ON THE K-12 PROGRAM

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Masayoshi Okabe’s (2013) paper aims to bring a development perspective in order to provide insights on the underlying principles and framework of the K-12 curriculum. It progresses by first providing quantitative data describing the current situation of education in the country, then describes the K-12 program and its features, interprets the program on different angles and discusses human and education development in the Philippine.

As a teacher, I could not help but agree on the different issues covered by the paper. There are problems which exist within the system. The paper noted that socioeconomic status plays an important part in the education of the people. Many of those on the lower SES could not afford higher education and even free education that is why they tend not to acquire the education that they need to stop the cycle of poverty. I believe that the government should provide equitable solutions to increase the access to education and increase educational resources and opportunities needed for the growth of the people specially those who are poor. The K-12 may be a solution for this problem but it is still too early to declare that it really is the solution.

It was also noted that there are more high school graduates and more students who can access higher education in the urban center. It only means that people in the rural especially those in remote areas have lesser access to education which again calls for equitable solutions. As can be observed, those in the rural areas have lesser interest in education which may be due to the misconception that they only need elementary
education and that secondary education is no more necessary as they know that they will not go to college because they cannot afford it.

Gender difference is also apparent in education. The author found that females tend to be more educated than males especially those in the lower stratum of the social ladder. Male students were found to have no interest in education compared to their female counterparts. The author argued that this lack of interest is that because education has become monotonous and not flexible enough to address the needs and interests of the students. The K-12 curriculum may offer a solution to this because the students of the senior high school get to choose a program which best suits their interest and skills.

Basically, the K-12 curriculum adds two more years of high school education. The author stated that lengthening secondary schooling by two years will help decongest the curriculum and that content that had to be taught within 4 years will now be taught over 6 years. However, this may not be the present case. The high school curriculum remains congested. The junior high school students have to spend 35 learning hours a week while the senior high school students have about 33 hours a week. The curriculum is still stressful for the students and it should be noted that this kind of stress is not helping to keep students inside the school. One probable reason for this congestion is that the program aims to develop the learners holistically targeting both employment and college readiness at the very end. However, though the end goal is promising, it would be best if the curriculum is to be revisited so as to focus on what is necessary without deviating from the desired holistic development of the learners.

The K-12 curriculum is a model borrowed from other countries as a way to converge toward the common world educational norms. High school graduates will earn more competencies which they can use either at work or in college. Aside from that, a unique aspect of the K-12 curriculum is the consideration of the ethnic and lingual diversity of
the country as the author noted. This, I believe, is a good change in the present curriculum. Our learners have been preoccupied in learning using the language which is not of their own which would lead to either less understanding of the topic or dwindling nationalism or both. Learning using one’s tongue and the contextualization and localization campaign may increase the interest of the students on education. However, the challenge is on how the curriculum will adapt to the various dialects and cultures that the country has.

Another major problems of pedagogy are teaching-related and school-related matters. Teachers play a crucial role to make this program a success. Classrooms and other physical resources also matter. The K-12 curriculum may have been poorly or forcibly hatched. Preparations were so minimal that teachers are poorly trained and schools are poorly equipped to handle the challenges of the curriculum. Some schools in the country are offering technical-vocational programs even though they have no qualified teachers on their roster and have no equipment necessary for the program. Students cannot learn welding, cooking, electronics and others using the blackboard alone.

Okabe finds that the Philippines appears to be heading toward the globalization of its education and seemingly becoming a more credentialed society. He further noted that:

“the Philippine government’s project to overhaul the country’s public school educational system and its new “K to 12” Program are still at the introductory stage. It is too early to draw any conclusions on the many issues discussed in this paper.”

Many would agree that the implementation of the K-12 curriculum is premature. We are ill-prepared to take the challenges which it may present head-on. Collateral damages have been done. However, what exists now is a system which may deliver the Philippines to a desirable and competitive educational system which would be at par with
international standards. It is therefore only fitting that we hold on to it, though some of us reject it so much, and make sure that we do our part to uphold to its ideals and principles to better educate our youth. We are not sure as to where Philippine education would go, but it holds great promise.

References: