THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND ITS HISTORY

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Education in the Philippines goes a long way back, even before the Spanish conquest in 1521. Many would assume that before the Spanish came to the Philippines that the native Filipinos were savages and barbarians. That is in fact, so wrong.

Before the Spanish arrival in the Philippine archipelago, native Filipinos already have a form of government and an education of some sort. Fathers teach sons how to be warriors, how to be fishermen, how to be hunters, miners, and builders. While mothers teach daughters house works and foraging.

The first education was more on the vocational type. But there are also ‘schools’ were the elders teach the younger members of the tribe how to write and read. Yes, there is a native Filipino form of writing. From about 300 BCE, native Filipinos use a script style writing system derived from Southeast Asian writing, mostly from India. Researchers even compared the scripts found in the Philippines to scripts found in Bengal dated at around the same era. The studies showed that some of the letters do match but others were completely re-interpreted and made to be used differently. It is the ancient scripts that we call Baybayin script today.

When the Spanish inquisitors arrived, they brought the European style of education, of which closest to the modern style of education we see today. The first actual schools were parochial schools opened by Missionaries and Priest within their Parishes. Here Filipino children were though how to read, write, arts, and most especially religion. Then colleges were also established, although not the tertiary education and more comparable to high school, these collages were built to teach more advance subjects like
Latin, Geography, and Philosophy. These colleges however are gender segregating and not the co-ed we know in the 21st century. Boys and girls study separately. For over 300 years of the Spanish colonialism, education is provided by the Catholic church, they control every aspect of it, from what to teach to who teaches it. The government doesn’t have any say in the matter, not until the late 19th century wherein the first ever ‘public school’ is established. But at these times, ‘colleges’ were the highest form education that a native Filipino blood can attain because Universities only accept students that are pure Spanish blood.

When the Americans came however, the education system once again took a 360 degree. American’s first priority when they came to the Philippines was to educate Filipinos and teach them self-governance. They made sure to teach Filipinos their language and establish new primary school system wherein the teachers are educated and train in America. The establishment of these schools abolished the religious instruction of the Spanish. Americans also gave intelligent and gifted young Filipinos the opportunity to study in the States under a sort of scholarship program funded by the Philippine government. With the more accessible education and the opportunity given by the American’s, Filipinos went to public school eager to learn.

After the Americans came the Commonwealth governance which continued the Western style of education. Then there came the Japanese inquisition which changed the education system again. The Japanese incorporated their Nippon-go language to the curriculum and made the language costmary to every schools and work place.

Today, education is a good mixture of all those eras in the country’s history. Filipino education system manages to retain some of the aspects of every form of education. The only difference now is that education has an autonomy and variety it lacks before. Now more than ever, education is more accessible to the Filipinos. Although there are still problems and issues regarding the system and curriculum, it is no doubt the best there is, yet, because, along with the advancing technology and way of life, education is
bound to grow with it. It is really accelerating to think what lays ahead the education system for our beautiful mother land.

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