

Examining *The Filipino Teacher* (1907–1911) as a Platform for Education Advocacy in the Philippines

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Abstract The Philippine Teachers' Association (PTA), an organization established during the American period, began releasing its monthly journal *The Filipino Teacher* in 1907. This research primarily focused on examining the role of the publication as a platform for the PTA's advocacies from 1907 to 1911. Emphasis was given to the education-sector issues discussed in its editorial pages. *The Filipino Teacher's* editorials during those years covered a wide array of topics, including teachers' salary, promotion opportunities, and overcrowded classrooms—concerns that remain relevant to this day. Scanned copies of *The Filipino Teacher*—accessed through the University of Michigan's Philippine American History Special Collection online portal—were utilized for this historical narrative. It is hoped that future researchers can access sources on other defunct teachers' organizations once the present limitations on doing archival research caused by the current pandemic are over.

Keywords: *issues in Philippine education, Philippine Teachers' Association, teachers' unions in the Philippines, The Filipino Teacher*

Introduction

Established in 1901, the PTA was the first and only teachers' union recognized by the American-created Department of Public Instruction and the Bureau of Education during the first decade of United States rule over the country. In 1907, or six years into its founding, the PTA began publishing the monthly journal *The Filipino Teacher* as a platform to raise issues and promote its advocacies. In coming up with the periodical, the organization mentioned the following in the first issue's editorial ("Greeting," 1907):

Our main purpose in the publication of *The Filipino Teacher*, as our journal is called, is purely educational, that is, we will do all we can for the development and advancement of our race in what is known as learning. It is also our aim to form a more nearly perfect union among the teachers and the people at large to defend their interest, to suggest to the authorities what we think best in regard to our duties, to give them as much assistance as possible and to love that sweet and noble thing in the world, *justice*. (p. 3)

This paper's first objective is to examine the role of *The Filipino Teacher* in advancing the PTA's advocacies from 1907 to 1911. This research also emphasized the issues discussed in the journal's editorials. United States-based publication *Des Moines Register* (2018) described editorials as opinion articles that state the position of a publication's editorial board on particular matters. The second objective of this paper is to analyze the relevant issues in the education sector, as discussed in *The Filipino Teacher*. The third and last aim of this research is to provide a brief history of the PTA.

Digitized copies of *The Filipino Teacher* from 1907 to 1911—which were utilized for this historical narrative—

were obtained through the University of Michigan's Philippine-American History Special Collection online portal. It is important to note that this resource does not have digital copies of *The Filipino Teacher* and its next iteration named *The Progress of Education* beyond March 1911, and it cannot be ascertained if the PTA abruptly stopped the monthly journal's publication by then.

A Brief History of the Philippine Teachers' Association

According to "The PTA and Its Seventh Anniversary," an article published in *The Filipino Teacher* in 1908, the organization was established by a group of educators from the city of Manila on September 8, 1901, at the Escuela Municipal de Manila (now called Manila High School) in Intramuros. It also mentioned that the PTA's founding members "had the aim of uniting all Filipino Teachers into one solid, compact body, because they realized that by so doing, they can be of more service to their country in diffusing knowledge of education, civilization, and progress" (p. 1). It was first intended to be just a local association, but its membership eventually included teachers from other parts of the country, necessitating the establishment of official branches in provinces ("The PTA," 1910). "The PTA and Its Seventh Anniversary" (1908) further stated:

They understood that there are things which cannot be accomplished except by the combined efforts of many. They believed that it is in the union of small things from which big things spring up. They understood that persons of such a high calling as teaching, ought not to be strangers to each other, that there should be frequent social intercourse between them, and that to help each other in their difficult work, there must be constant change of ideas among themselves. (p. 1)

In the same piece, the administrators of the monthly journal even hinted that the establishment of the PTA would not have been possible had the Americans not occupied the Philippines:

The PTA was organized at a time when the atmosphere was clearer and when the Filipinos began to enjoy the invigorating air of liberty. It was organized at a time when the atmosphere everywhere was saturated with sound democratic principles and when a new horizon, a wider sphere of action was opened, to Filipino teachers. (pp. 1–2).

It added that membership to the PTA quickly rose, with local chapters established in Cebu, Bulacan, Rizal, Pangasinan, and Zambales.

It is necessary to point out, however, that a teachers' organization—the Magisterio Filipino—was established during the final decade of Spanish rule in the Philippines. It even had an official newspaper called *Boletín Oficial del Magisterio Filipino*, which was published by Imprenta-Litografía Partier (1895, p. 3).

A Brief History of *The Filipino Teacher*

The members of the PTA's board of directors approved the proposal for the organization to have a monthly journal during a meeting held on February 23, 1907, in the house of a certain Mr. Gloria along San Marcelino, Manila. As narrated in *The Filipino Teacher's* maiden editorial published in March 1907, the organization's leaders "warmly applauded and approved the move ("Greeting," 1907)." The PTA claimed that *The Filipino Teacher* would be the "first journal published in the Philippine Islands by the Philippine teachers" (p. 4).

The PTA described the publication as "purely educational," adding that it aimed "to form a more nearly

perfect union among the teachers and the people at large,” and “to defend their interest,” among others (“Greeting,” 1907, p. 3). Each issue was released every second Saturday of the month and featured content written in English, Spanish, and Tagalog.

According to an article written by Emilio Pestaño (1910), the publication had an initial funding of only P85.00, with the 17 founding members contributing P5.00 each. Pestaño mentioned that this meager start-up money prompted one veteran journalist to haughtily predict that the paper will stop operating after just two issues (p. 10).

Apart from being a platform to raise their issues and advocacies, the creators of *The Filipino Teacher* likewise said that the journal also intended to help educators by giving them “suggestions concerning the methods of teaching and other important matters about this profession.” The maiden editorial of *The Filipino Teacher* expounded: “So, you see, how important a journal is! Let us then, Filipino teachers, work together with a common purpose for the prosperity of our country for whose sake our beloved patriot, Rizal, gave up his precious life concluded” (“Greeting,” 1907, p.4).

The monthly journal’s first issue provided good insight into how its creators intended to sustain its operations. Each copy was sold for P0.25. A one-year subscription was worth P2.40 for residents of Metro Manila and P2.80 for those based in the provinces (“Subscriptions and Advertising Rates,” 1907).

The rate for advertisements with a standard size of 1 by 5 inches was set at P1.00 per month or P10.00 per year, and there were special discounts for larger advertisements. The journal’s frequent ad placers included lawyers and medical professionals, as well as corporations like San Miguel Brewery and the distributor of Remington typewriters.

The Filipino Teacher first appeared in March 1907. Guillermo Santos was listed as the editor-in-chief, while Anastacio Quijano took the role of manager. For the next four years at least, it was published monthly except during April and May—when schools were on “summer vacation.” Unlike most publications, the journal typically mentioned only its manager and editor on its title page.

Additionally, *The Filipino Teacher* never had a masthead listing the names of the people with a role in the publication process (e.g., the layout artist). Nevertheless, in “Call for Contributions” (1907), it announced that it was accepting articles from teachers across the country, with their by-line appearing after their piece.

In a special edition released in April 1910—a month after *The Filipino Teacher*’s third anniversary—the article “The PTA” (1910) described that the organization’s work and that of its official organ had become inseparable. It posits that:

In all their efforts to fulfill the aims for which they live, they have mutually shared the joys and sorrows which they have experienced in their career, and both have never lost courage in the face of any adversity which they have so far met. (p. 6)

The monthly journal was eventually renamed *The Progress of Education* starting January 1911 (Cosio, 1911).

Methodology

In writing this historical narrative, the researcher accessed digitized copies of *The Filipino Teacher* from the years 1907 until 1911 through the Philippine-American History Special Collection online portal of the University of Michigan. It should be noted that the resource does not have digital copies of *The Filipino Teacher* beyond March 1911.

One possible reason is that the PTA already ceased to exist by then. In fact, it was mentioned in an editorial titled, “Meaningless and Absurd,” which appeared in the April 1911 issue of *The Progress of Education*, that the group was experiencing internal conflicts (p. 11). It is also probable that the publication continued to be in circulation, although no more copies of the succeeding issues have survived. The titles of the editorials considered for this research are listed in Table 1, together with the date they were published.

Table 1

List of Articles from The Filipino Teacher Discussed in this Research

Date Published	Title of the Article/Subject	Issue/Matter Discussed
March 1907	Subscriptions and Advertising Rates	Call for subscriptions and advertisers
March 1907	“Greeting”	Unionizing teachers
April 1907	Call for Contributions	Call for contributors
April 1907	“The Philippine Teachers’ Association”	Introduction to the PTA
August 1907	“The Filipino Teacher”	Raising teachers’ salary
September 1907	Untitled	Unionizing teachers
January 1908	“Disadvantages of Large Classes in School”	Overcrowded classrooms
February 1908	“The Philippine Teachers’ Association”	Unionizing teachers
September 1908	“The PTA And Its Seventh Anniversary”	History of the PTA
November 1908	“A Circular on Public School Students”	Student activism
January 1909	“Do We Teach Theory More Than Practice?”	Industrial education
June 1909	“Compulsory Education”	Compulsory education
August 1909	“A Bitter Truth “	Funding for education
October 1909	“A Word to Our Fellow Teachers”	Raising teacher’s salary
April 1910	“The PTA”	History of the PTA
April 1910	“My Souvenir to The Filipino Teacher”	History of the PTA and <i>The Filipino Teacher</i>
July 1910	“A Question”	Promotion of teachers
September 1910	“Pointer, Not a Whip”	Corporal punishment
September 1910	“Unnecessary Delay”	Raising teachers’ salaries
March 1911	“Meaningless and Absurd” (from <i>The Progress of Education</i>)	Internal conflicts within the PTA

Findings and Discussion

Selected Issues Discussed in *The Filipino Teacher*

Some of the issues explored in the publication are the importance of unionizing teachers, salary raise, students' strikes, overcrowded classrooms, compulsory education, funding for education, promotion for teachers, and corporal punishment.

Figure 1

The Editorial Page of the First Edition of The Filipino Teacher ("Greeting," 1907, p.3)

THE FILIPINO TEACHER

VOL. I.	MANILA, MARCH, 1907.	N. ° 1.
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A MONTHLY JOURNAL PUBLISHED BY
"The Philippine Teachers' Association"
Guillermo Santos, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF.
Anastacio Quijano, MANAGER.

ADDRESS all communication, regarding, publications, advertisements, subscriptions, and business matters to the Manager, Mr. A. Quijano, Manila, P. I. P. O. Box. 1090

ONE YEAR -P- 2.40 MANILA. " " " 2.80 PROVINCES. SINGLE COPY 0.25	SUBSCRIPTIONS:
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The advertising rates of "the Filipino Teacher" are: -P- 1.00 per month and -P- 10.00 per year for a space of 1x5 inches. Special discounts for large space

Any subscriber wishing to stop his paper must notify the Manager, otherwise he is responsible for payment as long as the paper is sent.

Missing Number:—Should any subscriber fail to receive his copy, notification should be sent to the manager and another copy should be mailed.

Change of address:—Subscribers must notify us of any change in their addresses, giving the former and new addresses.

EDITORIAL

<p style="text-align: center;">GREETING.</p> <p>The spell of the long night's darkness has been broken up after many a struggle and at last the long-hoped-for Goddess of Hope comes smiling from the east annihilating the miasma around us and presenting before our eyes the brightness of the morning sun.</p> <p>"The Filipino Teacher"! This is the name of the car which the Filipino Teachers have built for themselves on which they mean to ride and catch the golden chariot of Progress. Filipino Teachers, let us all</p>	<p>ly aside that mantle of seclusion which keeps us down; let us all ride on this car of ours now, for, if you put it until to-morrow you shall be left behind; let us unite all our strength in holding the reins! let us show to the world what Filipino Teachers really are.</p> <p>Before we bend our sinews to our pursuit, before we start on the race, we send our most cordial greetings to the authorities, to Mr. G. A. O'Reilly Superintendent of Manila Public Schools, to the Manila Press and last but not least, to the public in general.</p>
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Unionizing Teachers

The editorials carried by *The Filipino Teacher* frequently discussed the importance of unionizing teachers—a not-so-subtle way for the PTA to increase its ranks. In the journal’s maiden issue, the editorial titled, “Greeting” (1907), amplified this theme:

People who try to fight life’s battle alone often fail. Why is this so? Because they did not wisely seek the help and cooperation of others. Our main and sacred purpose is the pursuit of the advancement of the Filipino Teachers along educational lines. The question which arises now is, how can we carry out this high aim? How can we bring out this noble pursuit? This difficulty is answered in one short sentence: “We must have union!” (p. 2)

The untitled editorial of *The Filipino Teacher*’s September 1907 issue circled back to this topic. However, this time, the organization also mentioned the need for Filipinos to cooperate more with the American colonizers for the nation to achieve progress. Justo Juliano (1907b), the editor of the journal at that time, argued that:

When all of the teachers are united, they will be a very important factor in annihilating that subtle source of discord which poisons our atmosphere; they will be the chief agent of sowing the seeds of union among the people; they will be one of the powers which will help the United States of America to clear the Philippine soil of noxious weeds of discontentment, leaving it clean and ready for peace, progress, and prosperity to grow... (p. 2)

The publication went back to this theme for its February 1908 issue editorial (“The Philippine Teachers’ Association,” 1908).

Raising Teachers' Salaries

In the August 1907 issue of its monthly journal, the PTA began zeroing in on the need to increase teachers' income to make it more competitive with other government jobs, especially in light of the myriad of tasks assigned to them. Nevertheless, it is unclear if the appeal for higher wages was acted upon by the colonial government. Juliano (1907a) said:

What compensation does the teacher deserve rightly in return for his hard work? What reward must be paid for his Herculean task? Your just conscience will probably answer: "As much as the worth of his work," and you have judged rightly and truly. But what recompense does the teacher receive in return, now? Oh, it is pitiful to say! Strange but true. His salary? Ay! He is like a slave, which, after a hard day's work in the fields is given just a sufficient amount of food to maintain his strength and nothing more... The teacher's salary is so small compared to his hard work. We invite the attention of the authorities, the worshipers of justice, to cast their eyes over our shoulders and weigh the burden we carry-then judge whether we have a reason or not for our claim. (p. 3)

The Filipino Teacher discussed this concern again in the editorial titled, "A Word to Our Fellow Teachers," which was part of its October 1909 issue. It pointed out that the reputation of teaching as a low-paying profession was so well-known that many bright young men and women eventually decided not to pursue this occupation. Despite this, the editorial argued that there is more to teaching beyond the subpar compensation it provides:

The teacher's financial standing is perhaps within the estimate of all, but what nobody can estimate, nor much less overestimate, is the influence, the power

that teachers exert upon the life of the people of a country. Teaching is not a lucrative profession, but the most lucrative profession cannot be nobler, more sublime, and more patriotic than teaching. (p. 1)

In its September 1910 editorial titled, “Unnecessary Delay,” it sought the action of government authorities on the problem of delayed salaries. “The wages of these teachers vary from the sum of P0.10 to P0.15 per month. Beside the fact that said wages are so insignificant and that said teachers depend on said wages for their subsistence, the tardiness adds indeed another hardship on those unfortunates,” the editorial stated (p. 2).

Students’ Strikes

For its November 1908 issue, *The Filipino Teacher* reprinted a circular from Dr. David P. Barrows, the Director of Education, who expressed his disapproval of then-recent incidents of strikes organized by students against their teachers and school administrators. Although the journal did not take a stand on the matter, the fact remains that it provided a platform for him to express his negative views toward student activism. Barrows (1908) claimed that:

In every instance, these strikes have taken place before the cause of grievance could be made a matter of investigation by this office and in apparent contempt of the established method for securing consideration of complaints and redress of grievances... Demonstrations of this kind are extremely prejudicial to school discipline, to the reputation of the schools where they occur, and are demoralizing in their influence on the character of the students themselves. (pp. 5–6)

Overcrowded Classrooms

The January 1908 issue included an article from San Nicolas Primary School teacher Vicente Diaz, who later became the journal's editor. In "Disadvantages of Large Classes in School," he discussed a problem that persists to this day:

Is it possible in a large class for a pupil to receive as much of the teacher's attention as he would if he is in a small class? The answer is no... To sum up, large classes are disadvantageous in that first, they are dangerous to the health of the pupils, second, that they create a tendency to noise and inattention on the part of the pupils thereby making them lose their precious time; third, that the teacher finds too many to look after, and last but not the least, each pupil receives less attention than in a small class.
(p. 2)

He concluded the article by saying, "Large classes reduce the number of teachers needed but the result falls far below our expectation. Small classes increase the teaching force of the school but they result in better work and that is what we are aiming at—to have the best possible school."
(p. 2)

Compulsory Education

For its June 1909 edition, *The Filipino Teacher* ran an editorial titled, "Compulsory Education," opposing the proposal at that time before the Philippine Assembly for the country to make education mandatory. According to UNESCO (2005, p. 418), compulsory education refers to an "educational program that children and young people are legally obliged to attend, usually defined in terms of a number of grades or an age range, or both." The editorial argued that the proposal is largely unnecessary because Filipino parents never thought

twice about sending their children to school even during the Spanish period. It stated:

In the first place, the Filipino people are and have always shown profound love for instruction... When owing to the change of sovereignty, the United States assumed control of these Islands, and the first steps were taken to establish public schools, the Military Government, which then held full sway, found a compulsory attendance measure unnecessary, for hardly had the news been made public, when the people responded by sending their children to the schools. (p. 2)

It even pointed out that having a law mandating education for all implied that Filipinos cannot be trusted to do things for their own good without the government's intervention. The editorial further asserted that the cash-strapped government was not in fact capable of hiring more teachers and accommodating more students, which would be the natural consequence of instituting compulsory education.

Funding for Education

The editorial for the August 1909 issue of *The Filipino Teacher* was titled, "A Bitter Truth." It criticized the huge cut in the annual budget for education, describing the move as economizing in the wrong direction. The editorial reasoned out:

The Bureau of Education needs more school-houses and better-paid teachers than what it has at present. Every year, the government raises the standard and qualifications of its teachers, but, speaking of the Filipino teachers especially, their average salary (except those of Manila and Bulakan) is now P18.39 per month, where in 1904 it was P20.69. In

other words, the more the government raises their qualifications, the poorer they are paid. (p. 3)

It also agreed with the observation of Barrows that teachers' salaries were "insufficient to maintain a family and below the life of manual labor in many parts of the Archipelago" (Barrows, n.d., as cited in "A Bitter Truth," 1909, p. 3). The journal pointed out that with less money to work with, the Bureau of Education will no longer be able to push ahead with its plans for the coming school year, which included purchasing books for night school pupils.

Promotion of Teachers

The editorial for the July 1910 issue of *The Filipino Teacher* focused on the need for educators to be given more opportunities for career advancement and promotion. The piece titled "A Question" (1910) alluded to the American policy at that time of opening more government jobs to Filipinos and argued that:

Now then; admitting, as we cannot otherwise do, the fact that the Filipino teachers have amply shown their efficiency in the higher positions to which they have hitherto been promoted, it is but logical that there should exist, as it actually does exist, the hope of promotion to the still higher and more responsible positions in the teaching service of the government which until now are like "closed doors" to the Filipino teachers. (p. 1)

The paper went on to discuss that getting promoted in the public school system is not guaranteed even after many years of service. It further described the situation:

How many teachers there are now in the service who are classed by the Bureau of Education as doing Second Year High School work when these same

teachers were perhaps classed as such years and years ago? In five years from now, unless the situation is changed, these teachers will still be in the Second year of the High School course. (p. 2)

Ironically, the current generation of public school teachers still faces the same predicament, especially the challenge of investing in graduate studies. The piece concluded that:

Among the conditions set forth for their promotion to these positions is higher education. How can the Filipino teachers acquire this higher education without their leaving the Bureau of Education? This is a question which *The Filipino Teacher* respectfully submits to the Philippine Legislature and the Director of Education for their consideration. (p. 2)

This passage also highlighted the fact that the teachers then needed to find a balance between doing their job and pursuing further education so they can be considered for promotion.

Corporal Punishment

The Filipino Teacher laid out a strong case against the use of corporal punishment on students in schools, which was particularly prevalent during the Spanish era. The editorial, “Pointer, Not a Whip,” in its September 1910 issue added that doing this is no longer acceptable under the American regime.

We want to cultivate in their minds the love of school, so that they would consider it as their own home and feel easy and happy aside from their second parent, the teacher... A teacher is a sort of a guide, so let them follow your way, encourage them, mold their characters according to your own likings, but never

with a blow, never with a strike; for, instead of getting the best of citizens out of them, you will be liable to get the worst in spite of all. (p. 1)

Industrial Education

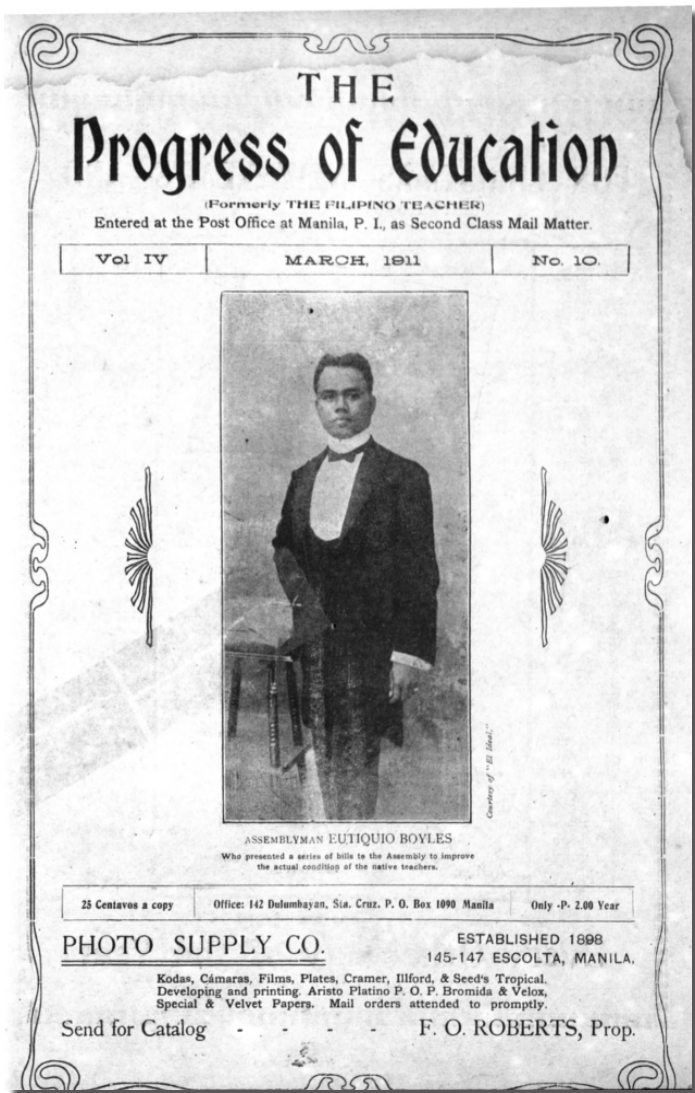
In the editorial titled, “Do We Teach Theory More Than Practice?,” published in its January 1909 issue, *The Filipino Teacher* discussed the importance of industrial education, a type of learning supported by the American educational officials. “Realizing that much of the future welfare of the Philippines depends upon its local industries which, unfortunately now lie idle, the Bureau of Education has established industrial schools. There is no province in the whole Archipelago that does not have its own Industrial School where the pupils learn the particular trade or industry in which they are interested,” it elaborated (p. 1).

The Filipino Teacher then discussed the importance of agricultural education through a hypothetical scenario in the editorial, “A Good Idea” (1909):

Here is a village essentially agricultural but whose people, instead of availing of the richness of the soil for planting vegetables after their rice is harvested, leaves the ground idle and depend exclusively on the product of the year’s harvest... Had they planted other crops which could help them in case their harvest fails or gives out, instead of selecting rice and devoting all their time to its cultivation to the exclusion of all other crops which grow as easily as rice, they would not find themselves in such helpless condition.” (pp. 1–2)

Figure 2

The Front Page of the March 1911 Issue of The Progress of Education, Formerly The Filipino Teacher (Cosio, 1911)



Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper had three main objectives. The first one is to examine the role of *The Filipino Teacher* in advancing the Philippine Teachers Association's advocacies from 1907 to 1911. The second is to analyze the relevant issues in the education sector at that time, as discussed in *The Filipino Teacher*. The third and last aim of this research is to provide a brief history of the PTA. As one of the first teachers' organizations in the country's history, the strategies used by the PTA in promoting its advocacies deserve a close examination.

Based on an analysis of the editorials and opinion articles that were published in *The Filipino Teacher*, it can be said that from 1907 to 1911, the PTA was able to utilize this periodical to discuss issues relevant to teachers with the main aim of having the American colonial government act on these—an objective that it mentioned during its maiden issue. The editorials of *The Filipino Teacher* covered a variety of topics, including overcrowded classrooms, teachers' salary, promotion opportunities, and the need for educators to be unionized—issues that remain relevant for the country's education sector even though over a century had already passed since the journal was in circulation.

The editorials likewise showed the organization's supportive attitude toward the government's push to promote industrial education and to hold up Jose Rizal as a role model for the youth. However, it did express opposition to some proposals, like the need to make education compulsory. It is apparent that the PTA tried its best to maintain a good working relationship with the American education officials during the period. In fact, *The Filipino Teacher* frequently featured their images on the front page. The monthly journal also routinely reprinted orders released by these policymakers

in their entirety, even if the creators of the publication could have accommodated more contributors instead.

While there had already been several studies in the past that tackled the educational policies implemented by the Americans in the Philippines, including historian Glenn Anthony May's 1980 book *Social Engineering in the Philippines: The Aims, Execution, and Impact of American Colonial Policy, 1900-1913*, the situation of teachers during the period deserves more attention from researchers. This study can serve as a template or framework into how future researchers could examine the work of other education advocacy organizations that succeeded PTA, especially if they also produced publications to reinforce their efforts.

This historical narrative relied on digitized issues of *The Filipino Teacher* accessible through the online portal of the University of Michigan's Philippine-American History Special Collection. However, it must be pointed out that only the issues released between 1907 to 1911 were in that archives. It is not clear when *The Filipino Teacher* released its final edition, which means it is possible that there are other issues of the journal that may be available for future researchers. It is also hoped that in the future, more sources on the PTA can be accessed since the limitations on doing in-person archival research previously imposed because of the pandemic are already being lifted.

It would be interesting to probe more into how the educators during the early American period—including non-PTA members—reacted to the organization's activities and the topics discussed in *The Filipino Teacher*. It is likewise relevant to investigate the reactions of American education officials toward the said organization and its official journal. In terms of the response from the general public, sources like official government publications can possibly provide answers.

It must be added here that while *The Filipino Teacher* is a good jump-off point for those researching about the issues concerning the education sector during the early American period, it is a limited source of information because most of its contributors were from Manila and its nearby provinces. This meant that the concerns of teachers in Visayas and Mindanao were not adequately covered. It is possible that future researchers in the field of education might discover similarly themed publications from other parts of the country. Other teachers' organizations from the past, including the Magisterio Filipino and others that were founded before and after the PTA was established should also be written about.



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