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JOSE S. ARCILLA, S.J.

INTRODUCTION

Although the Jesuits returned to the Philippines in 1859 with the primary commission to christianize the pagan tribes in Mindanao, they rightly guessed that they would be asked to open a school as soon as they arrived in Manila in June of that year. By themselves they had already decided to maintain a central office in the capital of the archipelago to coordinate their mission work and, at the same time, to serve as a rest house for the sick and for newly arrived missionaries from Europe before they left for their assignments in Mindanao. Not surprisingly, they also hoped that this residence would awaken interest in their life and work among the young and induce them to think of joining the Society of Jesus.¹

As they had expected, the Jesuits had hardly settled in their new house in Manila when they were formally asked to take charge of the *Escuela pia* in the Walled City. They refused, but the offer was renewed and, on 1 October, the governor general issued the decree ordering the change in the administration of the school. And so, on 10 December 1859 the Jesuits opened the first classes, now no longer of the *Escuela pia*, but of the *Ateneo municipal de Manila*, as the school came to be called.²

1. Pablo Pastells, S.J., *Misión de la Compañía de Jesús de Filipinas en el siglo XIX* (Barcelona, 1916), 1: 7-9; José S. Arcilla, S.J., "The Return of the Jesuits to Mindanao," *Philippine Studies* 26 (1978): 23.

2. *Libro de Consultas, 1859-1899*: Archives of the Philippine Province of the Society of Jesus (Loyola House, Quezon City), 7^a *consulta* (7 de julio de 1859), 13^a *consulta* (6 de octubre de 1859). For a copy of the decree mandating the change in the administration of the school, see the governor general's official communication to the archbishop of Manila dated 1 October 1859 in *Oficios del Superior Gobierno (Civil) 1843-1871*, Archdiocesan Archives of Manila, 8-c-8.

Aside from isolated references to the Escuela, very little is known of the primary school which had served as the forerunner of the Ateneo de Manila University. We find it explicitly mentioned, for example, in a petition filed against the *ayuntamiento* of Manila by the last director of the school, Don Lorenzo Moreno Conde, claiming compensation for the injustice perpetrated in the "summary dismissal and absolute neglect of the person who had satisfactorily served as its regent for more than seven years."³

The petition, unfortunately, had no valid legal basis except a law dated 9 September 1857, but in force only in the Spanish peninsula. Moreno Conde was invoking that law, however, contending that it had always been the tradition of the home government to try to forestall the occasions when Spaniards in the Philippines would be condemned to a life of destitution. In losing his job because of the change in school administration, he claimed that he was equivalently being sentenced to a life of misery.

On 9 March 1860, three months after the inauguration of the Ateneo municipal, the new governor general of the Philippines wrote to the Overseas Ministry in Madrid, endorsing a proposal to pay the former teachers of the defunct school two thirds of their old salary as pension, until they could find a new job.⁴ As in Moreno Conde's case, the governor could not cite a single legal precedent to bolster the proposal; but he was hoping that some system could be introduced to resolve similar cases in the future. Madrid's answer was short and swift: it denied both requests.⁵

ORIGINS OF THE ESCUELA PIA

It is perhaps an exaggeration to say that between the Jesuits' expulsion in 1768 and their return to the country in 1859, pri-

3. Archivo Histórico Nacional (Madrid), *Sección de Ultramar, Filipinas*, Gobierno, *legajo* 5176. The petition is dated 23 November 1859 and signed by five other co-petitioners. Moreno Conde became director of the Escuela pia on 5 August 1852. The petition mentions that since all the primary schools in Manila were subject to the Escuela pia soon to be under the Jesuits, many teachers were likely to lose their jobs, too.

4. The Jesuits arrived in Manila when Fernando de Norzagaray was still governor general of the Philippines. During his term a number of improvements were introduced: the use of the decimal system in official accounts, the establishments of houses for the exchange of money, the beautification of Manila, the creation of the botanical gardens, etc. He left for Spain on 20 January 1860 for reasons of health, and was succeeded by Ramón M. Solano, who governed only until 30 August 1860, when he died. See *La Ilustración Filipina* (1 October 1860) for a brief biography of Solano.

5. AHN, *Ultr., Fil., Gob*, 5176.

mary education in the Philippines was “*en un todo abandonado*,”⁶ but it must have been badly neglected. It was precisely to remedy the situation that the Escuela pia had been founded.

Back in 1803, Don Pedro Agustín de Vivanco had headed a group to solicit voluntary contributions to finance a school for sons of Spanish and foreign families in Manila. The plan was to buy a house large enough to accommodate the necessary classrooms, besides living quarters for two resident teachers who would teach the basic academic skills, the elements of geography and geometry, plus the catechism (or, as it was then known, the *doctrina cristiana*), and *buenas costumbres*. The project called for an initial outlay of ₱20,000. After the first campaign, however, they collected only ₱5,000.

This flurry of activities came to a halt when, on 2 March 1804, Vivanco suddenly died intestate and without having recovered his speech. As was done in these cases, the register containing the money was opened in the presence of duly constituted witnesses, and they found the sum of 4,050 Mexican pesos, with the papers attesting to the loan of ₱2,000 to Don José González del Valle, an investor in the galleon trade. There were also four copies of a proposed *Plan de Institución de la Escuela pia*, one of which had been marked for presentation to the governor general, and another to the city board of trade.

Ten years later, in 1813, the school was still in the planning stage. We read of a Don Vicente Verzosa, a trustee of the board of trade, demanding from Don Francisco Diaz Durana who had been elected to succeed Vivanco, a formal statement of where things stood. The need for a school was apparent, it was pointed out, considering that the children in Manila had multiplied “beyond imagining.” Some money was available, part of which had been invested, and yet there was no school in sight. An answer from Durana failed to satisfy Verzosa who sent a second formal request for a more factual statement. In answer, he was told that because the royal treasury had disapproved the plan to purchase

6. *La Escuela pia. Su Origen, Desarrollo y Decadencia Probados con Documentos auténticos en este libro fielmente copiados, 1814-1831*: Archivo de la Provincia Tarraconense de la Compañía de Jesús (Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona), E-IIC-1, 24. On pages 20-21, the anonymous author of this book writes that not a single teacher could be found in Manila to educate the youth. At least, two Spanish teachers were needed “de la mejor conducta y mejor nombre posible . . .”

the factory of the royal tobacco monopoly and convert it into a primary school,⁷ the funds had been invested, some of which had proved successful, while others had been disastrous losses. For example, in 1806, the galleon *Magallanes* had sunk off Antique with all the goods aboard. Durana added, evidently out of hurt pride, that he had felt no obligation to report to Verzosa, since it was only the governor general, the "chief head of these islands," that he recognized as his superior.

Two years later, the governor general himself asked for a report. Durana explained that there was available the sum of ₱6,125, with ₱2,900 invested in loans. A month later, a new school board consisting of three residents of Manila and three members of the board of trade was formed. At their first meeting on 13 October 1815, they elected Diaz Durana as their president, and then they proceeded to discuss the regulations for the new school.

SCHOOL'S PURPOSE

The purpose of the school, Diaz Durana reported afterwards to the governor general, was to come to the aid of the more outstanding residents of "this Republic [who] sadly do not know where to send and educate their dear sons from their tenderest years, in our Sacred Religion, the Laws of Spain, and in conformity with that Superior Authority [vested in the Governor], since no individual, no body in this Republic has tried to initiate this praiseworthy object."⁸ It was in this spirit that they had approved article 14 of the proposed regulations which stated that the pupils were to be taught "reading and writing, Christian Doctrine, Orthography, Castilian Grammar, and Arithmetic." Furthermore, since the board of trade had always wanted to open a nautical school, they had agreed to set aside the "last hall" of the school for the purpose. In this way, the school board hoped to provide public instruction commensurate with the "donors, the most respected residents of this City, the same who form the Body of its Commerce."⁹ More importantly, of course, the board of trade had agreed to pay part of the expenses of the Escuela pia.

7. This building had belonged to a certain Felipe de Cerain and, by 1813, was serving as the Colegio de Santa Potenciana, a school for girls.

8. *La Escuela pia*, 24.

9. *Ibid.*, 33.

Perhaps Diaz Durana, the first president of the school board, did not immediately advert to this veiled threat against the independence of the school; but even if he did, he could not have done anything about it.¹⁰ Less than a year later, on 19 April 1816, he died, and a new president had to be chosen to succeed him. It was his successor who suggested printing the planned school *Ordenanzas* and two textbooks for class use: a *Catecismo pequeño* (or *Compendio*) attributed to Francisco Amado Pouget, and a *Librito menor* in quarto, prepared by the Piarist Fathers as a Spanish grammar, arithmetic, and orthology all rolled into one.

FIRST DIRECTOR

By July 1816, there was still no school. Worse, two of the school board had already resigned, necessitating the search for two new members to take their place. On 2 September 1816, the chaplain of the ayuntamiento, Fr. José de Barcelona, was hired to teach and serve as the first director of the school. He was, however, told that he had to resign his chaplaincy with its attendant monthly salary of ₱29, although he could still continue to accept mass stipends. As director, he could propose before the school board the second teacher, or, at least, the latter would not be approved without his consent. Furthermore, he could sit in during the monthly board meetings.

The search for a second teacher was not easy. The salary was low, owing to the "inadequate resources of the city," and, on the other hand, the school board was more than ordinarily careful not to hire "any Jew or Teacher, for the consequences that could follow." They wanted someone known for his "good religious principles, prudence, urbanity, and love for our sovereigns . . ."¹¹ Finally, by the end of October, they named a newly arrived Spaniard as the second teacher, Don Juan Reyes, who had come to

10. One of the questions discussed by the Jesuits when they were ordered to take charge of the Escuela pia was their authority to admit or expel pupils from the school. They unanimously agreed to ask for "full freedom" on the matter, but with the obligation to notify the ayuntamiento of their decision. The prefect of studies was given this authority, but it was suggested he act only after consulting the teachers. See *Libro de Consultas*, 13ª consulta.

11. *La Escuela pia*, 46-47.

Manila as a private tutor to the younger brother of Don Thomas Shely.¹²

Just when they thought everything was ready for the opening of classes, someone pointed out that the suggested textbooks were of the wrong kind. A second manual, Santiago Delgado's *Elementos de Ortografía y de Gramática Castellana*, was also voted down because the letters were so tiny that it "could hardly teach properly with its method . . ."¹³ If they had the funds, they could reprint it using a larger type. But they had none and it was decided to use the *Ortografía y Gramática Castellana de la Real Academia*, copies of which were stored in the archives. Even if these were *any*-eaten, they could be repaired, and that would be less expensive than issuing a new edition of the book.

Was everything, then, set for the start of classes? No, someone pointed out, because there were no funds to keep the school going. Nonetheless, the city government decided to intervene and set the inauguration of the Escuela pia for 2 January 1817. Authority over the school was vested in the school board, whose vice-president had the special task of visiting the school daily.

CONSTANT FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

As anybody could have guessed, starting a school without adequate funds was to invite trouble. On 7 February 1817, barely a month later, the school board approved a resolution to impose a monthly fee of six *reales* on the sons of rich families. This was soon raised to eight reales or one peso. Six months later, the fee was doubled, except for the children of low-salaried military officers or employees who were still charged with the old rate. The added income was expected to amount to ₱30 or ₱40, but by November, there was a move to make a new list of subscribers and donors in order to ascertain whether they still wanted to continue as benefactors or donors to the school. To compound the problem, the school had grown and better facilities were needed. But this also meant doubling the monthly budget. Books had to be procured, and the services of a secretary were necessary to keep up

12. We have no information who this Shely was. Most probably he was an English resident in Manila, and his name was Shelley, instead of the hispanicized form used here.

13. *La Escuela pia*, 100.

with the increased school population. Because of lack of funds, the school board told the director that he had to pay the secretary's salary out of his own income. The school could not afford to hire one!

The problem of insufficient funds continued to plague the Escuela pia during its brief existence of forty-three years, and was in fact one of the main reasons for its colorless history. The school board had to meet every month in order to bail it out of its chronic insolvency. The ayuntamiento had already agreed to allocate money for the school rental,¹⁴ but when the royal order of 17 April 1821 established an independent nautical school in the Philippines, the board of trade stopped paying half of the school budget, prompting an appeal to the governor general to intervene and ask the board to continue its financial help just as the ayuntamiento was doing. And when the 250-year old galleon trade finally ended after the South American wars of independence, the liquid assets of the school sank to only ₱3,738, while unpaid expenses for the last five years grew to half that amount. If the school received no financial aid, the school board decided at their monthly meeting on 12 April 1826 that the school would have to close: "... most regretfully finding the funds so exhausted that it is impossible not only to hire the Teachers that are needed, but also to allow the continuance of classes much longer than the present year."¹⁵

Fortunately, aid came. The following June, the ayuntamiento offered a yearly subsidy of ₱800 from the "surplus funds set aside for the mercantile deposit" recently restored by the city government which had also stipulated that sum "for things connected with teaching and the common advantage of its commerce."¹⁶ As though this were not enough, the city also agreed the next year to pay the school debts and expenses in order to keep the Escuela pia from closing.

On receipt of this good news, a third teacher was hired at a monthly salary of ₱15 and, as soon as the school year began, new

14. Initially ₱400 a year, but when a bigger school was needed, the rental fee rose to ₱600. To appreciate the real value of these figures, in 1875, the annual salary of the Director of Civil Administration was ₱1,800. See AHN, *Ultr.*, Hac., 1455.

15. *La Escuela pia*, 108-110.

16. *Ibid.*, 111-112.

statutes for the school were approved by the school board for a period of trial or until experience dictated certain changes or revisions had to be introduced.¹⁷

Ill luck seems to have been the lot of the Escuela pia. In October 1828, it lost ₱1,000 in loans to a commercial firm in Manila. Once more the ayuntamiento had to come to the rescue by paying ₱1,495 for the expenses incurred in the last two years. The school had available only ₱600 in cash, but a debt of ₱800 had to be paid to one of the school's creditors.

At their monthly meeting on 31 December that year, the school board discovered that expenses amounted to ₱1,032 while the school's income totalled only ₱774. There was only one decision to make. They had been trying to keep the school from floundering, but now they were forced to admit that "it would be very convenient" if the city government was asked to assume "direction of this foundation since it finds itself in the aforesaid situation of a total lack of funds"¹⁸

The end did not come immediately. For three years more, the school board managed to scrape enough money for the school. But on 9 March 1831, the decision was taken. Since the main function of the school board had automatically ceased with the complete exhaustion of the school funds, it had no more reason to exist. The only logical thing to do was to dissolve the school board. Its books and archives were turned over to the ayuntamiento of Manila, "from whom [the teachers] will await the termination or the continuation of their tasks."¹⁹

The following June, the city of Manila formally accepted the control and direction of the Escuela pia, after the governor general of the Philippines had approved the transfer. For the next twenty-eight years, until the Jesuits returned to the islands in 1859, the city was the owner and administrator of the school.

17. The director of the Escuela pia received a monthly salary of ₱50, the second teacher ₱40, and the third teacher ₱15, but later to be increased to ₱30. By 1824, to help the director two secretaries had been hired at a monthly salary of ₱20 for the "more outstanding" of the two, and only ₱10 for the second.

18. *La Escuela pia*, 137.

19. *Ibid.*, 147-148.

PROBLEMS OF AUTHORITY AND DISCIPLINE

Lack of funds was not the only problem that faced the school, although it was its major concern. Membership in the school board changed frequently, and apparently the obligation of the vice-president to visit the classes daily was not always faithfully kept. By January 1823, four members of the board took monthly turns to make the prescribed visits.²⁰

The need for these visits is evident in the minutes of the monthly school board meeting on 25 March 1817, just three months after classes had started. The school, it was noted, was already losing its good name, and the parents were complaining that the boys were "advancing little in their training and formation, and it was known that even in class, they did not observe the proper order and decent behavior" This was due to the "excessive goodness" of Reyes, the new director after Barcelona had resigned for ill health. Nor was the second teacher any help. The latter hardly ever came to school on time; when he did come, he followed no method in his classes and even deviated from the accepted system. The boys were naturally mired in the same lesson for many days without making any progress. The school board duly sent a reminder to Reyes urging him to assume and exercise his authority, while it also admonished the other teacher and the officials in the school to "acknowledge the authority vested in Reyes to arrange and order everything that he may consider necessary, no less than to correct the defects, omissions, and faults of his subordinates" ²¹ Clearly, it was more than merely an academic problem that was brewing in the school.

Five years later, in 1822, the school board called the attention of the second teacher, José M^a Fabié, for having recourse to "indecorous words and inflicting excessive punishments." One of the board members suggested banning the cane and "instead, a short leather belt, wide and open at one end." It was also proposed that the children be grouped in small classes where "from the first to the last, they may read or study the same lesson," since in this

20. For example, in 1823, the schedule of visits was: Don Manuel Brodet – January, May, September; Don José Calderón – February, June, October; Don Ciriaco Yraola – March, July, November; Don Felipe Fernández de Vedoya – April, August, December.

21. *La Escuela pía*, 57.

way, "the instruction would be mutually beneficial," the slower ones learning from the faster, who ought to "move on to the next higher group."²²

In answer, Fabié explained that because several of the pupils habitually absented themselves, they could not be expected to learn much. Besides, some of them aspired to be "cadets" and they came to class with their sabers.

Things did not improve much, for in 1824, the school board approved writing to the parents of boys of "bad conduct," and warned the former that if punishment proved ineffective, the guilty would be dismissed from the school. For their part, the teachers were again reminded to watch lest the other pupils be "contaminated" by the bad boys.

To satisfy the continued complaints of the parents, it was decided a month later to change the system of two teachers. The position of the second teacher would be abolished and in his place two clerks would be hired, both of whom would be under the direct orders of the director of the school.

Neither was this plan of any help. In the middle of June 1829, the monthly meeting of the school board was devoted exclusively to the "public clamor against the abuses in the Escuela pia and the discredit it was consequently earning for itself." From all sides, the president of the board was bombarded with complaints about the chaotic situation in the classrooms, the total neglect of the regulations, and the general dissatisfaction of the families whose sons were enrolled in the school. The most frequent charge was that the teachers imprisoned the boys in a wine cellar, two, three, or four hours at a stretch. Sometimes, the boys were left to themselves as they rioted and pulled one another about in the classroom, "in the manner of animals, calling one another nicknames." At other times, the boys were hit on the head with the teacher's cane. Nor were these the only misdemeanors. The teachers were accused of frequent lateness to school. One of them dared "to smoke in class with no concern for decency, not only in this but also in the various postures he assumed, even reclining on two chairs." The head teacher frequently left school early on any pretext to take care of his family, or allowed his own children to

22. Ibid., 89.

come and play inside the classroom. Worse, he tolerated boys more than fourteen years of age to continue at the Escuela and either admitted others without the knowledge of the school board, or without due authorization granted exemptions from the monthly fee.

Nor was this all. In calligraphy, the teacher had disregarded the regulation and the children learned nothing. Smelly, or dirty and foul-tasting water was served to the boys, although one could easily purchase good water at the current price and boil it. In the afternoon, the school was kept locked until the head teacher felt like opening it, and so the children were left out on the street by themselves, "as though this was a matter of indifference to the school authorities." And, concluded the report, "what will the parents of the pupils around you say if they saw the latter, as some of the residents do see, climbing and lying on the railings of the windows, in danger of falling and being killed?"²³

It was a lengthy litany of complaints that preoccupied the members of the school board. But either the situation was hopelessly beyond remedy, or the teachers were masochists who delighted in inflicting corporal punishments, for ten months later, by April 1830, complaints still kept pouring in. Spanking or whipping had been explicitly forbidden. However, it was left to the teacher's prudence to inflict whatever "decorous" corrective measures had to be applied, like "suspensions, privation of recreation and snacks between meals, exposure to public shame, or, at most, one, two, or three canings" But an incorrigible pupil for whom punishment inflicted "with the consent of his parents or guardians" was ineffective, had to be dismissed from the school.²⁴

By the middle of 1830, then, not long before the school board was disbanded and the city took over the administration of the Escuela pia, Vivanco's project had turned out to be a notorious disappointment. What kind of school, however, had he envisioned?

As mentioned, a proposed plan for the school had already been drawn up when Vivanco, the originator of the Escuela pia foundation, died in 1804. This was revised and changes were introduced

23. *Ibid.*, 140-43.

24. *Ibid.*, 144.

because certain subjects could not be taught due to the limited financial resources of the school. A third edition was approved in 1828, better formulated and based on the experience of the past ten years. There were nine chapters of several sections each, except the sixth which had only one section explaining the division of the hours of teaching, and the ninth dealing with vacations. The chapters were: (1) Teachers; (2) Pupils; (3) Classes and Times Allotted to Them; (4) Teaching Methods; (5) "*Emperor*" and his "*Decuriones*" (or Captains); (6) Division of Hours of Teaching; (7) Penalties; (8) Awards; (9) Vacations.

THE SCHOOL'S RATIONALE

What, perhaps, might be considered as the rationale behind the Escuela pia is briefly stated in the first section of the chapter on teachers. The latter had the duty of "leading the children along the path of the fear of God, of virtue, and of honor . . ." They were expected to observe "concord and friendship, an affable manner, propriety in their speech, and, in a word, all their actions should be a credit to the confidence placed in them when the Fathers of the Country had entrusted them with their future hopes." On the other hand, obviously to avoid repetition of a decade's sad experience in intramural bickering, the third section warned that "detraction, hateful gossiping, and lack of union are the bane of the young, painful to the School Board, and alien and unworthy of men at the forefront of the fine hopes of the Fatherland. The Board denounces such vices, it condemns them, and hopes they will find no place in the bosom of the teachers." And in order to properly evaluate the progress of their pupils, monthly teachers' meetings were prescribed.

Only Spanish *criollo*, and foreign boys between six and fourteen years of age could be admitted, but no one younger than six or older than eleven years of age could begin schooling at the Escuela. They must always be decently clothed, otherwise they would not be admitted into the classroom. Everyone was expected to show respect for the others, and no one might dare address another with the familiar "*tú*." Teachers were never to allow any prattling or annoying and bitter answers.

On entering the classroom, the boys were to say "Ave, María Purísima" and others were to answer "Sin pecado concebida."

Then they made the sign of the cross before the image of the Blessed Mother of God, before proceeding to their places in the *decuria*. The latecomer was made to kneel until the head teacher told him to rise.

Such detailed regulations must have weighed heavily on the boys as the months went by, unless by some special talent, the teachers succeeded in instilling in their charges some kind of a spartan military attitude.

The boys were divided into small groups under a *decurio* (or captain) who was chosen for his "diligence in studies and good upbringing." An *Emperor* was appointed to act as the supreme leader of the boys, chosen for his "diligence in studies, irreprehensible conduct, and attendance at school." While the *decurio* was charged with the observance of silence and order in his small group, the emperor had the same duty over the entire school. He also led the prayers at the start and end of the class, reported the faults of the pupils, and acted in the place of the teacher when the latter was absent.

Although these appointments had occasioned a deterioration in the teacher-student relationships during the past ten years, there was good reason for the practice. On their appointment, the emperor and his *decuriones* were told that their "talents . . . conduct and diligence in studies" had won for them their "imperial Crown." If they refused the honor being conferred on them, they deserved a good reprehension, for if they refused to "serve their companions, they will badly serve their Fatherland when it will entrust them with some duty, distinction, or task. For as students in a school, which is a special society with its own government, Magistrates and Laws, they ought to prepare themselves beforehand to become useful members of society."

COMPLAINTS CONCERNING PUNISHMENTS

The majority of the complaints of the parents were occasioned by the punishments suffered by the pupils. The revised school regulations of 1828 added a long introduction to the chapter on punishments, in which it explained that penalties were "necessary to keep us within the bounds of our duties, we are our source of

evil.”²⁵ Punishment was of two kinds: corrective or moral, and corporal punishment. The first was imposed for less “transcendent” faults, while the second was for the more serious offenses which “could undermine the more solid foundations of subordination and discipline which, if preserved, produced such wonderful effects.”

Contemporary ideas of discipline and moral behavior may lead one to ridicule some of the penalties imposed on the boys, but we must keep in mind the thinking behind these rules. For example, a pupil caught with *buyó* or cigarettes,²⁶ was punished, for a first offense, with an hour of “post” or two hours in the “stockade.”²⁷ Of course, both the *buyó* and the cigarettes were confiscated. Careless use of class manuals, given their high cost, was also punishable with an hour of post, plus a tag worn by the culprit which read “NEGLIGENT.” Confiscation was the price paid for bringing to school “toys, pictures, and sharp instruments.” A second offense also earned the culprit a caning, and if the boy continued to disregard the prohibition, he was assigned “an extra dose of lessons, writing exercises, or mathematical problems for eight days.” Finally, if a boy showed any sign of *soberbia* when being sentenced for any offence whatever, he won a double measure of the penalty!

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

The academic program began with *ortología*, the art of proper diction and oral reading. Lessons were based on a syllabary prepared for the purpose by the Escuela pia. Once this initial text was mastered, the boys were introduced to the *Catón cristiano*, a book of selected phrases and sentences arranged according to difficulty to perfect the beginner in reading.²⁸ The more proficient used the second syllabary prepared by the Spanish Royal

25. The introduction to the chapter on punishments adds: “*Castigando se corrige, contemplando se fomenta el vicio, y dá margen á la corrupción.*” *Reglamento de la Escuela pia*, Cap. 7, “Introducción.”

26. Today, it would be drugs and strong alcoholic beverages.

27. It is hard for us today to imagine how, for example, a pupil could be condemned to four hours “in the stockade” (*cepo*) for an act of disrespect for the teacher, the penalty imposed for the first offense. A second offense merited two whippings, and a third four. Who whipped the pupil? The *sirvientes de la Escuela*.

28. The book is so called after Cato Dionysius, a Latin grammarian.

Academy of Language, without which no boy could move on to *The Obligations of a Man* and *The Children's Friend* by Abbé Sabatier.²⁹ The last book studied in this subject was the *Lessons of Morality, History, and Geography* written on commission by the superior government of the Philippines. If this book was not available, the *Selections from the Best Spanish Orators*, a text prescribed for the schools in Madrid, was used.

The class began and ended with the bell. The prompter (*enmen-dador*) indicated where the day's lesson started and closed, and the boys practiced their reading in groups of two, three, or six. As the boys read, individual corrections were offered by pointing out how a particular rule had been violated. Class competitions were regularly announced, the competitors being chosen by their respective classes.

There were four other subjects, calligraphy, arithmetic, grammar, and christian doctrine. The same methods were followed as in the class on orthology. Lessons were graduated according to difficulty, and individual teaching was emphasized. Interest was fomented by regular competitions and there was plenty of opportunity for review. Interestingly, review classes in arithmetic and Spanish grammar were obligatory on all students who had begun these subjects. Thursday morning was entirely given to a review of grammar, while arithmetic was reviewed at regular intervals in the afternoon classes, except Thursday which was the regular weekly holiday.

Christian doctrine was an afternoon subject. For the beginners, the catechism written by the Jesuit Jerónimo Ripalda was used. Those who already knew their Ripalda studied either the *Compendio* by Pouget or Claude Fleury's *Ecclesiastical History*, most probably modified to suit the children.³⁰ A review of the weekly catechetical lessons was conducted every Saturday morning by the head teacher himself, to emphasize the importance of the subject. This was followed by the rosary which all the boys

29. Auguste Sabatier (d. 1901) was a protestant theologian, dean and founder of the faculty of theology in Paris. It is a rather pregnant sign of the times that Catholic Manila should have approved for their children a book authored by a non-Catholic.

30. Ripalda was a Spanish Jesuit whose *Catecismo* was widely used all over Spain for several generations. He died in Toledo in 1618. — Claude Fleury, a French priest, had served as the confessor of King Louis XV of France and authored a history of the Church. He died around 1723.

recited "in common, kneeling." If there was time, a portion of the school regulations was read. A regular activity of the school was the celebration of the holy mass every Saturday morning.³¹

CONCLUSION

This was, then, the Escuela pia, the primary school for boys whose troubled history was quickly overshadowed by that of the more fortunate Ateneo municipal. Against all odds, the former managed to offer some fundamental academic skills to those who continued to follow its program of education. We do not have exact information on the total number of boys who studied at the Escuela pia, except for 1818 when we know there were at least ninety-two boys. There were only two teachers until the 1830s when a third was hired, besides the secretaries and the *sirvientes* to take care of the daily chores in the school.

The arrival of the Jesuits in 1859 must have seemed to the distraught parents as the long-sought solution to their problems. One, however, wonders whether things could have turned out differently if Vivanco's pious foundation had been a financial success. That he should have even initiated such a project is already in itself a laudable thing. Unfortunately, the Escuela pia was conceived during a rather low point in the history of

31. The class schedule was revised a number of times, but the 1828 school regulations finally decided on the following:

Monday-Wednesday-Friday

A.M. 8:00 – 9:00 – Calligraphy

9:00 – 10:00 – Orthology

10:00 – 11:00 – Arithmetic

P.M. 3:00 – 4:00 – Calligraphy

4:00 – 5:00 – Orthology and Christian Doctrine
(except Thursday and Saturday)

Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday

A.M. 8:00 – 9:00 – Calligraphy

9:00 – 10:00 – Memory and Grammar Lessons

10:00 – 11:00 – Review Lessons (except Thursday)

On Thursday, review lessons
from 8:00 – 11:00 A.M.

P.M. No time mentioned – Orthology
Christian Doctrine

Spain and her colonies. Both the government of Madrid and of the colonies must have been distracted by more important concerns. The lack of financial resources which greatly explains the lack of good teachers at the Escuela was merely a symptom of the hard times in which the school had tried its heroic best to exist. Despite everything, however, one cannot avoid the impression, after reading the school regulations and the records of the various meetings of the school board, that those in charge were motivated by the highest considerations and had clearly tried to do their best for the sake of the youth of Manila.