



SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL AS CRITICAL PEDAGOGY



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ABSTRACT

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Given the tendencies of education to become oppressive in theory and practice, exploring the premises of critical pedagogy as an educational philosophy becomes timely and compelling. This study aims to describe the possibilities of intensifying the essential role of pedagogy in teaching-learning processes, thereby leading to the framing of a liberating curriculum. In this qualitative phenomenological study, stories from purposively selected Senior High School stakeholders were collected through interviews, survey, and observations. After careful analysis, it revealed that some of the existing pedagogical practices still adhered to the traditional approach that deterred education from its being a genuinely free act. Proofs were gleaned from the areas of instruction, assessment, and learning environment. It is recommended that by strengthening critical pedagogy, learners become agents of social change. Teachers should then also be curriculum reformers who could make learning not just relevant but also liberating, and hence, humanizing.

Contribution/ Originality: The study documents the possibility of incorporating the ideals of Critical Pedagogy as a philosophy of education in the Senior High School curriculum implementation in the Philippines.

1. INTRODUCTION

The 1970s could be considered a vast and significant paradigm shift in curriculum development approach where the dominant Tyler's model – implemented in the 1950s and 60's – was challenged and debunked on its being mechanistic. The approaches to curriculum development evolved not just in a single time; they morphed from *product* to *process* and then to *praxis*. One of the leading personalities in the discourse of education, or *pedagogy*, to date, is Henry Giroux. He heightens the ongoing debate on whether schools and curriculum play appropriate roles in reproducing the necessary values in the face of the dominant society that existed since the turn of the century. Thus, he inaugurates a movement he appropriately calls the *new sociology of curriculum*, which challenges the generally technocratic characteristic of traditional and dominant curriculum theory and design. Such intellectual movement carries the questions that inquired into why and how learning in school has been based on flawed assumptions that are scientific rather than historically contextualized, imposing knowledge that is external to the individual, thus, lacking meaning and intersubjective exchange.

The moribund and traditional curriculum model more or less gave life to *critical pedagogy* as a mindset or philosophy of education. Inspired by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and reflective of the Frankfurt School's principles, critical pedagogy remains explicitly spoken by scholars who believed in its ideals relative to the (mal)practice of education these days. In the Philippines, there is not much mention of critical pedagogy being

employed in classroom settings based on available and accessible resources. A handful of scholars wrote eloquently on the topic on a conceptual (i.e., philosophical) ground. For instance, Pangilinan (2009) meaningfully traces the roots of critical pedagogy from its Marxist and Freudian origins. In the process, he highlights the radical humanist thoughts of Eric Fromm. He believes that the perfectibility of the human being and the attainment of a sane society can be fulfilled through a robust education system free from the alienating tendencies of capitalistic economic determinism. With his leaning towards psychoanalysis, Fromm convinces us that alienation is a pathological state of mind, or more understandably, a mental disorder. Without immediate intervention, the spread of the pathogen into the whole society becomes imminent. This intervention is administered by stating a clear purpose for education to help young people learn democracy and teach them a structuralized view of the world. Participatory democracy calls for social action that starts from the minuscule tasks in the classroom. Cortez (2013a) provides a supplement to this by delving straight into the ideas of Freire, reiterating the philosopher's strong contention that education is never neutral but has the inherent trait of being transformative. He further posits that every pedagogical process should involve *conscientization*, associating every classroom discourse to the grand vision of a human(ized) society. In other words, education is none other than an act of conscientization.

Neoliberalism is an increasing philosophic concern in the Philippines. Marquez (2017) for one, observes the steady advance of capitalism, which is tantamount to a free market economy, to be an effect of globalization where there is a great demand for skilled human capital in and from the country. Schools then are being established, if not bought, by private corporations to finance the programs that serve their (financial) interests. Moreover, Abulencia (2015) is convinced that the K to 12 program is considered a global basic education standard; hence, it is a lucid manifestation of globalization in all its sense. Its curriculum may not entirely be relevant to the needs of the Philippine society as many subjects are designed to train future Filipino global workers. The truth behind it – the hidden curriculum – is that it operates to enhance capitalist and market-driven values. His analysis mentions Giroux who, among other critics, asserts that this instance of neoliberalism enforces pedagogy of repression.

In his reflection of the K to 12 Curriculum in the Philippines, Cortez (2016) clarified that the Department of Education's (DepEd) claim of fostering critical thinking into the new generation of Filipino learners is not precisely what critical pedagogy means to set forth. Radulović and Stančić (2017) agree to this instance of incongruity by finding it insufficient to merely deploy programs and methods to develop critical thinking into the existing education system. It still has to be corroborated with the restructuring and empowering of both students and teachers and [appropriate] curriculum development. With their aim to establish a different approach to education for critical thinking, they contend that criticality requires criticism of existing social relations leading towards a direction of change rather than merely an exercise of rational critical thinking. They blame it on the closed and independent nature of the curriculum, thus shaping the educational practice to be purely rationalist and decontextualized. Marquez (2017) then proposes a reconsideration of the [Bloom's] taxonomy of learning objectives in the country to pave the way for Critical Pedagogy to get the children and the youth to raise essential questions relative to their often neglected struggles in the society.

Alterado (2009) contends that knowledge is not for its own sake (i.e., epistemological) but presupposes a utilitarian value that makes it *kinetic* or *applied* knowledge (i.e., political and ethical) aimed at developing the nation-state for the good. Cortez (2013a) calls this an invitation to the critique of the [Philippine] society. He observes that there have been limited attempts to bring Freire, and likewise critical pedagogy, in the context of formal schooling. He quotes Demeterio Cortez (2013b), claiming that Filipino philosophy is being traumatized due to the lack of interest in Freirean educational thought. Atim (2017) supported this thought when he expounded on Demeterio's argument that among the traditions of Filipino philosophy is a critique of existing social, political, and economic conditions. In his project to Filipinize critical pedagogy, Viola (2009) narrates his surprising findings during his visit to the archipelago, describing how awful the conditions of some Filipinos are in their schooling. He,

later on, holds the prevailing global capitalism and racism caused by neoliberal configurations of the state responsible for it.

One of the significant changes instigated by the K to 12 reform in the Philippines is the two-year addendum to basic education called the Senior High School (SHS), which to most people is a milestone and historic achievement as it delists the country from the three remaining nations (the other two being Djibouti and Angola) offering only ten years of pre-university education in the world. In 2008, the Presidential Task Force on Education recommended the extension of pre-university education to 12 years benchmarked abroad. The primary indicator for such a move is the perceived poor quality of education evidenced by the relatively high unemployment rate due to inadequate preparation of high school graduates for the world of work. The K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum has the primary [socio-economic] goal of "creating a functional basic education system that will produce productive and responsible citizens equipped with the essential competencies and skills for both life-long learning and employment" (Department of Education, 2010). This consequently led to the resolution of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) – and its adoption by DepEd – on the College Readiness Standards (CSR) defined as "consisting the combination of knowledge, skills, and reflective thinking necessary to participate and succeed – without remediation – in entry-level undergraduate courses in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)" (CHED, 2011). Of all the four identified curriculum exits of the K to 12, aside from *employment*, *entrepreneurship*, and *middle-skill development*, only *higher education* remains viable for the continuance of critical pedagogy's advocacy.

Today's education milieu, the 21st Century or the Postmodern, is characteristic of individual yet enriching differences. Looking at it in a local setting, Cortez (2013a) invites Filipino critical educators to reinvent Freire for the formal classroom. The curriculum should then be viewed in a *process* (contextual) than as a *product* (technocratic) as it significantly uses the knowledge and experiences of the actors of learning, opening along the way a possibility of differently understanding the world they live in Radulović and Stančić (2017). This study heeds to this challenge as it traces for any underpinnings of critical pedagogy in the recently implemented Senior High School program under the K to 12 Curriculum, precisely to delineate whether it is characterized more as a *process* of a *product*.

This paper primarily describes how the integration of Critical Pedagogy in the classroom teaching-learning processes could be enhanced for possible considerations of framing a so-called liberating curriculum. Critical Pedagogy suggests at least two essential principles that formulated these specific objectives of the study: (1) that a critique of current conditions of the society is apparent in SHS subjects; and (2) that transformation of society and emancipation of its members are implied in the every learning objective. Therefore, a liberating curriculum calls for *praxis*, the very act of not merely *reflecting* (or rationalizing) but also more importantly *acting* on the same issues of the society we live in. Freire adamantly argues on this complementarity of reflection and action in the pedagogical process; as he puts it, pure reflection is *verbalism* while pure action is *activism*. In essence, through a liberating curriculum, critical pedagogy hopes for a transformed society that is more just, humane, and free.

2. METHOD

This qualitative study is subjective as it considers social and cultural variables that impact the subject matter (Maroun, 2012) – curriculum. Kozleski (2017) strongly argues for using qualitative methodologies in shaping and advancing important questions of educational practice and policy. Discerning the presence and significance of critical pedagogy in a classroom setting also needed to be *phenomenological*. This undertaking mainly studied the meanings, or *essences*, of the students' lived experiences and their perspectives relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Tavakol & Sandars, 2014).

Phenomena were observed in schools that were purposively identified through direct and personal people connections under a common environment (Arseven, 2018). One was a public school, the other was private sectarian, another was private non-sectarian, and the last was a private technical-vocational institution. The field observation was conducted within the second semester of Academic Year 2018-2019. Informal interviews and focus

group discussions were conducted with students and teachers separately. SHS alumni were also conveniently selected to respond to an online qualitative survey. Lastly, a curriculum expert was consulted through an interview to corroborate the findings based on her knowledge and expertise on the matter. Data were collected through participant and non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), open-ended questionnaire, the researcher's journal, and review of archival records and other pertinent documents. Significant statements were organized using a repertory grid where subsequent themes were derived (*in vivo*) for the discussions.

Official correspondences were made with school heads and officials before observing, while parental consents were secured from parents of students below legal age. At the same time, consents were solicited from the interview and FGD participants. After data treatment, validations were executed through member checking, establishing the research's credibility by sharing the results with the participants themselves.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Relevant data gathered from germane sources described some existing teaching-learning practices using the lens of Critical Pedagogy in line with the following themes that emerged: *instruction*, *assessment*, and the *learning environment*. Further, it talks about possible ways to integrate Critical Pedagogy (CP) in framing a liberating curriculum.

3.1. Critical Pedagogy on Instruction

A discussion with a curriculum expert, Dr. Brenda Corpuz, said that the K to 12 Program's teaching philosophy (hereinafter referred to as Program) is *constructivism*. She believed the philosophical foundation or basis of the Program is implied in its legal documents as shown in the figure:

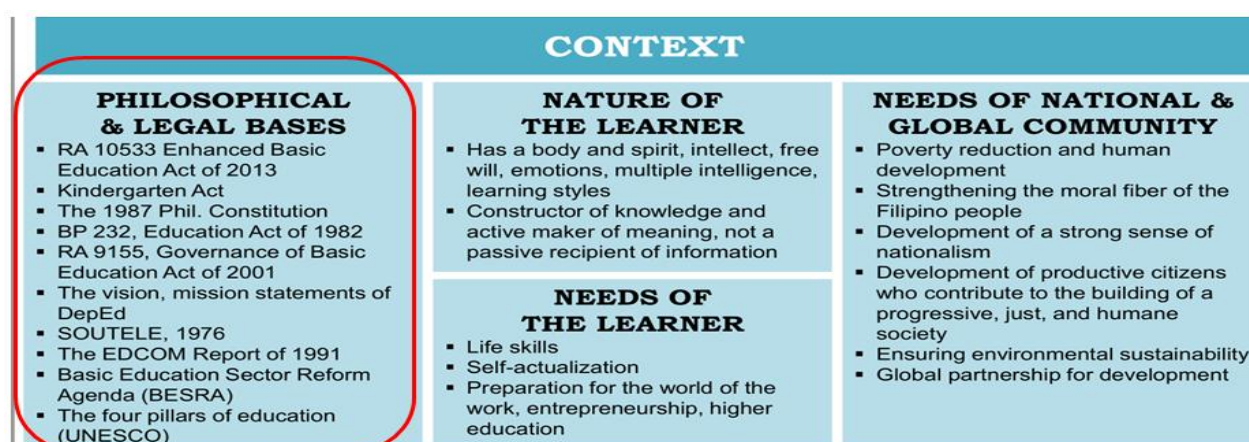


Figure-1. The K to 12 basic education curriculums was conceptualized based on various existing contexts.

Basing on the above figure, there was no explicit mention of an educational philosophy that serves as a foundation to the Program. If there was, then it has still to be derived. Being constructivist, Corpuz elaborates that learning cannot be detached from society. The learner literally constructs knowledge, creates meaning, and then acts according to it. However, when SHS teachers were asked to validate this, they say only in chosen subjects does it become applicable. In the so-called content subjects – science, math, and languages – the one-way input of knowledge or information is still being practiced. They said they couldn't do otherwise because it works best with the students' learning attitude. According to some CP scholars, in Paulo Freire's own words, this is referred to as the banking method, a form of educational hegemony. Math teachers who joined the discussion shared that they use real-life examples and instances when giving students problems. They notice, however, that despite this manner of

trying to engage the learner into situations they could relate with, only the figures (i.e., the numbers) matter to them. After getting the numerical values, the students start computing while the story behind it is set aside.

SHS students admit that content subjects are important but not necessarily interesting. When asked which subjects interest them most, they mentioned those that encourage them to think and share what they believe rather than those that simply tell them what to think about that lacks the grasp on the concepts. They shortlisted *Philosophy* and *Humanities* as the interesting subjects while citing *Science*, *Math*, and *Entrepreneurship* as the important ones. They said they would instead share different perspectives and views on an ongoing discussion than being forced to believe in things just because they simply have to. Moreover, they can relate to topics in those interesting subjects, as they are not foreign to the human person. These students do not like being forced to believe or learn things because it is a course requirement, resulting in rote learning where memorization is at large. Given the aforementioned, anyone would still probably approve of the American theologian Richard Shaull's distinction that education is more about criticality and creativity than conformity (Cortez, 2013a).

In agreement with Cortez (2016), Corpuz defines critical thinking not merely as a cognitive activity but "an act of applying unless it eventually dies." Critical thinking, therefore, necessarily involves the social and political dimensions of human learning, the very same thought meant by Freire when he considers education as *conscientization*. Two of the desired outcomes of the Program could be attributed to this thought as shown in the illustration (Department of Education, 2012):



Figure-2. DepEd enumerates the ideal attributes of a graduate from the K to 12 program.

Those two outcomes cater to the needs of the society while the rest purely focused on the human self. Graduates of the Program are then expected to possess the character of caring not only for themselves but their entire context as well. In the SHS teaching framework, *Saysay-Husay-Sarili* (Marquez, 2017) this could be discerned as *saysay* that pertains to the meaning-making part of the curriculum. Teachers vividly picture to the students the *why's* of the lesson, which boils down to no less than treating them not as an individual, self-centered, and decontextualized learners. This shows the true meaning of *paideia*, according to Martin Heidegger, which is letting-learn (Pasco, 2015). We do not simply transmit useful knowledge and skills to raise a self-reliant Filipino populace; instead, we dig deeper into the hidden aspect of the curriculum where the essentials are being left unspoken.

From the data gathered, classroom instruction shows less inclination to CP as there was no significant deviation from traditional learning methods. Given the short period of immersion in the various identified schools, it was observed that the customary classroom teaching approach is still in place, except for some modifications that make the students more participative, like during group activities. Classrooms have just enough space to accommodate the size of a traditional theater setup class. Books still preoccupy the students by large, reflexive questions are seldom asked, and lessons are carefully planned so that everything has to be taught in preparation for the assessment. Most teachers understand critical thinking to refer to students' ability to respond differently to situations. As a result, the class sessions are engrossed in critical discussions producing various perspectives on a matter. Still, CP falls short on being actualized in these instances as it merely concludes in assessment and not in concrete actions.

It was reiterated that the distinguishing feature of the Program is its being learner-centered. Critical thinking, which is an essential characteristic of the learner, was argued to be differently understood by many educators than critical pedagogues. Thinking is critical because it appeals to higher thinking and not because it brings a sense of freedom and empowerment to the learner. Therefore, what is meant by critical thinking in CP exceeds what is in the commonly used taxonomy of learning objectives. The closest idea of critical thinking adhering to the tenet of CP is what Corpuz calls system-thinking, or *metacognition*, which allows one to relate his learning to himself – why he needs it or what good it gives him. As to the issue of empowerment, the question about the K to 12 Curriculum being apolitical was raised. If seen closely, it appears that almost the entire curriculum caters to the economic agenda. The main objective was still on enhancing the graduate attributes for employment. Learning under the Program is, after all, primarily aimed at the *economic* and then only consequently the *politic*. Corpuz made an important clarification, however when she claimed that under the K to 12 Program, "politics could still be a part of *life and career skills*," as shown in the proceeding figure:

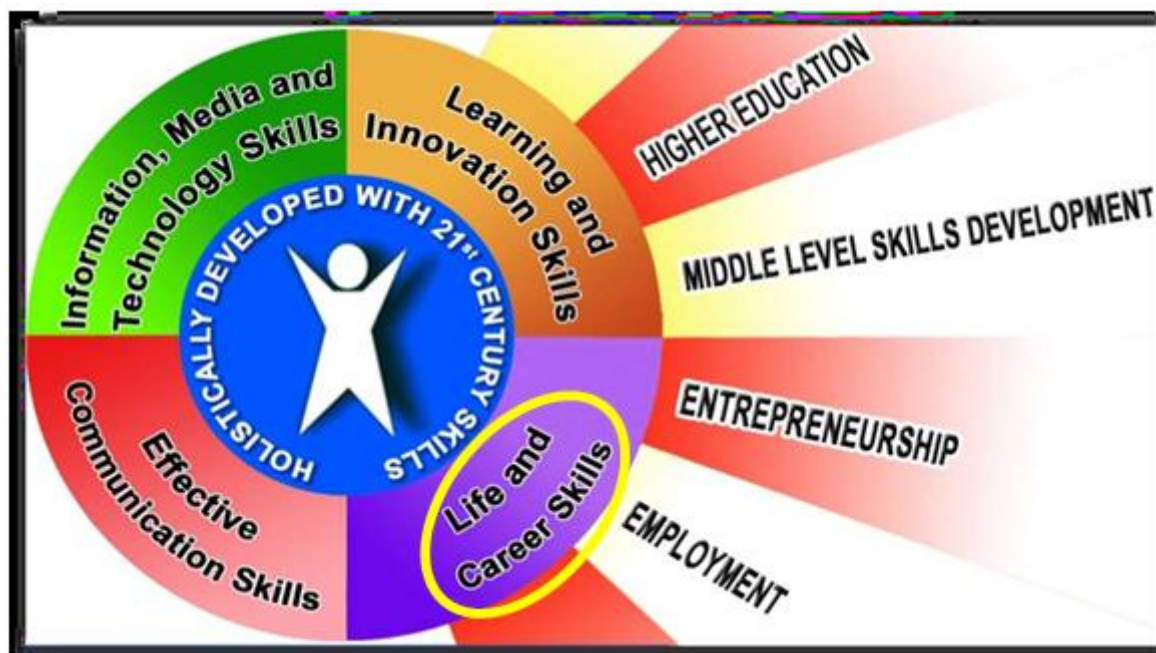


Figure-3. A graduate of the K to 12 curriculum is pictured to be holistically developed with the essential skills for the 21st century.

Senior High School (SHS) came out as a different discussion due to specialization – four tracks, many strands under each track, and several competencies under the strands of the tech-voc track. It transpired in the discussion that there is a need to produce specialists in different fields of work, especially in the industry. There are even sub-specializations to speak about. This scheme was not, however, thought to be a capitalist concept, just like the Marxist idea of division of labor. It was merely for the reason of giving choices to students for their career after

SHS. Corpuz disagrees with some CP scholars like Abulencia (2015) and Pasco (2015) that our education system, and K to 12 in particular, caters to the socio-political and economic interests of the ruling class, global elite, business, and corporations. To her, while we are considering the importance of producing professionals and skillful workers here and abroad, we are also serving the interest of the country and its populace. In simple terms, if citizens of a country do not get educated, they must possess skills.

3.2. Critical Pedagogy on Assessment

In the same discussion with SHS students, they cited as unlikely experience is their struggle with the unending tasks required from them without justifiable reasons and sufficient resources to work with. Every day they had to hurdle over so many submissions, which are merely acts of blind compliance to avoid failing marks. For instance, teachers ask them to do one research after another, expecting a full-blown output when the purpose of which, as admitted by teachers themselves, is merely to orient them on the basics of how to do it. There was congestion of tasks which bespeaks of congestion of the entire curriculum. Corpuz expressed personal frustration on this situation of Filipino learners, knowing that the supposed decongestion of the curriculum was not realized in the implementation of the Program. There should have been fewer subjects offered in SHS alone, fewer classroom encounters, and more time to accomplish the assigned tasks. The 80-hour time allotment for a subject in a semester also becomes exhausting for both the teachers and students. She then sympathizes with students "who can no longer find time to sleep."

As stated earlier, rote learning is not the type that SHS students want to deal with. This preference was evident in their responses when no one chose *memorization* over *critical thinking* when asked about their preference for assessment. But then again, it is opposite to what is being practiced in the actual setting. Students are trained to think spontaneously by being critical during assessments, which is another essential feature of being holistically developed. It elevates the learner's mind to the level of higher-order thinking, according to Corpuz. Similar to this effect, students who belong to the humanities also favored *tasks* over *tests* aside from those in the sciences who prefer the opposite. It is a common agreement among them, however, that they would go for those assessments that do practical things, enhance creativity, and do less memorization. Having known about this, teachers are expected to be more adaptive to the student's learning needs. Individuality, not uniformity, has to be observed more in the classroom where, for instance, there is not just a single answer to a given question. Teachers have to be more responsive to their students' preference to do something due to their learning. Performance tasks then have to be given more emphasis by observing intelligibility and regularity; that is, it should be made clear to students what is expected. It has to be recurrent throughout the semestral encounters. Not all practical tasks can be referred to as *praxis*, however. Breunig (2005) clarifies that praxis is both active and reflexive; thus, if by *practical* the students meant doing what their teacher asked them to do, it falls under what (Cartwright & Noone, 2006) considers as *technicist* mode where *reproductive* dominates *transformative* practice. On this occasion, students are reduced to mere objects of learning who *produce* rather than *create* and who are *limited* rather than *free*.

The K to 12 Toolkit (Seameo-Innotech, 2012) presents the paradigm shift in the country's national assessment system from the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) to the current K to 12 Curriculum. It shows that the purpose of assessment determines the achievement of schools, division, region, and nation (in the BEC) and extends to deciding the achievement level of students (in the current K to 12). According to DepEd Order (2015), classroom assessments aim to measure the three learning standards: *content*, *performance*, and *learning competencies*. It comes in two forms – *formative*, which is informal and ungraded, which takes place before, during, or after the lesson; and *summative*, which is the actual assessment of learning at the end of the lesson. With the prevalence of content-inspired assessments such as the NAT, teachers, students, and school administrators alike are driven to implement measures to show they could outperform other institutions. Critical Pedagogy favors formative over the summative type of assessment. The former is also known as assessment *for learning so that* teachers can make adjustments in

their instruction and *as learning* wherein students reflect on their progress (DepEd Order, 2015). In this manner, learning becomes more meaningful, and it is where mastery or *husay* is genuinely achieved. One is said to be *mahusay* if and when he/she can perform a task in a repeated yet improving manner. Summative, or assessment *of learning*, merely aims to compare a student's ability to agreed standards or competencies. Accordingly, it benefits the people other than the learner (DepEd Order, 2015); hence, it shows how poor a particular student performance is rather than how far it has improved.

Abulencia (2015) argues that assessment has been widely used for accountability, control, and sorting mechanism of society, lacking what he considers to be its social role to be an instrument of social justice. Stratification has been evident even within the classroom setting because of the widespread tradition of doing assessments of this kind. At this point, students do not fully realize the true purpose other than simply earning passing marks. It is also noteworthy that areas of specialization were created in the SHS to categorize students as to which career path they want to pursue, thus determining how students could adequately be assessed.

3.3. Critical Pedagogy on Learning Environment

The 21st-century students are characterized to be the well-informed generation of learners. With the use of ICT in schools, learning became more multi-faceted. As a result of this, a teacher raised the exacerbation of what he termed the *attention economy* of learners. Since students are exposed to a vast amount of information, they fail to digest them. That same teacher believes that this is an offshoot of capitalist thinking. Free online services like electronic mailing and social media are being used to promote a market-driven mentality. Today's learners get easily distracted by what they see on their computer screens without truly understanding them. This could also be true with how students are treated in schools. Teachers bombard students with tasks to the point that they are no longer practically able to discern the importance of what they are doing. As a result, learning merely becomes the satisfaction of course requirements; graduation is considered more of a relief from distress than an event of success.

In the separate discussions with teachers and students, and corroborated with actual observations, there is that common sentiment on the absence of public spaces in school campuses. These spaces are described as places where students meet and freely exchange opinions and ideas on any matter that concerns their [socio-political] existence. School campuses are being maximized to be used as classrooms, playgrounds, and parking lots. Libraries offer places for personal reading and intellectual workout; however, it needs to be noiseless and cannot, therefore, be generally considered a public space. There are no other places in school where students can be social; thus, they merely channel their attention to their smartphones. In this case, public spaces do not really matter to them anymore since they become already satisfied with a Wi-Fi connection or mobile data subscription. Nonetheless, we cannot say that the learning environment has become virtual since, as one teacher said, these students have to be taught how to filter and process the information they get from their smartphone encounters.

Gitlin and Ingerski (2018) explore technological possibilities to make critical pedagogy fit public schools, which is the same condition experienced here in the Philippines. In fact, at one point, this is also now being observed in some private school setups. They further said that the space for schooling is not particularly conducive to host and propagate the ambitions and ideals that critical pedagogy wishes to convey. It is apparent that learning is still mostly confined within the four-walled classroom, and lessons are lifted from textbooks. Technology, therefore, has to come in to create additional spaces of difference within schools, between schools, and with their local communities. Technology is seen here not as *the force* for change but, in fact, *a part* of the change process (Gitlin & Ingerski, 2018). Corpuz (2017) augments this idea by saying that using ICT should be aligned with any learning outcomes and that one learns not *from* ICT but *with* ICT. It is not the source or vehicle of knowledge but a partner in learning where the learner processes information to construct meaning out of what ICT presents.

3.4. Critical Pedagogy and the Liberating Curriculum

Corpuz asserts that criticality is implicit in the K to 12 Curriculum. SHS, being the terminal stage, has to manifest its realization then. In 2018, the Philippine telecommunication giant, ABS-CBN (2018) shared an astonishing finding by the global market research and consulting firm Ipsos that the Philippines is the third most ignorant on the nation's critical issues. It is also worth noting that the Philippines was in the sixteenth rank two years earlier, which shows a remarkable deterioration in the Filipino people's interest in socio-political discourses. It sounds like the Filipinos are acceding to what Freire considers as the *culture of silence* or what Giroux (2011) describes as the dark times of Critical Pedagogy.

In a discussion on this so-called "ignorance" of students on socio-political issues, teachers admit that not all subjects tackle the topic. It shows that the interdisciplinary character of the curriculum is hardly being worked out in reality. Moreover, students show coldness towards these pressing issues since they do not directly affect them. In response, then, teachers shared some of their practices as a resolution to it. One elaborated on the place of teachers as *infrastructures* under the *superstructure* of education where curricula serve as effective tools of control. DepEd encourages curriculum implementers, especially the teachers, to enhance, but not change, the curriculum. Unpacking the competencies and objectives stated in every curriculum guide is being stimulated, particularly in SHS, where subjects are deemed unorthodox compared to the earlier stages in basic education. According to another teacher, teaching is both a science and an art, where teachers systematically follow through the learning expectations mandated by the curriculum but creatively design how it will be achieved. In agreement, Corpuz emphasized one of the salient features of the K to 12 Curriculum as enumerated in Section 5 of R.A. 10533, stating that "the curriculum shall be flexible enough and allow schools to localize, indigenize, and enhance the same based on their respective educational and social contexts." According to her, this is the act of schools serving the society when students can metacognition and system thinking to ask what they are learning things for.

Critical pedagogues sternly argue that teaching and teacher education are value-laden and politically endeavored (Cartwright & Noone, 2006) which calls for its stakeholders to be empowered to question and challenge rather than merely support the status quo. It is not about making the child fit into the curriculum but the other way around. One indispensable role of teachers and school leaders is to become *curriculum specialists*, as stated in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) since its adoption in 2017. Teachers do contribute to developing learners that meaningfully contribute to nation-building through "interacting with the national and local curriculum requirements... translating the curriculum content into learning activities that are relevant to learners..." (PPST, p. 5). Re-conceptualizing Senior High School as Critical Pedagogy refers to the teacher's capacity to translate the existing curriculum by DepEd into something that adheres to the principles of CP, thereby making it less tied to the ideals of *privatization*, *commodification*, and *consumerism* but transforming the schools into democratic public spheres, teachers as intellectuals, and students as potential agents of individual and social change (Giroux, 2011).

The banking (hierarchical) model of education should be replaced by a problem-posing (libertarian) one. Education should be co-intentional where both teachers and students are subjects of the learning process. Learning becomes a two-way process that overcomes the limiting factors in education. One way to materialize this is by doing away with the traditional classroom setup with all students facing the teacher who is in front. Moving all of the chairs into a circle could promote a more interactive and less hierarchical setup where discussions work better than lectures. In his elaboration on democratizing education, Alterado (2009) cites the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas favoring seminar type of handling classes:

"...the students become not just passive recipients of knowledge but become responsible participants of the learning processes. They determine the topics to be discussed, read the assigned readings, prepare before coming to class, and actively participate in the discussions." (p. 58).

4. CONCLUSION

This study aims to uncover what is observed as the lack of congruence between pedagogical theories and actual classroom practices. Critical pedagogy still exists today as a theory of learning that needs more practical realization, especially in the Philippines, where life is structured according to the dominant consumerist and capitalist trends. This study elaborated on how some teaching-learning practices still lean on the traditional method of inquiry and learning, where students mostly remain passive and uncritical. The recent implementation of the K to 12 Curriculum in the country could be an opportune time to reform the educational landscape vis-à-vis to address the perennial problems of society by getting students involved through constant and self-initiated action and reflection. This realizes how education truly means conscientization.

There are at least three areas where critical pedagogy recommends reconstructions based on the first-hand stories of participants in this study. *Instruction* should not merely tackle how one gets to be employable but also look into why situations lead to a high unemployment rate. Fostering critical thinking in the classrooms does not exactly help a learner get the best job offer; instead, it makes him question the entire socio-political landscape why jobs are being selective. *Assessment* should then ask about what one can do rather than what he merely recalls. Developing assessment tools needs to be reconsidered so that it doesn't simply reproduce knowledge but transform it. Finally, to cater to these desires, the learning environment has to befit the needs of the 21st-century learners by considering technological (not technical) enhancements to widen the public sphere where critical minds meet despite the physical scarcity of spaces in the schools.

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