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The Unraveling of K-12 Program as an Education Reform in the Philippines

ABSTRACT: Education is big social investment for families or parents as well as the entire nation. We cannot afford to have a good or quality education, even at least the basic level. Although the true aim of education is to nurture human being to become truly human being, however because of global competition, we need to educate and train our students to be at par with their counterparts in other parts of the world. And, of course, we need them to be parts or contributors to develop our national economy. In the context of the Philippines, it is relevance to note here that more than two years ago, the incumbent President Aquino signed into law the Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act 10533), or most commonly referred to as K-12 Program. The K-12 Program mandates that all pupils entering Grade 1 should have compulsory undergone kindergarten or pre-school, and the secondary level will add two more years, that is the senior high school. Accordingly, everybody has stake or concern about education, and, consequently, we should listen to all the voices who are uttering their piece regarding the K-12 Program. There are beneficiaries of the K-12 Program, but some sectors will be drastically affected and dislodged. We should have an open eye and listening ear to consider and integrate the ideas and suggestions of people.

KEY WORD: K-12 Program; Education Reform; Quality Education; Global Competition; Ideas and Suggestions of people.

INTISARI: “Mengurai Program K-12 sebagai Reformasi Pendidikan di Filipina”. Pendidikan adalah investasi sosial yang besar untuk keluarga atau orang tua serta seluruh bangsa. Kita tidak mampu untuk memiliki pendidikan yang baik atau kualitas, bahkan setidaknya pada tingkat pendidikan dasar. Meskipun tujuan sebenarnya dari pendidikan adalah untuk membina manusia menjadi makhluk yang benar-benar manusiawi, namun karena persaingan global, kita perlu mendidik dan melatih para siswa agar menjadi setara dengan rekan-rekan mereka di bagian lain dunia. Dan, tentu saja, kita membutuhkan mereka untuk menjadi bagian atau kontributor untuk mengembangkan perekonomian nasional kita. Dalam konteks Filipina, adalah relevan untuk dicatat di sini bahwa lebih dari dua tahun yang lalu, Presiden petahana Aquino telah menandatangani Undang-Undang Pendidikan Dasar 2013 (Republic Act 10533), atau sering disebut sebagai Program K-12. Program K-12 mengamanatkan bahwa semua murid yang masuk Kelas I wajib menjalani pendidikan TK (Taman Kanak-Kanak) atau pendidikan pra-sekolah, dan sekolah menengah akan ditambah dua tahun lagi, yaitu hingga SMA (Sekolah Menengah Atas). Dengan demikian, setiap orang memiliki modal atau perhatian terhadap pendidikan, dan, akibatnya, kita harus mendengarkan semua suara mereka yang disampaikan secara tidak utuh mengenai Program K-12. Ada manfaat dari Program K-12 ini, namun beberapa sektor kehidupan akan secara drastik dipengaruhi dan dipreteli. Kita harus memiliki mata dan telinga untuk mendengarkan secara terbuka dalam mempertimbangkan dan mengintegrasikan semua ide dan saran dari masyarakat.

KATA KUNCI: Program K-12; Reformasi Pendidikan; Pendidikan Berkualitas; Persaingan Global; Gagasan dan Saran dari Masyarakat.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of the public school system in 1901, the Philippines has been inundated with education challenges starting with its curriculum, teachers, facilities, school supplies, language policy, governance, among others. In the past, there were many policies and programs implemented to arrest and address these problems, and with the aim of improving the quality of education in the country and more specifically in the public school system.

We always hear in local and national news as well as we read in the national dailies and critical blogs and posts in the social networking sites on the perennial problems of our education system. It seems that many sectors of our society are interested in education, but we still lack the needed resources, and maybe the right political will to really elevate the stature of education in the country.

To some, they are already tired of discussing the issues and possible solutions, because we are not moving toward a higher level of development. Some people even chose to vote by their feet, meaning to say, they are migrating to other countries because of the frustration that they have, not only in the education scenario but to the entire Filipino society. But for many, we are untiringly exploring and navigating the unchartered territories, which will bring us to development by hopefully solving our education baggage.

As we opened the new school year again, education sector was in the limelight as a spectacle for all of us to discuss and grandstand. And after the heighten discussion mellows and fades into the darkness of the night, we return back to our usual things and routines.

SOME EDUCATION REFORMS

The 1991 of Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM) was one of the major initiatives of the government to reform and restructure the educational system of the country. The EDCOM Report was headed by former Senator Edgardo Angara and Congressman Carlos Padilla. In the context

of education, EDCOM Report specifically recommended: (1) the prioritization of basic education to ensure the then DECS or Department of Education, Culture, and Sports' undivided attention to this sector; (2) the development of alternative learning modes, especially for literacy acquisition; (3) the use of the mother tongue as language of learning from Grades 1 to 3, with Filipino gradually becoming the medium of instruction in basic education and English a subsidiary medium of instruction in later years; (4) the expansion and enrichment of technical/vocational education; (5) the strengthening of pre-service teacher education and provision of incentives to make the rewards of teaching commensurate to its importance as a career; (6) support for both public and private education; (7) the facilitation of planning, delivery, and education financing and training by industry, workers, teachers, parents, and local governments; (8) greater access of poor children to all levels of education; (9) more cost-effective public college and university education with curricular programs that are relevant to the communities they serve; (10) the search for new sources of funds, including taxes, to finance basic education; and (11) the restructuring of the Department of Education, or DepEd, to ensure clearer program focus, rational resource allocation, and realistic planning (cited in Bautista *et al.*, 2009).

To some extent, some recommendations of the EDCOM report were mostly implemented during the 1990s, such as the *trifocalization* of the education department from DECS to DepEd (the creation of Commission on Higher Education and Technical Education & Skills Development Authority as separate agencies from DepEd); the establishment of Center of Excellence in Teacher Education (CENTREX); the reform in vocation technical education; the professionalization of teachers; and the passage of RA (Republic Act) 9155, which is now the governance framework in the management of the DepEd, among many others.¹

¹See, for example, "Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 9155: Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001". Available online at: <https://www.scribd.com/doc/204037878/RA-9155-IRR-Governance-of-Basic->

In 2005, the DepEd in consultation with education experts and in response to the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) set by the UN (United Nations) in 2001, has formulated the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda or BESRA. BESRA aimed to systematically, institutionally, and sustainably improve nationwide basic education outcomes.²

The following are the major goals of the reform agenda. *First*, universal coverage of out-of-school youths and adults in the provision of basic learning needs: all persons beyond school-age, regardless of their levels of schooling should acquire the essential competence to be considered functionally literate in their native tongue, in Filipino or in English. *Second*, school participation and elimination of dropouts and repetition in first three grades: all children aged six should enter school ready to learn and prepared to achieve the required competencies from Grades 1 to 3 instruction. *Third*, universal completion of the full cycle of basic education schooling with satisfactory achievement levels by all at every grade or year: all children aged six to eleven should be on track to completing elementary schooling with satisfactory achievement levels at every grade, and all children aged twelve to fifteen should be on track to completing secondary schooling with similarly satisfactory achievement levels at every year. Finally, *fourth*, total community commitment to attainment of basic education competencies for all: every community should mobilize all its social, political, cultural, and economic resources and capabilities to support the universal attainment of basic education competencies in Filipino and English.³

But interestingly, Dr. Cynthia B. Bautista of UP (University of the Philippines), a Professor and Sociologist, has strongly pointed out that reform proposals in

BESRA were externally generated (cited in Poblador, 2012). This means that the reform package was formulated by policy makers or consultants, who are not organic of the DepEd. In other words, it has created a problem, because DepEd officials and bureaucrats are reluctant to accept proposals or reforms that come from outside sources (cf Bautista, 2009; and Poblador, 2012).

According to Niceto Poblador (2012), there are reasons why reform packages in the past that were implemented by the Education Department failed: (1) Absence of a shared commitment to a common goal; (2) Conflicting individual interests; (3) Perceptions of inequity in the sharing of effort, costs, and benefits; (4) Exaggerated self-assessment of competence, or the lack of it; and (5) Differences in status and authority, which hinder meaningful debates and the free flow of information (Poblador, 2012).

More than two years ago, the incumbent President Aquino signed into law the Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act 10533), or most commonly referred to as K-12 Program. This law adds three years of formal schooling in the basic education level from the 10-year basic education curriculum to make the Filipino students globally competitive in other countries (Cabansag, 2014).

The K-12 Program mandates that all pupils entering Grade 1 should have compulsory undergone kindergarten or pre-school and the secondary level will add two more years, that is the senior high school. President Aquino stated that:

By signing this bill into law, we are not just adding two years of additional learning for our students; we are making certain that the coming generations are empowered to strengthen the very fabric of our society, as well as our economy (cited in Burgonio, 2013).

According to DepEd (Department of Education), K-12 Program has the following features: (1) making curriculum will be relevant to the learners, or contextualization and enhancement; (2) building proficiency through language, or mother tongue based multilingual education; (3) integrated and seamless learning, or spiral progression;

Education-Act-2001 [accessed in Manila, Philippines: February 15, 2015].

²“BESRA Progress Report”, on May 8, 2010. Available online at: <https://mlphil.wordpress.com/2010/05/08/besra-progress-report-includes-deped-order-74-s-2009/> [accessed in Manila, Philippines: July 17, 2015].

³As cited in “The K-12 Basic Education Program, 2015”. Available online at: <http://www.gov.ph/k-12/> [accessed in Manila, Philippines: July 25, 2015].

and (4) gearing up for future, or senior high school.⁴

The K-12 Program provides sufficient time for mastery of concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners, and prepare graduates for tertiary education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship. From the point of view of the government, K-12 is the appropriate response to address the century old problem in education as well as being globally competitive (Cabansag, 2014).

K-12 AS RESPONSE TO ASEAN INTEGRATION AND GLOBALIZATION

With the advent of globalization, almost all our cultural life as a nation is affected, directly or indirectly. Globalization is the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, and ideas across the borders. Globalization affects each country in a different way, due to a nation's individual history, traditions, culture, and priorities (*cf* Lenn, 1996; Azad, 2011; Tsuruta, 2013).

We cannot escape the force and power of globalization in our midst, because globalization is like a *juggernaut*, according to Anthony Giddens (2003). Globalization is like an unstoppable machine that will radically transform or alter or even mangle all the structures that are obstructing its way (Giddens, 2003). For nations like the Philippines, to cope with "globalization", the national education system, such as DepEd (Department of Education) and CHED (Commission on Higher Education) has to re-orient its structures, framework, and functions in order to meet the challenges of the global society (Conchada & Tiongco, 2015).

Globalization may bring to us positive aspects, like more foreign investments that will result to more employment opportunities for the Filipino workers, such as the call center jobs or BPO (Business Process Outsourcing). Globalization could really encourage competition among countries and multinational corporations to make the prices of goods a little cheaper

resulting to democratization of technology, e.g. mobile technology and motorcycles (Azad, 2011; Chomsky, 2013; Tsuruta, 2013; and Conchada & Tiongco, 2015).

Globalization continuously accelerates the speed and power of innovation in technology, especially in ICT (Information and Communication Technology), transportation, production, etc. Through globalization, different countries around the world could work together to address common world problems, like poverty, human and drug trafficking, and global warming (Azad, 2011; and Oludimu, 2014). In terms of culture, we are also exposed and have so many options to various music, food, clothing, movies, among others.

But, we should be reminded of the backlash or the negative impact of globalization to our life. Globalization could transfer the production or manufacturing to developing countries in order to spare the highly developed economies from environmental destruction/damage. There is now a phenomenon of "homogenization of culture" courtesy of globalization, because the multinational companies (e.g. international food chain store), the internet, the global media are so powerful in influencing and shaping the lives of the people especially the young people (*cf* Azad, 2011; and Oludimu, 2014).

The ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations)' integration is also another reason for the implementation of K-12 Program in the Philippines. The Philippine government is well aware of the competition in trades and in human resources by the ASEAN member-countries, as we open our economies and countries to the ASEAN community (Severino, 2002). Therefore, we have got to be competitive, because we are no longer competing with ourselves, but with our ASEAN neighbors.

Although we are not in control of the global events, the problem with so much consideration of ASEAN demands and challenges is that we are compromising the relevant and pragmatic needs of our people, such as the indigenous communities and the national economic development that is

⁴"The K-12 Basic Education Program, 2015". Available online at: <http://www.gov.ph/k-12/> [accessed in Manila, Philippines: July 25, 2015].

anchored on sound industrialization and stable agricultural sector.

In the context of education, globalization has been here silently and effectively manipulating our educational system. One distinct indicator of the globalization of education in the Philippines is the decisive implementation of the K-12 Curriculum, starting year 2012 by the DepEd. Different countries have adopted the global basic education standards (K-12), although we know very well that different countries have different challenges or academic needs.⁵

To be aligned with K-12, DepEd has already restructured the contents, duration, quality, and standards of educational offerings in line with the broad frame of global educational systems. DepEd has adjusted the content and duration of studies (from 10 to 12 years of basic education), it followed the qualification framework and standards of other countries (e.g. Bologna Accord), and the results were we fall into a common pattern with other countries, focusing on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math); and we relegated indirectly the humanities, national culture, languages, and even values.

Yes, indeed, the content of global K-12 Curriculum in the Philippines were modified to suit and to keep with the local context, but still the basic content, philosophy, and structure remain global or Western-influenced. Thus, the global K-12 Curriculum is put in place, so that all countries will conform to the structures that will serve the interest of powerful global corporations and global elites. This condition breeds more and more social and economic inequality and dependence of developing world to the highly developed economies.

The mantra of globalization is to promote a more competitive and deregulated educational system modeled after free market, but with more pressure on it to assure that the next generation of workers

are prepared for some amorphous' job market of 21st century (Sharma, Saini & Joshi, 2012; and Chomsky, 2014). But, also there will be a possibility of more awareness of people of the global exploitation; and, thus, educational system will increasingly provide the sites of struggle over the meaning and power of national identity and a national culture. And, finally, schools will no doubt also be the sites of various counter-hegemonic movements and pedagogies. With a discerning eye, the process of globalization is slowly birthing the seeds that will later bloom and germinate into global protests, e.g. Occupy Wall Street, anti-globalization movement.

CRITIQUE OF K-12

The TDC (Teachers' Dignity Coalition) and *Ating Guro* Partylist gave a rating of "B" to DepEd (Department of Education) regarding its on-going implementation of K-12. The rating of "B" stands for "beginning" with a numeric value of 74% or below. The main reason for such rating of K-12 is "shortage in basic resources", such as seats, classrooms, water and sanitation facilities, and kindergarten facilities, according to Benjo Basas, the Chairman of TDC (cited in Malipot, 2014).

Likewise, there are shortage of learning and teaching materials and manuals, which are very much needed in the instruction or teaching learning situation. With the new curriculum, teachers are also in need of training to understand and properly implement the K-12, but so far the training of teachers is not as comprehensive as expected. And, lastly according to Basas, the additional years in senior high school will take away the new enrollees in college come 2016; thus, may cause grave disruption among colleges and universities, which will result to cutting of teachers' job (cited in Marcelo, 2015).

The call for the suspension of K-12 will give way to a more participatory discussion that would involve all the stakeholders – teachers, parents, students, and ordinary citizens. After all, education is about the future of the nation – the entire nation and

⁵See "UP Gears Up for the Impact of the K-12 Curriculum and ASEAN Economic Cooperation 2015", on August 5, 2013. Available online at: <http://www.up.edu.ph/up-gears-up-for-the-impact-of-the-k-12-curriculum-and-asean-economic-cooperation-2015/> [accessed in Manila, Philippines: February 15, 2015].

not just the so called experts in education (Burgonio, 2013; Chomsky, 2013; and Cabansag, 2014).

No other than one Senator has clearly manifested his strong opposition to the K-12 Program of the national government. Senator Antonio Trillanes IV argued that:

It is in the best interest of the country to suspend the K-12 Program, while we continue to face the perennial problems of our education system, such as the lack of classrooms and school materials, high student-teacher ratio, and low salary of teachers. In addition to this is the government's unpreparedness to the threatened retrenchment of around 85,000 college professors and employees, when the program commences in 2016.

[...] there are still a lot of schools, which continue to use make-shift classrooms, or take shifts in using classrooms just to accommodate their students. This situation would even worsen once two batches of students would be absorbed in addition to the four levels of high school that we have now. In terms of school materials, students continue to share with each other with the ratio of as high as four students per module. This number will definitely increase as the K to 12 Program commences in 2016.⁶

Another teachers' group, the ACT (Alliance of Concerned Teachers) have also urged the national government to suspend the K-12, because of "lack of preparation, especially in terms of facilities, equipment, and the hiring, training and salaries of teachers".⁷ The government is not yet ready for the full implementation of the K-12, according to Benjie Valbuena. He said that out of the P (Peso) 68.7 billion allocated last year for classroom construction, only a meager P 2.9 billion, or 4.22 percent, was released for implementation. Out of that figure, only P 1.7 billion has been utilized.

⁶As cited in "Trillanes: Suspend Implementation of K to 12" in *Press Release*, on July 22, 2014. Available online also at: http://www.senate.gov.ph/press_release/2014/0722_trillanes1.asp [accessed in Manila, Philippines: May 20, 2015]; and "Trillanes Pushes for Suspension of K to 12 Before its Full Implementation in 2016". Available online at: <http://www.trillanes.com.ph/media/press-releases/trillanes-suspend-implementation-of-k-to-12/> [accessed in Manila, Philippines: May 20, 2015].

⁷See also "Teachers Urge Senate to Suspend K-12 Program – TDC" in *Human Rights Online Philippines*, on May 7, 2015. Available online also at: <http://hronlineph.com/2015/05/07/statement-teachers-urge-senate-to-suspend-k-12-program-tdc/> [accessed in Manila: July 25, 2015].

Benjie Valbuena, then, cited the backlog in the construction school laboratories and sanitation facilities, in deliveries of books and modules, and in the hiring of more teachers, to resolve the problem of large-sized classes (cited in Gamil, 2015).

Another important issue that is being raised by teachers in the public schools is the salary increase. ACT NCR (Alliance of Concerned Teachers, National Capital Region) Secretary said that:

There has been no salary increase for teachers under President Aquino's time. [...]. If teachers are going hungry, will the K-12 Program work? [...]. A salary increase is justified. According to the Philippine Constitution, education should be given the highest budgetary consideration. But, the budget for education now is just 2.3 percent of the national budget. That's not even half of international standards of six percent (cited in Gamil, 2015).

ANALYSIS OF K-12

In general, from the critical perspective of education, the educational system is unfair and it is always bias to serve the political, economic, and social interests, or agenda of the ruling class. The educational system is an effective instrument of the power elite to perpetuate the status quo or cultural reproduction (Cook, 2008). Political sociologist and neo-Marxist, Louis Althusser, argued that:

Teachers are in effect agents of capitalism, who through their classroom work reproduce the exploitative relations of capitalism. They produce pupil "types", who will accordingly receive more or less education and enter the labor force at different points (cited in Cook, 2008).

According to Henry Giroux (1983), neo-liberals believe that the curriculum should be organized around testing, creating passive students, and enforcing a pedagogy of repression (Giroux, 1983). This kind of education serves the interests of the global elite to further their extraction and plunder of the world's resources through trade (Nevradakis, 2014).

The contents of the K-12 Curriculum may not be totally relevant to the needs of the Philippine society. There are many subjects

offered in the K-12 that are designed to train Filipinos as future global laborers with its emphasis on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Obviously, the K-12 Program is not responding to the needs of the Filipino society, but the mandates of our 1987 Philippine Constitution is “*establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society*”.⁸

Although, we are economically benefitting from the contribution of the OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers), through their remittances, which amount to \$22.5 billion every year. The hidden curriculum, the curriculum behind the K-12 Program is so powerful in its agenda of teaching the knowledge, values, and skills to young people, so that they will become submissive, passive, obedient, and docile bodies in the workplace, whether here in the Philippines or abroad.

The school system is the locus, where the principle of meritocracy is unconsciously being implanted in the minds and consciousness of the young people through competition and stratification. Students are evaluated using various testing mechanisms to categorize them as above average, average, or below average. We are still in the avenue of the old traditional education delivery masked with new perspective.

Samuel Bowles & Herbert Gintis (1976)’s highly respected research claimed that schooling prepares pupils for their roles as workers under capitalism through the correspondence in structure, processes, and social relations between the school and the workplace. They argue that different social groups are taught at school different values that will fit their roles in capitalist society, like: (1) Pupils destined to be workers are taught to follow rules; (2) Pupils destined for middle management are taught to be dependable; and (3) Pupils destined for senior management are socialized to accept inwardly the norms of business (Bowles &

Gintis, 1976). If we are going to dissect the K-12 Program of the Aquino administration, the same is very true.

The textbooks of the Philippine K-12 Program reflect even the literature of European/Western countries and undervalue the local and national literature. According to Michael W. Apple (2004), in his book entitled *Ideology and Curriculum*, he said that the (American) textbooks present accounts of history and social structure, which reflect the interests of politically and economically dominant groups (Apple, 2004). In other words, the direction of education is through the molding of students to conform to the capitalist values and to underplayed or toning down of critical thinking and killing the revolutionary spirit among the young.

The corporations have also co-opted the media as their partner in marketing the K-12 by drumbeating the relevance and crucial importance of adopting the K-12 to the Philippines. We all know very well that marketing is just mostly propaganda to manipulate or redirect or condition the public opinion. Advertising is described by analysts and the business literature as a process of fabricating wants – a campaign to drive people to the superficial things in life, like fashionable consumption, so that they will remain passive and obedient (Chomsky, 2013).

Bourdieu, a French sociologist, argued that the educational system serves to eliminate the working class from competition for higher levels of education (cited in Sullivan, 2002). Henry Giroux (1983), in full agreement with Bourdieu, stated also that schools are seen as part of a larger universe of symbolic institutions that do not overtly impose docility and oppression, but reproduce existing power relations more subtly through the production and distribution of a dominant culture that tacitly confirms what it means to be educated (Giroux, 1983).

With the additional two more years in basic education under K-12, a lot of young people will be deprived of pursuing higher education because of the additional two

⁸See “Section 1, Article XIV, 1987 Philippine Constitution”. Available online at: <http://www.chanrobles.com/article14.htm> [accessed in Manila, Philippines: February 15, 2015].

years, which is actually converted to two years of additional expense on the part of the parents. Thus, only the family with higher income could send their children to universities. The poor people, who would like to aspire for higher education, are already eliminated from the race.

The K-12 Program is actually the instrument of the global elite to promote the universal system of education to go well with their capitalist and exploitative agenda. The K-12 Program could be seen as a neo-liberal attack to public education in the Philippines. Behind the scene, the big corporations are the ones who played as the masters of the puppet shows. The privatization of education in the Philippines through unhampered tuition fee increases, both in basic education and in higher education, is a corporate assault on education and independent thought (Burgonio, 2013).⁹

Just recently, the CHED (Commission on Higher Education) has approved the applications of 313 private HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) to increase tuition and other school fees for the incoming academic year, 2015-2016. Likewise, the DepEd (Department of Education) has approved to implement tuition fee and other miscellaneous fees of 1,246 private schools, nationwide. So, with these slowly but surely encroaching of private interest in our education system, the independence and the national autonomy of the DepEd and CHED will be compromised and overtaken by corporate greed.

THE WAY TO GO (FOR K-12)

I think to attain a quality of education in the public school system and the entire education system in the Philippines, we need to listen to the voices of all the education sectors, the issues and concerns raised by the marginalized groups, e.g. public school teachers, various teachers' organizations, among others. We should observe or

consider the following points in pondering the various issues at different levels of analysis.

Curriculum. John Dewey (1915), the great American pragmatic philosopher who influenced the American public school system in the 19th and 20th century, articulated that there should be pragmatic relationship between school and society. What is needed by society should be taught in the school and the ones taught in the school are needed in society, otherwise there is a waste in education. In other words, John Dewey is articulating the relevance of education or curriculum to the everyday life of the people (Dewey, 1915).

Even, the Philippine Constitution is bias in favoring a curriculum or education by providing that the State shall establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society.¹⁰ The Philippine K-12 Program is actually a product and influence of the forces of globalization. The graduates of K-12 are geared toward global competition; and, thus, they will be future global laborers and workers in the global labor market.

Our professionals and even the technical manpower are well-sought workers abroad, due to our technical, professional skills as well as our work ethics. This could be good for us in terms of employment opportunities and dollar remittances. But, what we are missing is our clear path to national development. An economic growth based on OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers) remittances is unstable, because if there are economic and political shocks abroad, our OFWs are direct affected. We need to establish our fundamental or heavy steel industries, develop the creative and innovative talents of Filipino people to promote Filipino brands, local and international.

But, most of our talents are working abroad as OFWs and more and more young

⁹See also, for example, "Trillanes on K-to-12: Are We Intellectually Inferior?" in *Rappler.com*, on June 5, 2012. Available online also at: <http://www.rappler.com/nation/6483-trillanes-on-k-to-12-are-we-intellectually-inferior> [accessed in Manila, Philippines: May 20, 2015].

¹⁰See again "Section 2, Article XIV, 1987 Philippine Constitution". Available online at: <http://www.chanrobles.com/article14.htm> [accessed in Manila, Philippines: February 15, 2015].

professionals are lured to pursue post-graduate studies abroad and to some extent, they are encourage to work in their host countries as scientists, inventors, innovators, among others. What we need is a curriculum that will respond to the need of our own people. A curriculum content that will address our problems, so that we could move forward to development.

There is nothing wrong with science and technology, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) subjects, as well as mastering the language of international communication, e.g. English, but we need to strengthen the mother tongues, our cultural heritage, strong appreciation of history, and our national heroes. We need to study the indigenous knowledge system as a way to pattern our development plan. We should consider the need to preserve the environment by looking at the sustainable way of using and utilizing our natural resources. Like for example, in mining, the dominant forces are the multinational companies (e.g. Australian, Canadian mining) extracting our precious minerals, but I think we need to shift paradigm in our mining policy.

We are disaster prone area in the Pacific and, thus, disaster response and risk reduction management should be an integral part of the curricula at all levels of education. As a people, we are not close to our natural world, as if we are miles away to our nature. It's really high time to be closer to nature and be part of nature by integrating environment education from the point of Asian or Filipino way of communing with nature.

Our values and culture are so heavily punctuated by foreign influences, because of globalization. But, in the curriculum, we should strike a balance of learning/ respecting the cultures of other people as well as understanding and recognizing the importance of our being culturally rooted Filipinos. The Filipino culture is always and will always stay with us, what we need to do is to uncover the hidden structures of Filipino culture and values and we should capitalized on it for our development.

Textbooks. Our textbooks should

serve as a representation of knowledge, which is needed for us to survive as a people as well as a member of the global community. Textbooks should carry or provide information that is reflective of Filipino values or Asian way of life before bombarding our students with Western ideas and ways of life. However, our students are so much exposed with foreign ideas and cultures through the social media.

We need textbooks as instruments for them to learn our being a Filipino. The textbooks should not be biased in all ways: gender, age, ethnicity, class, among others. Textbooks should not only a monopoly of big publishing corporations, who are obviously promoting the values of capitalist economy (or neo-liberal/free market). But, Filipino scholars and intellectuals, critical members of society, our indigenous wisdom are considered in textbook projects.

Textbooks are the main references, but it there should be ample and relevant available references that students could use for their studies. Latest journal publications and books are also very crucial to our students aside from the traditional textbooks that we used to have.

Training of Teachers. The teachers are very critical in the delivery of quality education. The training of teachers is a starting point. That's why the TEIs (Teacher Training Institutions) should be well-equipped in all their facilities, curriculum, professors, libraries, among others in educating the future teachers of the country. The national government, through the DepEd (Department of Education), should allocate additional or bigger budget for the training of teachers, In-SET (In Service Training), and other professional growth opportunities, like scholarship for post graduate studies.

More importantly, the incentive package for them should be attractive to motivate the best and the brightest young people to go into teaching profession and like to retain and motivate our teachers, who are already in the field. The remuneration or compensation package should be higher, so that it will be at far with the salaries of

teachers in the other developed economies. K-12 Program did not strongly factor in the effective training of teachers. Trainings were done haphazardly and the mass trainings were not really of quality.

School Facilities. Another consideration or variable that we need to address before the implementation of the K-12 Program is the lack of school equipment and facilities. We have 23 million students entering the public schools every opening of the school year, but the DepEd (Department of Education), even up to now, is aware of the limitations that the system have in terms of number of classrooms, buildings, chairs, rest rooms, LCDs (Liquid-Crystal Displays), computers, internet connection, and others.

The school facilities are the support system of our teachers in their teaching-learning encounters. The K-12 Program is now on its more 4th year this June, but we have not yet addressed the basic or essential needs and demands of the public schools.

Partnership and Collaboration among Education Stakeholders. As we always here from both local leaders and international agencies that education is not only the concern of the school officials and teachers, but rather of the entire community. The adage, “*it takes an entire village to raise a child*” is always true.

All the stakeholders, like the local government units, business sector, parents, NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations), and other concern sectors, should work hand in hand in providing quality education to the young people.

CONCLUSION

Education is big social investment for families or parents as well as the entire nation. We cannot afford not to have a good or quality education, even at least the basic level. Although the true aim of education is to nurture human being to become truly human being; however, because of global competition, we need to educate and train our students to be at par with their counterparts in other parts of the world and, of course, we need them to be parts or contributors to develop our national

economy. Cognizant to global opportunities that we could gain if we have good quality education, let us not forget that our education should more importantly cater to the needs and demands of local community.

Everybody has stake or concern about education and, consequently, we should listen to all the voices who are uttering their piece regarding the K-12 Program. There are beneficiaries of the K-12 Program, but some sectors will be drastically affected and dislodged. We should have an open eye and listening ear to consider and integrate the ideas and suggestions of people.¹¹

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¹¹**Statement:** I would like to declare that this article is my own original work; so, it is not product of plagiarism and not yet also be reviewed and published by other scholarly journals.

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