

EDUCATIONAL POLICY ANALYSIS: POLICY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FIVE STATUTORY POLICIES IN THE PHILIPPINE BASIC EDUCATION

Demetria May T. Saniel, Jennifer O. Parcutilo*, and Tito M. Mariquit

University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines, Lapasan Highway, Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines

*For Correspondence; Email: jennifer.parcutilo@ustp.edu.ph

ABSTRACT: *This study was commissioned by the National Economic Development Authority in collaboration with State Universities and Colleges in Northern Mindanao, Philippines, which aimed to identify the determinants of the academic achievements of basic education learners and its implications to Higher Education Institutions. This study is focused on statutory policy analysis particularly on policy formulation and policy implementation. Considered in this study were the top and middle management, teachers and parents in the Schools Divisions of Misamis Oriental, Cagayan de Oro City, Gingoog City, and El Salvador City to address the gaps in the formulation and implementation of the five statutory policies for Basic Education from 2015-2019 related to curriculum and instruction, student development and teacher development. Specifically, through a narrative analysis of FGD responses, the findings indicate that policy formulation is consultative and participatory, pro-active, and evidenced-based; policy implementation was experienced with challenges on consistencies between standards and practice. Issues raised include broad themes in the contextualization of standards and localization in implementation that may diminish learning outcomes; teacher development and teacher quality, equity; learning assessment versus school governance and teacher performance measures. The study also highlighted the role of SUCs as a valuable and supportive resource in collaborative research projects with the Department of Education in policy analysis as an iterative complex process to improve basic education policy-making that translates challenges into better school governance and teaching/learning practice.*

Keywords: narrative analysis, policy analysis, policy formulation, policy implementation, policy monitoring and evaluation, Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533), Kindergarten Education Act (RA 10157), Basic Education Reform Agenda (K-12), No-Child-Left Behind Act of 2010, Institutionalizing the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program- 4Ps (RA 11310)

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is now internationally accepted as a key development index. Quality basic education contributes to economic productivity and competitiveness, and to peaceful communities for better social cohesion. The primordial responsibility of quality basic education is placed on governments both for public education funding and educational regulations and monitoring for private education. Free public school education supported with a steady increasing public funding becomes the leverage for empowerment where learners become functional and responsible individuals who enable organizations and communities to impact the quality of life and well-being and living.

Most of the learners in the public basic education belong to disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. However, OECD Policy Outlook [1] highlights the conditionalities for education policymaking. It is reported that only sixteen (16) percent of recent educational policy reforms focus on ensuring quality and equity in education. Only twenty-nine (29) percent of the educational policy reforms aim to better prepare students for the future. Only twenty-four (24) percent focused on school improvement with the aim of developing positive learning environments and attracting and retaining qualified school staff. Where these policy interventions continue to be impacted by challenges in improving the quality of basic education, the learning outcomes for economic and social mobility are less assured. To be likely as low academic performers, the learners may not achieve their academic and professional potentials. They would contribute less to sustainable economies, become more and more dependent on public aid,

and become more vulnerable to economic volatility and disruptive social movements.

The purpose and imperative for a quality basic education become more compelling for an effective and relevant basic education statutory policy framework. In the Philippines, statutory policies for a free quality basic education are aimed to meet the established learning standards both nationally and globally. In pursuit of globalizing the quality of Philippine basic education and for Quality Basic Education reform plan, the Philippines joined for the first time the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2018. The results indicated that the Philippines scored all below the average of participating OECD countries in Mathematics, Science, and Reading [2].

The thresholds of effectiveness and efficiency of the basic education policies are evidenced by successful learning outcomes. The PISA (2018) results are also parallel to the learners' performance in the National Achievement Test. To date, DepEd Secretary Leonor M. Briones states that free and compulsory public basic education is provided to 27.2 million learners; however, quality basic education remains an imperative and a challenge [3]. How could then the Department of Education (DepEd) address issues and gaps in the achievement of targets related to intermediate outcomes indicators on learning outcomes, specifically in the National Achievement Test results? This research study engages in a public basic education policy analysis that will identify gaps in the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of relevant basic education policies to determine

and recommend feasible policy options for basic education in the new normal.

In particular, the research study will focus on the five statutory policies, namely, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 [4], the Kindergarten Education Act [5], the Basic Education Reform Agenda [6] (K-12), No Filipino Child Left Behind Act of 2010 [7], and the Act Institutionalizing the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program-4Ps (RA 11310) [8]. These statutory policies were studied in the context of educational outcomes in curriculum and instruction, learner development, and teacher development in the four School Divisions in Region X. As the school divisions look forward to an increasing number of learners and complexity of socio-demographic context, the prominence of academic performance in national and international comparisons, the study becomes more relevant and timely.

With policy analysis, the DepEd as a social institution then could improve an institutional framework for public basic education policy that shapes society and empowers the economy through a more productive and responsible community of individuals. On a final note, only when huge public education spending is translated into significant and strategic learning outcomes, quality basic education has been attained.

2. FRAMEWORK

The research study makes reference to the theories, principles and concepts related to policy analysis and statutory policy and the School-Based Management Framework of the Department of Education. The study is primarily anchored on Howlett and Ramesh's policy stages model that provides a good illustration of the usefulness of analytical frameworks for examining public policies. The policy evaluation however is not included in this analysis.

Policy Stages Model. Public policy analysis adopts variations of public policy models. The policy stages model provides a good illustration of the usefulness of analytical frameworks for examining public policies. The stages model is referred to in a number of ways and has been variously called the "linear model," the "sequential model," the "heuristic stages model" or the "public policy cycle" [9]. The five-stage model of Howlett and Ramesh identifies five stages, namely, agenda-setting, policy formulation, adoption (or decision making), implementation and evaluation. In this study, we only consider policy formulation and policy implementation.

Policy Formulation. A policy entails the broad statement of future goals and actions and expresses the ways and means of attaining them. It is a framework of government intervention that covers a variety of activities. Policy formulation is conceptualized as a dialectic process where all stakeholders, those affected by the policy, are involved in policy design and development. Policy formulation is therefore both a very dynamic process and set in a robust framework. It is experienced as a continuous and contested process in which those with competing values and public interests seek the contextual influences to form and shape policy in their own interests. To this end, analyzing

education policy formulation covers a wide complex array of factors.

Policy Implementation. Implementation is an important stage in the policymaking process that usually begins with policy awareness. Policy Awareness, generally, means to be aware means to know, to realize or interested in knowing about something, or, to know that something is important [10]. Policy awareness is understood as policy learning, policy diffusion, policy education among other literature. Policy implementation refers to the execution of the law, wherein various stakeholders and organizations work together with the use of procedures and techniques to put policies into effect to be able to attain the desired goals and targets [11]. The Department of Education instituted structural reform mechanisms as an enabler in the implementation of statutory policies to improve the quality of basic education specifically on the authority and utilization of resources to achieve improved educational outcomes in leadership, curriculum and learning, accountability and resource management.

Public Policy and Statutory Policies of the Department of Education

Public Policy & Education Policy. Policy as applied to government, Khan [12] defines public policy as the guide to action and it connotes a broader framework to operationalize a philosophy, principle, vision or decision, mandate, etc. which are translated into various programs and projects, activities and actions. Anderson [13] defines public policy as a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern. Stewart, Hedge, & Lester [11], on the other hand, define public policy as a series or pattern of government activities or decisions that are designed to remedy some social problems. Based on the literature, education policy consists of the principles and government policies in the educational sphere as well as the collection of laws and rules that govern the operation of education systems. Education policy implementation refers to a multidirectional process that aims to translate specific policy objectives into concrete education changes. An effective implementation process encompasses smart policy design, inclusive stakeholder engagement, a conducive environment and a coherent implementation strategy (OECD).

Statutory Policies of the Department of Education.

Specific among different types of public policy is the statutory policy. The statutory policy is mandated by or related to statutes, which are laws or bills passed by the legislature; that which is decided or controlled by law (Merriam Dictionary & Cambridge Dictionary). Through the use of statutory policies in the form of regulations, laws, and other instruments, governments are able to implement and attain their objectives. The statutory policies of the Department of Education included in the study are those promulgated by Congress. These include the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533), the Kindergarten

Education Act (RA 10157), the Basic Education Reform Agenda (K-12), No Filipino Child Left Behind Act of 2010, and the Act Institutionalizing the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program-4Ps (RA 11310).

Kindergarten Education Act (RA 10157) [5]. The Republic Act No. 10157 refers to "An Act Institutionalizing the Kindergarten Education into the Basic Education System and Appropriating Funds Therefor." It is otherwise known as the Kindergarten Education Act", approved on January 20, 2012, and which took effect on March 14, 2012. The one-year Kindergarten education is mandatory and compulsory for entrance to Grade 1. The General Kindergarten Program includes provisions for the Inclusiveness of Kindergarten Education that addresses unique needs of learners, namely, the Head start Program for the Gifted, Early Intervention Program for Children with Disabilities, Kindergarten Madrasah Program (KMP), Indigenous Peoples (IP) Education, the Catch-Up Program for Children under Especially Difficult Circumstances. The Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB- MLE) method is mandatory, with exceptions indicated, in cases whereby the mother tongue of the learners is the primary medium of instruction for teaching and learning at the kindergarten level in public schools.

Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) [6]. The DepED is pursuing a package of policy reforms named the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) that as a whole seeks to systematically improve critical regulatory, institutional, structural, financial, cultural, physical and informational conditions affecting basic education provision, access and delivery on the ground. The reform package primarily contributes to the Schools First Initiative implemented by the DepED. The Initiative is an effort to improve basic education outcomes through a broadly participated, popular movement featuring a wide variety of initiatives undertaken by individual schools and communities as well as networks of schools at localities involving school districts and divisions, local governments, civil society organizations and other stakeholder groups and associations.

No-Child-Left Behind Act of 2010 [7]. According to the National Statistical Coordination Board, the dismal cohort survival rate is even decreasing indicating for every 100 learners who enter in Grade 1, only 63 to 69 learners reach Grade 6, and only 55 learners enter high school. These statistics became the rationale for the "No Filipino Child Left Behind Act of 2010" which protects and promotes the right of the citizens to quality education and to take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. The legal basis also indicated provisions for a necessary framework and resources for the implementation of education programs, projects and services; encourage local initiatives for the improvement of schools and community based learning facilities; promote compulsory education and provide only for limited special circumstances when children of compulsory school age would not be required to attend

school; provide a system for the monitoring of children of compulsory school age and ensure that they enjoy the benefit of having the opportunity to be educated; ensure that the schools and other facilities of learning are able to reflect the values of the community by allowing the teachers, learning facilitators and other staff to have flexibility in servicing the needs of the learners.

Institutionalizing the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program- 4Ps (RA 11310) [8]. Known as the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) Act (RA 11310) was passed by the Senate as Senate Bill No. 2117 on Feb. 4, 2019, and adopted by the House of Representatives as an amendment to House Bill No. 7773 on Feb. 7, 2019. It was signed into law by President Duterte on April 17, 2019. "By signing this into law, President Duterte has ensured its sustainability and enabled us to get closer to bringing down the incidence of poverty by 14 percent in 2022 from a previous high of 27.6 percent in 2015" [14]. The Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program is the national poverty reduction strategy and a human capital investment program that provides conditional cash transfer to poor households for a maximum period of seven (7) years or longer when necessary, to improve the health, nutrition and education aspects of their lives.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research study is primarily aimed to conduct policy analysis on the access to quality basic education considering the five educational statutory policies. It further investigated the quality of formulation and implementation of the policies. It further identified relevant problems and analyzes the impact of these problems on the implementation of the existing policies as the contextual knowledge for bases to recommend options for policy improvements.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study used the qualitative research design to explore how the stakeholders experience and react to the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the specific five educational statutory policies. Through narrative analysis, the study was able to identify relevant problems and analyze the impact of these problems on the implementation of the existing policies as the contextual knowledge for bases to recommend options for policy improvements. Narrative analysis as a qualitative study design [15] studies lived and told stories that are personal, social, cultural, or institutional [16]. This research study used the narrative inquiry to reveal unique perspectives and deeper understanding of a situation from the qualitative responses regarding the experiences of the individual or small group, revealing the lived experience or particular perspective of that individual or group usually primarily through interview or focus group discussion which is then recorded. The benefit of narrative inquiry as a qualitative research paradigm according to Johnson and Golombek [17] is in the uncovering of the lived experiences of teacher-researchers. Specifically, the study conducted focus group discussions and isolated interviews in the second half of 2020. It included the selected school's divisions, school heads, and

officials, teachers and parents in the Department of Education Region X.

SAMPLING PROCEDURE. Per consensus with other participating SUCs in Region X, the school's divisions of the Department of Education in Region X were distributed to the participating Region X Higher Education Institutions. It was also agreed that the sampling size was set at 20 percent of the public schools in the assigned school divisions. This study considered the four identified Schools Divisions namely, Cagayan de Oro City, Misamis Oriental, Gingoog City and El Salvador City. The sampling population was determined by using stratified cluster random sampling. With the Schools Division of Cagayan de Oro City, there are five public schools in the sample population out of a total of 31 public schools; Misamis Oriental has seven schools out of 39 public schools; Gingoog City has four schools out of 16 public schools; and El Salvador City has only one school. The sample population has a total of 17 schools out of 88 schools. Participants of the study were the Schools Division Superintendents, Assistant School's Division Superintendents, Education Supervisors, Education Program Specialists, other Division Office Officials, School Principals or School Heads, Department Chairs, Master Teachers, Teachers and Parents. Being primary stakeholders of the statutory policies, it is best to elicit their experiences and how they impact the expected outcomes of DepEd and the challenges serve as input to continuous improvement.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

The study observed ethical considerations to begin with research conceptualization in collaboration with participating SUCs and other stakeholders; and written authorization for permission and approval of the study from relevant stakeholders in various levels of the Department of Education Region 10 from the regional office, to the school's divisions and the school heads, school officials, teachers and parents; and the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines. Letters of informed consent indicated confidentiality and voluntary participation. Confidentiality assures that research participant are kept private and not identified in any publications that result from this study. All information collected is kept strictly confidential. Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity are ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material. Participation in this study was completely voluntary.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS.

The research instruments included a semi-structured interview guide that indicates questions collaborated by the researchers of Study Area 1 researcher across all the Region X HEIs involved. The interview guide consists of nine questions to study the effectiveness in the policy formulation, policy implementation, policy monitoring and evaluation in reference to the five DepEd statutory policies. Prompt questions were also contributed by the participating state universities that may be asked to further investigate and gather insights and clarify issues to contribute to the policy analysis study.

The responses from the participants were organized according to thematic clusters and analyzed to extract thematic codes, their implications and insights.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Policy Formulation.

The analysis below for policy formulation consists of two parts. First, comprehensive literature support for the extracted or descriptive word or phrase that closely captures the qualitative responses of the research participants to the research study questions. Second, the implications of the qualitative responses of the research participants to the research study questions. The implications are primarily the problems or issues that surface from the lived experiences of the research participants in the context of the five statutory DepEd policies. The analysis also specifically focuses on answering the two questions in policy formation. First, the question inquired on their observations on the formulation of the five DepEd policies. Second, the question inquired on their observations on the intended purpose or end result of these policies in terms of considering the PESTEL framework conditions and approach on curriculum and instruction, teacher development, and learner development. The narrative analysis is anchored and clarifies what education policy formulation is and how it is experienced by those in the Department of Education – Region X Office, in the four schools divisions, and school heads, teachers and some school personnel and parents.

The literature review provides an in-depth analysis of the relevant concepts of education policy formulation to include its definitions and perspectives, processes and determinants, and salient features. Education policy implementation is a complex, evolving process. It is the process of arriving at statements by organizing policy resources and supporting information to convert ideas into solutions that are practically implementable to deal with a certain activity or address challenges evolved therewith and which are in the direction of the policy objectives.

Observations on the formulation of the Five DepEd policies.

The observation among the DepEd officials, school heads, teachers and parents on the policy formulation of the five Education statutory policies is generally that it is *participative and consultative*. The formulating the five education policies, the respondents expressed that most of them were part of the series of policy forums initiated by the Department of Education Central offices across levels of the Department of Education and cascaded by the regional offices to the school divisions and consequently to the schools, teachers, parents and children. The schools were also instructed to hold local public consultations especially with the parents and children who are the primary actors or key players affected by the education policies.

In fact, FGDs indicated that relevant DepEd officials and stakeholders are invited depending on the objectives of the consultations. The technical working group is created to design the consultation framework for presentation to the ExeCom for a series of multi-sectoral consultations; meetings with different municipal mayors and barangay captains on gathering their input in the formulation of the policy. The goals and objectives, roles and procedures were well-communicated prior to implementation through the DepEd portal, meetings. The KRAs are defined and guided on the expectations; although there is a need for standardized procedures as they implement in the context of the division and school. There is strong appreciation from the Division

officials on the salient points for the rationale of the policies. The policy framework is well crafted and the schools also embrace the rationale.

There was a strong grassroots consultation during Policy Formulation. Policy formulation is well appreciated by the school's divisions and many school principals and school officials who have served with experience; also a wide consultation to include the other stakeholders. Policy Consultation experience varied in some Divisions. However, it is not the same with new school principals who have not been in the position during the consultation rounds. There are areas that need to be addressed. For example, it was experienced by some in the Division/School that not all levels were not part of the consultation. Suggested capacity-building in all levels of basic education governance to contribute to the policy review. Levels of understanding in different levels could vary. Intensified campaign for policy information since only very few select stakeholder representations like PTA President, Barangay Captain but limited to their wider group/constituents.

Another observation among the DepEd officials, school heads and teachers on the policy formulation of the five Education statutory policies is that the policy formulation was *evidence-based* to include political, economic, social, technological and legal aspects (PESTEL) as part of the entire complex context or landscape of basic education. The policymakers conducted several relevant research to gather both statistical data and attitudinal anecdotal evidence. The statistical data are primarily on the economic and financial aspects of the policy. These included the projection of the number of school children; the number of schools for land, infrastructure and facilities requirements, number of teachers and school personnel, and number of learning materials such as textbooks and modules as resource requirements especially for the added two years in the basic education as well as the for the mandatory kindergarten education. With the research data on the number of out-school-youth data gathered, the policy on the No-Child-Left Behind Act was formulated. The participants also stated that when the policy formulation was at its very early stages, experts were consulted on the scope of research data that need to be gathered to come up with comprehensive data sets.

Another observation among the DepEd officials, school heads and teachers on the policy formulation of the five Education statutory policies is that policy formulation was *pro-active*. Being proactive is being forward-thinking by acting in anticipation of future problems, needs, or changes. The Department of Education demonstrated being proactive in formulating the education policies. DepEd anticipated the problems that come with the policy implementation. Consultations also included the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). The consultation focused on the various government support programs for the anticipated problem of teachers and personnel from colleges and universities affected or displaced by the K to 12 Program in the first two years of K to 12 implementations where there will be no freshman enrollees. In addition, the government

also anticipated the problem by providing a series of teacher mass training and development to address teacher competence and task requirements in the new K-12 curriculum. Being proactive is imperative in policy formulation especially for public policy affecting the country long-term. Literature support explains that being proactive is acting in anticipation of future problems, needs, or changes to prevent a concern, problem, or emergency from occurring and reduce or mitigate the magnitude of which.

From many responses of the participants, all the five education policies started with the identification of a problem (*problem-based solving approach*). For K to 12 Policy, the problem addresses the issue in the international workforce where Filipinos do not qualify for better jobs that require a 16-year education (elementary, secondary and tertiary); the problem then contributes to international recruitment markets for the Filipino graduates. The K to 12 programs also were aimed to address the competencies of the Filipino hoping that with the 12-year basic education curriculum in place, future Filipino students will be ready and better equipped to join overseas universities at the undergraduate level. Generally, the K-12 Basic Education Program aims to provide every Filipino child with the education s/he needs to compete in a global context. Another problem addressed by the K to 12 is that students of the new system will graduate at the age of 18 and will be ready for employment, entrepreneurship, middle-level skills development, and higher education upon graduation. In problem/issue identification, the reality is far more complex where it is often difficult to decide precisely what the issue is that needs to be addressed.

The research participants also described policy formulation as an *iterative process*. Some of them expressed that the processes in the policy formulation undergo various repetitions or replications to cover as many sectors and levels in the discussions and analyses. The DepEd technical working group was created to design the multi-stage iterative consultation framework for presentation to the ExeCom for a series of multi-sectoral consultations; meetings with different municipal mayors and barangay captains on gathering their input in the formulation of the policy. Literature also supports that policy formulation is an iterative process and even a multi-stage iterative process. It is important to view it in this light for two reasons. First, in an iterative process experiences and lessons learned can be more easily taken into account to inform and improve coordination. Second, iteration helps to maintain a dialogue on the policy and its implementation after the process of developing a formal policy has concluded. Ongoing dialogue, and an established platform for it, is an often crucial component in implementing policies, as many concrete details in the implementation of the education policy need to be discussed or negotiated after it has been adopted (European Commission 2017).

On the problems and insights, the research participants highlighted predominantly the lack of a sustained /continued awareness for new principals/school heads. There is a lack of a consultation program as input to policy improvement on policy formulation for a periodic formal assessment/evaluation rather than just a summative assessment. On the strong positive points, the participants

appreciated the learning that the education policy goals and objectives, roles and procedures were well-communicated prior to implementation through the DepEd portal, meetings. The KRAs are defined and guided on the expectations; although there is a need for standardized procedures as they implement in the context of the division and school. There is strong appreciation from the Division officials on the salient points for the rationale of the policies where the policy framework is well crafted and the schools also embrace the rationale. Second, there was a strong grassroots consultation during policy formulation to include parents and local government except with the teachers being the frontline providers and consultation was limited to the very few select stakeholder representations like PTA President, Barangay Captain.

In summary, DepEd's Establishment of a Policy Development Process at the Department Of Education is strongly operationalized in DepEd Region X. DO 13, s.2015 states that the Department of Education (DepEd) issues the enclosed Guidelines on the Establishment of a Policy Development Process at the Department of Education which aims to establish a policy development process that provides for systematic, evidence-based and participatory mechanisms and procedures for the formulation, adoption and review of policies issued by the DepEd Central Office.

Policy Implementation.

Problems and issues articulated from the responses for Policy Implementation.

There is a lack of standardized procedure on policy implementation when cascaded down to the level of teachers, opening the possibilities of different interpretations of implementation procedures. The principal's varied techniques, strategies and creativity in the development of the School Improvement Plan may have been the reason for varying results and outcomes in the implementation of the statutory policies. Some principals do well with their leadership styles and some principals do not. The gap lies in the principal's skills and abilities to plan and execute well what is indicated in the School Improvement Plan. Varied interpretations of the statutory policies become apparent in the low performance of students in the National Achievement Test-NAT in the four divisions considered in this analysis. The purpose of a School Improvement Plan is to guide the school improvement problem-solving and planning process throughout the year and help identify and organize strategies and resources that will lead to increased student achievement at the school. However, this increased student achievement was not evident in the NAT results for the past 3 years. One problem cited was the low reading proficiency of students in the secondary level because reading was not given priority to be taught in grade 1. Poor nutrition was also mentioned as a contributing factor in the low achievement of students. There is conflict in the 4P's policy implementation and policy outcome. There is a lack of orientation on parents' and teachers' roles in the implementation of the policy. Parents do not use financial aid for their child's school needs. Despite the financial aid, students still drop school due to poor monitoring of parents. There is evidence of the passing of roles. Teachers expect parents to monitor, parents expect

teachers to monitor. However, some schools do not share the same problem.

There is a lack of teachers teaching in specialized areas, both in junior high and senior high; lack of coordination between institutions producing teachers and the need of specialized teachers in the community; lack of classrooms and 1-1 ratio of books and learning materials. The situation worsened during the pandemic as the need for technology and other IT support increased. There is still a lack of sufficient budget to address all the concerns of schools. The principal and the teachers carry the burden of insufficient funds. Teachers do multitask and cannot focus on teaching. There is a misalignment of addressing the needs of students and increasing their academic performance. There is a focus on programs that teachers believe as an effective way to help students increase their academic performance but are not backed by studies and research results. There is a lack of correct understanding and interpretation of the "No Child Left Behind" Policy. Teachers are forced to promote students who are supposed to be retained just so no child is left behind. There is also an absence of assessment tools to detect students with special needs which should not be in the mainstream curriculum. For the No Child Left Behind Act, teachers claim that this policy may be the reason why DepEd produces students who are not competent and in the case of senior high school graduates, not college-ready. Recommendations were raised like policy review on the Enhanced Basic Education Act and the No Filipino Child Left Behind Act and request for the standard procedure of implementation of the 5 statutory policies.

Insights/Learnings from Challenges Encountered on Policy Implementation of the five DepEd policies.

The key activities in cascading policy in DepEd were in place. From the Central Office, policies were disseminated through issuances of DepEd Orders and Memoranda channeled through the Regional Offices, Division Offices then to the schools. On the Quality of Teacher Training for awareness and understanding; and for Capacity-building, series of Training and Seminars were conducted however, teachers attended seminars and training which were handled by Principals or Head Teachers who re-echos seminar and training attended in the regional or division level. There could be so many possibilities of misinterpretations and misinformation when policies are cascaded down to the level of the front-liners who are the teachers. Based on personal experiences as a DepEd Teacher for 16 years, seminars and training are sometimes shortened. Instead of 3 days, it would be shortened to 1 day, instead of 1 day, it would be shortened to half-day even when the approved budget and plan would reflect otherwise. Most often, the seminars and training are just one shot.

The 4 P's Policy's with its intention is remarkable and praiseworthy however, the problem is with role blaming. Roles are not well-defined. Despite the financial aid, some parents still ask their children to skip school or quit school to help in their livelihood. The absence of standardized procedure on orientation on the roles of the stakeholders may be seen as the problem since, in some schools, the parents are cooperative while in some schools, parents are observed to be passive. The increase in enrollment and the

implementation of the K-12 Curriculum had the principals caught off-guard in hiring specialized teachers to teach in the specialized area. There seems to be a problem with the inventory of human resources before the offering of specialized track in the senior high. Schools are forced to assign teachers to teach not in their specialized field. There is an apparent lack of coordination between schools and teacher education providers. TEI's produce teachers that are not based on the actual need of the community.

DepEd launch programs which somehow believed to have a direct effect on the achievement of students like the "Gulayan sa Paaralan", "Feeding Program" etc. which requires teachers to multi-task and even use their own resources to comply with the program but the program has not been supported by studies to have a direct effect on student's performance and academic achievement. More often than not, teachers engage in activities that are not directly related to increasing students' academic achievement. DepEd recommends activities but is not supported by research and teachers engage in such activities believing that the activity would somehow increase students' performance. Some divisions, however, encourage research-based instructions and activities among their teachers. Based on personal experience and personal observation over the researcher's years of teaching in DepEd, misinterpretations and over-interpretations of policies have usually been the cause of unintended results. Teachers seldom read and internalize the content of a policy since it is too lengthy to read. Teachers just depend on the interpretations and directions of school heads and principals. Added to that is the silent culture of schools to make sure that annual reports of data are remarkable and outstanding. There is a tendency of covering up real data in order to avoid being rated as a poor-performing school.

There is an apparent failure of stakeholders' understanding of the real intention of the "No Child Left Behind Policy" leading to the promotion of a student to the next academic year. There is a gap in the teachers' understanding of his or her role on what to do if the student shows signs of missing the required competencies. There are cases where students with special needs are joined with mainstream students however, the teachers are forced to accept the student since there is no assessment on detecting students with special needs. These students are promoted to the next academic year due to sensitivity of the students' and parents' emotions adding another burden to teachers. Some schools however appreciate the increase in enrollment and the reduction of drop-out cases because of the No Child Left Behind policy.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Aspects of these policies to be revisited to address the conditions of the new normal include sustained awareness programs for School Heads (Old and New). There are 88 school heads in the 4 Divisions which would require a budget to be included for Training & Development. Launch Network for School Principals where experienced principals can share a "learning portfolio" similar to that of teachers on teaching resources online. Contextualization and localization of some learning materials considering the extent of

quarantine protocols varying among Schools Divisions and schools. Strengthen consultative & coordination programs between DepEd, DSWD and LGU. The periodic consultation and coordination forum will require a budget for the number of teachers, DSWD and LGU stakeholders. Provide a standardized procedure for orientation and implementation to avoid different interpretations of stakeholders. To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy to better achieve its intended objectives or intended policy outcomes in curriculum and instruction, learner development, and teacher development, the following are forwarded. First on curriculum and instruction. A possible root cause why many of Grades 6, 10 and 12 students are below the NAT standards is the possible conflicting interpretations for implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act. It is recommended to advocate for a strict implementation of the set proficiency standards at the school(class) level. Policy change in the No Child Left Behind Act might be necessary for its not accomplishing the stated purpose, some teachers are pressured to lower the proficiency standards in class to ensure that all their students pass. Continue the review and evaluation of curriculum content, especially when content needs contextualization; where localization may diminish the intended learning outcomes and render curriculum not as competitive. Continue the review and redesign, and revision of instructional materials to be able to teach learners the knowledge needed for the future and foster life-long learning skills for tomorrow's work. More focus on increasing interest, appreciation and understanding on mathematics, science and technology learning areas. Review current classroom assessment to strongly align evaluation and assessment with educational goals. This could improve learning outcomes by developing assessment tools and materials that enhance quality rather than quantity of assessment. For learner development, the stringent procedure for tracking utilization of 4Ps allowance; enhance learners' "digital citizenship" knowledge and skills. More than learning content, learners need to be assisted in developing independent learning and learner resilience embedded in the learner modules. Periodic anecdotal journals of the learners can provide the teachers the real feedback on what the learners are going through during the pandemic. These journal entries can also be indirect and creative such as drawing symbols/icons. Embed in the classroom learning for learners to be more encouraged to develop self-instruction and self-efficacy. For teacher development, human resource policy and processes for alternative work arrangements considering the extent of quarantine protocols varying among Schools Divisions and schools. Technology-aided monitoring and tracking of the status of teachers on health and well-being issues with hotline support. Capacity-building to align teacher specialization to the subjects handled. Enhanced teacher mobility program where many teachers are still placed in low ranks. Orientations, seminars and training should be experienced first-hand by teachers from sources in the Central Office. Provide teacher enhancement programs that address the actual needs of the school. Conduct regular review of actual budgetary requirements of schools. Review programs that take away teachers from classrooms and focus more on evidenced-based and research-based programs that

result in the academic achievement of students. Provide support on research capability of teachers to engage more on evidenced-based and results-based activities linking to student academic achievement. Teachers' network where teachers share highlighting their resilience, creativity and innovation that they bring to their work to foster a student-centered environment and maintain a love of learning especially during the pandemic. For collaboration between SUCs and the Schools Divisions in policy formulation and review in the new normal, the following are recommended. Collaborate to review and propose a research-based study on policy formulation to include emerging issues during the pandemic. Proposed project to obtain the political will of leaders to address the virtual learning issues such as interconnectivity and communication gadgets especially for the poorest of the poor and those in the far-flung areas. Availability and access of learning modules. Review of the emerging role of the teacher in the implementation of the policies and the pandemic. Collaborate for the conduct of academe-industry meetings regularly to align the needs of the community and what the teacher education institutions produce. Collaboration with funding agencies (ex. World Bank) to support the conduct of thorough evaluation after program completion to strengthen DepEd's capacity to measure results and undertake impact evaluations.

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