UNCHARTERED CHANGE FOR A BROADER LEARNING RANGE

by:
Sheryl B. Asio
Teacher I, Jose C. Payumo Memorial High School

The Philippines, as colonized by different nations, had undergone several changes in its educational system. The curriculum made major shifts from the pre-colonial to each foreign conqueror; such as Spaniards, American and Japanese, and even succeeding Philippine presidents. The existing curriculums during those times were dependent on the needs, social demands and the standard of living specific for each timeframe. Changes in cultural, social, and political environment, interlaced with global standards, demanded a continuous modification in the curriculum.

A non-formal curriculum was being used by the earliest Filipinos during the pre-colonial period. Despite having a writing system, which is known nowadays as “Baybayin”, theirs was still considered less structured for its focus was about the necessary skills for survival. Then came the Spaniards which brought abrupt changes in the curriculum. Latin and Spanish were introduced as Baybayin took a backseat. They’ve established the 3Rs (Reading, Writing, Arithmetic) and inculcated the propagation of Christianity in the Philippine Educational System; thus, establishing a more structured and formal curriculum. Succeeding to Spaniards were the Americans, the curriculum took another turn as they took over the Philippines. English was introduced, higher education and Liberal arts became core facets. According to Clark (2009), the Americans brought a more structured educational system for the Philippines. This paved the way for the 6+4+4 system that the country used for the longest time. The Japanese came, forced the Americans out and established their own Philippine educational system. Aggabao, B.A. et al, (2018), pointed out that during the Japanese colonization, total abolition of the curriculum influenced by the Americans was done, they emphasized on the number
of days attended plus the removal of summer breaks. Along with these changes, class sizes increased to 60 and Nihongo and Japanese culture were introduced. Though these were major shifts, Filipinos welcomed it as they have no other choice for the Japanese implemented strict rules. Defying from these would result to punishments.

Looking at such jumble in the curriculum with the different historical influences, the Philippines still managed to identify its own educational needs and had established an authentic Filipino curriculum – a curriculum that meets the goals and objectives of the country and had the Filipino culture at its heart, adapting the 10-year basic curriculum by the Americans. However, time is indeed the only constant thing. As years went by, the curriculum still underwent minimal changes regarding the use of vernacular and bilingual language yet keeping the authenticity of the Filipino curriculum in meeting the needs of its students. According to Calderon (2014) in an interview with Former Senator Rene Saguisag, a Professor at the College of Law at Arellano and San Beda College, he commemorates how some of his classmates from Rizal High had topped several board exams and became renowned people in the Philippines. Despite the successes of the 10-year basic education, it is continuously described as congested. Time spent on tasks are not enough since the curriculum is designed to be taught in 12 years instead of 10 years. Also, according to Velasco (2012), National Achievement Tests results for grade 6 in SY 2009-2010 showed only a 69.21% passing rate while the NAT results for high school is at a low 46.38%. This is even more evident with the high school graduates which are not properly equipped with the basic competencies needed at work.

The solution proposed to such problem is the implementation of the K-12 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 – it has both its pros and cons. Looking at the brighter side, its goal is to create a functional basic education system. Faced with the economic competition and skills required in the global community, it aims to meet the standards required in working abroad, to be globally competitive and to produce quality graduates that are ready for work. According to Abulencia (2015), quality education is
difficult to attain, even at the basic level. However, with the global competition present, students need to be trained at par to match their counterparts all over the world. The K-12 Program will enable them to be in-depth in broader knowledge and skills needed in the global community. On the other hand, critics of the newly implemented curriculum have accentuated the possible effects and downsides of the implementation. According to D. Verdera and R. Ramos as mentioned by Umil (2012), the 10-day training for the content that will be taught for a year is not enough – half-baked training. Incomplete learning materials is also a major problem; teaching without a reference material is difficult. Hence, despite the hindrances presented, the K-12 curriculum must still be implemented and act on by all the schools in the Philippines.

Being one of the three countries that only has 10-year basic education, this is what the country needs – The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. We can either accept it or deny it, but it still doesn’t change the fact that it is already part of our educational system. Let’s make it our stepping stone to quality education and global competitiveness. Every student must be adequately ready for the global community.

References:


