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THE DEGREE PROGRAMS IN HISTORY AT THE DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY-MANILA, 1984-2012: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The only field of study for the A.B. degree program at the De La Salle University from 1953 to 1964 was social sciences. Later on, the major in social sciences was replaced by the history-political science major program. Pursuant to the decision of the Council of Chairpersons and the Council of Deans in 1983, the history-political major program was split in 1984. From that time on, the History Department has offered A.B. History and eventually, Master of Arts in History and Master in History (non-thesis) degrees. The undergraduate degree program in history has been periodically reviewed and streamlined to meet the needs and demands of the times. It is in this context that this study is being undertaken. This paper focuses on the degree program in history in both the undergraduate and graduate levels at the De La Salle University-Manila. It seeks to trace the development of the history curriculum from 1984 when the separation of the history-political science major program took effect up to the present. Specifically, this paper explains the factors, emanating both from within and from without, that were taken into account in offering or abolishing the courses and restructuring the program in the undergraduate level. Essentially, it looks into the faculty, their fields of specialization and their respective contribution to the enrichment of Philippine historiography, and their efforts in educating faculty from other institutions of higher learning. It likewise presents a profile of the students enrolled in the program as well as undergraduate and graduate theses. The study employs the historical method, which is the descriptive-analytical method, and appropriates Prof. Arnold Toynbee's theory of challenge and response.

Key Words: De La Salle University; history curriculum; curriculum development; faculty; students

1. INTRODUCTION

The liberal arts program was re-established at the De La Salle University, then De La Salle College, in the 1950s. The sole field of concentration for the Bachelor of Arts program from 1953 to 1964 was social sciences. Shortly thereafter, the divisional major in social sciences was supplanted by a major in history-political science for a "more thorough concentration in these two areas" (De La Salle College, 1970, p. 37). Such courses were still offered even when the program was turned over to the history-political science department, which was set up in the 1970s. Following the decision of the Council of Chairpersons and the Council of Deans made in 1983, the history-political science major program was separated in 1984. Apart from the "difference in disciplinal orientation" (Jimenez, 1998, p. 104), Dr. Foronda stated that "there was



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felt need to separate them because it was beginning to be big” and “because now there are many majors” (Bonpin, 1993, p. 29). Dr. Corpuz, who served as the first chairperson of the History Department, maintained that the administration was impelled by the imperative “to develop both disciplines” (Bonpin, 1993, p. 44). Since then, the department of history, abolishing the West East sequence, has offered courses leading to the degree Bachelor of Arts in History. Subsequently, it created the Master of Arts in History and Master in History (non-thesis) degree programs and has continued to offer them up to the present time. The programs, particularly in the undergraduate level, have been constantly assessed and restructured in keeping with the demands of the times.

There has been no systematic study on the historical development of the history curriculum at the De La Salle University. The university records provide only a listing of the course offerings under the A.B. and M.A. History programs. In light of the absence of such a study, the writer deems it necessary to embark on this research.

This paper is a pioneering attempt to explain how the history curriculum at the De La Salle University, both in the undergraduate and graduate levels, has developed from the time the history-political science program was split in 1984 up to the present, taking into account the factors that were considered in offering and streamlining the undergraduate degree program and the line-up of faculty, their fields of specialization and contribution to Philippine historiography and efforts in training faculty from other educational institutions. A profile of student enrolment and undergraduate and graduate theses will likewise be presented.

This paper utilizes the historical method, that is, the descriptive-analytical method and appropriates Prof. Arnold Toynbee’s theory of challenge and response. It explains how the history department has designed and streamlined its curriculum, bearing in mind its mission-vision and that of the university, its keen desire to increase the number of majors, changing political circumstances, as well as the availability of faculty to handle the courses and the challenge posed by the trimestral system. It shows how the department organized its teaching staff to meet the curricular requirements.

2. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM IN HISTORY

Since the history-political science program was separated in 1984, the Department of History, has offered a three-year course that leads to the Bachelor of Arts (A.B.) degree, major in history. The department, which belongs to the College of Liberal Arts, has endeavored to “provide students with an understanding of the broad foundations of historical studies through a critico-theoretical approach” (De La Salle University, 1984, p. 96; “Bachelor of Arts in History,” n.d.).



Presented at the Research Congress 2013
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March 7-9, 2013

The courses listed under the Department of History during the School Year 1984-1985 included the following: History of Civilization, Anthropology and History, Philippine Nationalism and Social Movements, History of East Asia, Philosophy of History, The Philippines under Spain, History of Southeast Asia, Literature and History, The Philippines in the 20th Century, Special Topics in History, Major Trends in Historical Writing and Methods of Oral and Archival Research. It must be noted the History of Civilization was treated as a major subject until School Year 1986-1987 (De La Salle University, 1984; De La Salle University, 1985; De La Salle University, 1986). In the main, most of these courses have been retained in the ensuing decades, while some have been removed after the curriculum has been revised.

When asked about the history curriculum when he was chair of the History and Area Studies Department from School Year 1987-1988 to School Year 1989-1991, Dr. Reynaldo Palma remarked that the curricular thrust was nationalism in consideration of the spirit that animated the People Revolution that toppled down the Marcos dictatorship (personal communication, January 30, 2013). Dr. Cornelio Bascara, a retired professor of history at De La Salle University who is still teaching in that institution on a part-time basis, shared the same view, adding that Dr. Palma was impelled by his personal advocacy to foster Filipino nationalism (personal communication, February 1, 2013). Dr. Antonio C. Hila, who was likewise a retired professor of history at De La Salle University with part-time appointment in the university, was quick to note that the department's thrust was in line with the institution's mission-vision and programs (personal communication, February 1, 2013).

The curriculum was revised in School Year 1991-1992 during the incumbency of Dr. Foronda to include courses on Prehistoric Philippines, Cultural History of the Philippines, European History and American History. The course on Methods of Oral and Archival Research had been replaced by Historical Methodology (De La Salle University, 1991). The courses on Anthropology and History, Literature and History, Major Trends in Historical Writing and Special Topics in History had been abolished in view of the lack of faculty who could teach these subjects (R. Palma, personal communication, January 30, 2013).

In School Year 1999-2001, the department, under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Hila, who held the position of chairmanship for eight years, had restructured the curriculum. The department recognized that it was impossible to cover all the topics in the syllabi of the courses on European History and American History what with the trimestral system, which consists of 14 weeks. Hence, the course on European History was split into two courses namely, Ancient and Medieval Europe (EUROMED) and Modern Europe (EUROMOD), while the course on American History was likewise divided into two courses namely, USACOLO (Colonial Period) and USAPRES (from 1770s to the present time) (A. Hila, personal communication, January 21, 2013).



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De La Salle University Manila
March 7-9, 2013

Curricular changes were effected in School Year 2003-2004 during the term of Dr. Bascara to provide impetus to the history curriculum and to expand the curriculum so as to offer a variety of subjects with the hope of attracting more history majors. The Philippine area was further strengthened when the curriculum was expanded to incorporate Diplomatic History of the Philippines and Economic History of the Philippines. In light of the addition of these two courses, EUROMED, EUROMOD, USACOLO and USAPRES were removed. Instead the department offered one course each for European History and American History. The course on Special Topics in History was restored. The course on Practicum was instituted. The course on Historical Methodology was scrapped (Bascara, personal communication, February 1, 2013; College of Liberal Arts, 2002).

Dr. Ronaldo Mactal, former chair of the department, was instrumental in the reintegration of the course on Special Topics in History into the curriculum. He decided to incorporate it into the history curriculum because one core subject in the College of Liberal Arts had been removed from the undergraduate program of study (personal communication, January 31, 2013).

The curriculum had not undergone drastic change in School Year 2006-2007. Under the chairmanship of Dr. Mactal, the department had restored the course on Historical Methodology and the two courses on American History (USAHIS1 and USAHIS2) (College of Liberal Arts, 2005).

GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN HISTORY

The Department of History started to offer Master of Arts in History in 1996 and subsequently, the Master in History program was opened during the term of Dr. Bascara. The curriculum of the graduate programs has not been revised nor updated since the time they were implemented (R. Escalante, personal communication, January 31, 2013). The courses included the following: Historical Methodology, Philippine Historiography, Philosophy of History, The Philippines under Spain, Postwar Philippines-1946 to the Present, Pre-colonial Philippines, Special Topics in Philippine History, The Philippines during the American Era, The Philippines during Japanese Occupation ("Master in History," n.d.).

3. FACULTY

Among the faculty members who had taught major courses were Dr. Marcelino Foronda, Dr. Carmelita Corpuz, Dr. Belen Alampay, Dr. Reynaldo Iletto, Dr. Bernardita Churchill, Dr. Reynaldo Palma, Dr. Antonio Hila, Dr. Luis Dery, Br. Gregory Wright FSC and Dr. Ronaldo Mactal. Educated at the Universidad de Salamanca, Dr. Foronda was a professor of history for over three decades and University Fellow whose works in oral and local history had expanded the frontiers in historical research. A retired professor of history, Dr. Corpuz obtained her doctorate degree in history at the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas and focused her research



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on women and Japanese and Southeast Asian histories. A Ph.D. degree holder from Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Dr. Alampay engaged in local history. Dr. Reynaldo Iletto, who received his Ph.D. from Cornell University, has published works on Southeast Asian historiography, among other topics. Educated at the Cornell University and Australian National University, Dr. Bernardita Churchill, who is currently the Chairman, Commission on Higher Education Technical Committee for History, has published books and articles on Philippine historiography and Philippine independence missions to the United States. A retired professor of history, Dr. Palma earned his doctorate degree in history at the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas and utilized the oral history methodology in his research on Luis Taruc. A Ph.D. degree holder from the University of the Philippines, Dr. Hila, who is currently a member of the CHED Technical Committee for History, has published extensively on Philippine culture and distinguished himself as a cultural historian. Dr. Luis Dery, a retired professor of history who holds a Ph.D. History from the University of the Philippines, has published extensively on local history. A former Visiting Professor of History, Br. Wright FSC earned his Ph.D. from the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque and undertook research on Lasallian studies and American history. Dr. Mactal, a Ph.D. degree holder from the University of the Philippines and member of the Teachers' Education Council of the Department of Education who continues to teach on a full-time basis, has been cited for his significant contribution to environmental history.

It is likewise instructive to note that at present, Mr. Jose Victor Jimenez, Dr. Rene Escalante, Dr. Jose Victor Torres, and Dr. Florina Orillos Juan have been tapped to teach major courses. Mr. Jimenez, who is currently reading for his dissertation at the University of Santo Tomas, has focused his research on institutional history. The current chair of the department and Commissioner, National Historical Commission of the Philippines, Dr. Escalante, who obtained his Ph.D. from the University of the Philippines, has undertaken researches on friar lands and the career of William Howard Taft in the Philippines. A Ph.D. degree holder from the University of Santo Tomas, Dr. Torres has conducted studies on Philippine culture. Dr. Orillos-Juan, who holds a Ph.D. from the University of the Philippines, has published works on environmental history.

4. STUDENTS

In the undergraduate level, the number of history majors fluctuated over time. In School Year 1984-1985, three students had been accepted into the major program. During the incumbency of Dr. Hila, there had been practically a seven-fold increase in the number of majors. Under Dr. Mactal's chairmanship, there were close to 10 majors. There had been a 10 to 15 percent increase in the number of majors in the next six years (Co and Santos, 2012).

The graduate program commenced with seven majors. This figure has been sustained over the years. Graduate students are teaching in such schools as De La Salle Lipa, De La Salle Canlubang, STI Sta. Rosa, Colegio de Amore, to name a few (D. Badilles, personal



Presented at the Research Congress 2013
De La Salle University Manila
March 7-9, 2013

communication, February 3, 2013; F. Orillos-Juan, personal communication, Feb. 3, 2012; A. de la Cruz, February 3, 2013).

As a terminal requirement both in the undergraduate and graduate level, students have submitted their thesis, which have been written under the advisership of faculty members of the department. The thesis may be categorized into the following: oral and local history; institutional history, cultural history; environmental history; economic history; political history; and the like.

5. CONCLUSION

In reviewing and enhancing the curriculum, the Department of History considered its mission-vision and that of the university, its pool of faculty, the political conditions obtaining at the time, the limitations of the trimestral system and the imperative to attract more students to the major program. The curriculum, specifically in the undergraduate level, has been constantly assessed to make it relevant to the demands of the times. The curricular requirements have dictated the faculty recruitment. The faculty members who have been tapped to teach the major courses have advanced degrees in history and have published works in their respective fields of specialization, which have enriched Philippine historiography. The faculty members exerted efforts to train faculty from other educational institutions. The number of history majors in the undergraduate level has risen and fallen over a period of almost three decades. There has been no considerable growth nor decline in the enrolment in the graduate program. For the thesis requirement, students both in the undergraduate and graduate level have produced historical works that have surely contributed to the body of knowledge.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Presented at the Research Congress 2013
De La Salle University Manila
March 7-9, 2013

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