

OUTLOOK ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE K TO 12 PROGRAM: CHRONICLES OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The researcher formulated the following conclusions based on the teachers' narratives: Senior high school students faced common challenges as they experienced the K to 12 Education program. These are how they manage their time (time management), how they cope with the new educational system (coping mechanism), and parents' lack of source for additional two years (financial source). They also shared the same insights as to the advantages of the new educational systems' not just to them but also to society - job opportunities, additional learnings, and the preparation for tertiary education, to name a few. K – 12 Program aims to equip the graduates with knowledge and skills that will arm Filipino graduates to be at a solid ground where if not for excellence with foreign countries but at least, quality workers. The K-12 education program can be the instrument for the integration of information and communication technology in education. Meanwhile, they also shared negative feedbacks for the program. These are lack of facilities, lack of financial support, and the delay of professional attainment. Though senior high school students faced those challenges and difficulties upon dealing with the new educational system, they likely have ways to boost their minds and confidence to meet the challenges despite the challenges. The K – 12 Program will be a burden on parents and students, not just for emotional, physical reasons but also in financial aspects because this program will prolong the years of stay in the school of the students. The senior high school students continued to battle with the new educational program's hardships. They shared those things like time management and accepting reality. By seeking help from those around them, like their family, relatives, friends, and classmates, they tend to overcome them as their coping strategies to continue their journey as senior high school students.

Keywords: K to 12 implementation, challenges, views, insights, feedback

1. INTRODUCTION

Across the world, education has been provided the most attention among everything else because it decided the future of every country. Among the countries around the world, the Philippines was the last country in Asia and one of the only three countries in the world with a 10-year pre-university program (Yap, R, 2011). To align the country's curriculum and meet the need of the global market where quality education became a must for everyone, the Philippine Educational system adapted to a modern and more dynamic curriculum where it followed the 12- year program.

K to 12 program implementation aimed at creating more skilled students with basic skills for lifelong learning and employment. This program promoted the mutual recognition of Filipino learners and professionals in other countries because they were able to master the skills and learn the core competencies which were necessary to meet the demands of the global market. This new program created learners who have been prepared for jobs, entrepreneurship and middle-level skills development since they had to graduate on the program at the age of 18.

Learners who graduated under this course were considered young adults so, they were prepared with the necessary qualifications because they struggled with much higher learning when they entered tertiary education. This new education scheme in the Philippines has given the students the chance to choose on their own as they pursue a specific track that made them successful in a certain area. The government claimed that this placed Filipino learners at the same level as the rest of the world as they obtained a spot in the competitive labor market. Through these specializations, learners were prepared in a holistic way as they faced the upcoming future.

In Abueva, A. (2019), implementing the K-12 Program in the Philippine Curriculum of Basic Education was the key to the growth of our country. Although the government has faced many problems as it implements the program over several years, it has been a necessary improvement as it has been critical to the success of our nation to increase the quality of our education.

From a positive point of view, the K to 12 program offers a greater solution to the problems that the country was facing, particularly in the employment phase, as the Filipino graduates worked abroad. These problems include the need for teachers to be trained in pedagogy, education research, measurement and evaluation, and classroom management (Bala, C., 2017) to ensure that instructions are delivered in a meaningful way and a lack of government budget to provide the necessary resources to support this new curriculum, including junior and senior high school teachers.

Despite all the problems found as a result of the implementation of this new curriculum, many had believed that the long-term effects of the K to 12 program were very beneficial to all Filipino graduates. Therefore, support and encouragement for the betterment of the new educational system implemented by the government be shown by all Filipinos. By investing more time and resources to education, national growth and development can truly be achieved. The researcher by way of evaluation collects narratives of elementary teachers as a way of knowing their perspectives on the K to 12 and its implementation. This study is a way of giving voices to teachers and their views about the implementation of the new curriculum.

This study would like to know the perspectives of elementary teachers on the implementation of K to 12 programs in their own school. This research used a qualitative approach with the use of thematic analysis to analyze the data.

The narratives of teachers may only be applicable or true to the identified school. However, the insights or the lessons shared by elementary teachers may guide other school teachers in improving their lot in the implementation of the K to 12 in their schools.

From a teacher's point of view, as quoted from the Acosta (2016) study it was found that there were five predisposing factors, namely: qualifications, hiring requirements, streamlining of courses, management of surplus labor, and alternative programs to assess the readiness of senior high school teachers and higher education institutions to ensure stability and to encourage and protect the health of the faculty involved and other workers in the higher education field.

Vizconde, C. (2015) stressed the emerging issues of the K to 12 systems in its study: 1) the displacement of teachers at tertiary level; 2) the lack of information on the guidelines for implementation; 3) the lack of university students for two years; and 4) the lack of resources for implementation.

A positive impression was identified by the study by Lacorte, E. (2011) that teachers are likely to have been adequately prepared for the implementation of the K to 12 programs in terms of teaching skills, teaching strategies and teaching materials and there was a considerable variation in the readiness of private and public schools, as well as the readiness of their respective teachers, and this, was mostly attributable to the different settings and conditions in the two groups of schools.

Crisol, L., et. al., (2014) affirmed that the teachers had approved the implementation of the program. They believed that the program effectively provided students with the fields and careers they had chosen. Although they were willing to take part in the program, they still do not find themselves equipped to teach students because they believe they need more training.

On the other hand, the study revealed the perspectives of students who (a) regarded communication as essential to their learning experience, and (b) moderately satisfied with their blended learning experience. The predictive model of student satisfaction, using three forms of experiences, was accurate. Of the three types of interaction, the learner-content interaction was the strongest predictor of student satisfaction when the design of the course involved a small number of collaborative activities. In addition, student personality has been identified as a vital factor for interaction and satisfaction in this type of course design. Students who reported having an extroverted personality experienced more interaction and a higher level of student satisfaction than those who self-reported as introverted (Belland, B., et. al., 2014).

Students have been enthusiastic about the introduction of the K-12 program, and are also hopeful that it will be successful in achieving its objectives. In addition, students are willing to invest their time and resources to carry out the curriculum (Crisol, L., et. al., 2014). The K-12 program concerned only students who are not yet ready to enter the world of work. This program will pave the way for a generation of graduates who are equipped not only with knowledge but also with skills that are relevant to their day-to-day experiences of future sustainable development (Mohammad, N., 2016).

The findings revealed by students generally show that the implementation of a new science curriculum has a positive impact on the learning of science concepts, the acquisition of scientific skills and the development of scientific attitudes and values. Among the different learning domains that the K12 Science Curriculum wants to improve, it is the values and attitudes training domain that students have agreed to be relevant to them (Montebon, D. 2014).

In addition, a misunderstanding of the views of parents on the implementation of the K to 12 programs has been established. As cited in the Cabansag, M. (2014) report, myths about the essence of the additional two years of basic education known as the senior high school have had a negative impact on the lower economic status of parents.

Article written by Umil, A. and Andres, I., (2012) quoted from Garry Martinez's statement, based on the latest Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES), that families prioritize food spending and other basic needs. "The additional two years of education will be an additional burden on the OFWs. Loan money for enrolment or they'll work three times as hard just to pay for school fees and other fees.

However, findings from the study of Mohammad, N. (2016), stressed that some parents viewed this program in a negative light, which gave them and their children a different burden both physically and financially, but some parents viewed the program positively and thought that it helped learners to choose and decide the career that best suits their skills. Different perspectives were identified from various studies from those individuals who were involved with the change of the educational system of the country. There were positive and negative impressions however, let us viewed in wider perspectives the beneficial effects of this new curriculum. It was not an aim of this new curriculum to give additional years for sufferings but rather to standardized the educational system of the country where it strengthened the academic subjects and prepared students' work readiness as skills were enhanced and developed. Furthermore, this new system produced graduates who were competent, skills and highly employable.

In line with this change, additional classrooms and infrastructures are the priority of the Department of Education to be able to house senior high school students in the school years to come. More extension positions for teachers are filled. The department said to have allotted more or less P63 billion for this program. However, the former DepEd secretary, Bro. Armin Luistro on the second year of K - 12 is ever positive about this program although he admitted that K-12 is not that perfect and will be subjected to further study and monitoring especially on the curriculum materials. What is important is the concentrated effort of the DepEd family and the government supports for this program to fully effect a quality basic education for the Filipino children.

In an interview with the public school teachers who are students at the Graduate School teachers were made to make beautiful lesson plans and perfect reports to satisfy school heads who in turn submit these to the higher authorities in the division, regional and central offices. It takes many hours to produce a detailed lesson plan as well as make the necessary visual aids. Most of the time the teachers would sit down and write while letting the pupils writes the lessons on the board. They have no more time to explain the lessons to the pupils.

This is another major challenge of the Department of Education is retaining those in school, particularly those at risk of falling out of the system. Those who are at risk of dropping out are those who encounter difficult circumstances in life – poverty, cases of teenage pregnancies, student laborers, children whose parents were poorly schooled, slum dwellers, families who live in areas with peace and order problems and learners with various forms of disabilities.

When people heard news of the K-12 program implementation in the country, it received mixed reactions. Suddenly, there was a combination of backlashes and praise in the background with the students left puzzled on whose voice to listen to. There are still challenges and standards of quality to consider but the important thing is to establish that development is present as a result of the new program. Now that the K to 12 system is fully implemented in the country, how did it affect the Philippine education system? And was it successful in its objectives prior to implementation?

K stands for kindergarten and 12 refers to the succeeding 12 years of basic education, which is why it is called K to 12. The 12 years of basic education comprises of 6 years of elementary education, 4 years of junior high school, and 2 years of senior high school. The K-12 program offers a decongested 12-year program for the students which aims to give them sufficient time to master skills and acquire basic competencies with the goal of being competitive on a global scale. Students of the new system will be equipped with the skills required to be ready for employment, entrepreneurship, middle-level skills development, and higher education even if they intend to do so after graduation.

The K to 12 program promotes global competency by accelerating mutual recognition of Filipino graduates and professionals in other countries. The new curriculum allows students to choose between three tracks which are the Academic, Technical-Vocational-Livelihood, and the Sports and Arts strand. It will also give students opportunities to undergo immersions, have relevant exposure to a variety of industries, and to have experience in their chosen track. Whereas the old curriculum offers a broad and linear curriculum, it did not include enough practical applications like the K-12 does.

Starting with Kindergarten as the foundation for lifelong learning and development, the 12-year curriculum aims to give students the journey in education that they deserve. Foreign countries perceive that a ten-year curriculum in the education department is insufficient that is why many Filipinos abroad are not recognized professionals. With the new curriculum, graduates are fully equipped with the skills which can help them stand out on a global scale and compete accordingly according to international standards.

Advantages of K to 12 to the Philippine Education Sector

There are plenty of advantages to the new curriculum of the K to 12 program and most of them put the Filipino student at the forefront of the educational agenda. The K to 12 curricula in the Philippines will put Filipino students at par with the rest of the world. This would be a testament that an investment in education is the key toward reaching national growth and development. There is still a challenge in accepting the K to 12 system as a curriculum but with

these advantages, doing so would require less difficulty. There are some people who still think that the K to 12 system is just a stretched curriculum with barely any changes from the old curriculum. The curriculum is more than that, as it clearly focuses on enhancing the students' progress and their future.

Here are some of the benefits that students can receive from the curriculum:

Preparedness for Tertiary Learning. With the adaptation of the K to 12 program, students are expected to graduate at an age that is a bit older than past graduates of the old curriculum. According to DepEd, this would be an advantage to the young adults venturing out into the professional world because they would be much more equipped to deal with the higher level of learning as they enter college. With this, they can choose to continue their education to higher forms which will be another great journey to access essential learning developments.

Readiness to Join the workforce. Unlike the old system, K to 12 can make students more prepared in joining the workforce. The new curriculum has this benefit because they compel each student to be enthusiastic about the workforce and the scheme empowers students to make a choice on their own. They may or may not pursue a college program especially if they have chosen a track other than the academic track. Senior high school students need not fret if they would like to explore other fields aside from their own because they get to choose electives that can also hone their skills in certain areas that they are interested in.

Skill Competency in the Job Market. The K to 12 system aims to improve Filipino students' skills in mathematics, science, and linguistics to further exhibit competence in the global job market. With the new curriculum, the Department of Education promises to offer higher quality education through the strands. Each track will give the students enough time to master a field and enhance their skills in that respective industry and by the end of the curriculum, K to 12 graduates will be ready to become globally competitive and are set to obtain a spot in the meticulous labor market.

K to 12 is a Learner-Centered Curriculum. K to 12 as a student-centered curriculum can influence the students to take a more active role in the learning process. With the freedom and the flexibility to choose what they will learn, how they will learn, and how they can evaluate your own learning, this would be a way to teach them about independence and how to be a reliable member of a team. Not only will this make learning very enjoyable and easier for students, it will also help address diverse needs which include special cases and those that come from indigenous groups which make this education system very inclusive for everyone.

K to 12 Fosters Gainful Employment and Entrepreneurship. Unlike the previous education system, K to 12 offers more opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. Many schools in the Philippines are slowly implementing this. Graduates of the new system can instantly get a job after they receive their certificates and passing competency-based assessments. On the other hand, they can set up their own business or continue their education in college. All the options will help every student to step up in improving their competence, skills, and professional characteristics.

The Role of K to 12 to Students and their Parents

It is a sad reality that there are students who drop out of high school without graduating which leaves them unemployed and at risk of facing difficulties. Parents, educators, employers, and students themselves hold the responsibility of making sure that this does not happen and that they secure a future for themselves. K to 12 plays a vital role for students and their parents in ensuring that they would be competitive in the workforce and thus generates progressiveness for the whole family in this economy.

Learn How to Socialize. It is a given that schools are major agents of socialization. One of the things that young people who drop out of school can miss out on is being a part of a group with peers who understand and support them. Not to mention that educators also function as role models and a figure of authority that can keep the attitude and behavior of students in check. With K to 12, they recognize that this is a primary function of learning and they provide more avenues for students to socialize. Without the positive influence of the educational institution, an individual can find himself in difficult situations during their socialization process. Social skills are needed in a work environment and basically, in ensuring that you have the proper disposition to go through life. Going to school is an important part of this process this is what K to 12 aims to foster in the curriculum.

Teaches Respect. School teaches students to recognize authority figures not out of fear but out of respect. This values the discipline that a student nurtures and this will come in handy when they eventually have authority figures in their future jobs. A student who knows how to respect teachers and school personnel will easily adapt to the workplace and in other social aspects of adult life. Knowing respect and discipline by heart is vital in becoming successful as working adults or even when planning to form a healthy household.

Master Basic Skills. Basic skills such as reading and writing are the main benefits of K to 12 education. Adults who do not master these skills usually go through a process of learning how to read and write before landing a good job,

making the situation even more difficult for them. Acquiring basic math skills is also another benefit of a good education—math skills can help individuals balance their budget, look for the best prices in the market, figure out the best paying jobs or how to file taxes properly. Having a good grasp on these skills all boils down to receiving a solid education and having a strong foundation from it.

Acquire General Knowledge. Learning general knowledge is one of the perks that you can get from an education. The knowledge of history, geography, science or literature can be exhilarating, and it can greatly enrich one's life. All that useful information can have more value than material things because someone who learns can probably feel more fulfilled. This will keep them in the course of their lives with the constant enthusiasm to learn new things which will help in the individual's progress towards growth. Someone who does not acquire a desire for learning will miss out on discovering the richness of other lifestyles and cultures.

K to 12 Provides Options. Getting a K to 12 education can open new doors and increase the chance of finding a stable job. Students can get the opportunity to build a network, acquire more skills, and find the career that they really love. K to 12 can get students the access to all these great opportunities and have a fulfillment during this learning experience. Obtaining a K to 12 diploma will make students more likely to be hired because employers usually assume that someone who completed the K to 12 curriculum has the basic skills necessary for the job, have adequate communication skills, can get along with the rest of the team and follow objectives like they are supposed to.

In conclusion, the many benefits of K to 12 education include basic skills such as being able to read, write, count, communicate, and interact with others. Getting this kind of education not only helps your chances of landing a respectable job—it also helps you in developing the life skills you will need on your journey towards growth. Having a good education, finding a good career, adapting in the workplace, becoming a stable adult, and raising a family; that sounds like the dream, right? School might be overlooked but its importance is unparalleled. As parents or educators, their roles are just as vital as the learning process that students get from the four walls of a classroom, their job is to help the young people understand the importance of their lifestyle in school.

Challenges on the Implementation of the K to 12 Program in the Philippines

The K to 12 Program covers Kindergarten and 12 years of Basic Education to provide sufficient time for mastery of concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners and prepare graduates for tertiary education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship.

The implementation of the new curriculum was a solution to the different issues in the country but also, it came with different problems considering that it created a big change in the entire educational system of the country and Filipinos were affected by this change.

Findings of Ednave, R., et. al., (2018) stated that the implementation of the K to 12 programs presented the following challenges: a) lack of preparation and professional development; b) excessive academic burden on students; and c) integration of lessons in the real-life context. This would be a great challenge for all teachers to engage in different training and to pursue higher education in order to manage the changes and ensure that their growth corresponds to the demands of society.

The K to 12 Basic Education Program proposed by the Department of Education adds two years of secondary education to allow graduates to pursue one of three paths: postgraduate employment, higher education or entrepreneurship. The reform faced challenges in the redesign of the curriculum, in the deployment and training of teachers at the start of the program, in ensuring the sustainability of the program, and in meeting the necessary infrastructure (Sergio, M., 2012).

As mentioned in the study of Cocal, C. and Marcellano, G., (2017), it claimed that the current physical and educational facilities and services of the various public elementary schools in Pangasinan did not comply with the minimum specifications laid down by the Department of Education. There was a great need for schools to improve their physical facilities and educational resources in order to implement the K to 12 program effectively and efficiently. The financial resource was a major problem for the schools with regard to the implementation of the K to 12 program.

Findings from different research papers should give an eye-opener to the government in particular to the Department of Education to come up with the necessary approaches to provide immediate solutions to address all these problems identified to ensure that the goals of this new curriculum can be achieved. The findings gave also provided the government with a road map of what was required to be done and that an immediate response was needed to avoid delay in the outcome, especially for learners who were key participants in this program. As a result, the partnership and coordination of the different experts in education have been essential to the creation of the best action plan that worked in addressing these issues arise upon the implementation of this program.

The needs of preparation, adjustment, experience, mastery of subject, and professional development are the underlying factors affecting the teaching-learning process. Trainings undergone by these teachers are not enough to ensure that the curriculum is seamless, especially those instructors from college that are deployed in high school.

The excessive academic load has an adverse effect on the performance of both teachers and students. It requires combined efforts to fulfill the standards set by DepEd, and it's up to them on how to balance academics and co-curricular activities.

Speaking about challenges, issues or concerns, the following online news articles dated January 30, 2017 thresh out the challenges and triumphs in the K to 12 implementations:

The implementation of the K to 12 Basic Education Program is in full swing as more than 1,300 Department of Education (DepEd) personnel and stakeholders from around the country shared best practices in ensuring that every Filipino achieves quality, accessible, relevant, and liberating basic education.

“Napakaganda ng mga istorya ninyo, napaka-inspiring whether these are unhappy or joyous pero lahat nagre-release ng ating creative juices, nagre-release ng ating courage, that allow us to overcome fear, hindi tayo naghahintay kung ano sasabihin ng Central Office, ang marami sa inyo andyan na yung sitwasyon, kumikilos na kayo sa inyong sarling sikap and these are very inspiring,” former Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones emphasized.

At the 2nd National K to 12 Conference held on January 10-11, 2017 at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC), DepEd gathered some of the nation's most passionate education implementers, managers, and leaders who weathered the challenges of implementing the basic education reform through interventions and innovations to serve learners better.

During the conference synthesis, Undersecretary for Curriculum and Instruction Dina S. Ocampo discussed the following findings:

Kindergarten. Kindergarten best practices include the contextualization and localization of curriculum and instruction materials; training-workshop for teachers on the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual education (MTB-MLE); clean, safe, and child-friendly classrooms; home visits, child mapping, early registration, and barangay meetings; and involvement of the community and stakeholders.

Results showed that learners' love for reading was promoted; needs of learners with special needs were met; zero dropout rate; teachers' enhanced skills in information communication technology and teaching strategies; and implementers gained better understanding of the policy.

Grades 1 to 6. Meanwhile, best practices in Grades 1 to 6 include designing of curriculum that enable teachers to cater to the needs of both Muslim and Christian learners; provision of self-paced learning materials; Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions for the professional advancement of teachers; catch-up programs across all levels; capacity building for school implementers of Special Interest Programs; advocacies for Muslim parents aimed at increasing appreciation of the Madrasah Program; and involvement and collaboration with Muslim and indigenous peoples' (IPs) elders.

The initiatives resulted in learners having more opportunity to learn Arabic language and Islamic values; increased enrollment and more learners staying in school; increased awareness of the needs of learners with special needs; better performance of teachers when efforts are recognized; and learners gaining confidence when their difference, abilities, and talents are recognized.

Junior High School. Junior High School (JHS) best practices include Basic Literacy Program for adult learners; use of virtual classroom for Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners; systematic trainings for teachers that integrate real-life scenarios and applications; school-based programs to reduce dropout rate; livelihood skills training; research on causes of student dropout; and scholarships from private individuals for adults and learners with special needs.

Results yielded increased enrollment and school participation; improvement in teachers' competence; models of success in classrooms, schools, and communities; strengthened collaboration and harmonized efforts between local government units (LGUs) and other stakeholders; increased community awareness on ALS; increased probability of employment for learners; and availability of reliable data leading to creation of appropriate school programs.

Senior High School. The Senior High School (SHS) program is heading toward full implementation with the roll out of Grade 12 in 2017. Best practices in actual implementation, learning environment, and governance include ensuring better distribution of program offerings per District or Division to answer to learners' and communities' needs through SHS mapping (including private schools, state and local universities and colleges, and technical-vocational institutions); utilization of LGUs conference hall, libraries, and barangay halls as SHS classrooms; redeployment of excess JHS teachers to teach in SHS based on their specialization; short-term scholarship for teachers; refined hiring process; collaboration with the Association of Private Basic Education Schools to reduce top-up fees; provision of dormitories for learners from remote places; and construction of additional classrooms, science laboratories, and TVL

workshops from LGUs, government agencies, NGOs, government-owned and –controlled corporations (GOCCs), and private companies.

These collaborative efforts resulted in the enrollment of learners in their preferred programs; achievement of ideal class size and teacher-student ratio; address of classroom shortage; availability of learning materials for both teachers and students; accessibility of schools; and hands-on, experiential, relevant instruction and learning.

SHS support partnerships and linkages also saw best practices that include implementation of transparency system in any and all SHS transactions; constant monitoring and evaluation of schools; school-to-school partnership training; benchmarking in other provinces and countries; conduct of workshops, conferences, caravan, advocacy campaign, parents' orientation, and consultative meetings on SHS concerns; dissemination of information through various media; and better partnership with LGUs, SUCs, LUCs, HEIs, TVIs, private schools, NGOs, industry partners, and alumni associations.

Results include increased enrollment in SHS; large percentage of the total enrollment in private schools received voucher; scholarship grants; teachers received training from experts in different fields; allocation of financial assistance to build and repair classrooms, schools, workshops, laboratories, and procurement of tools and equipment; public and stakeholders are more well-informed about SHS; private schools agreed to have minimal or no top-up for tuition of SHS students from public schools; agreed sharing of resources and facilities for work immersion and research of SHS students; and renewed commitment of partners.

Citing Che Guevara, a Cuban revolutionary leader, Usec. Ocampo reminded the conference participants that “in this world, we need people who work more than criticize, who construct more than destroy, who make fewer promises and deliver more solutions, who expect to give more than they receive, and who say it's better today than tomorrow.”

John Dewey (1915), the great pragmatic philosopher who influenced the public school system in the 19th and 20th century, articulated that there should be pragmatic relationship between school and society. What is needed by society should be taught in the school and the ones taught in the school are needed in society, otherwise there is a waste in education. In other words, John Dewey is articulating the relevance of education or curriculum to the everyday life of the people (Dewey, 1915).

The Philippine Constitution is bias in favoring a curriculum or education by providing that the State shall establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society. The Philippine K-12 Program is actually a product and influence of the forces of globalization. The graduates of K-12 are geared toward global competition; and, thus, they will be future global laborers and workers in the global labor market. Our professionals and even the technical manpower are well-sought workers abroad, due to our technical, professional skills as well as our work ethics. This could be good for us in terms of employment opportunities and dollar remittances. But, what we are missing is our clear path to national development.

An economic growth based on OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) remittances is unstable, because if there are economic and political shocks abroad, our OFWs are direct affected. We need to establish our fundamental or heavy steel industries, develop the creative and innovative talents of Filipino people to promote Filipino brands, local and international. But, most of our talents are working abroad as OFWs and more and more young professionals are lured to pursue post-graduate studies abroad and to some extent, they are encourage to work in their host countries as scientists, inventors, innovators, among others.

What we need is a curriculum that will respond to the need of our own people. A curriculum content that will address our problems, so that we could move forward to development. There is nothing wrong with science and technology, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) subjects, as well as mastering the language of international communication, e.g. English, but we need to strengthen the mother tongues, our cultural heritage, strong appreciation of history, and our national heroes. We need to study the indigenous knowledge system as a way to pattern our development plan. We should consider the need to preserve the environment by looking at the sustainable way of using and utilizing our natural resources.

Like for example, in mining, the dominant forces are the multinational companies (e.g. Australian, Canadian mining) extracting our precious minerals, but I think we need to shift paradigm in our mining policy. We are disaster prone area in the Pacific and, thus, disaster response and risk reduction management should be an integral part of the curricula at all levels of education. As a people, we are not close to our natural world, as if we are miles away to our nature.

It's really high time to be closer to nature and be part of nature by integrating environment education from the point of Asian or Filipino way of communing with nature. Our values and culture are so heavily punctuated by foreign influences, because of globalization.

But, in the curriculum, we should strike a balance of learning/ respecting the cultures of other people as well as understanding and recognizing the importance of our being culturally rooted Filipinos. The Filipino culture is always and will always stay with us, what we need to do is to uncover the hidden structures of Filipino culture and values and we should have capitalized on it for our development.

2. METHODS

The research used qualitative method. This design explored a wide array of dimensions of the understandings, experiences and imaginings of the research participants, the way that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate (Mason, 2002). It utilized the phenomenology approach of qualitative method, in which an in-depth interview was conducted. The study was directed to look into lived experiences of the teachers in the K to 12 program implementation in a public elementary school.

The participants of the study are the teachers of a public elementary school namely: Marcelo H. del Pilar Elementary School of Towak, Matanao, Davao del Sur. The participants were selected accordingly and purposefully for this research. The researchers ensured appropriate measures such as consent and willingness to participate. All gathered data were transcribed accordingly.

The teachers were selected through the following inclusion criteria: regular permanent status as elementary teacher of the school, has been teaching in the public school for more than 3 years, of either sex, residence of the locality, and willingness to participate in the study.

Purposive sampling was used in the study. With the K to 12 implementation comes the change in the curriculum of the basic education, hence two teachers from each grade level were chosen for a total of 12 teachers.

Interviews were conducted with twelve (12) teachers (of either sex). The research approach allowed learners to tell their own unique stories. The reason for this small group was to allow all learners to participate and to allow the researcher to capture a variety of stories on the research topic. Both male and female learners were included in the research population to ensure that the findings reflected the gender diversity at the school. The method of this study and the selection of the case were designed to ensure that the learners met certain criteria in order to participate in the study

Narrative essays, interviews, and field notes were used as data collection methods. These sources were expected to provide extremely rich and detailed narratives (Yin, 2009).

To acquire authentic data, the researchers monitored the following steps of qualitative data analysis according to Creswell (1998). First is to organize data into several forms (i.e. database, sentences or individual words); peruse the data sets several times to gain a complete picture or overview of what it contains as a whole.

During the process, the researchers jotted down the key points that suggest possible categories or interpretations; identified general categories or themes and classified them. This helped the researchers see patterns or meanings of the gathered data. Final step is to integrate and summarize the data of the participants. This step also included indicators that state the relationships among those categories defined by the researchers.

3. RESULTS

Views of elementary teachers on the implementation of the new curriculum (K to 12)

Views of the elementary teachers were gathered through interviews. They were analyzed and interpreted: preparedness for tertiary learning, readiness to join the workforce, skill competency in the job market, K to 12 is a learner-centered curriculum, and K to 12 fosters gainful employment and entrepreneurship.

Preparedness for Tertiary Learning. With the adaptation of the K to 12 program, students are expected to graduate at an age that is a bit older than past graduates of the old curriculum. Readiness to Join the workforce. Unlike the old system, K to 12 can make students more prepared in joining the workforce. The new curriculum has this benefit because they compel each student to be enthusiastic about the workforce and the scheme empowers students to make a choice on their own. Skill Competency in the Job Market. The K to 12 system aims to improve Filipino students' skills in mathematics, science, and linguistics to further exhibit competence in the global job market.

K to 12 is a Learner-Centered Curriculum. K to 12 as a student-centered curriculum can influence the students to take a more active role in the learning process.

K to 12 Fosters Gainful Employment and Entrepreneurship. Unlike the previous education system, K to 12 offers more opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. Many schools in the Philippines are slowly implementing this.

The Role of K to 12 to Students and their Parents

Learn How to Socialize. It is a given that schools are major agents of socialization. One of the things that young people who drop out of school can miss out on is being a part of a group with peers who understand and support them. Not to mention that educators also function as role models and a figure of authority that can keep the attitude and behavior of students in check. With K to 12, they recognize that this is a primary function of learning and they provide more avenues for students to socialize. Without the positive influence of the educational institution, an individual can find himself in difficult situations during their socialization process.

Teaches Respect. School teaches students to recognize authority figures not out of fear but out of respect. This values the discipline that a student nurtures and this will come in handy when they eventually have authority figures in their future jobs.

Master Basic Skills. Basic skills such as reading and writing are the main benefits of K to 12 education. Adults who do not master these skills usually go through a process of learning how to read and write before landing a good job, making the situation even more difficult for them.

Acquire General Knowledge. Learning general knowledge is one of the perks that you can get from an education. The knowledge of history, geography, science or literature can be exhilarating, and it can greatly enrich one's life.

K to 12 Provides Options. Getting a K to 12 education can open new doors and increase the chance of finding a stable job.

Challenges of the K to 12 program implementation

Aside from a resolute detailed and committed understanding of the new curriculum and its implementation, the teachers have varied challenges. The following were shared by the teachers:

Challenge 1. A superficial solution. It is merely a superficial solution and does not truly address the more fundamental problems of the educational system. Government meager budget to pay for two more years of free education; does not even have the money to fully support today's ten years.

Challenge 2. Relationship between the length of school cycle and quality of education. Longer education cycles do not necessarily result in better performance of students. What is more important is how effectively learning time is spent.

Challenge 3. Funding constraint and shortage of inputs. As a result of the perennial underinvestment in the sector, the educational system is plagued by long standing shortages in important enabling inputs like classrooms, teachers, chairs, textbooks, computer/library/sanitation/sports facilities. the government has yet to fully fund the existing 10-year basic education cycle.

Challenge 4. Additional expenses incurred by parents. Critics argued that while K to 12 will be provided free by the government in public schools where most of the poor enroll in, parents will still have out-of-pocket expenses to cover their schoolchildren's food, transportation and allowance.

Challenge 5. Increasing the school leaving age. Increasing the school leaving age would be particularly unfavorable to the poor who, in general, want to finish high school in the shortest time possible so that they can help their families right away.

Challenge 6. Complying with the global standards. Critics maintained though that while it is important to comply with standards, actual experience as cited by Tan (2010) showed that foreign employers look primarily at competencies and not at the number of years of schooling when hiring workers.

Challenge 7. Effect of K to 12 on higher education institutions. If two years will be added to basic education, higher education institutions (HEIs) will not have incoming college freshmen for two years because students will have to undergo senior high. This could have disastrous effects on the HEIs' financial standing.

Challenge 8. On nationalism and cultural awareness. The program undermined nationalism and cultural awareness as values promoted in Philippine education. The CHED memo no. 20, s. 2013 "prescribed a new General Education Curriculum," compacting this set of required courses to 36 units. As a result, the memo removed Filipino and Panitikan as core subjects.

Challenge 9. Displacement of teachers. The new curriculum would lead to the layoff of teachers - an estimated 78,000 in colleges across the country. Setting up a P29-billion stabilization fund to help higher education institutions and displaced teachers and other personnel is just a "palliative" measure, said one school official, as faculty members from colleges and universities aired their fears, including loss of jobs, tenure and other nonmonetary benefits.

Challenge 10. Untrained and unprepared teachers especially those who are non-Education graduates but would be hired based on their specialization and/or skills (e.g., engineers, scientists, technologists).

Suggestions to address the problems of implementation
of K to 12 programs

Suggestion 1. Importance to the Society. Based on the interpretation of the data gathered, students perceived the K-12 education program as a good indicator that can contribute to society.

Suggestion 2. Advantages of K-12 Education Program on the Educational System. Based on the analysis of the data, additional knowledge is the K-12 education programs' high advantage in the Philippines' educational system. Quality education is what our government wants us to have.

Suggestion 3. On the Negative Feedbacks on the K-12 Education Program. Based on the insights of the participants, delayed professional attainment and wasted years are the common negative feedbacks from the participants.

Suggestion 4. Find Solutions to the Common Challenges. Based from the responses of the participants, time management is the biggest or common challenge that the SHS students encounter. Students, just like athletes, shared their opinions as they experienced difficulty in balancing their time.

Suggestion 5. Over-Coming the Challenges of the K-12 Education Program Based on the analysis of data gathered, according to the participants, they encounter challenges as SHS high school students, and they tend to seek answers to cope with these difficulties.

4. DISCUSSIONS

The many benefits of K to 12 education include basic skills such as being able to read, write, count, communicate, and interact with others. Getting this kind of education not only helps your chances of landing a respectable job—it also helps you in developing the life skills you will need on your journey towards growth. Having a good education, finding a good career, adapting in the workplace, becoming a stable adult, and raising a family; that sounds like the dream, right? School might be overlooked but its importance is unparalleled. As parents or educators, their roles are just as vital as the learning process that students get from the four walls of a classroom, their job is to help the young people understand the importance of their lifestyle in school.

Abulencia (2015) stressed in his article ‘the unravelling of the K to 12 program as an education reform in the Philippines’ that there are beneficiaries of the K to 12 Program, but some sectors will be drastically affected. The sectors that will be affected are those who failed to support this new educational program, and that there is a need to be open-minded with the ideas and have an open eye and listening ear to consider and integrate the ideas and suggestions of people.

Discussion

For the students to develop 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and communication germane to a global and competitive workforce, education must be the schools' priority. Administrators and teachers need to work together toward a shared vision of excellence in the classroom. If the possibility of achieving excellence is perceived to be remote and unachievable, it will not be taken seriously by school administrators, faculty, and students. But if it can be shown that excellence is realizable, its norms and values can be created and imprinted in the educational culture. This implies that for a curriculum to be implemented, knowledge and experience is required in order to improve competence and positive attitude, this will enable schools to solve problems and implement change. Although it is a complex duty to determine the needs of every employee within an institution, the school principal should try and establish the needs of the staff and integrate them with the needs of the school.

Therefore, the principals should create a comfortable and pleasant teaching and learning environment, good classrooms, furniture, teaching and learning resources, teacher-pupil ratio, ensure a work environment that is physically and psychological safe and free from external threat, ensure a stable work environment through creation of order, systems, policies, procedures, job descriptions and being consistent and fair with everyone. The principal should also enhance efficient regular communication, support personal growth through continuous learning and training as well as allow individual to perform.

Principals need to implement the curriculum with the help of teachers in an actual school setting and find out if the curriculum achieved its goal. In the past decade, public educators—both teachers and administrators – have faced considerable pressure from parents, the private sector, and politicians to be accountable for the “bottom line.” The bottom line is student learning, and now more than ever, educators are expected to create schools in which all children achieves excellent outcomes in the face of shrinking budgets and dwindling resources.

The school administrators and teachers can create a culture of excellence in the new curriculum by the following ways:

Must be willing to change. It may seem risky to think about fashioning a new culture. The process requires a willingness to let go of the past and to invent a future not based solely on history. Uncertainty is a natural part of this process.

Make culture of excellence a priority. Designing a culture of excellence begins with an organization-wide commitment to the process and to the outcome. This commitment comes when school administrators can see a direct connection between devising and working in a culture of excellence and achieving the mission, goals and objectives of the organization. The move to a new culture demands that they clearly define the benefits, or the return on investment, of engaging in the work of designing it.

Should involve everyone. The process involves everyone -- not just part of the school or organization. School administrators and teachers willing to invest the time and resources both to fashion the culture and to keep everyone informed. Success depends on providing paths for input and for feedback.

Should foster effective communication. Should make a point of communicating information to everyone who would be empowered to know it. When promising to do something, the school leaders must agree on when it is due. This provides certainty to both parties.

School administrators/Teachers must be responsible for results they have promised. They have to hold themselves accountable for, or in charge of, ensuring that those results are produced. They have to be responsible for what they say. Words have an important effect for good or ill. They have to cultivate opportunities to celebrate and acknowledge accomplishments. They have to eliminate gossip and complaining. They have to seek solutions to problems, rather than think of ways to lay blame. They have to ensure that everyone knows the mission, goals and/or objectives during meetings and in orientation of new employees.

Should maintain an environment of experimentation, creation and invention of teaching and learning approaches, strategies, techniques, and methodologies. Specifically, in the K-12 curricular setting teachers can promote culture of excellence in their school by: strengthening accountability and transparency [including nationally comparable reporting about schools] Developing stronger partnerships with the community, local/national government units, and with private organizations; supporting quality teaching and school leadership; strengthening early childhood education; enhancing middle years development; supporting senior years of schooling and youth transitions; promoting world-class curriculum and assessment, [including national testing]; and improving educational outcomes for indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Filipinos, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

What is the process? Designing a culture of excellence begins when staff and management, working together, articulate a shared vision for a new culture and define its qualities. Key questions to ask include: what are the values that define our organization?; what difference will the “new” culture or curriculum make?; how will it contribute to the success of our staff and our school?; what will be the qualities, or hallmarks, for this school?; and how will we know when we’ve succeeded in establishing a culture of excellence?

School administrators should create a team of people drawn from every area or department of the school, with one person accountable for managing the process and the team. The team’s function is both to design the culture and to be catalysts and champions of change. They are the ones who: clearly articulate the results of the process and why it matters; identify the practices to put in place to support those results; define how people will work together to make those practices a part of the culture; establish how they will evaluate progress and make necessary changes; and design a process for ongoing inquiry and creation of the culture.

School leaders should know what it is that they wanted. They may begin by brainstorming about what the school might create. The brainstorming list may include: qualities (nouns) such as “integrity,” “honesty,” or “responsibility,”; qualities (adjectives) such as “impeccable,” “clean” or “effective,”; practices such as “regular proofreading,” “resolve fights fast” or “no gossip,”; and desired results, such as “we won’t settle for mediocrity,” “we will meet deadlines,” or “we will work in partnership, seamlessly.”

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