

The content of the publication is the sole responsibility of the author and does not necessarily reflect the views of the RLS.

**The Philippine nation-
building project
remains an ongoing
process, yet building
the Filipino identity
remains a weak
spot, a vulnerable
point that could be
bolstered through
a robust and
consistent study of
Philippine History.**

DISJUNCTURES IN PHILIPPINE HISTORY EDUCATION SINCE THE K TO 12 REFORM

John Lee Candelaria, Ph.D.

Much has been said about the links between history and identity. Shared knowledge of history becomes the basis of social identity and cohesion in a mnemonic community that shares cultural memory: a body of reusable texts, images, and rituals that provides stability and conveys a society's self-image.¹ When a society remembers collectively, they do so through shared symbols and deep structures that are real insofar as the individual members treat said symbols and structures as such or instantiate them in practice.² Memory is also fundamentally connected to notions of a national identity imbued with power through commemoration and education.

According to Niels Mulder, the "Filipino Way" of honoring the nation through symbols and commemorative³ practice lacks enthusiasm. He noted how Filipino students, especially during early grades, are barraged with national symbols and endless "nationalistic" ceremonies that have become so commonplace that their meaning has been lost through banality. The same could be said about how Philippine history has been taught in schools. Jose Rizal, the Philippines' foremost heroic figure, emphasized the necessity of studying history as he posited, "[t]o foretell the destiny of a nation, it is necessary to open the book that tells of her past."⁴ The benefits of studying history are something uncontroversial throughout the world, yet Philippine History education remains beset with challenges in the past few decades.⁵

The unfortunate reality is that what the teaching of Philippine History suffers is symptomatic of a greater, more sinister ill that has long affected Philippine education in general. This crisis predates even the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic that has overtaken conventional educational approaches in the country. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results in 2018 showed that Filipino students ranked as the worst in reading comprehension and second worst in science and math worldwide.⁶ The rankings came as the country was still in the process of completing reforms to its basic education. Republic Act No. 10533, or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, not only added two years to basic education but also restructured the curriculum to be "pedagogically sound," globally competitive," and "at par with international standards."⁷ The most significant change was introduced to secondary education due to the lengthening of school years and the introduction of junior and senior high school levels. Subsequent revisions also "decongested" the curriculum by "reducing the number of desirable learning competencies" and provide students ample time to absorb lessons. The decongestion effectively reduced time allotment for the main subjects, English, Mathematics, and Science. Among the subjects comprising

¹ Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 126.

² Jeffrey K. Olick, "Collective Memory: The Two Cultures," *Sociological Theory* 17, no. 3 (1999): 335.

³ Niels Mulder, "Filipino Identity: The Haunting Question," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 32, no. 1 (2013): 58.

⁴ Jose Rizal, *Sucesos de Las Islas Filipinas*, por el Dr. Antonio de Morga, Paris: Libreria de Garnier Hermanos, 1890.

⁵ Several scholars have analyzed issues related to Philippine History education, mostly focusing on textbooks and the educational system, such as the work/s of Renato Constantino, Leticia Constantino, Niels Mulder, Luisa Doronila, and Rommel A. Curaming, among others.

⁶ OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 Results, <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/pisa-2018-results.htm>

⁷ Official Gazette, RA No. 10533, 15 May 2013, <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2013/05/15/republic-act-no-10533/>

MAKABAYAN (nationalistic or patriotic), a civic education component of the curriculum, the time allotment for Araling Panlipunan (AP, Social Studies) was reduced. Later, the dedicated Philippine History subject was removed from the high school curriculum.⁸

History educators and advocates were quick to decry the removal of the Philippine History subject at the high school level, pointing out that the 2013 reforms essentially put in place a gap of six years between the mandatory Philippine history subjects that students studied. After Grade 6, the students waited until they get to college before they take another Philippine history subject.⁹ The resulting K to 12 high school curriculum emphasizes regional and global perspectives, promoting an “outward appreciation of history.”¹⁰ If and when they get to college, they will take the mandated subject, Readings in Philippine History (RPH), which focuses on understanding Philippine history through primary sources. The Department of Education (DepEd) dismissed the criticism, arguing that Philippine history topics are integrated at the high school level.¹¹

In light of the reported dissatisfaction among Filipinos concerning the K to 12 program,¹² DepEd has undertaken revision efforts, culminating in the launch of the new Matatag (sturdy) Curriculum¹³ and its phased implementation. This article aims to look back at the ramifications of the curricular reforms the K to 12 program instituted on the teaching of Philippine history, and provide a cursory assessment on the subsequent developments, especially the latest efforts to revise the curriculum through Matatag. Additionally, it seeks to explore the perspectives of higher education level educators concerning the impact of the K to 12 on Philippine history education, and how the newly launched curriculum addresses the limitations of its predecessor.

To fulfill these objectives, this article unfolds in three main segments. The first section presents an analysis of Philippine History subjects at the basic and tertiary education levels evaluating how the K to 12 modification align with the decongestion efforts. Subsequently, the article will share insights gleaned from conversations with educators that have delivered the tertiary general education course RPH in an attempt to capture perceptions about the adequacy of the existing framework across basic and tertiary education levels in nurturing a comprehensive understanding of Philippine history. Lastly, the article will present the changes brought about in Philippine history education through the introduction of the Matatag Curriculum.

THE PHILIPPINE HISTORY SUBJECT IN BASIC AND TERTIARY EDUCATION LEVELS

Before the K to 12 reforms, Philippine history was taught as part of the AP subject under the learning area MAKABAYAN. With other learning areas such as Filipino Language, English

⁸ Department of Education (DepEd), Additional information and corrigendum to DepEd Order No. 31, s.2012 (Policy guideline on the implementation of Grades 1 to 10 of the K to 12 basic education curriculum (BEC) effective school year 2012- 2013), https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/DO_s2014_020.pdf

⁹ Jamaica D. Ignacio, “The slow death of Philippine history in high school,” Rappler, October 26, 2019, <https://www.rappler.com/voices/ispeak/243058-opinion-slow-death-philippine-history-high-school/>

¹⁰ Luis Zuriel Domingo, “Removing Philippine History in the ‘age of disinformation’: Politics, implications, and efforts,” Paper presented during the De La Salle University Research Congress, July 7, 2021, De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines.

¹¹ Leonor Magtolis Briones, “Not ‘Kuri-kulam’ but ‘Cure-iculum’,” Inquirer.net, October 8, 2017, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/936395/deped-leonor-magtolis-briones-ferdinand-marcos-marcos-martial-law-ferdinand-marcos-jr-bongbong-marcos-marcos-martial-law-k-to-12-basic-education-philippine-history>

¹² Neil Arwin Mercado, “44% of Filipinos not satisfied with K-12 basic education program, survey says,” Inquirer.net, 18 July 2022, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1629671/fwd-44-of-filipinos-dissatisfied-with-k-12-program-suey>

Language, Science, and Math, MAKABAYAN was introduced to combine old subjects under a different heading. For the grade school level, Philippine History is a component of the subject Sibika at Kultura (Civics and Culture), one of the three subjects of MAKABAYAN together with a subject on Technology, Home Economics, and Livelihood Education (TLE) and another on Music, Arts, Physical and Health Education (MAPEH). At the high school level, Philippine History was taught as AP in the first year. It remained under the MAKABAYAN label with the abovementioned subjects in grade school, with the addition of the subject Values Education. A grade six student received 200 minutes a week of Sibika at Kultura, and a first-year high school student received 240 minutes a week of AP¹⁴ in the past.

The K to 12 curriculum moved Philippine History as a dedicated topic of AP in grades 5 and 6. The chronology of Philippine history was split between the two grade levels, as grade 5 ends in 1815, and grade 6 resumes from there and ends in the contemporary period. Meanwhile, there are no Philippine History subjects in the junior (Grades 7 to 10) and senior (Grades 11 and 12) high school levels. Numerous individuals and groups decried this move, noting how removing Philippine History as a dedicated subject in the high school years “obstructs the cohesion of study on Philippine history in basic education.”¹⁵ Amid the numerous calls from academics, activists, and concerned groups for the return of Philippine History at the high school level, former DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones responded that events of Philippine history are “naturally integrated”¹⁶ in several high school subjects. Educator and long-time critic of the DepEd, Calipjo Go, in his response to Briones, belied claims of integration based on a cursory analysis of recommended learning materials by the DepEd and asserted the deficiency of the K to 12 curriculum as regards Philippine history.

The focus on chronology is apparent in the grades 5 and 6 AP subjects. Grade 5 AP is titled *Pagbuo ng Pilipinas bilang Nasyon* (The Formation of the Philippines as a Nation) and tackles “the formation of the Philippine islands and early society until the beginning of the 19th century using basic concepts such as historical significance, change, progress, and continuity.”¹⁷ Grade 6 AP is titled *Mga Hamon at Tugon sa Pagkabansa* (Challenges and Responses to Nationhood) and focuses on “the Philippines as it faces the challenges and responses from the 20th century until the present toward the formation of a Filipino identity and strong nationhood.”¹⁸ The diagram in Table 1 illustrates the topics and periods covered by the two years of AP under the original K-12 curriculum.

¹³ “DepEd forms task force to review K-12 program,” *Inquirer.net*, May 14, 2023, <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1768861/dep-ed-forms-task-force-to-review-k-12-program>

¹⁴ Allan B. Bernardo and Rizalyn J. Mendoza, “Makabayan in the Philippine Basic Education Curriculum: Problems and Prospect for Reforming Student Learning in the Philippines,” in *Reforming Learning: Concepts, Issues and Practice in the Asia-Pacific Region*, edited by Chi-hung Ng and Peter D. Renshaw (the Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2006), 7.

¹⁵ Jamaica Ignacio, “We seek the return of ‘Philippine History’ in Junior High School and Senior High School,” *Change.org*, 19 July 2018, <https://www.change.org/p/we-seek-the-return-of-philippine-history-in-junior-high-school-and-senior-high-school>

¹⁶ Briones, “Not ‘Kuri-kulam’”.

¹⁷ Translated from the Grade 5 subject description from Department of Education, *Kto12 Gabay Pangkurikulum, Araling Panlipunan Baitang 1–10*, May 2016, <https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/AP-CG.pdf>, 11. Note that the original text mentions 20th century, which is an obvious typographical error as Grade 5 AP ends in 1815.

¹⁸ Translated from the Grade 6 subject description from Department of Education, *Kto12 Gabay*, 11.

Table 1. Course content of Grades 5 and 6 AP subjects. ¹⁹

| Grade 5 | Grade 6 |
|---|--|
| <p>1. The Origins of the Filipino</p> <p>A. The Location of My Country</p> <p>B. Origins of the Philippines and Early Societies</p> <p>C. Early Philippine Societies</p> | <p>1. Location of the Philippines and Liberal Ideas of the World</p> <p>A. Location of the Philippines and the Proliferation of Liberal Ideas</p> <p>B. The Propaganda Movement, the Katipunan, and the Philippine Revolution</p> <p>C. The American Intrusion</p> |
| <p>2. Spanish Colonial Period (16th–17th centuries)</p> <p>A. Context and Reasons for Colonization</p> <p>B. Methods of Colonization</p> <p>C. The Relationship of the Church and the Colonial Government</p> | <p>2. The Struggle during American Colonization and World War II (1899–1945)</p> <p>A. American Government in the Philippines</p> <p>B. The Commonwealth Government</p> <p>C. Japanese Occupation and World War II</p> |
| <p>3. Cultural Change during the Spanish Colonial Period (18th century to 1815)</p> <p>A. Social Change Under the Colonial Government</p> <p>B. Efforts to Resist Colonial Rule and Maintain Freedom</p> | <p>3. Response to Problems, Issues, and Challenges of Independence (1946–1972)</p> <p>A. Challenges of an Independent Country (The Third Republic)</p> <p>B. Programs in Response to the Challenges of Independence (1946–1972)</p> |
| <p>4. Changes in the Colony and the Growth of National Resistance</p> <p>A. Context of Reforms</p> <p>B. Growth of Liberal Ideas and Early Revolts</p> | <p>4. Towards Achieving True Democracy and Progress (1972–Present)</p> <p>A. Problems and challenges to freedom and human rights during Martial Law</p> <p>B. Struggle for complete freedom (1972–1986)</p> <p>C. Continuing Response to the Challenge of Independence and Nationhood (1986–Present)</p> |

It is apparent how, within the time frames, the historical events are organized thematically. The division of the Philippine historical timeline into two gives more time for discussion and exploration of the specified themes. It assists in dispelling the tradition of marking Philippine historical periods according to colonial reference points²⁰ while opening spaces to discuss other aspects of Philippine history beyond political topics. Altogether, “the narrative of the struggle for freedom” emerges from these two subjects, which, according to a study of Philippine textbooks for Grades 5 and 6, is “historically apt.”²¹

¹⁹ Translated from Department of Education, Kto12 Gabay, 101–143.

²⁰ Brendan Luyt, “Replacing the Ideology of Information by Exploring Domains of Knowledge: A Case Study of the Periodization of Philippine History and Its Application to Information Studies,” *Journal of Documentation* 71 no. 6 (2015), 1293.

²¹ Maria Serena I. Diokno, Kerby C. Alvarez, Francisco Jayme Paolo A. Guiang, Dondy Pepito II G. Ramos, and Aaron F. Viernes, *The Dilemma of Philippine History Textbooks*. FEU Public Policy Center, 2022, <https://publicpolicy.feu.org.ph/the-di->

The impact of removing Philippine history at the high school level becomes more pronounced when seen from the vantage point of higher education.²² The introduction of senior high school at the basic education level prompted an overhaul of the General Education Curriculum (GEC) by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the introduction of the GEC subject Readings in Philippine History as mandatory for all students at the tertiary level. The introduction of the senior high school level resulted in the integration of general education subjects formerly taught at the college level, and a window for curriculum revision opened to “expose undergraduate students to various domains of knowledge and ways of comprehending social and natural realities, developing in the process, intellectual competencies and civic capacities.”²³ Simply put, the undergraduate GEC was revamped to avoid content duplication and upgrade course content, as undergraduate students now have two extra years of basic education.

Within this context, RPH was, indeed, an upgrade. Its course description is as follows: “Philippine History viewed from the lens of selected primary sources in different periods, analysis and interpretation.”²⁴ In the past, the history subject at the undergraduate level was a survey course throughout the entirety of Philippine history, an enormous task since the sixteen weeks of a semester is just never enough. The conventional focus on structure and content in the old curriculum has been toned down as the new GEC is “outcome-oriented” and highlights competencies rather than content. Using RPH as an example, the “critical competencies ranging from detecting bias, appreciating the effect of perspective on the construction and understanding of history, and interpreting facts” are emphasized together with “factual knowledge.”²⁵ RPH is now focused on “reading” primary sources or eyewitness accounts of historical events. In history and social studies education elsewhere in the world, primary sources have long been advocated, as the approach “prepares students to learn to think historically through historical inquiry and develop young citizens who are capable of informed deliberative criticism.”²⁶ While it is not apparent how the use of primary sources is integrated into basic education, the AP subjects of the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum mention the use and analysis of primary sources as a competency, and the Grade 6 learning standard includes the use of primary sources as a means of understanding Philippine history.²⁷

The course description of RPH states that “students are expected to analyze the selected readings contextually and in terms of content (states and implied).”²⁸ Table 2 details the topics covered in the prescribed RPH syllabus.

lemma-of-philippine-history-textbooks-a-review-of-select-grades-5-and-6-araling-panlipunan-textbooks/?fbclid=IwAR3FpX388l-UuOKcP2Mxj1CPa2ajsRzaUlJ9Dp2_xbpDhwmmudM-A126XYo.

²² While it must be pointed out that a college education is largely inaccessible to majority of the Philippine population, it remains as a to be seen as a standard for social mobility.

²³ CHED Memorandum Order No. 20, Series of 2013, General Education Curriculum: Holistic Understanding, Intellectual and Civic Competencies. <http://www.ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/CMO-No.20-s2013.pdf>

²⁴ CHED Memorandum Order No. 20, Series of 2013.

²⁵ “Differences Between Present and the Revised General Education Curriculum,” CHED Memorandum Order No. 20, Series of 2013.

²⁶ David Hicks, Peter Doolittle, and John K. Lee, “Social Studies Teachers’ Use of Classroom-Based and Web-Based Historical Primary Sources,” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 32, no. 2 (2004):213–214.

²⁷ Department of Education, Kto12 Gabay, 7, 10.

²⁸ CHED, Readings in Philippine History Preliminaries, 2016, <https://ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Readings-in-Philippine-History.pdf>

Table 2. Course Outline of RPH.²⁹

| Week | Topic |
|-------|--|
| 1–2 | Meaning and relevance of history; distinction of primary and secondary sources; external and internal criticism; repositories of primary sources, and different kinds of primary sources |
| 3–6 | Content and contextual analysis of selected primary sources; identification of the historical importance of the text; and examination of the author’s main argument and point of view |
| 7–10 | “One past but many histories”: Controversies and conflicting views in Philippine history a. Site of the First Mass b. Cavite Mutiny c. Retraction of Rizal d. Cry of Balintawak or Pugadlawin |
| 11–14 | Social, political, economic, and cultural issues in Philippine history Mandated topics: 1. Agrarian Reform Policies 2. The Philippine Constitution: 1899 (Malolos) Constitution; 1935 Constitution; 1973 Constitution; 1987 Constitution 3. Taxation |
| 15–18 | Critical evaluation and promotion of local and oral history, museums, historical shrines, cultural performances, indigenous practices, religious rites and rituals, etc. |

The course outline is an interesting mix of methods, topics, and themes. The selection of primary sources for weeks 3–6 was based on the type of primary source, such as chronicle (Antonio Pigafetta’s account of the Magellan expedition), memoirs (Emilio Aguinaldo’s memoirs of the Revolution), editorial cartoons (caricatures of the American era), speeches (Corazon Aquino’s Speech before the U.S. Congress), and visual sources (paintings by Luna and Amorsolo), among others. The attention to representing different types of sources seems to have overlooked historical periods, as most sources were from the 19th and 20th centuries. Weeks 7–10 dealt with controversies and conflicting views of Philippine history and included four topics, three of which were connected to the Philippine Revolution. It must also be pointed out that including Rizal’s retraction is possibly a duplication since a dedicated subject on *The Life and Works of Rizal* is included in the GEC. The course outline noted that instructors may arrange the topics chronologically or thematically.

In RPH, primary sources are only dealt with in the first ten weeks, while weeks 11–14 are dedicated to “mandated topics” on agrarian reform policies, the Philippine Constitution, and taxation, an interesting mix of rather broad topics that could be separate subjects themselves (and were, in fact, separate subjects in the past). Aside from these three topics, “sample topics” are recommended, such as “Filipino-American relations” and “Government peace treaties with Muslim Filipinos,” among others. Finally, weeks 15–18 tackled “local and oral history, museums, historical shrines, cultural performances, indigenous practices, religious rites and rituals, etc.” This final set of topics is the most confusing because it is easy to justify

²⁹ CHED, *Readings in Philippine History*, 2016

the historical significance of sites, locales, and cultural practices as primary sources. However, there is just too much to cover. To address this, the syllabus noted that the ultimate decision on which topics to include rested on the instructor based on whatever parameter they identified.

INSIGHTS FROM RPH EDUCATORS

It has been a decade since the K to 12 was legislated, and the first few batches of students that went through the new system have already graduated. The educators' perspectives about transition challenges and the potential for improvement would be invaluable in assessing whether Philippine History education is headed in the right direction. The author talked to several instructors and professors of RPH to gather their insights and experiences,³⁰ and many lauded the effort to focus more on the competencies than the content. "The impossibility of finishing a Philippine history survey course in a semester disappeared," said a respondent from Cebu.³¹ "I was stuck discussing the Spanish and American colonial periods before, as there is just a lot that had to be tackled in class," she added. Indeed, the new approach decongested the GEC Philippine history subject since students now focus on reading and analyzing primary sources. The visits to local historical sites and museums, as well as the attention to local history, have been a great source of topics for historical research, as some instructors shared that the last few weeks of the semester were dedicated to local or oral historical research and students tend to uncover very interesting and exciting historical knowledge about their localities.

The emphasis on competencies also enabled a shift in perspective since RPH students now do less of traditional pen-and-paper examinations. A respondent from Manila³² shared that his students were surprised that they were not expected to memorize historical facts in class, and the focus on primary sources. "frees them from the burden of playing catch up with details and instead, allows them to focus on the reason and relevance of historical events." Yet, some respondents also raised the adequacy of the RPH content. An instructor from Koronadal City³³ noted that equally significant historical events need to be included and cited martial law history as sorely lacking in the syllabus. He shared that interest in the years of the dictatorship has been high recently, and students themselves are particularly interested in learning more about it. However, the RPH syllabus prescribed by CHED does not include relevant primary sources from the period.

Similarly, grade school textbooks currently in use allotted limited space in discussing martial law in the Philippines.³⁴ In their study, Diokno and colleagues found that the inadequate discussions on the economic crisis during the years of authoritarian rule perpetuated the myth of a Philippine golden age under Marcos Sr., while textbook-suggested activities that ask students to enumerate the positive and negative features of martial law teach students to ignore historical facts. In the case of RPH, the absence of primary sources or topics from the

³⁰ All interviews were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement.

³¹ Interview with an RPH educator from Cebu via Zoom, August 17, 2023.

³² Interview with an RPH educator from Manila via Zoom, August 13, 2023.

³³ Interview with an RPH educator from Koronadal City via Zoom, August 17, 2023.

³⁴ Diokno, et al., *The Dilemma*.

martial law period could mean that students are susceptible to historical disinformation about martial law that has been prevalent in social media.³⁵

Another key theme emanating from the educators is that, while RPH is not a survey course, there are topics that are rather difficult to teach because they require sufficient knowledge of Philippine historical periods on the part of the student and, at times, specialized knowledge on certain themes on the part of the instructor. A respondent from Manila³⁶ noted how the mandated topics of agrarian reform policies, the Philippine Constitution, and taxation were too complex that the allotted time for discussion was insufficient. She also complained about CHED directives that mandated the integration of other topics, such as peace studies³⁷ and indigenous peoples' studies³⁸, into core GEC subjects such as RPH. Aside from the inadequate time allotment, it is also a matter of specialization since she admitted that she had an inadequate background in topics such as agrarian reform policies and taxation. A respondent from Bukidnon³⁹ echoed the same issues. While she recognized the importance of including peace and indigenous people issues as she is an educator in Mindanao where these topics would greatly resonate, there is also an added complexity, as these topics require a survey of Philippine history through different historical periods. Thus, a firm grounding in foundational knowledge of Philippine history is necessary. A respondent from Manila⁴⁰ noted that this is indeed a foundational issue. "Since the students are now in college, we deal with historical questions focused on why and how... so I would assume that the who, what, when, and where have been covered in the basic education level, but this is not the case," she explained. This issue seems to directly result from the lack of Philippine History subjects in high school. Another respondent from Manila⁴¹ observed the same: "The lack of stock knowledge is very apparent in students today, so what I do (in class) is I reorient my students to have more contextual information... they need to review their Philippine history before they can appreciate the more advanced RPH," he shared. Filipino historian and educator Ambeth Ocampo shared the same misgivings with RPH, observing that while it can inspire critical and constructive conversation about Philippine history, a prerequisite to this is a knowledge of Philippine History built through the basic education level. He said that because Philippine History was removed in high school and "melded it ... into that mishmash we know as Araling Panlipunan, students must relearn history double-time."⁴²

The educators interviewed for this study agree that undergraduate Philippine history classes are an opportune time to correct historical inaccuracies and dated approaches to historical education that have long proliferated in the basic education level. At least, before the K to 12 reforms were instituted, there were only three years between the last Philippine History

³⁵ Loreben Tuquero, "Tracking the Marcos Disinformation and Propaganda Machinery," Rappler, April 14, 2022. <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/stories-tracking-marcos-disinformation-propaganda-machinery/>

³⁶ Interview with an RPH educator from Manila via Zoom, August 16, 2023.

³⁷ CHED Memorandum Order No. 1, Series of 2019, Integration of Peace Studies/Education into the Relevant Higher Education Curricula, <https://chedro1.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CMO-No.-01-s-2019-Integration-of-Peace-Studies-into-the-relevant-Higher-Education-Curricula.pdf>

³⁸ CHED Memorandum Order No. 2, Series of 2019, Integration of Indigenous Peoples' (IP) Studies/Education into the Relevant Higher Education Curricula, <https://chedro1.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CMO-No.-02-Series-of-2019-Integration-of-Indigenous-peoples-studies-into-the-relevant-Higher-Education-Curricula.pdf>

³⁹ Interview with an RPH educator from Bukidnon via Zoom, August 15, 2023.

⁴⁰ Interview with an RPH educator from Manila via Zoom, August 16, 2023.

⁴¹ Interview with an RPH educator from Manila via Zoom, August 13, 2023.

⁴² Ambeth Ocampo, "Return History to K-12," Inquirer.net, June 16, 2023, <https://opinion.inquirer.net/164080/return-history-to-k-12>.

subject before students took a more advanced one in college. The shift from too much focus on factual content to analyzing, debating, and arguing about historical events and processes impresses students that studying history is not simply rote memorization. Today, this shift could still happen in RPH. However, it will be more challenging since the gap between the Philippine history classes taken from grades 5 and 6 until the time students enter college leaves much room for historical distortion and misinformation to take root in their minds. This reality is dangerous since students today are digital natives, regularly and greatly exposed to new media, social media platforms, and technologies where sensational and incredible historical inaccuracies are trumpeted and tend to proliferate. Again, such is already the challenge of teaching history to students, even before disinformation in social media, but the six-year gap could only worsen matters.

At this point, the importance of history education at a time when disinformation and fabricated content have grown exponentially must be emphasized. Historical facts are perceived as a matter of opinion and politics, not as the result of rigorous and professional research. While it is true that politics cannot be severed from history, studying history enables historical thinking, which, at its core, is critical thinking—how should we see the past to live better today and tomorrow?⁴³ The critical history approach encourages students to question, analyze, and evaluate historical narratives rather than merely accept them. The connections between the present and the past also become more apparent since “a critical apprehension of the problematic present must bring us to the critical study of the past.”⁴⁴ Historical thinking is also “seeing things from multiple perspectives,”⁴⁵ with an appreciation that contentious historical issues could be best understood by looking at them from different points of view. Indeed, history lessons are ideal places to teach students about evaluating the information presented since primary source analysis is part and parcel of historical education. In a world where the vast amount of misinformation greatly outnumbers legitimate sources, the skills developed from studying history are important and necessary.

CALLS FOR REFORM AND THE MATATAG CURRICULUM REVISIONS

The removal of Philippine History in high school has prompted advocacy groups to campaign for a more comprehensive treatment of Philippine history at the basic education level. In 2017, the group *Tanggol Kasaysayan* (Defend History) called for the return of Philippine History in high school and the subject of the Philippine Constitution and Government at the tertiary level.⁴⁶ In 2018, the High School Philippine History Movement recommended that one dedicated Philippine History subject be included in junior or senior high school.⁴⁷ In 2018, DepEd promised a review of the K to 12 program, and in August 2023, it announced the recalibrated K to 10 curriculum⁴⁸ it referred to as the *Matatag* curriculum. It further “decongested” the curriculum “by 70 percent”⁴⁹

⁴³ Linda Elder, Meg Gorzycki, and Richard Paul, *The Student’s Guide to Historical Thinking: Going Beyond Dates, Places, and Names to the Core of History* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 5.

⁴⁴ John N. Ponsaran, “Critical Pedagogies in Student Textbook Tasks: A Politico-Communicative Inquiry,” *Media Education Research Journal* vol. 12, no. 1 (2023), 12.

⁴⁵ Patrick Iber, “History in an Age of Fake News,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 22 July 2019, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/History-in-an-Age-of-Fake-News>

⁴⁶ *Tanggol Kasaysayan*, “Ibalik and required Philippine History subject sa high school,” *Change.org*, June 9, 2017, <https://www.change.org/p/philippine-department-of-education-ibalik-ang-required-philippine-history-subject-sa-high-school>

⁴⁷ Ignacio, “We seek the return of ‘Philippine History,’” July 19, 2018.

⁴⁸ The revised senior high school curriculum will be announced separately.

and apportioned more attention to literacy and numeracy. The new curriculum introduces Makabansa (love of country) from Grades 1 to 3, which strings together competencies relating to AP and MAPEH. AP will be taught separately in Grade 4, while a new Philippine History subject will be taught in junior high school or in Grade 7. Peace competencies will also be integrated into the basic education curriculum, which emphasizes the need for nonviolent actions and the promotion of conflict-resolution skills for students.⁵⁰ This focus is a welcome change since it could serve as a springground for discussing multicultural coexistence in the Philippines and the history of separatist conflicts in Cordillera and Mindanao in more advanced grades.

While new AP subjects will be introduced in grades 4 and 7, the approach of these subjects is consistent with that of the K to 12 AP curriculum. The new subjects complement the AP conceptual framework, which was also revised in Matatag. The logical consistency in the vertical articulation has been remedied. In Matatag AP, the Makabansa subject in the early grades focuses on individual, personal, and cultural identity; grades 4 to 6 focus on Filipino identity; and grades 7 to 10 focus on Southeast Asian, Asian, and global identities. Sequential learning expands and deepens the notion of identity, a key mission of AP.

The biggest change in the curriculum is in high school AP. In K to 12 AP, Asian Studies and World History were the topics of AP in grades 7 and 8. In Matatag, these subjects were merged in grade 8 as Ang Asya at Daigdig (Asia and the World), while grade 7 becomes Kasaysayan ng Pilipinas sa Timog-Silangang Asya (History of the Philippines in Southeast Asia). The new AP subject will leverage a multidisciplinary and comparative approach in looking at the Philippine past as part of the Southeast Asian region, an interesting departure since traditional Philippine History curricula usually isolate the Philippine experience and tend to concentrate narrowly on the country's colonial past. The grade 7 AP curriculum announced by DepEd includes discussions on the Southeast Asian colonial experience, Japanese imperialism during World War II, nationalist movements, and the region's postcolonial struggle. The design of the curriculum rightly situates the Philippines as part of Southeast Asia, which is a refreshing take on Filipino identity that has been traditionally viewed as a "historic outcome of international exchanges."⁵¹ Seeing the country as part of and sharing a larger Southeast Asian cultural and historical experience could resolve the Filipinos' "ignorance about the [Philippines] cultural affinity with its neighbors" that results in their "helpless insularity,"⁵² as Mulder forwarded. More importantly, the discussions in this Grade 7 AP subject could lead students to wider discourses on postcolonial ideologies and decolonization.

Advocacy groups such as the High School Philippine History Movement praised news of this new AP subject as a step in the right direction.⁵³ The revision of the rest of the curriculum, especially grades 5 and 6 AP subjects and the integration of Philippine historical events as topics in other subjects are yet to be determined. Conversely, the well-meaning but inadequate

⁴⁹ Department of Education, General Shaping Paper, 2023. <https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/GENERAL-SHAPING-PAPER-2023.pdf>

⁵⁰ Jane Bautista, "New Curriculum Adds Sara's Focus on 'Peace,'" *Inquirer.net*, August 11, 2023. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1815131/new-curriculum-adds-saras-focus-on-peace>

⁵¹ Mulder, "The Filipino Identity," 76.

⁵² Mulder, "The Filipino Identity," 76.

⁵³ "Opisyal na Pahayag: Tungkol sa Bagong Araling Panlipunan Curriculum 2023 sa Ilalim ng Matatag Curriculum," High School Philippine History Movement Facebook Page, August 12, 2023.

RPH course for undergraduate students also needs to be revised and recalibrated, and CHED has yet to release news in this regard.

There is much to be done at the level of curriculum development to ensure that historical thinking skills are effectively learned by Filipino students while ensuring that nationalist and civic consciousness is embedded in the subjects. However, the matter of curriculum is but an aspect of a multifaceted issue. Educational materials such as textbooks have been the subject of numerous controversies regarding accuracy and agenda, and existing Philippine History textbooks used at the basic education level have been found to bear similar issues.⁵⁴ Some of the foundational and structural issues that hound Philippine education in general, such as low learning outcomes, malnutrition, deteriorating and inadequate educational infrastructure, and the increasing number of out-of-school youths, among a host of other problems, are ever present, and the global pandemic only intensified these concerns. As government agencies grapple with these multifaceted challenges, it is imperative that civil society groups, political organizations, and non-governmental actors committed to educational reform remain actively engaged. Their participation is vital in fostering meaningful dialogues that steer reform efforts toward addressing the root causes of these problems. Simultaneously, these stakeholders should advocate for developing a holistic historical education curriculum that aligns with the contemporary needs of the nation.

While it seems that Philippine education has continually been in crisis, its potential to imbue vitality to the Filipino national identity cannot be overemphasized. The Philippine nation-building project remains an ongoing process, yet building the Filipino identity remains a weak spot,⁵⁵ a vulnerable point that could be bolstered through a robust and consistent study of Philippine History.

CONCLUSION

The removal of Philippine History from the high school curriculum, under the original K to 12 educational reforms, has had far-reaching consequences for the country's historical education. This study explored the disjunctures created by these changes by examining the impact on basic and tertiary education levels.

The K to 12 reforms aimed to decongest the basic education curriculum, promoting competencies over content. However, the resulting six-year gap in mandatory Philippine History subjects seems to have hindered the development of the student's understanding of the Philippine past. This gap is particularly concerning in a digital age where disinformation and historical inaccuracies abound, making critical historical thinking skills indispensable.

The introduction of RPH at the tertiary level is commendable since it represented a shift in perspective by focusing on primary source analysis. However, much must be done to address the deficiencies in the RPH syllabus, such as inadequate content coverage and the need for a more holistic foundational knowledge of basic historical facts from the basic education level.

⁵⁴ Diokno, et al., *The Dilemma*.

⁵⁵ Mulder, "The Filipino Identity," 77.

The study also highlighted how crucial history education is in combating disinformation and promoting critical thinking skills. Advocacy groups have called for the return of dedicated Philippine History subjects precisely because learning historical thinking skills equips students with tools to evaluate information critically and appreciate multiperspectivity on historical issues.

The newly announced Matatag Curriculum appears to address some concerns regarding Philippine historical education and the AP subjects within the K to 12 program. However, there is much to do to align social studies education and integrate Philippine history topics across educational levels. Moreover, broader issues in Philippine education need further examination to ensure that the potential of history education in molding a strong Philippine identity is realized. Ultimately, this study highlights the need for comprehensive reforms that prioritize critical historical thinking skills, content coverage, and the development of a robust national identity rooted in a deep understanding of the nation's history. Through these reforms, the educational system can significantly contribute to shaping a well-informed citizenry, capable of navigating the complexities of the digital age.

John Lee Candelaria is an Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Hiroshima University. He completed his bachelor's (2008) and master's (2014) degrees in History at the University of the Philippines Diliman, and a Ph.D. (2022) from Hiroshima University. He has co-authored textbooks on Philippine History published by Rex Education in 2018 and 2021, and co-edited "Kaalaman at Pamamaraan sa Pagtuturo ng Kasaysayan" (U.P. LIKAS, 2008), a guide for tertiary-level Philippine History educators.

REFERENCES

- Assmann, Jan. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity." *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 125–133.
- Bautista, Jane. "New Curriculum Adds Sara's Focus on 'Peace'." *Inquirer.net*, August 11, 2023. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1815131/new-curriculum-adds-saras-focus-on-peace>
- Bentrovato, Denise and Martina Schulze. "Teaching about a Violent Past: Revisiting the Role of History Education in Conflict and Peace." In *History Can Bite: History Education in Divided and Postwar Societies*, edited by Denise Bentrovato, Karina V. Korostelina, and Martina Schulze, 15–28. Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2016.
- Bernardo, Allan B. and Rizalyn J. Mendoza. "Makabayan in the Philippine Basic Education Curriculum: Problems and Prospect for Reforming Student Learning in the Philippines." In *Reforming Learning: Concepts, Issues and Practice in the Asia-Pacific Region*, edited by Chi-hung Ng and Peter D. Renshaw, 1–16. The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2006.
- Briones, Leonor Magtolis. "Not 'Kuri-kulam' but 'Cure-iculum'." *Inquirer.net*, October 8, 2017. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/936395/deped-leonor-magtolis-briones-ferdinand-marcos-marcos-martial-law-ferdinand-marcos-jr-bongbong-marcos-marcos-martial-law-k-to-12-basic-education-philippine-history>
- Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Memorandum Order No. 1, Series of 2019. Integration of Peace Studies/Education into the Relevant Higher Education Curricula. <https://chedro1.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CMO-No.-01-s-2019-Integration-of-Peace-Studies-into-the-relevant-Higher-Education-Curricula.pdf>
- Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Memorandum Order No. 2, Series of 2019. Integration of Indigenous Peoples' (IP) Studies/Education into the Relevant Higher Education Curricula. <https://chedro1.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CMO-No.-02-Series-of-2019-Integration-of-Indigenous-peoples-studies-into-the-relevant-Higher-Education-Curricula.pdf>

Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Memorandum Order No. 20, Series of 2013. General Education Curriculum: Holistic Understanding, Intellectual and Civic Competencies. <http://www.ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/CMO-No.20-s2013.pdf>

Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Readings in Philippine History Preliminaries. <https://ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Readings-in-Philippine-History.pdf>

Department of Education (DepEd). Additional Information and Corrigendum to DepEd Order No. 31, s.2012 (Policy guideline on the implementation of Grades 1 to 10 of the K to 12 basic education curriculum (BEC) effective school year 2012- 2013). https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/DO_s2014_020.pdf

Department of Education (DepEd). General Shaping Paper, 2023. <https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/GENERAL-SHAPING-PAPER-2023.pdf>

Department of Education (DepEd). Kto12 Gabay Pangkurikulum, Araling Panlipunan Baitang 1–10, May 2016. <https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/AP-CG.pdf>.

“DepEd Forms Task Force to Review K-12 Program.” Inquirer.net., May 14, 2023. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1768861/deped-forms-task-force-to-review-k-12-program>

Diokno, Ma. Serena I., Kerby C. Alvarez, Francisco Jayme Paolo A. Guiang, Dondy Pepito II G. Ramos, and Aaron F. Viernes. The Dilemma of Philippine History Textbooks. FEU Public Policy Center, 2022. https://publicpolicy.feu.org.ph/the-dilemma-of-philippine-history-textbooks-a-review-of-select-grades-5-and-6-araling-panlipunan-textbooks/?fbclid=IwAR3FpX388IUuOKcP2Mxj1CPa2ajsRzaUlJ9Dp2_xbpDhwwmmudM-A126XYo.

Domingo, Luis Zuriel P. Removing Philippine History in the ‘Age of Disinformation’: Politics, Implications, and Efforts. Paper presented during the De La Salle University Research Congress, 2021, 1–6. July 7, 2021, De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines.

Elder, Linda, Meg Gorzycki, and Richard Paul. The Student’s Guide to Historical Thinking: Going Beyond Dates, Places, and Names to the Core of History. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011.

Hicks, David, Peter Doolittle, and John K. Lee. “Social Studies Teachers’ Use of Classroom-Based and Web-Based Historical Primary Sources.” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 32, no. 2 (2004): 213–247.

Iber, Patrick. “History in an Age of Fake News.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 22, 2019. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/History-in-an-Age-of-Fake-News>

Ignacio, Jamaica D. “The slow death of Philippine history in high school.” *Rappler*, October 26, 2019. <https://www.rappler.com/voices/ispeak/243058-opinion-slow-death-philippine-history-high-school/>

Ignacio, Jamaica D. “We seek the return of ‘Philippine History’ in Junior High School and Senior High School.” *Change.org*, July 19, 2018. <https://www.change.org/p/we-see-the-return-of-philippine-history-in-junior-high-school-and-senior-high-school>

Luyt, Brendan. “Replacing the Ideology of Information by Exploring Domains of Knowledge: A Case Study of the Periodization of Philippine History and Its Application to Information Studies,” *Journal of Documentation*, vol. 71, no. 6 (2015), 1289–1299.

Magsambol, Bonz. “History in crisis: Review K to 12 curriculum, open the schools.” *Rappler*, 7 May 2022. <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/review-k-12-education-curriculum-open-schools-pandemic/>.

Mercado, Neil Arwin. “44% of Filipinos not satisfied with K-12 basic education program, survey says.” *Inquirer.net*, July 18, 2022. <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1629671/fwd-44-of-filipinos-dissatisfied-with-k-12-program-survey>

Mulder, Niels. “Filipino Identity: The Haunting Question.” *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, vol. 32, no. 1 (2013): 55–80.

Ocampo, Ambeth. “Return History to K-12.” *Inquirer.net*, June 16, 2023. <https://opinion.inquirer.net/164080/return-history-to-k-12>.

OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 Results. <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/pisa-2018-results.htm>

Official Gazette. RA No. 10533. 15 May 2013. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2013/05/15 /republic-act-no-10533/>

Olick Jeffrey K. "Collective Memory: The Two Cultures." *Sociological Theory* 17, no. 3 (1999): 333–348.

"Opisyal na Pahayag: Tungkol sa Bagong Araling Panlipunan Curriculum 2023 sa Ilalim ng Matatag Curriculum." High School Philippine History Movement. Facebook Post, August 12, 2023.

Ponsaran, John N. "Critical Pedagogies in Student Textbook Tasks: A Politico-Communicative Inquiry," *Media Education Research Journal* vol. 12, no. 1 (2023), 1–27.

Rizal, Jose. *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, por el Dr. Antonio de Morga. Paris: Libreria de Garnier Hermanos, 1890.

Tanggol Kasaysayan. "Ibalik and required Philippine History subject sa high school." *Change.org*. June 9, 2017. <https://www.change.org/p/philippine-department-of-education-ibalik-ang-required-philippine-history-subject-sa-high-school>

Tuquero, Loreben. "Tracking the Marcos Disinformation and Propaganda Machinery." *Rappler*, April 14, 2022. <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/iq/stories-tracking-marcos-disinformation-propaganda-machinery/>