

INTRODUCTION

K-12 education in the Philippines

The Philippines is now leaving behind its reputation as Asia's only country with a 10-year basic education program. The new K-12 system was born when former President Benigno Aquino III signed the Republic Act 10533, known as the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013." The law is currently in its third year of implementation, with Grade 11 established in those institutions that offer the Senior High School Program. The first Filipino students to experience 12 years of education will graduate in 2018.

K-12 reforms changed the entire structure of Filipino education. Previously, preschool was not compulsory, that is, pupils could enroll in Grade 1 with or without having gone through preschool. Under K-12 reforms and the Kindergarten Act (RA 10531), preschool education for five-year-old children became mandatory. Then follow six years of elementary education (grades 1 to 6), four years of Junior High School (grades 7 to 10), and two of Senior High School (SHS, grades 11 to 12). The additional two years of SHS are intended to better prepare students for whatever path they will choose, and to bridge the gap between the age at graduation (16 years, under the previous system) and the legal employment age (18 years).

Upgrading the quality of our education is critical to our country's success. The K-12 Program is expected to serve as the key to economic development by making graduates more prepared to enter the labor force. Part of the motivation for this change was globalization and the recognition that the Filipino education system has not kept pace with the rest of the world. In addition to changing the structure of basic education, the law demands "a pedagogically sound curriculum that is at par with national standards." It also recognizes that education should include preparation for technical, artistic, athletic, and entrepreneurial careers, as well as traditional higher education. It even specifies the philosophy on which teaching should be based, using language like "learner-oriented," "inclusive," "culture-sensitive," "contextualized," and "inquiry-based."

Research question and motivation

A few private schools adopted the new K-12 Program in SY 2012-2013, one year ahead of most schools in the Philippines. They graduated their first batch of Grade 12 in 2017. This creates an opportunity for formative evaluation of the SHS Program before most Filipino schools fully implement it.

Formative evaluation is important because expectations of this program are high, but the benefits to young Filipinos and to the economy will only materialize if the program is implemented well across the country. Such an evaluation benefits schools that have not yet fully implemented SHS and can learn from the successes and failures of these early examples. It also benefits the education research community by revealing the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of the SHS Program.

In this thesis, I analyze the implementation of the Grade 12 Senior High School Program in three private schools. The purpose is to identify how these schools, and those who will soon be implementing this program, can maximize their success in achieving the program outcomes. I focus on the following research questions:

- How has the SHS Program been implemented in these three schools?
- To what degree has the program attained its goals?
- What practices should be continued, started, or stopped in the future?

These questions hone in on the specific strengths and weaknesses of the program, as well as the elements of the implementation process that enabled or hindered success.

Methods

To investigate these research questions, case studies were conducted in three private schools. All three schools applaud the K-12 initiative and believe it aligns well with what their respective institutions have been doing over the past few years. They are all religious schools, but each has a unique profile.

School A is a Jesuit school for boys, with a distinct Filipino and Chinese character, and its mission is to produce responsible Filipino citizens. School B is a Catholic school with a strong Filipino culture, and it continuously commits itself to excellence, service, social transformation, and global competence in a family atmosphere, a climate of joy, simplicity, and love. School C's mission is to develop girls and young women to build the Filipino nation and to be co-creators of God's kingdom on Earth.

The case study method used by Yin (2012) is applied in this study. The primary data sources are interviews with three representatives from each school: the principal, one teacher, and one student. Both within-case and cross-case analysis were conducted for each case, and conclusions based on the interviews are supplemented by data from school records and classroom observations.