**The Blended Mandate: Reconciling Foundational Skills and 21st-Century Competencies**

**Comment**

A stand-out idea prompted by the material (specifically political rhetoric on education) is that the public discourse rarely presents **didactic** and **authentic** education as opposing forces, but rather as **complementary necessities**. Political rhetoric often seeks to satisfy both the pragmatic public demand for a return to "basics" (a didactic, measurable goal) and the aspirational call for "21st-century skills" (an authentic/transformative goal). The new thought this raises is: To what extent does this political blending actually lead to pedagogical **compromise** rather than true **integration**? Do teachers and students end up simply doing *more*—more rote work *and* more projects—without a genuinely coherent, reflexive pedagogy that unifies the two?

@*[Name of another participant]*: What do you think—is the political mandate for "all of the above" ultimately good policy or just good rhetoric?

**Make an Update: Parsing The "Matatag" Agenda**

**Contemporary Text: Philippine Department of Education's "Matatag" (Strong) Agenda**

The "Matatag" Agenda, launched by the Philippine Department of Education, serves as a contemporary text of public policy setting social objectives for education.

**Social Objectives and Substance**

The agenda's substance lies in its dual, and sometimes competing, social objectives:

1. **"Make the curriculum relevant to produce competent and job-ready, active, and responsible citizens"** (Authentic/Transformative Goal).
2. **"Take good care of learners by providing a safe, inclusive, and learner-friendly environment"** (Social Justice/Transformative Goal).
3. **"Actively engage stakeholders for support and collaboration"** (Authentic/Social Goal).
4. **"Give support to teachers to teach better"** (Didactic/Institutional Goal).

**Comment on the Substance:**

The rhetoric is **strong in aspiration** but **necessarily vague on pedagogical method**. Its primary substance is the **strategic framing** of didactic and authentic learning as integrated components:

* **Didactic/Mimetic Reflection (High in Rhetoric, but Pragmatic):** The agenda's call to **"address learning losses"** and reinforce **"foundational skills in literacy and numeracy"** is a strongly **didactic** objective. The substance here is pragmatic and reactive: it acknowledges measurable performance decline and mandates a return to basic, structured instruction. The social objective is to ensure **universal academic equity**—you can't be a "responsible citizen" (Authentic) without basic literacy.
* **Authentic/Synthetic Reflection (High in Aspiration):** The objective to produce **"competent and job-ready"** citizens with **"21st-century skills"** directly reflects **authentic** learning. The substance is aspirational, aiming to shift the social goal of education from certification (Mimetic) to **real-world application** and problem-solving (Authentic). The emphasis on citizenship and responsibility also nudges toward synthetic tasks that require ethical or civic decision-making.
* **Transformative/Reflexive Reflection (Implicitly High):** While the policy doesn't explicitly mention "reflexive pedagogy," the social objective of promoting **"active and responsible citizens"** and creating an **"inclusive, and learner-friendly environment"** implies a **transformative** shift. The goal is to cultivate learners who can critically reflect on and adapt to social and economic realities, which moves beyond mere skills (Authentic) into **character and civic development** (Transformative).

**The Text's Strength (and Subtlety):** The substance is that the rhetoric avoids a false choice. It validates the political need for **accountability and basic mastery** (Didacticism) while simultaneously promising **relevance and critical thinking** (Authentic/Transformative learning). The lack of highly specific pedagogical directives in the public policy text itself is less a lack of substance and more a rhetorical necessity to maintain broad political consensus.