K – 12 CURRICULUM AND ITS TRANSFORMATION TO HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

By
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This year, 2017 a bunch Filipino youths will become the first students required to complete grades 11 and 12. They are at the leading age of a major education transformation effort that will bring the Philippines primary and secondary education systems into alignment with international norms in educational system. While aimed at the K-12 sector, the reforms are expected to histrionically affect the nation’s higher education system – and potentially Filipino students’ international mobility – as well.

The Philippines have undergone an ambitious overhaul in recent years. Extend formal education from just 10 years to 13, adding a mandatory year of kindergarten to the elementary curriculum, and extending high school through 12th grade. (Until 2011, kindergarten was optional, and just six years of primary education were compulsory.)

While the government hopes that the changes to the K-12 education system will leave its students better equipped for employment and further study, the effort has been widely critiqued by Filipino students, parents, teachers, and others. Fear of financial hardship is at the heart of many the concerns.

Some parents, for instance, oppose the reforms because the cost of keeping children in school and out of the workforce for two additional years will be a financial strain.

Changes to the education system are intended to better equip students for employment and further study, both at home and abroad. However, one consequence is the major and ongoing ripple effect they will have on colleges and universities. In particular, the reforms will spark a precipitous decline in higher education enrollments during the 2019/20 and 2020/21 school years, as the cohort of students who would typically enroll show up on campus instead continue on in senior high school.
Despite the fact that numbers should recover the following year, the prospect has created widespread concern among university faculty, who, last year emerged as “leading voices of opposition,” said The New York Times. “Many are concerned that moving classes for 17- and 18-year-olds from universities to high schools will result in the firing of at least 25,000 university employees,” the paper noted. (The government argues that this lower figure, not the higher one cited in widely circulated petitions protesting the reforms, is correct.)

To help address these issues, the country began implementation of major structural and curricular reforms with the Kindergarten Act of 2012 and the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. Together, they extend formal education from just 10 years to 13 years under a kindergarten through grade 12 system (K-12) by adding a mandatory year of kindergarten and two years of senior high school. (Prior to 2011, kindergarten was optional and just six years of education were compulsory.)

The transition period will end with the 2017–2018 school year when the first cohort graduates from the new primary and junior high cycles. Those graduating from the four-year junior high cycle will be the first in the nation to undertake the new two-year senior high school curriculum. The new 12-year school system has been introduced, in part, to stem the high dropout rates that have plagued the system for decades, and to better ready students for postsecondary training.