

THE CURRENT STATE OF PHILOSOPHY EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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Philosophy education in the Philippines is as old as the country's history. However, there are only a few studies on the development of philosophy education in the Philippines, which is critical given that the country is in the process of reforming its educational system and the need for philosophy to respond to contemporary challenges. This study examines the current state of philosophy education in the Philippines, focusing on its institutional roots, problems, and challenges. To do this, seminaries, colleges, and universities throughout Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao that offer philosophy programs at the undergraduate to PhD levels are being mapped and listed to provide an overview of their accessibility, distribution, and academic strength. As a result, the major problems facing the field are being addressed, especially concerns over its financial viability, perceived lack of practical relevance, and limited job opportunities for philosophy graduates. We place these within the larger discussions over the function of philosophy in contemporary Philippine society. Philosophy graduates' contributions to the different sectors of society are also shown, indicating that the field continues to have a minor but significant influence. Finally, the study examines how cultural and economic elements impact public perceptions of philosophy, potentially leading to its marginalization or reemergence. The study sheds light on philosophy's prospects and continuous relevance in the Philippine educational landscape by investigating its potential flexibility to societal needs rather than diagnosing an unavoidable demise. Thus, by doing this, we can enhance and strengthen the philosophy education in the Philippines.

Keywords: Emerita Quito, Filipino philosophy, philosophy, problems and prospects, state of Philosophy Education in the Philippines

INTRODUCTION

This paper surveys the current state of philosophy education in the Philippines via revisiting the discussion initiated by Dr. Emerita Quito in her 1983 book *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines*. We critically analyze the challenges facing philosophy education in the country and explore their potential solutions. We will examine the problems and prospects of philosophy in the Philippines, thereby offering a comprehensive overview of what must be done to sustain and enhance philosophy education. Although some recent works, such as Jeremiah Joven Joaquin's "*Analytic Philosophy in the Philippines*" (2022), examined the current state of analytic philosophizing in the country, this paper moves beyond specific philosophical traditions to offer a broader analysis of the general status of philosophy education in the Philippines. It considers developments not only in Metro Manila-based universities that have long offered philosophy programs, but also those institutions located beyond traditional centers. This extended scope further updates and adds comprehensive data to the effort made by Agbisit, Bolaños, Cariño, Cortez, Mancenido-Bolaños, and Pada (2021) in their report "*Teaching and Doing Philosophy in the Philippines: Critique and Intervention*," which critically surveys the landscape of philosophical education and practice across the country. Their study provided an essential foundation for understanding the institutional and pedagogical challenges faced by philosophy programs nationwide.

The first part of the paper explores colleges and universities across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao that offer philosophy programs at various levels. This section aims to provide a comprehensive view of both the accessibility and academic robustness of philosophy education in the country. It includes an assessment of the state of philosophy education, as well as an analysis of the overall demand for philosophy programs in higher education based on the number of HEIs offering them. The second part of the paper critically examines the contemporary challenges facing philosophy in the Philippines. It addresses the widespread perception that philosophy as a discipline is declining, often attributed to concerns about financial viability and limited career opportunities. It also investigates the roles philosophy graduates play in professional fields such as academia, research, ethics consultation, policymaking, and public discourse. Furthermore, it considers how cultural and economic factors influence public attitudes toward philosophy and whether these factors contribute to its perceived marginalization. Finally, the paper seeks to determine whether philosophy in the Philippines is truly losing relevance or, instead, adapting to meet the evolving demands of contemporary society.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The term *Filipino philosophy* is an unavoidable topic when tackling the state of philosophy education in the Philippines. It is a field that sparks particular attention when surveying the condition of philosophy education in the country in terms of its development and contestation. Many contributions and critiques of major thinkers in the field outline the evolving contours, internal debates, and potential future

trajectories of philosophical inquiry in the country. Hence, as an academic discipline and intellectual tradition, Filipino philosophy has undergone significant development and has been shaped by historical, cultural, and epistemological challenges (Demeterio 2013; De Joya 2013). Various Filipino scholars have examined its current state, methodological struggles, and the possibility of constructing a distinctly Filipino philosophical discourse (Jose 2021).

The assessment in this paper evaluates the state of Filipino philosophy through the works of key thinkers, such as Emerita Quito, Rolando Gripaldo, Feorillo Demeterio III, and others, to provide a nuanced understanding of its evolution and future directions. Quito's work, *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines* (1983), remains a foundational reference in understanding the trajectory of philosophical education and discourse in the country. Her primary argument was that philosophy in the Philippines was underdeveloped due to several issues. But one of her main concerns was the lack of an original Filipino philosophy (Liwanag 2016; Demeterio and Liwanag 2018). Much of the philosophical discourses in the country remained derivative, that is, primarily influenced by Western thought without significant local contributions. Additionally, she critiqued the way philosophy was taught in universities, for it was often overly historical and textual rather than critical and problem-based. Many philosophy programs focus on classical thinkers without encouraging original philosophical inquiry. Another major issue she identified was the marginalization of philosophy as a discipline, particularly in comparison to the sciences and applied fields. The public often perceived philosophy as abstract and impractical, leading to limited career opportunities for philosophy graduates. Despite these criticisms, Quito believed philosophy could be revitalized through reforms in education and research (Liwanag 2016). She advocated for a philosophy relevant to Filipino society, engaging with real-world issues such as governance, ethics, and social justice.

Rolando M. Gripaldo (1988, 520-522), in his review of Quito's *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines*, contributed extensively to the study of Filipino philosophy, particularly through his bibliographic and historiographical work. He documented a wide range of philosophical writings in the Philippines, from the colonial period to contemporary times, categorizing them into various traditions such as speculative, critical, and applied Filipino philosophy. Gripaldo also advocated for the development of a distinctly Filipino philosophy that integrates indigenous thought with global philosophical traditions. He proposed a reconstructive approach that would allow Filipino philosophy to be both historically grounded and methodologically rigorous (Gripaldo 2000, 2008, 2013, 2018). His efforts helped establish a clearer intellectual lineage for Filipino philosophers and provided a valuable framework for future scholarship. Moreover, Gripaldo's work continues to influence contemporary debates on identity, method, and the scope of philosophical inquiry in the Philippines.

Building on earlier foundations, F.P.A. Demeterio (2013; 2014) revisited and expanded the discourse on Filipino philosophy through a series of critical studies that assessed the contributions of key thinkers such as Zialcita, Timbreza, Quito, Abulad, Mabaquiao, Gripaldo, and Co. His meta-analysis of their theoretical orientations highlighted both the diversity and fragmentation within the field. In particular,

Demeterio (2014) examined the developmental potentials of twelve distinct discourses in Filipino philosophy, evaluating their coherence, cultural relevance, and academic viability. He also emphasized the institutional influence of De La Salle University professors, including Quito, Ceniza, Timbreza, and Gripaldo, in shaping a national philosophical canon. In revisiting Emerita Quito's foundational analysis, Demeterio highlighted the discourse's continued relevance, while also noting that many of the structural problems she identified, such as the lack of disciplinary coherence and methodological clarity, are still unresolved. As a consequence, Filipino philosophy continues to oscillate between cultural critique, historical reconstruction, and formal philosophical inquiry. It simply reflects that there are ongoing tensions in its search for identity and direction.

In contrast to the efforts that seek to define and develop a distinct Filipino philosophical tradition, Anton Heinrich L. Rennesland (2021) offered a critical perspective. He argued that "Filipino philosophy" may be more of a cultural construct than an epistemologically grounded discipline." His critique challenges the validity of foundational assumptions in the field and calls for a radical re-evaluation of its core premises. This skepticism aligns with ongoing debates about methodology in Filipino philosophy, particularly those raised by Roland Theuas Pada (2014), who identified its eclecticism and lack of systematic rigor as persistent issues. Pada emphasized the difficulty Filipino philosophers face in reconciling Western philosophical frameworks with indigenous thought, often resulting in inconsistencies and methodological confusion that hinder the formation of a coherent philosophical discourse.

Meanwhile, Jeremiah Joven Joaquin (2022) explored the development of analytic philosophy in the Philippines. He noted that analytic philosophy has gained ground in recent years, but it still remains underdeveloped compared to its Western counterparts. While Quito critiqued the general stagnation of philosophy, Joaquin highlights the increasing influence of analytic philosophy, particularly in academic institutions such as De La Salle University and the University of the Philippines. He acknowledges that, despite its growth, the reach of analytic philosophy remains confined to these two academic institutions. He also challenges the perception that philosophy lacks practical utility by demonstrating how analytic philosophy could contribute to logic, linguistics, and AI ethics (Joaquin 2022). With the influence of analytic philosophy on other fields of philosophy, he asserts that philosophy as a discipline is not necessarily declining. Instead, it keeps on evolving in response to contemporary needs.

Beyond the dominant national discourse, there have been concerted efforts to highlight the diverse but regionally grounded dimensions of Filipino philosophical thought. Jan Gresil S. Kahambing and Demeterio (2018), in their interviews and dialogues with some scholars from the Central, Southern, and Northern regions of the Philippines, reveal that philosophical inquiry in the country is far from being a monolithic pursuit. Instead, the inquiry is deeply rooted in local, cultural, and historical landscapes. Their works challenge the notion of a singular "Filipino philosophy," presenting instead a tapestry of regionally situated engagements with existential, ethical, and epistemological concerns.

Similarly, Raterta et al. (2019) explore the intricate relationship between language and philosophical development through engagement with some scholars from the Visayas, like Mercado, Ocay, Maboloc, and Suazo. Their study underscores how linguistic frameworks shape the articulation of thought and the horizons of philosophical possibility in the Philippine context. Meanwhile, Liwanag and Demeterio (2018) focus on the often-overlooked contributions of Filipina philosophers, particularly Quito and Mary John Mananzan. Their comparative study interrogates the gendered dimensions of Filipino philosophical discourse, while advocating for a more inclusive space where feminist perspectives are acknowledged and integrated into the broader philosophical landscape. These philosophical explorations demonstrate that Filipino philosophy is not merely an academic exercise but a lived, evolving discourse that must continually engage with the multiplicity of voices and experiences that define the nation (Gianan 2009; Joaquin 2010).

Accordingly, it is undeniably true that philosophy education in the Philippines has long been shaped by Western and patriarchal traditions, often marginalizing women's voices and indigenous epistemologies. However, women philosophers such as Josephine Pasricha, Magdalena Villaba, Narcisa Paredes-Canilao, and Antonette Palma-Angeles have significantly redefined the philosophical landscape by integrating feminist, decolonial, and culturally grounded perspectives into both scholarship and pedagogy. Their critiques against the male-dominated philosophical canon in the Philippines advocate for feminist reinterpretations, represented by scholars from the University of Santo Tomas (UST), such as Josephine Pasricha, who urges the inclusion of women's voices and perspectives to foster inclusivity (Pasricha 2004). Her approach resonates with Jane Roland Martin's critique of educational philosophy, which calls for the recognition of women's intellectual contributions and the restructuring of philosophical education to reflect diverse experiences (Rice 2015). Magdalena Villaba, also from UST, contributed to the integration of Eastern philosophy and Christian ethics, emphasizing the spiritual and intellectual roles of women in philosophical traditions (Villaba 1975). Her work parallels efforts in East Asian philosophy to recover indigenous wisdom and challenge Western epistemic dominance.

At the University of the Philippines-Baguio, Narcisa Paredes-Canilao foregrounds indigenous Filipino concepts such as *kapwa* and *loob*, offering alternatives to Western liberal individualism and contributing to the decolonization of philosophical education (Paredes-Canilao 2006). Her scholarship aligns with global movements advocating for epistemic justice and the reclamation of native knowledge (Strobel 2024; Mobilla 2025). Moreover, Antonette Palma-Angeles of Ateneo de Manila University has advanced Filipino ethical thought through her work on moral sensitivity and leadership ethics. Her pedagogical innovations emphasize culturally grounded ethical reasoning, beginning with students' lived experiences and integrating Filipino values into decision-making frameworks (Palma-Angeles 2013). Her co-authored work with Alejo José Sison further explores the intersection of Filipino culture, Catholic social thought, and business ethics, demonstrating how philosophical education can be both locally rooted and globally relevant (Sison and Palma-Angeles 1997). Collectively, these scholars challenge the patriarchal and

colonial foundations of philosophy in the Philippines, expanding the representation of women and redefining philosophy education to be inclusive, critical, and culturally resonant.

Despite these challenges, philosophy in the Philippines continues to evolve, as evidenced by the increasing engagement with indigenous knowledge systems, the expansion of regional philosophical discourses, and the incorporation of feminist and postcolonial perspectives. These developments are indicative of a more dynamic future for the discipline, even though its structural and methodological problems persist (Cariño 2013; Pada 2014; Jose 2021). Hence, there is a need for greater institutional support for philosophical research, more systematic engagement with global philosophical traditions, and a clearer articulation of what constitutes Filipino philosophy (Joaquin 2010; Agbisit et al. 2021; Jose 2021). Recent scholarly initiatives, including conferences and collaborative research networks, signal that the field is gradually gaining momentum. However, sustained progress will require not only academic commitment but also stronger policy frameworks that recognize the value of philosophical inquiry in national development.

Lastly, Filipino philosophy stands at a crossroads. It can either remain a fragmented field, struggling with identity and methodological coherence, or adopt a more integrative and systematized approach that reflects its indigenous heritage and global philosophical engagements (Gripaldo 2018; Jose 2021; Biana and Joaquin 2023). The works of Emerita S. Quito, Rolando M. Gripaldo, Feorillo Petronilo A. Demeterio, Jeremiah Joven B. Joaquin, among others, provide valuable insights that can guide Filipino philosophy towards greater intellectual maturity and relevance in both local and global contexts. Then, the increasing prominence of analytic philosophy, alongside emerging subfields like applied ethics and philosophy of technology, suggests that philosophical discourse is evolving rather than fading. With this, this study delves deeper into the current landscape of philosophy in the Philippines to critically assess its trajectory and propose concrete programs that could strengthen its institutional foundation. Moreover, it also aims to contribute to the ongoing effort to conceptualize a distinctly Filipino philosophy rooted in local realities and engaged in global philosophical discourse.

MAPPING PHILOSOPHY EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

The purpose of this presentation is to provide an updated and comprehensive overview of philosophy programs in the Philippines, countering the common belief that philosophy is dying or fading into obscurity due to its perceived lack of practical usefulness. While this work begins, like Emerita Quito's early profiling, with a systematic mapping of institutions, the present study goes beyond merely updating her list. It responds to the limitations of Quito's approach by expanding the scope, refining the methodology, and situating the mapping within a broader reflection on the geopolitics of knowledge production in the country. Quito's pioneering survey focused largely on Metro Manila-based universities and offered only limited coverage of institutions in the Visayas and Mindanao. As a result, earlier representations of the philosophical landscape tended to center Luzon and unintentionally marginalize regional traditions and emerging academic communities. In contrast, this research

undertakes a nationwide mapping, using a multi-source verification process to ensure accuracy and inclusivity. The profiling covers institutions across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, and thus provides a more representative account of where philosophy is taught, practiced, and institutionally supported.

The relevance of this expanded profiling lies in its ability to provide empirical grounding for contemporary claims regarding the vitality of philosophy in the Philippines. Documenting the geographic distribution of programs allows scholars and policymakers to see how institutional presence shapes regional intellectual cultures, research output, and participation in national conferences. This approach also foregrounds the geopolitics of philosophical practice: for instance, the clustering of publications and conferences in Luzon contrasts with the emerging but still under-resourced philosophical communities in the Visayas and Mindanao, where state universities are now becoming key sites of growth. Such distinctions highlight that regions may not only differ in institutional density but may also cultivate distinct pedagogical orientations, research priorities, and modes of philosophizing, shaped by local histories, languages, and socio-cultural contexts. By attending to these variations, the profiling moves beyond the descriptive limits of earlier surveys and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of philosophical development across regions.

To ensure accuracy, the study uses concrete and verifiable data from multiple sources, including the CHED list of accredited universities and colleges, the records of national philosophical associations (e.g., PNPRS, PAP), and the Catholic directory of active seminaries offering AB Philosophy programs. The data were further validated through collaboration with philosophy professors from various regions—many of whom are active members of philosophical organizations and former seminarians familiar with regional academic networks. This triangulation strengthens the credibility and comprehensiveness of the institutional mapping. With a total of eighty (80) institutions offering philosophy programs, the results show that philosophy is expanding beyond Metro Manila into the Visayas and Mindanao, especially within state universities that serve as regional centers for higher learning. This updated mapping provides a factual basis for policy-making, capacity-building, and long-term planning in philosophy education. Moreover, the strengthening of philosophical institutions nationwide suggests a growing recognition of philosophy's importance for public discourse, ethical formation, and democratic participation.

This work is thus more than a replication of Quito's effort. It constitutes the first published nationwide mapping of philosophical institutions in the Philippines to explicitly integrate a geopolitical lens, offering insights into how regional contexts shape philosophical practice and revealing the challenges confronting philosophy education in the country. In doing so, it seeks to help strengthen philosophy education at a time when national morale is declining (Bayod 2019) and the public's capacity for critical thinking appears to be weakening (Marquez 2017; Go 2018). As Aguas (2023) argues, the future of the Philippines requires a strong philosophical foundation; understanding the country's institutional landscape is therefore a necessary step toward strategic growth, intellectual resilience, and more equitable participation across regions.

PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Philosophy Education in the Luzon Region

Table 1. Luzon Region

| HEIs Recognized by CHED | Philosophy Programs Offered | | |
|--|-----------------------------|-----|-----|
| | AB | MA | PhD |
| 1. Adamson University, Manila | Yes | No | No |
| 2. Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 3. De La Salle University, Manila | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 4. Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Manila | Yes | No | No |
| 5. Rogationist Seminary College, Manila | Yes | No | No |
| 6. San Carlos Seminary, Makati | Yes | No | No |
| 7. University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 8. University of Santo Tomas, Manila | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 9. Divine Word Mission Seminary, Quezon City | Yes | Yes | No |
| 10. Saint Camillus College Seminary, Marikina | Yes | No | No |
| 11. Our Lady of the Angels Seminary, Quezon City | Yes | No | No |
| 12. Saint Anthony Mary Claret Seminary, Quezon City | Yes | No | No |
| 13. De La Salle University, Dasmariñas | Yes | No | No |
| 14. University of the Philippines (UPLB), Los Baños | Yes | No | No |
| 15. Our Lady of La Sallete College Seminary, Cavite | Yes | No | No |
| 16. St. Paul Seminary Foundation, Cavite | Yes | No | No |
| 17. Oblates of Saint Joseph College Seminary, Batangas | Yes | No | No |
| 18. Don Bosco College, Canlubang | Yes | No | No |
| 19. Mary Cause of Our Joy Seminary, Ilocos Norte | Yes | No | No |
| 20. Our Lady of Peace College Seminary, Tarlac | Yes | No | No |
| 21. Holy Trinity College Seminary, Daet | Yes | No | No |
| 22. Mater Redemptoris College, San Jose City | Yes | No | No |
| 23. Saint Joseph's College of Balanga, Bataan | Yes | No | No |
| 24. Maria Assumpta College Seminary, Cabanatuan | Yes | No | No |
| 25. Immaculate Conception Minor Seminary, Malolos | Yes | No | No |
| 26. University of Santo Tomas, Legazpi City | Yes | No | No |
| 27. Ateneo de Naga University, Naga City | Yes | Yes | No |
| 28. Bicol University, Legazpi City | Yes | No | No |
| 29. Mary Help of Christians Seminary, Dagupan | Yes | No | No |
| 30. San Pablo Seminary, Baguio City | Yes | No | No |
| 31. Mater Salutis College Seminary, Daraga, Albay | Yes | No | No |
| 32. Mount Saint Aloysius College Seminary, Quezon | Yes | No | No |

| | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|
| 33. Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary, Baguio City | Yes | No | No |
| 34. Saint Louis University, Baguio City | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 35. University of Saint La Salette, Isabela | Yes | No | No |
| 36. Lyceum of Aparri, Cagayan | Yes | No | No |
| 37. Saint Mary's University, Nueva Vizcaya | Yes | No | No |
| 38. Our Lady of Visitation Seminary, Isabela | Yes | No | No |
| 39. Saint Ferdinand College, Isabela | Yes | No | No |
| 40. Seminario de San Jose, Palawan | Yes | No | No |
| 41. Mother of Good Counsel Seminary, Pampanga | Yes | No | No |
| 42. Somascan Fathers Seminary, Pampanga | Yes | No | No |
| 43. Holy Rosary Major Seminary, Naga City | Yes | No | No |

The current state of philosophy education in the Philippines can only be completely grasped by considering its historical and institutional evolution. The ecclesiastical interests of the colonial administration initially controlled philosophical education in the nation when it was first introduced during Spanish colonization (Lim Pe 1973). As Cullum (1959) notes, early pedagogies were delivered through oral dictation since there were no standardized texts, and thus reinforced theological orthodoxy rather than fostering philosophical inquiry. The University of Santo Tomas (UST), the oldest existing university in Asia, played a central role in institutionalizing philosophy, primarily under the guidance of Spanish friars (Lim Pe 1973; Aguas 2023). In this context, philosophy served as a preparatory discipline for theology, strongly emphasizing Thomistic thought (Quito 1983, 1-30). Demeterio (2013; 2014) observed that this “dogmatic fashion” of instruction left little space for dissent or intellectual pluralism. But over time, however, this Thomistic dominance waned, giving way to more diverse philosophical traditions and methods in the country.

Luzon, which was the seat of colonial governance and ecclesiastical power then, emerged early as the intellectual epicenter of the archipelago (Cullum 1959). Therefore, understanding the present state of philosophy in the Philippines requires an examination of Luzon’s educational institutions and their geographic distribution. The region comprises eight key areas, namely, Ilocos (Region I), Cagayan Valley (Region II), Central Luzon (Region III), CALABARZON (Region IV-A), MIMAROPA (Region IV-B), Bicol (Region V), the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), and the National Capital Region (NCR). The NCR, home to Manila, remains the dominant hub of philosophical scholarship, supported by its high literacy rate of 96.5%, according to the 2019 Philippine Statistics Authority, where leading universities and seminaries are located (Gripaldo 1988; Demeterio 2014).

Based on data from CHED-recognized institutions, Luzon hosts the most extensive network of philosophy programs in the country, with forty-three (43) institutions offering degrees at the undergraduate (AB), graduate (MA), and doctoral (PhD) levels. A substantial number of these, twenty-five (25) in total, are Catholic seminaries, highlighting the ongoing influence of religious formation on the structure and aims of philosophical education (Gripaldo 1998; 2007; Agbisit et al. 2021). Seminary programs, such as those offered by the Divine Word Mission Seminary (SVD) in Quezon City and Saint Camillus College Seminary in Marikina, focus

primarily on metaphysics, theodicy, ethics, and Catholic philosophical traditions. In this context, philosophy is foundational in theological training, fostering an understanding of the relationship between faith and reason, particularly in exploring doctrines such as the nature of God, moral law, and human purpose (Gripaldo 2008; Aguas 2023). Although many seminaries today have begun to explore a wider range of philosophical traditions, their engagement is generally less rigorous than that of secular universities, particularly in terms of Scopus-indexed research outputs. This is primarily because philosophy education in seminaries is traditionally oriented toward priestly formation rather than academic publishing or ranking. Nevertheless, seminaries have produced some of the country's most brilliant philosophy scholars. Notable examples are Fr. Roque Ferriols, SJ, Fr. Leonardo Mercado, SVD, Fr. Raymun Festin, SVD, and many more, who have authored numerous books and published articles in international journals.

Outside the seminary context, philosophy flourishes in secular institutions. Leading universities in Metro Manila, such as the University of the Philippines Diliman (UP-D), Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), De La Salle University (DLSU), and the University of Santo Tomas (UST), anchor the region's academic philosophical discourse. These institutions offer the full spectrum of philosophy degrees, from AB to PhD, and are regarded as key centers of advanced research and engagement with local and global philosophical issues (Joaquin 2022; Demeterio 2013). UP-D and DLSU integrate analytic and continental traditions (Joaquin 2022) and often pursue interdisciplinary approaches, as seen in DLSU's AB Philosophy and Artificial Intelligence program (Jose 2021; See DLSU AB Philosophy & AI Program 2025). Ateneo remains grounded in Jesuit humanism, phenomenology, and existentialism, while UST, though maintaining its Thomistic legacy, is also known for its engagement with the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, such as the works of Paolo Bolaños, Ocay, and many more. Thus, UST has produced Filipino philosophers such as Quito, Mercado, Hornedo, Timbreza, and Co (De Leon 2019).

The Divine Word Mission Seminary (SVD) stands as one of the pioneering institutions in the Philippines to offer both AB and MA in philosophy programs concurrently, reflecting its longstanding commitment to philosophical education established by the German missionary priests (Layugan 2012). Meanwhile, the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), recognized as the country's largest state university by student population, is set to launch its own MA in philosophy program. This development is poised to attract a broader community of philosophy enthusiasts. Together, these institutions will play a pivotal role in bridging undergraduate and graduate studies, serving as key intermediaries in the academic pipeline toward doctoral training. Until recently, doctoral-level philosophy education was largely concentrated in Metro Manila. However, this landscape is beginning to shift. Saint Louis University (SLU) in Baguio City has expanded its offerings to include both MA and PhD programs in Philosophy, marking a significant development for higher-level philosophical education in Northern Luzon (See SLU Philosophy Program Offerings 2025). SLU's graduate programs contribute to the decentralization of advanced philosophical training and reflect a growing commitment to fostering regional centers of intellectual leadership beyond the capital.

Other institutions in Northern and Southern Luzon, such as Ateneo de Naga University, which offers an MA in Philosophy, Bicol University, and the University of Santo Tomas in Legazpi, primarily offer AB programs. While these two do not yet have graduate-level degrees, their regional presence signals an ongoing effort to widen access to philosophical education and to cultivate local philosophical cultures responsive to regional contexts (Marquez 2017; Mancenido-Bolaños and Demandante 2020). Moreover, philosophy programs in these non-seminary institutions equip students with vital skills in logic, ethics, and critical thinking, competencies valuable for academic philosophy and fields such as law, public administration, and education (Opiniano et al. 2022; Joaquin 2022; Aguas 2023; Paña 2025). Many students pursue philosophy as a preparatory step toward law school, given the discipline’s emphasis on conceptual clarity, rigorous argumentation, and public reasoning.

In sum, the landscape of philosophy education in Luzon in general is marked by diversity and gradual decentralization. While undergraduate programs remain widespread, including graduate and doctoral offerings in institutions like Saint Louis University, this signals a move toward more regionally distributed philosophical development (Agbisit et. al 2021; Joaquin 2022). The region continues to bear the marks of its colonial and clerical origins (Cullum 1959; Mercado 1972), yet it now reflects an evolving philosophical culture that embraces both religious and secular traditions. To foster a more inclusive and nationally integrated philosophical community, continued expansion of graduate-level programs and institutional support across the various regions of Luzon is essential (Gripaldo 2018; Agbisit et. al 2021).

Philosophy Education in the Visayas Region

Table 2. Visayas Region

| HEIs Recognized by CHED | Philosophy Programs Offered | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-----|-----|
| | AB | MA | PhD |
| 44. University of San Carlos, Cebu City | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 45. Silliman University, Dumaguete City | Yes | Yes | No |
| 46. Holy Name University, Tagbilaran City, Bohol | No | Yes | No |
| 47. University of Bohol, Tagbilaran City, Bohol | Yes | No | No |
| 48. Bohol Island State University-Main Campus, Bohol | Yes | No | No |
| 49. Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary, Tagbilaran City | Yes | No | No |
| 50. Visayas State University-Main Campus, Leyte | Yes | No | No |
| 51. University of San Jose-Recoletos, Cebu City | Yes | Yes | No |
| 52. San Carlos Seminary, Cebu City | Yes | No | No |
| 53. Sacred Heart Seminary, Palo, Leyte | Yes | No | No |
| 54. Sacred Heart Seminary, Bacolod City | Yes | No | No |
| 55. Sancta Maria Mater et Regina Seminarium, Capiz | Yes | No | No |
| 56. St. Vincent Ferrer Seminary, Iloilo City | Yes | No | No |
| 57. St. Vincent de Paul College Seminary, Calbayog City | Yes | No | No |
| 58. Saint Joseph Seminary College, Dumaguete City | Yes | No | No |

| | | | |
|---|-----|----|----|
| 59. Saint Pope Paul VI Seminary, Maasin City, Leyte | Yes | No | No |
| 60. Nativity of Our Lady College Seminary, Samar | Yes | No | No |

The philosophy education in the Visayas region is shaped by both ecclesiastical seminaries and higher education institutions recognized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Data show that undergraduate programs (AB Philosophy) are widely available across the region, while graduate-level programs (MA and PhD) remain concentrated in a few key institutions. Among these, the University of San Carlos (USC), designated by CHED as a Center of Development in Cebu City, stands out as the most comprehensive, offering the full spectrum of programs from AB, MA, to PhD (See USC Philosophy Program 2025). This makes USC the central hub for advanced philosophical education and research in the Visayas. Silliman University, with its philosophy department previously headed by the renowned critical theorist Jeffry Ocay in Dumaguete City, offers undergraduate and master's programs as well, reinforcing its status as one of the leading contributors to philosophical scholarship in Central Visayas.

Other institutions, such as Holy Name University, the home of the late renowned scholar Eddie Babor, and the University of San Jose-Recoletos (USJ-R), also offer MA programs in Philosophy, with USJ-R additionally providing an AB program. Holy Name University, however, has already closed its AB Philosophy program and now offers only an MA in Philosophy, with most of its students being former seminarians from the province. Accordingly, the majority of institutions in the region, particularly diocesan and religious seminaries, primarily offer AB Philosophy degrees, reflecting the traditional role of philosophy as a preparatory program for priestly formation and religious vocations. Seminaries such as San Carlos Seminary in Cebu, Immaculate Heart of Mary Seminary (IHMS) in Bohol, and Sacred Heart Seminaries in Leyte and Bacolod continue to uphold Thomistic and Scholastic traditions, aligning philosophy in the service of theology, as handmaid of theology, where faith and reason are like two wings in the study of the teachings of the Church.

In recent years, secular institutions such as Bohol Island State University-Main Campus in Bohol and Visayas State University in Baybay City, Leyte, have begun offering AB Philosophy programs. Their offering signals a growing expansion of philosophy education in the state universities. These efforts represent a significant shift toward decentralizing philosophical education and making it more accessible to a broader student population. With the AB program now available in state universities that offer free tuition, philosophy has become more attainable for students coming from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. This recent development also recognizes philosophy's relevance beyond the clerical or elite academic settings. Philosophy may become a critical foundation for civic engagement, ethical leadership, and interdisciplinary inquiry as state universities invest more in the humanities.

Meanwhile, the University of the Philippines-Cebu, as a constituent university within the UP System, does not currently offer a philosophy program at any level despite its status as a national and a research university. However, it reportedly plans to do so in the coming academic year. This absence reflects a broader institutional trend in which philosophy is often marginalized in favor of disciplines with clearer market utility, such as engineering, business, and information technology. As Quito (1983) observes, one major issue is the marginalization of philosophy as a discipline,

particularly in comparison to the sciences and applied fields. The public often perceives philosophy as abstract and impractical, contributing to limited career opportunities for philosophy graduates.

This context mirrors the national dilemma raised by Emerita Quito: *How can philosophy assert its relevance in a society that prioritizes economic productivity over intellectual inquiry?* In the Visayas, the persistence of philosophy programs despite such pressures suggests that the discipline is adapting, particularly through interdisciplinary applications in fields like education, law, and environmental studies. Philosophy education should be crafted to address public needs; for example, the Department of Education (DepEd) currently faces a shortage of qualified teachers to handle *Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person*. This subject is often taught by teachers without any background in philosophy, highlighting the need for more robust training and curricular integration (Bialystok 2017).

Although theological institutions continue to form the backbone of philosophy education in the region, the rise of secular programs at institutions like USC, Silliman, and other state universities marks a gradual transition toward a broader, more inclusive understanding of philosophy. Influenced by German SVD missionary scholars and international academic traditions, USC, in particular, has helped push philosophical discourse beyond theological boundaries. These developments have enabled the inclusion of analytic philosophy, applied ethics, and socio-political thought in the curriculum (See USC Philosophy Program 2025).

Notably, analytic philosophy is gaining traction in the region, consistent with national trends observed by Joaquin (2022). Programs at USC and Silliman increasingly emphasize logic, epistemology, and the philosophy of language, indicating a shift from purely metaphysical concerns to those that intersect with contemporary global discourse. Silliman, in particular, has produced one of the country's most distinguished philosophers, Claro Ceniza, who made significant contributions to symbolic logic, analytic philosophy, metaphysics, and the philosophy of language (Joaquin 2022). He was also instrumental in establishing an eclectic philosophy department at De La Salle University, Manila (Joaquin 2022).

Simultaneously, applied philosophy is gaining ground. Ethical inquiry, especially in environmental, political, and social contexts, is becoming increasingly relevant in addressing the Visayas' challenges, such as climate change, disaster resilience, and sustainable development. Philosophy programs at Visayas State University, the University of Bohol, and Bohol Island State University, for example, reflect this trend by preparing students for careers in law, values education, and public service. As Paña (2025) asserts, philosophy is crucial for interpreting laws and understanding the nature of law. Its role as a pre-law foundation has proven valuable in the past and will continue to be so in the future. The recent hosting of the 2025 4th USAPP Summit at BISU-Main Campus (Bohol) further illustrates the region's growing involvement in national philosophical discourse.

Looking forward, several strategic directions could further strengthen the role of philosophy in the Visayas. First, bridging religious and secular traditions is necessary, fostering dialogue that promotes pluralism and intellectual openness. This will ensure that philosophy remains both rooted and responsive to the realities of a diverse and dynamic society (Jose 2021; Aguas 2023). Second, fostering

interdisciplinary collaboration, especially with the social sciences, law, education, and environmental studies, can enhance philosophy’s relevance and societal impact (Agbisit et al. 2021; Opiniano et al. 2022; Altez-Albela 2024). Initiatives such as public philosophy forums, ethics centers, and critical thinking programs would further embed philosophy in academic and public life (Marquez 2017).

Equally important is the constructive effort to decentralize philosophical discourse beyond Metro Manila. While institutions such as UP Diliman, UST, ADMU, and DLSU remain vital hubs of national academic engagement, there is growing potential to cultivate vibrant philosophical communities in the Visayas. Supporting the development of regional research networks, scholarly journals, and philosophy conferences will amplify Visayan scholars’ voices and enrich the diversity of perspectives in national discourse (Raterta et al. 2019). Such collaborative initiatives will foster a more inclusive, balanced, and intellectually robust academic landscape across the Philippines (Mancenido-Bolaños and Demandante 2020; Jose 2021; Agbisit et. al 2021).

Finally, a long-term goal for philosophy in the region, and in the Philippines, is the development of a distinctly Filipino philosophy that is not merely an extension of Western traditions (Demeterio 2008; Pavo 2010; Cariño 2013). With its rich cultural and historical context, the Visayas is well-positioned to contribute to this project. Grounding philosophical reflection in local epistemologies, indigenous knowledge systems, and lived social experiences can help shape a philosophy that speaks directly to Filipino realities (Mercado 1974; Gianan 2009; Cariño 2013; Gripaldo 2018; Jose 2021).

In conclusion, the landscape of philosophy education in the Visayas reflects continuity and transformation. While deeply rooted in religious and scholastic traditions, the region’s institutions also embrace analytic, applied, and interdisciplinary approaches (Joaquin 2022). Despite ongoing challenges, particularly those related to institutional support and economic prioritization (Agbisit et. al 2021), philosophy in the Visayas demonstrates resilience, adaptability, and potential. Through the cultivation of intellectual pluralism, stronger regional collaboration, and deeper engagement with contemporary ethical and social issues, the Visayas hold the potential to make a lasting and meaningful contribution to the future of philosophy in the Philippines.

Philosophy Education in the Mindanao Region

Table 3. Mindanao Region

| HEIs Recognized by CHED | Philosophy Programs Offered | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-----|-----|
| | AB | MA | PhD |
| 61. Ateneo de Zamboanga University, Zamboanga City | Yes | Yes | No |
| 62. Immaculate Conception Archdiocesan School, Zamboanga City | Yes | No | No |
| 63. Saint Columban College, Pagadian City | Yes | No | No |
| 64. Saint Vincent College, Dipolog City | Yes | No | No |
| 65. Central Mindanao University, Bukidnon | Yes | No | No |

| | | | |
|---|-----|-----|----|
| 66. Bukidnon State University, Malaybalay City | Yes | No | No |
| 67. San Isidro College, Malaybalay City | Yes | No | No |
| 68. Mindanao State University-IIT, Iligan City | Yes | No | No |
| 69. Saint Michael's College, Iligan City | Yes | No | No |
| 70. Xavier University (Ateneo de Cagayan) | Yes | No | No |
| 71. Ateneo de Davao University, Davao City | Yes | Yes | No |
| 72. Holy Cross of Davao College, Davao City | Yes | No | No |
| 73. University of the Immaculate Concepcion, Davao City | Yes | No | No |
| 74. University of Southern Mindanao, North Cotabato | Yes | No | No |
| 75. Notre Dame of Marbel University, South Cotabato | Yes | No | No |
| 76. Notre Dame University, Cotabato City | Yes | Yes | No |
| 77. Queen of Apostles College Seminary, Tagum City | Yes | No | No |
| 78. Saint Francis Xavier College Seminary, Davao City | Yes | No | No |
| 79. Saint John Paul II College Seminary, Digos City | Yes | No | No |
| 80. Saint Peter College Seminary, Butuan City | Yes | No | No |

The data presented here were manually checked and verified by Arnel A. Morte, a professor of philosophy at Central Mindanao University, Bukidnon. He currently serves as president of the Philosophy Society of Bukidnon, Inc. (PSBI), which includes members from across the country, not only from Mindanao.

The offering of a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy in the southern part of the country is continuously flourishing. Some private schools have begun to offer the program to cater to the needs of the local church, specifically to train young men who enter the priesthood, while others have started offering the program to serve as a preparatory course for law. In private HEIs, the faculty combines priests and lay professors; in public HEIs, both former seminarians and lay professors handle major courses. The following categorizations will be laid out according to geographical regions in Mindanao.

In Region Nine (9), four catholic HEIs offer philosophy. First is the Ateneo de Zamboanga University, a Jesuit-run institution, and second is the Immaculate Conception Archdiocesan School, owned by the Archdiocese of Zamboanga. They are all situated in Zamboanga City. Third is the Saint Columban College, owned by the Diocese of Pagadian, located in Pagadian City, and fourth is the Saint Vincent College in Dipolog City. These four institutions offer philosophy primarily to cater to the seminarians under their care and secondarily to students who prepare themselves to take up law. The sending institutions or seminaries that send their seminarians to their respective educational institutions are the following: the seminarians of the Saint Joseph Seminary of Ipil to Ateneo de Zamboanga University; the seminarians of Pastor Bonus Seminary of Zamboanga City to Immaculate Conception Archdiocesan School; the seminarians of Holy Infant Seminary of Pagadian City to Saint Columban College; and the seminarians of Cor Jesu Seminary of Dipolog City to St. Vincent College Dipolog City.

In Region Ten (10), there are three state universities and three catholic schools (one of them is a university) offering the program. The first two state universities are

from the province of Bukidnon, namely, Central Mindanao University in Musuan, Maramag, and Bukidnon State University in Malaybalay City. There is a private school in the same province named San Isidro College in Malaybalay City. The other state university in Region Ten is the Mindanao State University – Iligan Institute of Technology in Iligan City, and a private school named Saint Michael's College. Another private university is in Cagayan de Oro City, the Xavier University, or the Ateneo de Cagayan, a Jesuit-run institution. The sending institutions or seminaries that send their seminarians to their respective educational institutions are the following: the seminarians of Inahan sa Kinabuhì Diocesan College Seminary of Iligan City to Saint Michael's College; the seminarians of Saint John XXIII College Seminary of Malaybalay City to San Isidro College; and the seminarians of San Jose de Mindanao Seminary of Cagayan de Oro City to Xavier University.

In Region Eleven (11), there are three catholic schools (two of them are universities) offering the program in Davao City, and these are the Ateneo de Davao University, the Holy Cross of Davao College, and the University of the Immaculate Conception. No institutions or seminaries are sending their seminarians to any of these schools.

In Region Twelve (12), one state university and two catholic universities offer the program. The first is the University of Southern Mindanao in Kabacan, North Cotabato. The second is the Notre Dame of Marbel University, situated in Marbel, South Cotabato. The third is Notre Dame University, which is located in Cotabato City. The sending institutions or seminaries that send their seminarians to their respective educational institutions are the following: the seminarians of Notre Dame Archdiocesan Seminary of Cotabato City to Notre Dame University Cotabato, while the seminarians of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Seminary of Marbel to Notre Dame of Marbel.

Aside from the commercialized offering of philosophy degrees to seminarians and non-seminarians throughout Mindanao, college seminaries offer and confer degrees to their seminarians. They are recognized and accredited by the Commission on Higher Education, and these are the following: the Queen of Apostles College Seminary in Tagum City, the Saint Francis Xavier College Seminary in Davao City, the Saint John Paul II College Seminary in Digos City, Davao del Sur, and the Saint Peter College Seminary in Butuan City.

In summary, philosophy education in Mindanao primarily focuses on undergraduate programs, with numerous seminaries and universities offering AB Philosophy across the region. However, among all CHED-recognized institutions, Ateneo de Davao University and Notre Dame University are the only ones offering a master's (MA) program in Philosophy, while Ateneo de Zamboanga University offers a Master's in Teaching Philosophy (MTP), as indicated on their university websites. These institutions serve as leading centers for advanced philosophical studies in Mindanao, fostering scholarly research and intellectual formation beyond the undergraduate level. According to Christopher Ryan Maboloc, they are set to offer a PhD in Philosophy by 2026, as they are still completing the necessary program requirements. Although many institutions continue to fulfill the traditional role of philosophy in religious and priestly formation, the presence of graduate-level programs at Ateneo de Davao University, Notre Dame University, and Ateneo de

Zamboanga University represents a significant step toward expanding and professionalizing philosophy education in the region.

GEOPOLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF PHILOSOPHY PROGRAMS IN THE PHILIPPINES

This profiling and overview of educational qualifications across 80 institutions offering philosophy education in the Philippines reveals not merely regional variation but a distinct geopolitical pattern in the production, concentration, and circulation of philosophical knowledge. The uneven distribution of undergraduate and graduate programs across Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao reflects broader historical, economic, and institutional power relations that shape where advanced philosophical training is possible and who gains access to it.

Luzon accounts for 53.75% of all higher education institutions offering the Bachelor of Arts (AB) in Philosophy, equivalent to 43 institutions, firmly establishing it as the dominant region for undergraduate philosophy education. More significantly, 8.75% of institutions in Luzon offer Master of Arts (MA) programs, while 6.25% provide Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programs. This concentration positions Luzon not only as the primary entry point for philosophical education but also as the national center of advanced philosophical formation and scholarly authority. From a geopolitical perspective, this dominance reflects the historical centralization of political power, economic resources, and academic capital in Metro Manila and its surrounding regions, where elite universities, research funding, and international academic networks are largely based (Agbisit et. al 2021). As a result, Luzon functions as the principal site of philosophical canon formation, research agenda-setting, and credentialing in the country.

In contrast, the Visayas hosts 20% of institutions offering undergraduate philosophy programs, amounting to 17 higher education institutions. At the graduate level, however, only 5% offer MA programs, and a mere 1.25% provide PhD-level training. This distribution suggests that the Visayas plays a crucial role in sustaining undergraduate philosophy education that contributes to regional intellectual life, civic formation, and teacher preparation, while remaining structurally peripheral in the production of advanced philosophical research. Geopolitically, this reflects a semi-peripheral position, where philosophical education is present but largely oriented toward foundational instruction rather than knowledge production at the highest academic levels. The limited availability of graduate programs may be linked to resource constraints, institutional priorities, and the continued gravitational pull of Luzon-based universities for advanced study.

Mindanao presents a distinct yet related pattern. Twenty-five percent of institutions offer undergraduate philosophy programs, indicating a relatively strong foundation for philosophical education at the entry level. However, only 3.75% provide MA programs, and there is currently no officially recognized PhD program in Philosophy in the region. This absence places Mindanao at a structural disadvantage in cultivating sustained philosophical scholarship and advanced research communities. Geopolitically, the region remains positioned at the margins of national academic power, despite its vibrant cultural, linguistic, and socio-political contexts. The

emphasis on undergraduate philosophy aligns with Paulo Freire’s conception of education as a “*practice of freedom*,” wherein learners develop critical consciousness and engage actively with their social realities. In this sense, philosophy in Mindanao functions less as a pathway to academic specialization and more as a tool for empowerment, ethical reflection, and social engagement, even as institutional pathways for advanced scholarship remain limited.

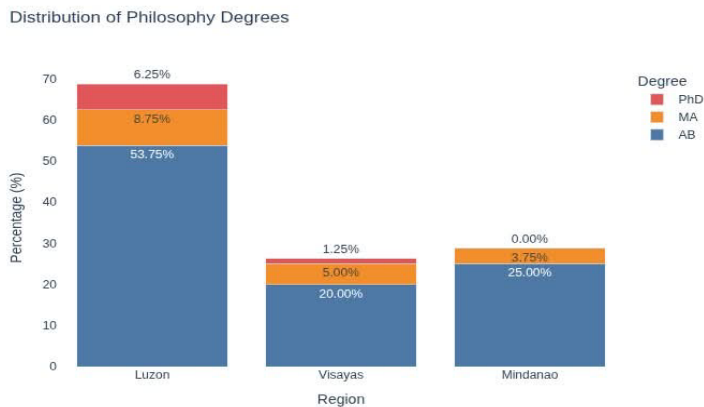


Figure 1. Distribution of Philosophy Degree Programs in the Philippines

Taken together, the regional data reveal systemic disparities in the distribution of philosophical capital across the archipelago. While undergraduate philosophy education is relatively accessible nationwide, graduate and doctoral training remain highly centralized, reinforcing academic hierarchies that privilege Luzon-based institutions. This centralization has geopolitical implications: it shapes which philosophical voices are amplified, which regional experiences are theorized, and where intellectual authority is recognized. The result is a national philosophical landscape where advanced discourse is disproportionately produced in a few urban and elite centers.

This geopolitical concentration becomes more evident when examining institutions that offer the full range of philosophy programs. Of the 80 institutions surveyed, only six provide continuous training from AB to PhD: the University of Santo Tomas (UST), the University of the Philippines-Diliman (UPD), Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), De La Salle University (DLSU), the University of San Carlos (USC), and Saint Louis University (SLU) in Baguio City. These universities function as intellectual hubs and gatekeepers, possessing the institutional capacity to shape philosophical research, influence national discourse, and train future scholars. Their geographic locations—largely in Luzon, with USC as a notable Visayas-based exception—underscore the spatial concentration of philosophical authority. A second tier of eight institutions offering programs from AB to MA serves as crucial regional bridges: Christ the King Seminary (SVD) in Quezon City, Ateneo de Naga University, Holy Name University in Bohol, the University of San Jose-Recoletos in Cebu City,

Silliman University in Dumaguete City, Ateneo de Davao University, Ateneo de Zamboanga University, and Notre Dame University in Cotabato City. These institutions partially decentralize philosophical education by extending graduate-level training beyond the traditional academic core. Geopolitically, they play a mediating role, enabling regional intellectual development while still remaining connected to national and often ecclesial academic networks.

This discussion can be further strengthened by elaborating on the geopolitical dimensions of philosophy in the Philippines, particularly by distinguishing how philosophical work is pursued across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Central to this task is an explicit recognition of the geopolitics of knowledge, that is, the ways in which power relations, institutional hierarchies, and historically uneven access to resources shape what counts as visible, legitimate, and measurable philosophical activity. Beyond the uneven distribution of degree offerings, these regional differences may also be examined in terms of patterns of publication (Joaquin 2022), visibility in national and international conferences, and the possible emergence of distinct styles or orientations of philosophizing shaped by local contexts (Jose 2021). From the perspective of the geopolitics of knowledge, mapping and profiling exercises are never neutral: they tend to privilege institutions with stronger research infrastructures, access to funding, metropolitan networks, and publication venues that are already recognized as academically authoritative. As a result, regions with fewer material resources or limited access to national platforms may appear underdeveloped, even when philosophical work is actively taking place in alternative forms such as teaching-intensive programs, community engagement, or locally oriented research. Such an approach allows philosophy to be situated not merely as an abstract academic discipline, but as a practice embedded in concrete regional, institutional, and sociopolitical realities.

The remaining majority of institutions offering philosophy programs continue to provide AB Philosophy degrees. This pattern itself reflects how the geopolitics of knowledge shapes mapping outcomes: undergraduate programs, especially those embedded in seminaries or regional institutions, are often rendered less visible in national profiles that prioritize graduate programs, indexed publications, and conference participation. Many of these are Catholic seminaries and religious institutions, which is consistent with the historical role of philosophy in theological formation and clerical education (Aguas 2023). At the same time, however, a gradual expansion into state universities and secular institutions can now be observed. In Mindanao, for example, the Philosophy Society of Bukidnon, Inc. (PSBI) reports that Central Mindanao University has recently established an AB Philosophy program. In the Visayas, similar developments are evident, with Bohol Island State University-Main Campus and Visayas State University-Main Campus having developed philosophy programs of their own. This shift suggests that philosophy is broadening its academic and social role, particularly in relation to pre-law training and the preparation of Senior High School teachers for the mandated course *Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person*.

These developments indicate that while philosophy no longer occupies the exclusively central theological role it once held, it is finding renewed relevance within the broader educational landscape. When read through a geopolitical lens, such

developments also suggest that philosophy's social function may be more pronounced in regions outside the traditional academic centers, where teaching, formation, and community relevance take precedence over research output as conventionally measured. Its interdisciplinary strengths, critical thinking, logical reasoning, ethical reflection, and cultural analysis are increasingly recognized as valuable to civic life, governance, and professional formation. Regional institutions, in particular, have the potential to enrich this trajectory by integrating local realities into philosophical inquiry. In Mindanao, this includes engagement with indigenous cultures, environmental preservation, and peace and conflict studies, especially in Muslim Mindanao, where institutions such as MSU-IIT already incorporate these themes into their programs. Such regionally grounded approaches may eventually contribute to distinctive modes of philosophizing that reflect the lived experiences and concerns of their communities.

In light of the widespread concern that philosophy is in decline due to limited career opportunities and financial insecurity, the continued expansion of programs across regions offers a compelling counter-narrative. A geopolitically informed mapping clarifies that what is often interpreted as decline may instead be an effect of uneven criteria of visibility: regions like Luzon dominate profiles because they host most doctoral programs, journals, and conferences, while the philosophical labor occurring in the Visayas and Mindanao is less frequently captured by conventional metrics. Philosophy in the Philippines is not waning; rather, it is evolving and repositioning itself to respond to contemporary social needs while remaining anchored in its academic foundations. The presence of doctoral programs and the gradual increase in MA offerings, together with the strategic importance of undergraduate education, suggest that philosophy is not in decline but in transition. Although Luzon currently dominates graduate-level offerings and scholarly visibility, the growing institutional diversity in the Visayas and Mindanao points toward the possibility of a more regionally balanced, socially grounded, and geopolitically attentive philosophical community in the years ahead.

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

Philosophy education in the Philippines has progressed steadily since Quito's *The State of Philosophy in the Philippines* (1983). Challenges such as limited resources and misconceptions about its relevance have been addressed through institutional initiatives. For example, universities like Ateneo de Manila provide research grants of up to 1.6 million pesos for interdisciplinary projects, including philosophy (See Ateneo University Research Council 2022), while CHED supports the field through grants-in-aid and commissioned research programs. Faculty members also actively present research at national conferences organized by professional bodies such as the Philosophical Association of the Philippines (PAP) and the Philippine National Philosophical Research Society (PNPRS), which regularly host symposia and publish journals like *SURI* and *Philosophia*. Moreover, the integration of philosophy into the broader curriculum underscores its significance. CHED Memorandum Order No. 20 (s. 2013) mandates core courses such as "Ethics" in college and aligns them with senior high school subjects like "Introduction to the

Philosophy of the Human Person,” ensuring continuity in developing students’ critical and moral reasoning. These efforts collectively affirm the discipline’s relevance and adaptability in Philippine education.

The field has also expanded beyond major universities in Metro Manila to institutions in the Visayas and Mindanao. Access to research funding, participation in conferences, and the integration of foundational philosophy courses into various programs have strengthened the discipline. Yet growth remains uneven, accompanied by persistent structural, curricular, and ideological challenges. Regional disparities in faculty preparation, research output, and institutional support continue to shape how philosophy is practiced and taught nationwide. In addition, emerging global developments such as artificial intelligence, digital ethics, and shifting educational priorities introduce new pressures that require careful curricular and pedagogical adjustments. The following subsections outline these challenges and the prospects they offer for philosophical renewal.

Inconsistency of the curriculum

One of the most persistent problems in philosophy education in the Philippines is the inconsistency of curricula across institutions. Quito (1983) observed that universities display different philosophical trends depending on the disciplinary formation and interests of their faculty members. Thomism continues to shape the curriculum at UST, phenomenology remains influential at ADMU, analytic philosophy is more dominant at UP, and DLSU maintains an eclectic orientation. These historical influences still affect curricular design today and contribute to uneven academic preparation among graduates of philosophy programs nationwide.

Although the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) established the Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs) for AB Philosophy through CMO No. 26, series of 2017, to promote national standardization, curricular inconsistencies persist. Some universities and seminaries, for example, still offer the history of philosophy sequence as four separate courses, namely Ancient Philosophy, Medieval Philosophy, Modern Philosophy, and Contemporary Philosophy, which contradicts CHED’s prescribed two-course structure for the History of Western Philosophy. Another inconsistency is that Existentialism, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, and Postmodernism are offered as separate subjects in most seminaries, despite being grouped as a single cluster in the PSGs. Such deviations hinder the development of a coherent national curriculum and complicate student mobility, as course credits may not be recognized across institutions. These variations also make it difficult to assess whether graduates across different regions achieve comparable levels of philosophical competence.

The PSGs are intended to align all AB Philosophy curricula to ensure both curricular coherence and academic mobility. This alignment directly addresses Quito’s concern regarding divergent philosophical trends and institutional fragmentation. A standardized curriculum provides clearer pathways for credit transfer, reduces course mismatches, and strengthens the credibility of philosophy programs nationwide. Progress in this area can be measured by the number of institutions with CHED-aligned syllabi and the number of successful student credit transfers. These indicators

reveal whether philosophy programs are moving toward greater unity in curricular content and structure.

To ensure that programs remain holistic and inclusive of diverse philosophical trends, CHED appoints faculty from various institutions to serve on the Technical Panel for Philosophy. Currently, Prof. Jeanette L. Yasol-Naval, PhD, from the University of the Philippines Diliman, serves as Chair of the Technical Panel for 2025 to 2028 (See UP Diliman Department of Philosophy 2024). Sustained compliance with CHED's PSGs under this leadership is essential for establishing a unified, academically rigorous, and nationally credible network of philosophy programs across the country.

Marginalization of philosophy in General Education (GE)

Recent educational reforms have proposed the reduction or relocation of General Education (GE) courses, including core philosophy subjects such as Ethics. EDCOM II's reports, *Miseducation* (2024) and *Fixing the Foundations* (2025), call for a decongested curriculum that focuses on foundational competencies. During House panel discussions, the Department of Education (DepEd) suggested removing Art Appreciation, The Contemporary World, and Ethics on the assumption that these subjects duplicate what is already taught in Araling Panlipunan, Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC), and Values Education. This assumption, however, overlooks the distinct objectives and methodologies of GE courses such as Ethics, which emphasize analytical reasoning, conceptual clarification, and the examination of normative frameworks.

This proposal immediately drew strong opposition from philosophical associations, university-based student organizations, and the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP). They argue that Ethics provides structured training in moral reasoning, civic responsibility, and critical thinking that cannot be replaced by broad values-oriented courses. Integrating Ethics into a general humanities subject would reduce dedicated time for argumentation, weaken the rigor of ethical analysis, and diminish teaching loads for philosophy faculty members. Such a move risks further marginalizing philosophy within the higher education system. Critics also emphasize that removing Ethics would undermine efforts to strengthen students' capacity for reflective judgment at a time when society faces increasingly complex moral and civic challenges, as repeatedly stressed by various philosophical associations in the country.

A more balanced approach is possible. Professional programs may integrate contextualized ethical instruction, such as Engineering Ethics, Business Ethics, or AI Ethics, provided these courses include clear rubrics for value analysis and argument evaluation. This would allow students to develop ethical reasoning within their disciplinary fields while still addressing EDCOM II's concern about academic overload. However, this model only works if institutions ensure that philosophical reasoning remains explicit, rigorous, and measurable. Otherwise, higher education loses one of its most vital spaces for reflection at a time when ethical judgment is crucial for professional practice.

Advocating for the retention of Ethics as a GE course in college curricula and the continued offering of *Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person* (IPHP) in Senior High School is essential for preserving these competencies. There is also a compelling case for reintroducing Logic as a GE course, since it directly strengthens analytical reasoning and argumentative clarity. Retaining these courses not only supports the development of civic and moral discernment but also sustains teaching positions for philosophy graduates and ensures that future cohorts of students receive adequate philosophical formation.

The extent to which institutions retain Ethics as a GE requirement or maintain the IPHP in Senior High School will reveal how effectively the philosophical community has responded to this challenge. Indicators such as the number of higher education institutions that continue to offer Ethics as a GE course, the number of secondary schools maintaining philosophy as a core SHS subject, and potential increases in enrollment in philosophy programs will show whether advocacy efforts are succeeding. These measures will also reflect the long-term viability of philosophy teaching positions and the overall health of the discipline within the educational landscape.

Inconsistency in quality between seminary-based and secular philosophy programs

The development of philosophy education in the Philippines remains uneven, particularly between secular institutions and Catholic seminaries. Seminary-based programs often follow ecclesiastical guidelines that do not fully align with the academic standards set by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), resulting in accreditation difficulties, limited recognition of coursework, and challenges in credit transfer when students move to secular institutions. Most seminaries in the provinces do not have enough qualified faculty to teach philosophy, and many priests who handle core philosophy courses do not hold at least a master's degree in the discipline. This lack of vertically aligned faculty, as required by CHED, further contributes to inconsistencies in curricular quality and undermines efforts to professionalize philosophy education nationwide.

The importance of philosophical formation for future priests is undeniable. Pope John Paul II (1998), in his *Fides et Ratio* no. 3, emphasizes that human beings possess diverse means for attaining truth and that philosophy, which investigates the meaning of life, is “one of the noblest of human tasks.” In addition, Fr. Pawel Tarasiewicz (2013, 173) notes that philosophy in seminaries often serves as “a serious alternative to the fideistic positions often adopted by Catholics.” This gives seminary philosophy a distinctly theocentric orientation that supports priestly formation but also differentiates it from the secular academic approach. Consequently, the philosophical training of seminarians shapes not only their intellectual formation but also their pastoral outlook and capacity for critical engagement with contemporary issues.

While this theological orientation is expected in ecclesiastical institutions, it does not exempt seminaries from complying with CHED's minimum requirements for AB Philosophy. For the sake of uniformity and to ensure that seminary students are

not disadvantaged, seminary programs must align with CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 26, s. 2017, particularly its prescribed course titles, units, and descriptions. Strengthening this alignment would promote equality across institutional types and enhance academic mobility. Such compliance would also support efforts to integrate seminary graduates more effectively into broader academic and professional contexts, both within and beyond religious institutions.

To address these issues, the study proposes requiring seminary AB Philosophy programs to adopt the CHED-mandated standards for course titles, units, and descriptions. This alignment is intended to promote academic recognition and ensure that seminary students can transfer credits without difficulty. The effectiveness of this initiative can be measured by the number of seminary programs granted a Certificate of Program Compliance (COPC), which would indicate successful adherence to CHED requirements. Thus, the different philosophical associations in the Philippines can offer free teaching services to seminaries, many of which cannot afford to fully compensate professors.

Shortage of qualified philosophy educators in Senior High Schools

A major challenge in philosophy education is the limited number of qualified teachers, especially in public senior high schools. Many teachers assigned to teach *Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person* (IPHP) are not philosophy graduates and lack sufficient background in the field. This often leads students to view philosophy as excessively difficult, impractical, or irrelevant. The shortage is more pronounced in rural areas, where there are even fewer philosophy educators with advanced training or exposure to both analytic and continental traditions. Although IPHP is a core subject in the K-12 curriculum, the Department of Education (DepEd) continues to assign teachers without formal philosophical preparation. This undermines the quality of instruction and the development of essential skills in reasoning and reflection.

One promising solution is the integration of professional education units within AB Philosophy programs, enabling philosophy majors to qualify for the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). This approach is already implemented by Ateneo de Davao University, Bohol Island State University-Main Campus, and Bukidnon State University (see the university websites), whose graduates can pursue careers in secondary education beyond the traditional paths of law school or graduate study. Expanding this model to other institutions would not only increase the number of properly trained philosophy educators but also enhance employment opportunities for philosophy majors. This would also strengthen the overall quality of philosophy instruction in senior high schools, ensuring that students receive a more rigorous and meaningful introduction to philosophical inquiry. In the long term, a larger pool of competent philosophy teachers could contribute to a stronger culture of critical thinking and civic engagement across the country.

In line with this, the study proposes introducing professional education units into AB Philosophy curricula to prepare students for the LET. The goal is to expand professional opportunities for philosophy graduates and improve the quality of philosophy instruction in secondary schools where IPHP is offered. The effectiveness

of this initiative may be assessed through the number of philosophy graduates obtaining LET certification, which would indicate an increase in the pool of qualified secondary-level philosophy teachers.

Conflict and/or disconnection between philosophy and the sciences

A persistent issue in philosophy education is the mistaken perception that philosophy and the sciences operate in isolation. This artificial dichotomy is unproductive and continues to shape how curricula are designed and taught. As Emerita Quito (1983) argues, science depends on the conceptual grounding provided by philosophy, while philosophy without scientific input becomes sterile. Treating the two disciplines as separate or competing domains leads to narrow forms of inquiry and limits the intellectual development of students.

In the Philippine context, overcoming this divide requires a stronger emphasis on interdisciplinary and applied philosophical approaches. Branches such as the philosophy of the human person, social philosophy, political philosophy, bioethics, and environmental ethics show how philosophical analysis gains depth when informed by empirical knowledge. These fields highlight that philosophy and science are not in conflict but function as complementary modes of understanding, each enriching the other.

To address this issue, the study proposes promoting interdisciplinary and applied philosophical courses, including Environmental Ethics, Political Philosophy, Bioethics, and related areas that explicitly integrate scientific perspectives. This initiative aims to reinforce the complementarity of science and philosophy by bridging theoretical reflection with practical and empirical concerns, consistent with Quito's (1983) insights. The effectiveness of this approach may be evaluated by monitoring the number of interdisciplinary courses offered and the amount of research produced in applied philosophical fields, which would signal stronger integration between philosophy and the sciences.

Influence of external forces such as neoliberal and market-driven educational priorities

The complementarity between philosophy and the sciences faces an additional threat from the rise of neoliberal and market-driven educational priorities. As Sannadan et al. (2021) observe in *Neoliberal Restructuring in Philippine Education: Towards Performativity*, global curricular reforms are increasingly revised “to fit businesses’ needs and feed factories with workforce.” This orientation reduces education to economic utility, where employability, profitability, and productivity take precedence over human dignity and intellectual development.

In the Philippines, universities and colleges—both public and private—often reinforce these priorities by aligning programs with labor market trends and business interests. Government agencies and legislators likewise sustain this shift through policy-making and curriculum revision. The rapid rise of artificial intelligence and automation intensifies this trend by steering educational goals toward technical and industry-specific competencies, further narrowing the space for humanistic inquiry. As

a result, philosophy risks being marginalized in an environment that prioritizes measurable outputs over reflective, ethical, and critical capacities.

Yet this context underscores the urgent need to defend and strengthen philosophy's role in higher education. A philosophy curriculum grounded in ethical citizenship, social responsibility, and civic engagement can counterbalance the reduction of education to economic utility. For this reason, the study proposes encouraging a more humanistic and socially engaged philosophy curriculum, one that explicitly integrates components of civic responsibility and public reasoning into course syllabi. The effectiveness of this initiative can be assessed by examining the inclusion of civic engagement elements in philosophy syllabi, which would signal a meaningful shift toward humanistic and socially responsive education.

Limited engagement of philosophy with contemporary global issues

Philosophy programs in the Philippines often prioritize classical texts and traditional frameworks, as reflected in CHED CMO No. 26 S. 2017, which now requires updating. While these foundations remain important, there is a growing need for stronger engagement with contemporary global issues such as artificial intelligence, environmental degradation, political instability, and economic inequality. Addressing these concerns requires philosophical analysis that draws from empirical research and interdisciplinary collaboration. Integrating these perspectives can equip students to apply philosophical reasoning to real-world challenges, fostering critical thinking that is both contextually relevant and globally informed.

Encouraging theses, dissertations, and faculty research on contemporary issues is one way to demonstrate the continued social relevance of philosophy. Philosophy educators must also design pedagogical strategies that help students recognize philosophical inquiry as a practical tool for interpreting and responding to the world around them. To support this shift, the study proposes adopting an approach that integrates empirical research and real-world application within philosophy programs. This strategy aims to position philosophy as relevant to present-day social challenges, ensuring that philosophical training is not confined to abstraction but remains responsive to lived realities. Progress in this area may be assessed through the number of theses and publications that address contemporary issues through interdisciplinary collaboration.

In sum, philosophy education in the Philippines faces significant curricular, structural, and ideological challenges. Yet these challenges also present opportunities for renewal. By engaging contemporary issues, resisting reductive neoliberal priorities, bridging disciplinary divides, reinforcing the humanities, and strengthening the preparation of teachers, philosophy can reclaim its essential role in shaping critical, reflective, and ethically grounded citizens. The prospects for revitalization remain promising. They simply require sustained, creative, and committed philosophical work. Thus, the table below summarizes the problems and their corresponding recommendations and interventions, rationales, and metrics for success.

Table 4. Summary of the Challenges and Responses in Philosophy Education in the Philippines

| Problems | Recommendation and Intervention | Rationale | Metrics for Success |
|---|--|---|---|
| Inconsistency of the curriculum offered across philosophy programs, both in the seminary and secular schools and universities | Alignment of all AB Philosophy curricula according to <i>Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No. 26, s. 2017</i> , and Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs) | To ensure that there will be curricular coherence and academic mobility. This case will address Quito’s (1983) observation on the different philosophical trends and institutional fragmentation | Number of institutions with CHED-aligned syllabi. This will also show the number of successful course credit transfers of students between institutions |
| Marginalization of philosophy in General Education (GE) reforms and Core Subject in Senior High School | Advocate for the retention of <i>Ethics</i> as a GE course in college curricula and the <i>Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person</i> in Senior High School Curricula. If possible, advocate for returning <i>Logic</i> as another GE course in college curricula. | To preserve the skills of moral reasoning, civic responsibility, and critical thinking. Consequently, this will prevent the decline of teaching positions for philosophy teachers and future philosophy graduates | Number of higher education institutions retaining <i>Ethics</i> as a GE philosophy course and secondary educational institutions retaining the IPHP as a core subject in SHS. It is also expected that higher enrollment rates in philosophy programs will be observed. |
| Inconsistency of quality between seminary-based and secular philosophy programs | Require seminary AB Philosophy programs to comply with CHED minimum standards for course titles, units, and descriptions | To promote equality, academic recognition, and student mobility across institutional types in private (and seminary) and public institutions | Number of seminary programs with CHED compliance (COPC) |
| Shortage of qualified philosophy educators in Senior High Schools | Introduce professional education units into AB Philosophy curricula to prepare students taking the <i>Licensure Examination for Teachers</i> (LET) | To expand professional opportunities for philosophy majors and enhance the quality of philosophy instruction in secondary education, particularly at the | Number of philosophy graduates obtaining LET certification. Hence, it will lead to an increase in qualified |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| | | senior high school level, where the <i>Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person</i> is being offered | secondary-level instructors |
| Conflict and/or disconnection between philosophy and the sciences | Promote interdisciplinary and applied philosophical courses, such as <i>Environmental Ethics, Political Philosophy, Bioethics, etc.</i> | To reinforce the complementarity of science and philosophy through bridging the theoretical and practical inquiries, as emphasized by Quito (1983) | Number of interdisciplinary courses offered and research done in the applied philosophy fields |
| Influence of external forces such as neoliberal and market-driven educational priorities | Encourage a more humanistic and socially engaged philosophy curriculum by emphasizing ethical citizenship and social responsibility | To counter the reduction of education to economic utility | Inclusion of civic engagement components in the syllabi of philosophy courses |
| Limited engagement of philosophy with contemporary global issues such as AI, environment, inequality, etc. | Adopt an approach that integrates empirical research and real-world application | Positioning philosophy as relevant to present-day social challenges | Number of theses and publications that address contemporary issues through interdisciplinary collaboration |

CONCLUSION

This study reaffirms that philosophy education in the Philippines traverses a difficult and unknown path towards its full development. While the discipline has witnessed notable expansion in institutional reach and curricular development across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, it continues to grapple with deep-rooted challenges such as the uneven alignment between ecclesiastical and secular curricula, inconsistent adherence to national academic standards, financial constraints, and the persistent perception of philosophy’s limited practical value. Despite these obstacles, philosophy endures as a vital intellectual tradition, thereby producing graduates who could contribute meaningfully to various fields of employment, including education, ethics consultation, policymaking, and public discourse.

The mapping of philosophy programs across the country reveals a landscape that is both diverse and dynamic. But the landscape is still marked by significant gaps

in access, quality, and recognition. The disparities being described point to the need for stronger policy interventions and institutional collaborations, all aiming at harmonizing curricular standards, professionalizing philosophy teaching, and expanding public appreciation for the discipline's relevance in contemporary society. For instance, aligning seminary-based programs with CHED's minimum requirements and strengthening faculty development initiatives are crucial steps toward ensuring academic mobility and curricular coherence.

Philosophy in the Philippines may be seen as undergoing a process of transformation. Its survival and flourishing will depend on institutional reform and on the broader cultural and intellectual climate that either enables or inhibits reflective, critical, and ethical discourse. As Filipino society continues to confront complex moral, political, and technological challenges, the need for a vibrant, contextually grounded, and socially engaged philosophy becomes more urgent than ever. The prospects for philosophy in the Philippines, while uncertain, remain promising if met with strategic, sustained, and collective efforts across academic, ecclesial, and public spheres.

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