

“WOMEN EDUCATION IN THE COLONIAL CONTEXT: THE CASE OF THE PHILIPPINES”

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ABSTRACT:

The Philippine Islands experienced a long period of colonialism, from 1565 to 1946. During nearly 400 years of colonization, Philippine education was deeply influenced by the Hispanic and American education system. The educational policies of colonial governments had affected most Philipinas, including women. While the Spaniards performed a minimal education for women and bundled them in the strict framework, the Americans paid attention to provide practical career skills for women in the family and in society. From the approach based on the connection between education and colonialism, the paper will focus on the issue of educating women in the colonial administration's educational policy and its impact on life of women, on their cognitive and the re-awareness process of their roles and positions in society.

Keywords:

Women, education, Philippines, colonial context, Spaniards, Americans

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INTRODUCTION

Today, the Philippines is known for being one nation of strong women, who have a high position in society. The great role of Philipinas women is shaped and developed through a long history, extending from pre-colonial to post-colonial period. In the pre-colonial period, both Philipinas men and women played important roles in society and enjoyed equal rights. Since the 16th century the Spaniards have tried to reduce the role of Philipinas women in society. Spanish missionaries brought to the Philippines a new education, in which women must be placed within the framework of family and society, and operated on the patriarchal ideals. In general, under Spanish rule, the Philippine education system contained a serious discrimination in terms of caste, gender, ethnicity and occupation, in which women were of course in a very low position

In the American period, public education based on the American model paved the way for widespread participation of Philipinas women in education. Women were given the freedom to get

university education and practice many different careers. As a result, Philipinas women were no longer isolated in their narrow homes, they could participate in larger socio-economic activities. In addition to this development, however, the tradition of division of labor by sex had not only been abolished but also reinforced through education and career orientation of the family and society.

METHOD

Aiming to answer this question, this paper will analysis and compare data/documents which related to the Philipinas education through the Spanish and American colonial period from two primary sources: (1) the official reports of the Spaniards and the American governments in Philippines, and the records and researches of the officials who presented in the authorities of the Archipelago; (2) the studies of scholars on the education of Philippine women under colonial eras.

The article based on the envisioning through the lens of postcolonial and ethnic studies, two interdisciplinary fields which draw from anti-racist, feminist, Marxist, and poststructuralist theories. The combined framework of postcolonial and ethnic studies offers analytical and methodological tools to investigate the gender issues in education, the transnational oppression and resistance of colonized peoples of color.

In addition to reviewing the studies and evaluations of previous scholars, the authors use a comparative approach to evaluate the practical interaction between theory and data. The authors believe that the data is an important basis for accurately assessing the situation and the change of gender in colonial education programs through the different periods, including the number of students, schools, classes, occupations...

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Studies and practice show that Philippine women have more power and equality than most women in neighboring Southeast Asia nations. The legacy of colonial education provided Philipinas women with a favorable foundation which helped to enhance their values in the family and in society.

Women education in the pre-colonial Philipippines period

The first study of Philipinas women was by Maria Paz Mendoza-Guazon entitled "The Development and Progress of Philipinas Women", published in 1928. Quotations written in the early Spanish period in the Philipippines, Mendoza-Guazon mentioned the respect for women and a status of equality between women and men before the coming of the Spaniards (Mendoza-Guazon, 1928). Further studies by others have confirmed this (Alzona, 1932 & 1934; Aguilar, 1989; Riitta Vartti, 2001).

Many pre-colonial residents in the Philippine archipelago deserved education. Philipinas men and women know how to read and write by using their native alphabet called alibata. The alibata consists of 17 symbols representing the letters.

Alzona's quote from a famous book by Chirino published in 1604 that writing was popular with Philipinass, both men and women. They write on palm leaves and bamboo with a sharpened piece of iron (Alzona, 1932: 1-2).

Formal education existed in many Philippine islands. They had schools in which students were taught reading, writing, reckoning, religion, and how to defend themselves. In the south of the Archipelago, (in Panay, for example) there were Sanskrit schools (which was the official languages of the neighboring Borneo island), Arithmetic, including Decimal, Self-defense, and the effective use of weapons for self-defense (Alzona, 1932: 10).

The high status of women in education demonstrated that the pre-colonial Philippine society had not developed discrimination on class, sex and patriarchy, which had grown so long in many other agricultural societies in Asia.

Women education under Spaniards period

During the Spanish rule, Conquistadors and Friars quickly changed indigenous education based on the European model, in which women were constrained in the patriarchal framework and not in prominent positions in society. The Philippine education system during the Spanish period was official and uniformly applied to the entire archipelago. Religious congregations paved the way for the establishment of schools from the primary to the tertiary level.

From the 16th century until the education reform of 1863, elementary education was entirely in the hands of priests or parish bishops (who belonged to the religious order of Augustinians, Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits, and Recolletans) (Alzona, 1932: 17-42; LeRoy, 1903: 657-680). There were very few schools and practically all were for Hispanic children and Philipinass from the rich or upper class ("Principales"). Even at higher education, the schools were only available to certain groups and contained racial discrimination. Karl Schwartz quoted a note from the Royal College of San

Filipe: "the collegiates must be of pure race and have no mixture of Moorish or Jewish blood to the fourth degree, and shall have no Negro and Bengal blood, or that of any similar nation in their veins or a fourth part in Philipinass blood"(Schwartz, 1971: 208.). He also cited Domingo Abella's paper to assert that "during more than two-thirds of the Spanish period, higher education was not available to the Philipinass on equal terms of the Spaniards." (Schwartz, 1971: 208).

Dr. Carolyn Israel Sobritchea described Fresnoza's account of the elementary education program undertaken by the Catholic Church during the early part of the Spanish colonial thus:

The course of study consisted of reading by the alphabet and syllable method, the learning of sacred songs and music, a little arithmetic, and writing for the advanced students. The contents of the materials to be read were religious... Instruction was given in the dialect of the community. Spanish was taught to the more brilliant students, especially to the sons of the principalia (Sobritchea, 1989:72).

In this unequal education system, education for women was very limited. It seemed to be a male privilege, although there were still girls' schools. Even in women's schools, in fact, they were only for the daughters of well-to-do families. Learning content focused on rudimentary reading, writing, arithmetic, religion and needlecraft.

Secondary and higher education are generally men's privileges. Most of the time under Spanish rule, the majority of high schools and vocational schools as well as colleges were for men only. There were several higher education schools for girls but they were only meant for Spanish girls and daughters of local elites. The earliest of such schools was Colegio de Sta. Isabel 1632 (Sobritchea, 1989: 72). Then, they were Colegio de Sta. Catalina (1696), Beaterio de San Ignacio (1699), Coligio de Sta. Rosa (1750) (Alzona, 1932: 31-35). As the main goal of the College and Beaterio was to prepare the girls for motherhood

or to practise religious life, the educational program was less academic. The program included 3 R's (Reading, Religion, Reckoning), Christian Doctrine and Sewing (Alzona, 1932: 34).

In 1863, the Spanish Government issued a decree to reform the colonial education system in the Philippines. Decree 1863 designated the establishment of a complete education system in the Archipelago comprising primary, secondary and tertiary education. Regarding women's education, this reform had some major changes as follows:

- Provided compulsory and free education for elementary school (7-12 years old children); the state supported textbooks and basic learning facilities (Hardacker, 2013: 8-30). The decree required the establishment of two elementary schools (one for boys and one for girls) for every 5,000 inhabitants in towns (U.S. The Taft Philippine Commission, 1901: 105; Alzona, 1932: 67).

- Not only the vernacular, Spanish was taught officially at all levels (Owen, 2000: 28)

The Educational Reform of 1863 established a state-run educational system, thus it significantly reduced the power and position of Catholic priests in Philippine education. So, they strongly opposed this reform. In addition to many other difficulties such as lack of capital, teachers and facilities, the actual changes that the Decree 1863 brought to native education were not substantial. Literacy levels had not improved significantly, especially for women. The first socio-economic census conducted in the late 19th century estimated that the literacy rate of women was 10% only, compared to almost 30% of men (Sobritchea, 1989: 71). However, many elementary schools were established. According to Mendoza-Guazon's research, in 1866, the number of elementary schools was up to 1474 (Mendoza-Guazon, 1928: 19), in which 40% were for girls. Based on an American survey of 1900, at the end of Spanish rule, the Philippines had 1593 public

elementary schools, 951 private primary schools, and 314 religious primary schools (Schwartz, 1971: 262).

These schools must teach the following subjects: Christian Doctrine, Ethics, Church history, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, Spanish Spelling and Grammar, History and Geography of Spain, Practical Agriculture, Music, Politics, Sewing (Alzona, 1932: 67). Boys were basically trained in agriculture and the girls in needlework. (Sobritchea, 1989:72).

At higher education levels, from the Educational Reform of 1863 to 1898, the Spaniards also established several schools for girls who wanted to pursue higher education in the Philippines: Escuela de Maestras (1864), Colegio de la Inmaculada Concepcion (1868) and Colegio de San Jose de Jaro (1872), Escuela Normal de Maestras de Primera Ensenanza de Nueva Cásceres (1875), The Assumption Convent and Superior Normal School for women (1893) (Alzona, 1932: 79-93).

In these schools, the courses for female students girls were not much different from the counterpart. However, in addition to basic subjects such as Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, female students were required to take very heavy loads of course work in needlework and other home crafts, religion and music. Meanwhile, also in higher education, boys had more options in choosing the schools to study and the professions to pursue. Popular courses in male schools, beyond the basic grammar and arithmetic, included Philosophy, Latin, Greek, Physics, Metaphysics, Logic, Ethics, Church Law, Roman Law and other laws. These subjects were often considered unsuitable for women and did become part of their curriculum (Sobritchea, 1989:73).

Mendoza-Guazon emphasized the disregard for the education of women by the authorities derived from the dominant belief that “a young woman did not need more than the rudiments of education because her sphere of action was within the three German K's kirche, kuche und kinder-

that is, church, kitchen and children” (Mendoza-Guazon, 1928: 19).

Besides being a mother and housewife, the upper-class women were limited in their career choices, either becoming a teacher or a nuns. The pursuit of or seeking for other which was still accepted for women of the working women and peasant classes, was not acceptable. This difference led to conflicting views on the role of women in society. For example, in Encarnacion Alzona's book (1934), she argued that Philipinas women never made a secluded and passive life during the Spanish period as confirmed by Mendoza-Guazon. Philippine women, according to her, freely participated in the country's industry, politics and religion (Torres, 1989: 29). Because women in lower social classes had limited access to Catholic education, especially higher education, they were not affected much by patriarchal values and norms such as women belonging to upper class. They remained active in economic production as traders, farm workers and weavers, and in such community functions as folk healing and conflict mediation (Sobritchea , 1989:74;Owen, 2000: 24-60).

However, on the other hand, Philippine colonial women's education was further improved through the changes of the late nineteenth century, with the main content being to provide learning opportunities for women from low to high levels. In comparison to many other countries of the same time, educational reforms in the late 19th century had made the Philippines the first country in Asia which received a free and compulsory elementary education for all students (10 years before Japan).

Women education under the American period

By the time the Americans occupied the Philippines in 1898, Philipinass were one of the best educated residents in Asia, according to Rory Sta. Catalina Dacumus (Rory, 2015). In fact, the public school system that the Spaniards brought to the Philippines, namely a school system for boys and a school system for girls had even been

introduced before the public school system of the United States (at that time, only 34 states in the United States had formal and compulsory education). However, the success of the Philippine Revolution and the Philippine-American War had greatly affected the public education system, with most school structures which were damaged or looted. More importantly, the educational system that the Spaniards built in the Archipelago contained many backward elements and heavily religious characteristic, according to the American view. Consequently, the Americans must reform the whole system and use education as part of a colonial program to civilize (called "benevolent assimilation"), modernize, and pacify the Philippines (Ruscetta, 1998: 33; Coloma R. Sintos, 2004: 24-28; Constantino, 1966: 39-65). In fact, the Americans did not completely eradicate the educational legacy from the Spanish era, they built a system of education based on the existing foundations but according to the American idea (Ruscetta, 1998: 27; Gates, 1973: 82).

The colonial administration made many changes in the colonial education system through reforms:

- The Reform of Fred Atkinson (1900-1902) with the main themes were to reorganize the public education system, remove religious elements from the curriculum, and use English as the official language. (U.S. Philippine Commission, 1901: 133-134; the Taft Philippine Commission, 1901 107-110; Alzona, 1932: 189-213; Reo Matsuzaki, 2011: 283-284)

- The Reform of David Prescott Barrows (1903-1909) focused on eradication of illiteracy and civic education, and implemented universal primary education (Bureau of Education, 1904: 11-33, Barrows, 1907). : Barrows, 1910: 156-168).

- Frank White's Reform (1910 - 1913) focused on expanding and developing vocational education and secondary education (Bureau of Education, 1910: 19-33 & 1911: 20-35; May, 1976: 135). - 183).

The curriculums for elementary and secondary schools had undergone some changes. However, they were basically implemented following the reform of Dr. David Barrows, who served as the Director General of the Philippine Department of Public Instruction from 1903 to 1909.

Primary education consisted of seven courses. The curriculum emphasizes English grammar, writing, reading and arithmetic. Children spent between 50% and 70% of the total number of hours a day in school. Other subjects such as Drawing, Music, Geography, Hygiene and sanitation, History and Biology were added to the program depending on the different classes. Boys and girls were learned the same subjects, except for Industrial Work course - which provided for separate training activities. In Industrial Work, boys were trained in gardening, woodwork, basket and mat weaving and clay modeling, while girls were taught lace-making, sewing and various home related activities. Remarkably, the number of hours of Industrial Work was about twice as much time as all the other subjects. According to Sobritchea's evaluation, Philippine school officials had focused on training for pupils the ways to make a living, especially in the field of agriculture and the production of handicrafts and other exportable products. (Sobritchea, 1989: 76-77).

Secondary education was established a few years after the elementary schools, which provided advanced learning and vocational training opportunities for students. It was a four-year program for students who wanted to pursue higher education or wanted to become a teacher, craftsman, and employee in government agencies after graduation.

In addition, another program for adult women which was established in 1912 under Act No. 2110 was the School of Household Industries. The purpose of this school was to improve the women's embroidery and lace skills, thereby improving the quality of Philippine exportable goods. After going through the training, they would return to their local areas and open training

classes for other local women. In this way, handicraft activities were expanded and met the needs of the market (Bureau of Education, 1912: 20-21).

The enrollment patterns indicated a clear sex distinction, though there was no official gender requirement to enter secondary education programs. Accordingly, girls were often enrolled in pedagogy and household arts, while boys specialized in agriculture, industrial arts and business. This trend continued in the following years, triggering a gender imbalance in these lines of work and the sexual stereotyping of different occupations (Sobritchea, 1989, 78; Torres, 1989: 105-118).

In the early 20th century, the shortage of skilled labor in the agricultural sector and other household economic activities such as handicrafts (as young people turned away from the fields) had turned the attention of school officials to women. The Economic Survey in 1929 noted the very low participation of women in agricultural schools. As a result, changes in the curriculum were made by enhancing vocational education for high school students, especially women. Courses related to agricultural and household economics were taught in all rural high schools and all female students were now required to take them (Sobritchea, 1989: 78).

The establishment of public higher education institutions only occurred after primary and secondary schools were in full operation. Educational officials pointed to the urgent need for a state-run university so that the most promising graduates of public high schools would have a place to pursue higher education, which specialized in professional and technical fields (The Board of Educational Survey, 1925: 609).

On June 18, 1908, the Philippine Legislature enacted the law establishing the University of the Philippines. By 1924, the University of the Philippines had about 17 different colleges and schools offering a variety of degree programs for both men and women. Among which, only the

School of Nursing was initially opened to women, but it changed this policy in the early 1920s for both sexes (Sobritchea, 1989: 80). In addition, the Government established six other colleges in the provinces to provide advanced education and training in agriculture, fisheries and animal husbandry.

In addition to the public school system, the lack of strict control of government coupled with the continuing rise in demand for higher education, allowed many religious schools to continue operating and using influence among children of well-off families. In fact, the growth of private higher education had far exceeded the public school system. By the year 1947, there were about 500 private colleges and 128 special and technical schools nationwide. Most of these schools did not follow the coeducation model, and kept separation between male and female schools (Philippine Republic, 1960: 27; Mendoza-Guanzon, 1928: 36-37)

Some results of changes related to Philippine women's education

From 10% for women and 30% for men in 1903, the literacy rate increased to 57% and 60% respectively in 1948. Number of students enrolled at all levels, from primary school to university, from 6,900 in 1898, it reached nearly two million in 1940 and four million in 1948. By 1948, the total number of public primary and secondary schools all over the Philippines was 16,472 compared to the estimated 2,000 at the end of Spanish rule. Private education also flourished as the total number of schools, from primary school to college, reached 1,684 in 1948 (Sobritchea, 1989: 81).

- The distinction between boys and girls in educational programs still existed. Statistics showed that the percentage of girls in elementary schools was the same as that of boys, but at the secondary and tertiary levels, this figure was much lower. According to the 1924 education survey led by Monroe, girls accounted for only one-third of high school students in the

Philippines. The Monroe’s report also found that the majority of girls in the high schools belonged to the vocational classes (The Board of Educational Survey, 1925: 329). The record of Mendoza-Guanzon (1928: 37) showed that very few women enrolled in a general course, which prepared students for college. The percentage of

college graduates in the first two decades of the American period was very low. Since there were fewer women than men entering college, it was easy to see why only a handful of women became professionals in different fields (see table below, according to Sobritchea, 1989: 84).

	Total Number	% Male	% Female
Architects	108	99.0	1.0
Accountants	320	94.0	6.0
Dental Surgeons	1,041	83.0	17.0
Druggists	65	97.0	3.0
Engineers	1,062	99.9	0.1
Lawyers	1,894	96.0	4.0
Midwives & Nurses	1,331	10.0	90.0
Opticians and optometrists	109	77.0	23.0
Pharmacists	1,675	24.0	76.0
Physicians	2,497	88.0	12.0
Captains (steamship)	133	100.0	0.0
Veterinarians	117	98.0	2.0
Others	331	88.0	12.0
TOTAL	10,683	71.0	29.0

Table 2: Registered Professionals in 1948

Source: Philippines Republic, Bureau of Census and Statistics. Economic Census Report, Vol.IV.Manila: Bureau of Print-ing, 1953, page 347.

CONCLUSION

Philippinas education in the Spanish period was a discrimination against women. Women received a totally disproportionate education compared to men due to the prejudices of gender, occupation and class. Even when the Decree of 1863 which provided more educational opportunities, especially primary education for both sexes, the separated public school system between men and women and the low participation of women in higher education could not offset the above-mentioned unequal characteristics.

The introduction of the American style public education was expected to give women the means to improve their position and role in the family

and in society. In fact, American education in the Philippines had helped to broaden the range of learning opportunities for women, thereby paving the way for liberty and democracy as well as providing more career opportunities for women through formal training programs. However, when the class and racial discrimination in education were blurred, gender bias in the professional education model for women had very little change. Although equal opportunities for both sexes existed in higher education, social prejudice drove most women into women's traditional occupations and continued to maintain a division of labor by sex. Despites the Philippine government had failed in improving gender

equality, the occupational and communication skills that women received were far better than those in many other countries in the region and the world at that time. And that was the fundamental foundation for Philippine women so that helped them rise to higher positions in education, economics, politics and society in the postcolonial period.

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