Facing the Challenges of K to 12 Education

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Philippine educational system had long been confronted by problems like unsatisfactory academic achievements, mismatch between labor market demands and skills of graduates, declining teacher competence, irrelevant curriculum and many others as stated in the 2000 Philippine Human Development Network (2008) summary report. In fact, as shown by researches on the status of education in the country, it was concluded that the EFA 2015 targets will not be met (Caoli-Rodriguez, 2007). One to be blamed was the outdated curriculum, believed to have caused the country to lag behind in terms of performance particularly in math and science which led to adding two more years in secondary level perceived necessary by Pres. Benigno Aquino III. (Franco-Velasco, 2012)

In order for the country to achieve the goals of EFA 2015 and be prepared for broader economic competition as a result of globalization and upcoming ASEAN Integration by 2015, major policy reforms in education were adopted. To name one is BESRA or Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda. BESRA with all its key reform thrusts were rolled out, paving the way for the adoption of K to 12 - an enhancement of the education curriculum. This new curriculum seeks to level Philippine education with the rest of the world, with 12 years of basic schooling a global standard. This was because across the globe, only the Philippines, Angola and Djibouti continued to have a 10-year basic education cycle (Quismundo 2012, Bonconan, 2012). Aside from this, K to 12 curriculum, which had long been existing in progressive countries like Finland and Singapore, was adopted in the Philippine educational system to equip graduates with necessary skills and knowledge that they can use once they enter the work force (Quismundo, 2012).

During the first year of K to 12 implementation, Dep Ed Usec. Yolanda Quijano identified issues and challenges regarding the implementation of Grades 1-10 curriculum for succeeding school years. Major concerns reported were (1) learning resources including the quality of Teachers’ Guides, Learners’ Materials for Grades 1-3 in the mother tongue and for the spiral curriculum in Grades 7-10, procurement of textbooks/e-books for Grades 4-10, adequate and timely distribution of learning resources (TGs, LMs, TXs/e-books); (2) competence of teachers, administrators & supervisors which include needs-based training of teachers implementing the curriculum either e-learning or face-to-face, effective instructional supervision of school administrators and supervisors to teachers; (3) monitoring and technical assistance and evaluation which include implementation of M & TA design and external evaluation; (4) assessment in key stages starting with SReA for Kindergarten, EGRA (Early Grades Reading Assessment) & EGMA (Early Grades Math Assessment) in the mother tongue in Grade 1, Grade 3 Assessment in Filipino and English, NAT in Grades 6 & 10 NCAE (National Career Assessment Exam.) in Grade 8. Other major challenges to deal with are the passage of the bill on K to 12 and completion of the curriculum for grades 11 &12. (Quijano, 2012). Few months later after the said report, K to 12 bill was approved and signed into a law known as RA 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 on May 15, 2013. (Official Gazette, 2013)
Aside from shifting to a more relevant and timely curriculum, principles of learning and development taught us that learning is a result of an interplay of many factors—the student, the parents, the teacher, the school, the material resources and the community. The factors that serve as the input in the educational system—human resources, school budget and facilities—have to be in sync with one another to achieve the target. With the introduction of the new curriculum, domino effect on other factors is unavoidable—human and material resources within the system need to keep abreast of the changes.

Moreover, although curriculum enrichment is an essential key of concern when it comes to ensuring better learning outcomes, human resource is still the most significant factor. That is why a competent teacher and a learner imbued with positive values are vital keys to toward quality learning. However, with the implementation of the enhanced curriculum, teachers and students have faced new challenges which could have been brought by several factors. To cite some—the”ill-preparedness of Dep Ed” as stated by Kabataan Party list Representative Palatino and the lack of budget to fully implement the reforms, solve shortages in teachers, classrooms, tables and chairs, and other educational materials according to Rep Ilagan of Gabriela Party list (Boncoan, 2012). Such scenarios made them vulnerable to difficulties.

The challenges are overwhelming and require concerted effort of all the stakeholders, especially from those who are within the system of education. To be able to adapt to these changes and come up with the appropriate response to these challenges, it is necessary that school administrators, teachers, and students make proactive approaches or interventions that fit their own school setting. By doing so, difficulties could be gradually addressed and overcome which could lead to better chances of attaining the DepED One Vision and Mission.

REFERENCES


BESRA Implementation and Accountability Plan, 2010-2012


