



A Policy Analysis of Philippine School System Reform Using Advocacy Coalition Framework

Krizia MAGALLANES¹, Jae Young CHUNG², Suyeon JANG³

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ABSTRACT

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Purpose: This study aimed to examine the development and outcome of the new Philippine school system which caused a national uproar among various educational stakeholders. This new system created two coalitions, pro-coalition and opposing coalition, that voiced out their beliefs about the K-12 educational system. **Method:** The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) was used to analyze both the supporting and opposing groups that had expressed their own policy beliefs and utilized their resources and venues to counter-argue and prove their stance.

Findings: The ACF showed the impact of policy actors' roles on the verdict of the Supreme court and public perception. Despite the series of petitions submitted by the opposing coalition against the continuation of the implementation, their argument was rejected by the Supreme Court. The supporting coalition, the Philippine government, continuously supported the K-12 program regardless of the challenges such as lack of resources and funds for the implementation that remained insufficient before and even during the implementation. **Implications for Research and Practice:** Improving the educational system is one step towards making the new generation more academically and globally competitive. However, the government should be meticulous and sensible in their planning and implementation process and must listen to the needs of all sectors. Moreover, open communication between both coalitions and key persons of the educational sector should also be encouraged for a smoother implementation and continuation of the program. Lastly, continuous provision of funds should be prioritized in every government budget planning.

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¹ Ewha Womans University, SOUTH KOREA email: kriziated@gmail.com,
ORCID: [0000-0003-4216-9712](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4216-9712)

² Jae Young Chung (corresponding author), Ewha Womans University, SOUTH KOREA
Email: jychung@ewha.ac.kr, ORCID: [0000-0003-0073-4314](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0073-4314)

³ Ewha Womans University, SOUTH KOREA Email: suyeonj@ewha.ac.kr,
ORCID: [0000-0002-9018-1081](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9018-1081)

Introduction

The Filipinos have an immeasurable appreciation for education, which has been considered as the foundation for national development and socio-economic progress (Florido, 2006). Hence, under the administration of President Arroyo (in office 2001-2010), the Philippines attended the United Nations Millennium Summit in pursuing the eight Millennium Development Goals until 2015. The second goal was geared toward achieving universal primary education. Adopting a longer cycle of basic education (12 years) was one of the implementation tasks to fulfil the second Millennium Development Goals (Philippine International Institute for Education Planning, n.d.). The old Philippine school ladder system which consisted of 1-2 years of preschool education, 6 years of mandatory primary education, and 4 years of secondary education (Florido, 2006) was reformed to a 12-year school system. This shift from the traditional 10-year cycle of Philippine education was one of the major changes that the Philippines have gone through over the years.

A lot of contributing factors have led to the government's decision for reform. The continued poor performance of students in the national examinations and overall advanced mathematics category showed how the present curriculum did not provide enough time to satisfactorily teach the content areas. With all the knowledge and skillsets being taught within 10 years, students were perceived to be incompetent outside the four walls of the classroom (Calderon, 2014). Oteyza (2012) and Okabe (2013) enumerated a few points highlighted by the Department of Education regarding the "deteriorating quality" of the Philippine education system namely: (1) the 10-year education cycle forces students to comprehend and master all the lessons in a short time; (2) consistent low achievement scores in the National Achievement Test; (3) unpreparedness of most students for employment and ability to face the realities of the work field; (4) low instruction quality; (5) unfavourable short number of educational years for the Overseas Filipino Workers. For these reasons, the department believed that passing Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 or Republic Act no 10533 (K-12) was the answer to the degrading quality of education.

The main feature of the K-12 program was the additional 2 years in the high school program (Grade 11 and 12) where students were trained in their desired specialized field. Moreover, there would be an enhanced curriculum for Grades 1-7 – changing the entire syllabus and reference materials (GovPH, n.d). This new educational policy was viewed as a "thought on education" as it aligned with common international educational practices and borrowed educational models of other countries. Moreover, the curriculum aimed for holistic development and practicing an outcome-based approach to affect the economy by alleviating poverty and contributing to economic growth (Okabe, 2013). However, its implementation caused mixed reactions from different government and non-government organizations and led to the rise of opposing groups. Critics believed that the new system did not fully answer the essential problems of the system and the hasty implementation could do more harm than good to society. It was also noted that it would be an additional financial burden to the parents and those in the poverty line, and there would be no parallel relationship between increasing the length of the educational cycle and the improving of educational quality (Oxford Business Group, 2017).

Calderon's Critique of the K-12 Philippine Education System also, highlighted the possible struggle to finish the K-12 cycle especially that there was a slow provision of facilities and infrastructures for students. Furthermore, colleges or universities experienced a shortage of incoming students therefore, they would have to cover the financial gap by increasing the tuition or miscellaneous fees. Calderon observed the capacity of the teachers as the real solution to the problems in education (Calderon, 2014).

Such emerging issues over this new policy implementation called for a deeper understanding as to why there was a strong backlash with the educational reformation. To understand the policy process of a specific area, the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) was identified as a potential solution to aid in making a logical comparison in discussing the goal conflicts, disagreements, and government participation between the two coalitions. Jenkins-Smith et al. (1991) assessed "ACF logic posits that coalitions seeking to translate their beliefs into policy compete with one another within a policy subsystem by using strategies to influence government decision-makers" (Jenkins-Smith et al., 1991). The policy subsystem was regarded as a "geographic scope, a substantive issue, and a population of hundreds of active stakeholders from all levels of government, multiple interest groups, the media, and research institutions" (Weible & Sabatier, 2005). The individuals involved in the subsystem, however, needed to contend about whose objectives should be considered in implementing the policy.

The policy subsystem of Philippine education was not only administrated by government-mandated organizations but also influenced by important key players in the educational field such as parents and teachers. However, the new school system led to the rising of two clashing coalitions which have their own set of beliefs for the betterment of the students and the future of Philippine Education. The opposing side expressed the "inadequate information dissemination among its stakeholders" and lack of consultation and coordination between the government and private sectors (ABS-CBN News, 2015).

To better understand the process and issues surrounding this implementation, the current research utilized the ACF framework and explored the following questions: (1) Who are the key persons spearheading both coalitions? (2) What are their stance and actions in pursuing their policy beliefs? and (3) What is the policy decision and impact on the Philippine education sector? The ACF is known to be helpful in providing a logical framework to delineate the policy issues brought by the reformation. There is currently a literature gap in studies focusing on the two coalitions supporting and opposing the educational reform as most of the existing research focus on the effect of the implementation, *per se*. Therefore, studying these issues and policy processes will help us understand the responsiveness of the government to public outcry and the remedial steps they are willing to partake to meet the needs of the public.

Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)

Sabatier (1987) defined policy change as an "important objective of the ACF" as it showed the variation in the belief systems (Moynon, 2017: 322). These coalitional beliefs and strategic behaviours would eventually influence policy outputs and impacts. This process of coalitional competition was affected by both long and short-term opportunities, constraints, and resources, which in turn were affected by both relatively stable parameters

and external subsystem events (Pierce, Peterson, & Hicks, 2020). The newly revised 2005 Diagram of the Advocacy Coalition comprised several elements including Policy Subsystem, consisting of Policy Brokers, Strategy, Decisions by Governmental Authorities, Institutional Rules, Resource Allocations, Appointments, Policy Outputs, and Policy Impacts; External (System) Events; Relatively Stable Parameters, Long-term Coalition Opportunity Structures; and Short-term Constraints and Resources of Subsystem Actors (Weible & Sabatier, 2005).

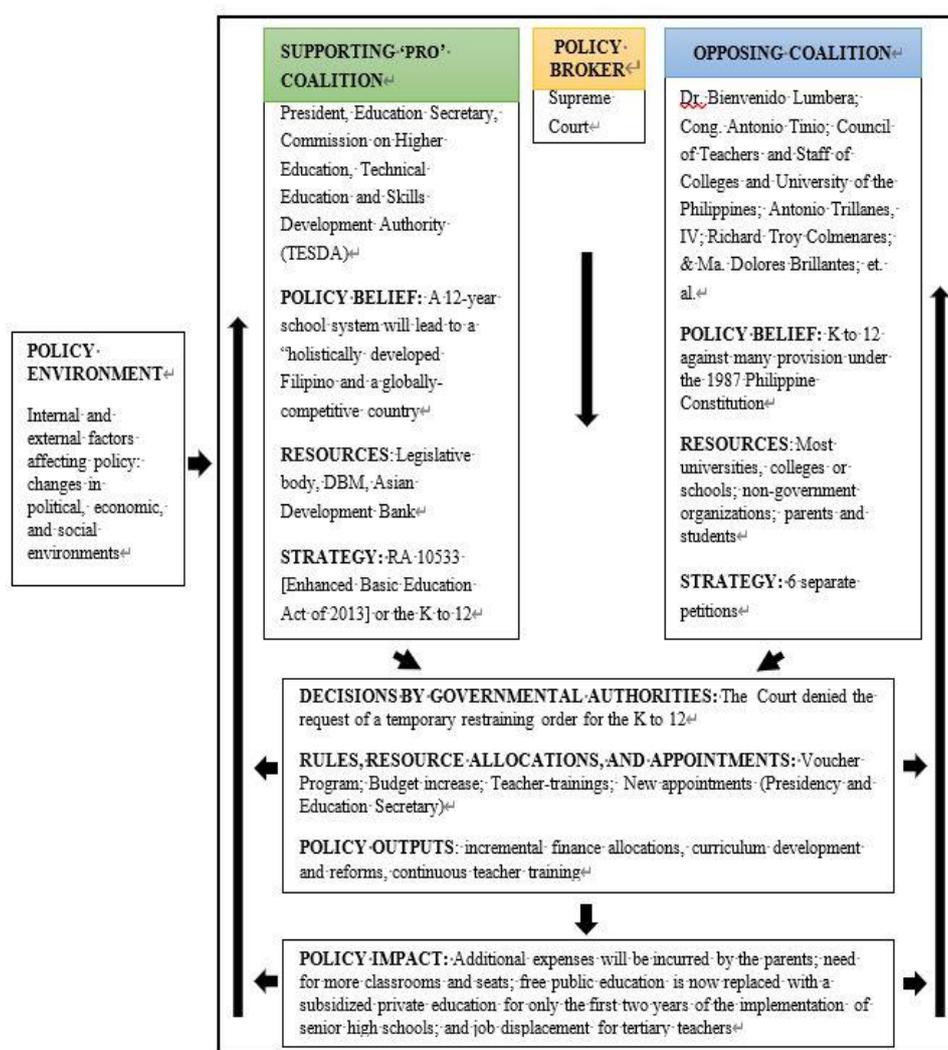


Figure 1. ACF Model for Philippine school system's reform
 Source: Sabatier & Weible (2007: 217-219)

The Policy Subsystem consisted of people who had a strong set of opinions on why their beliefs should win and be acted upon. Knowing the scope of the subsystem was an essential part of the ACF research project, whose primary role was to “focus on the substantive and geographic scope of the institutions that structured interaction.” Figure 1 illustrates the ACF model which aimed at reforming the executed in Philippine school system. The policy subsystem’s actions were inclined to two external factors: relatively stable parameters and external (system) events. On the other hand, the external system comprised socioeconomic circumstances, alterations in the governing coalition, and policy judgments from other subsystems. Relatively stable parameters were identified to refer to the fundamental characteristics of the problem, allocation of natural resources, basic socio-cultural values and structure, and constitutional structure. Bearing the word “stable” also meant that the factors were hard to change and were crucial in establishing the resources and constraints wherein the coalitions operated. All the factors were unpredictable; therefore, it was feared that they could affect policy changes in future.

The new policy coalition framework, therefore, proactively added the ‘long term coalition opportunity structures’ as the medial of both the stable parameters and the policy subsystem that affected each other. There were two variables under the opportunity structures: the degree of consensus needed for major policy change and openness of the political system. The degree of consensus needed for major policy change referred to the number of people who discussed and compromised to reach a consensus. Similarly, the openness of the political system had two functions: the decision-making process involved in the major policy decision; and the accessibility of the venues for the decision-making process (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

Since the ACF was presented by Sabatier as a theory that described the process of policy change, many researchers worldwide have actively applied the ACF in their research works. During the introduction of this theory, the study substantive topic mainly focused on environmental policies related to water or air (Zafonte & Sabatier, 2004; Weible, Sabatier, & Lubell, 2004; Weible & Sabatier, 2005; Leach & Sabatier, 2005). Gradually the framework was applied in various fields as evident in several research studies on education policy despite its embedded powerful controversies (Yang, 2007; Cho, 2008; Byun, 2009; Kim & Park, 2012; Han & Ha, 2014). Recently, apart from the theoretical application of the framework, studies have been geared towards the utility and impact of ACF. These studies call for a more definitive approach towards the application of ACF in various contexts (Pierce, Peterson, & Hicks, 2020; Pierce, Peterson, Jones, Garrard, & Vu, 2017). Moreover, the framework was also thought to be able to ground the “conditions for policy change” and for essential contextualization of the issues. Another research pointed out how the studies using this framework should also take into consideration the “role of discourse” between coalitions and analyzing the factors influencing policy dynamics by determining the “causal inferences” (Ma, Lemos, & Vieira, 2020).

Methodology

A qualitative research design was utilized to examine the secondary data gathered from relevant documents: General Registers (GR), memorandums, news articles, government publications and documents. The general registers are actual petitions sent by the

representatives to the Supreme Court of the Philippines. Those few petitions which were not publicly available, the researchers had to email the representatives to receive them directly. The use of a qualitative approach and ACF to analyze the documents was proposed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) as a suitable method to empirically compare the actors' policy beliefs (Markard, Suter, & Ingold, 2016). It has been quite helpful in understanding how the policy formulation and process were stemmed from the beliefs of the advocacy coalition actors.

Results

- *Coalitions: Supporting and Opposing sides*

The forefront planners and major respondents of the supporting coalition consisted of President Aquino; the three main governing bodies for the Philippine school system: Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA); and some organizations handling the K-12 implementation. Right at the outset The Department of Education managed and established all related concerns of both formal and informal basic education to meet the national development goals. It supervised all the elementary and secondary education institutions, including the alternative learning systems (Department of Education, n.d.b.). In the next stage, the CHED supervised both private and public higher institutions and any 'degree-granting' post-secondary educational institutions. Finally, TESDA handled two-year vocational courses (International Institute for Education Planning, n.d.). On the other hand, the anti-K-12 coalition included major petitioners: Council of Teachers and Staff of Colleges and the University of the Philippines, Dr. Lumbera, Senator Trillanes IV, Mr. Colmenares, Congressman Tinio, representing the Act Teachers Party-list, and Mrs. Brillantes, representing the Manila Science High School.

Both the coalitions had difference of opinion about the K-12 coalition. For instance, the pro-K-12 coalition believed that K-12 was the answer to the declining quality of Philippine education, as it will focus on the mastery level of the learners and create a curriculum that is internationally competitive. They even drafted an implementation schedule for the schools to follow from 2012 to 2018. The entry age of 4 years was recommended for a student who expected to reach the last year of Senior High School by the age of 17 years (GOVPH, 2013). In the initial phase, this group was widely supported by the government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the funds required for the implementation of the Senior High School Support Program. The ADB, through the Results-Based Lending, provided \$300 million to cover the implementation period for the 2014-2015 preparatory phase as well as 2016-2019 phase of basic education. The Department of Budget and Management also increased the Department of Education's budget from \$3.2B in 2010 to a staggering \$8B in 2016.

President Aquino III had signed the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 or Republic Act no 10533 into law on May 15, 2013, (Calderon, 2014). Three years later, the newly elected President Duterte too expressed his support for the K-12 school system. At a press briefing, he wished Filipino students to be intellectually at par with other nationalities (Ranada, 2016). When Luistro, Department of Education Secretary, ended his term, Leonor

Briones was appointed as the new Education Secretary on May 15, 2017. She stated that "by 2022, our legacy will be a nation of young people who love their country and know their history, learners who not only memorize facts but are also equipped to respond to the challenges and opportunities of a radically changing world in a positive manner. Individuals who think critically are innovative and happy" (Philippine Department of Education, 2017). She resolved to continuously monitor and assess the learning outcomes and made a few promises to improve the K-12 school system, by preparing new estimates of the department's budget to ensure the sufficiency of the infrastructures, schools supplies, textbooks, and teachers (Philippine Department of Education, 2016a).

The opposing coalition, on the other hand, believed that the additional two years would be an added burden for families. Even the Department of Education mentioned that almost 40 percent of Senior High School students will transfer to private schools because public schools cannot accommodate them anymore. Moreover, this will deny students their right to free education and limit accessibility to only those who can enroll (Canlas, 2015). The petitioners requested the Supreme Court to issue a temporary restraining order or writ of preliminary injunction to stop the K-12 school system. They also highlighted that R.A. No. 10533 was "illegal and unconstitutional," and would result in additional expenditure for poor Filipino families (Canlas, 2015).

A total of six petitions were filed in 2015 at the Supreme Court of the Philippines against the implementation of K-12, presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Petitions filed in the Supreme court with regard to K-12 implementation

| NO. | Date | Supporting Coalition | Opposing Coalition |
|-----|----------------|--|---|
| 1 | March 12, 2015 | President Simeon (C. Aquino III <i>et al.</i>) | G.R No. 217752 Council of Teachers and Staff of Colleges and University of the Philippines (UP) <i>et al</i> |
| 2 | April 15, 2015 | President Aquino and Commission on Higher Education Chairperson Licuanan | G.R No. 217451 Dr. Lumbera |
| 3 | May 6, 2015 | Ochoa, Jr., Hon. Luistro, and the Department of Education DOE Secretary Luistro, Commission on Higher Education Chairperson Licuanan, | G.R No. 218045 Senator Trillanes IV, Alejano, Acedillo |
| 4 | May 28, 2015 | Technical Education and Skills Development Authority Director Villanueva, Department of Labour and Employment Secretary Rosalinda, Baldoz in Department of Finance | G.R No. 218098 Mr. Colmenares |
| 5 | May 29, 2015 | President Aquino III <i>et al</i> | G.R No. 218123 Congressman Tinio, Representative of the Act Teachers Party list <i>et al</i> |
| 6 | June 23, 2015 | President Aquino III <i>et al</i> | G.R No. 218465 Mrs. Brillantes |

*G. R- General Register

In order to build a public opinion, the anti-K-12 coalition had a nationwide information campaign through various modes and platforms like media, protests, demonstrations and marches. Educators from different colleges, and universities marched all the way to the Supreme Court. Various groups led by Trillanes protested at Luneta Park, Manila (Canlas, 2015).

The six petitions filed in the Supreme court can be classified into six categories based on their argument and content. Table 2 summarizes the arguments labelled in these petitions.

Table 2.

General summarization of the petitioners' arguments

| ARGUMENTS | PETITION NO. |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Faculty issues (i.e tertiary level teachers) | 1 |
| 2. Employment | 1, 3, 5 |
| 3. Curriculum | 2, 5, 6 |
| 4. Finance | 3, 5 |
| 5. Educational result (i.e. quality issue) | 3, 5 |
| 6. Misc. (i.e., non-discretion) | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

The classification of arguments into six categories was based on the issues raised by the anti-K-12 group petitioners. The first argument referred to a few faculty issues such as pay reduction, opportunities of retrenchment, interference with their employment, and their professional status as HEI faculty. A pertinent issue among all was the loss of academic freedom of teachers, who taught at the tertiary level but were often forced to teach at secondary levels. The second argument referred to the violation of the protection and advancement of the rights of the teaching and non-teaching personnel who might experience massive unemployment due to the K-12 implementation. The third argument raised the issue of drastic changes in the science curriculum in high schools and reduction of Philippines-related topics and modules. The next argument, related to financial issues, drew attention to the failure to appropriate funds before the start of the implementation, due to which there was an added burden on parents who had to shell out more money. The fifth argument stated that the current system did not provide high-quality education and that the NAT results had been in constant decline through the years. Lastly, a frequently mentioned argument was the failure of providing discretion powers to the key players in the educational field by the supporting coalition.

The new K-12 policy also stepped on several constitutional rights pertaining to students' education and threatened their violation. For instance, the 1987 Constitution had stipulated that the State shall "(e)stablish and maintain a system of free public education in the elementary and high school levels. Without limiting the natural right of parents to rear their children, elementary education is compulsory for all children of school age." However, the Republic Act No. 10157 or Kindergarten Education Act and Republic Act no 10533 (K-12) set up different scenario. The former made kindergarten education

mandatory, thus violating parents' natural rights to rear the children, while the latter made secondary education compulsory. In addition, a few provisions of the K-12 Act— Article II, Section 13 & 17; and Article XIV, Section 2 & Section 3 (2), highlighted the importance of nationalism in education and national progress. These laws attempted to create a school system that was germane to the Filipinos. Further, CHED Memorandum No. 20, introduced the General Education Curriculum and reduced the prerequisite of 36 units required for college admission to 24 units, by removing subjects like the Filipino, Panitikan (Literature), Philippine Government and Constitution, and like that aimed to instill the spirit of nationalism in the students.

Discussion

The 1987 Constitution had declared the Supreme Court as the third pillar of Philippine government, which was entrusted the task to carefully adjudicate the cases between the individual(s) and the state and make logical judgements that adhered to the law and constitution (Philippine Information Agency, n.d.). All individuals are expected to follow the 'Rules of Court' for safeguarding and adherence of constitutional rights, procedures, and practice of law. The Supreme Court exercised judicial powers along with lower courts, but it was Supreme Court's decision that would finally prevail and be legally valued. The Supreme Court has a total of 15 judges, comprising one Chief Justice and 14 Associate Justices (Supreme Court of the Philippines, 2013).

During the *en banc* discussion on the petitions, the Supreme Court disapproved all the petitions as well as the appeal for a temporary restraint order. It also turned down the writ for preliminary injunction to stop the K-12 program, without any solid grounds (Requejo & Bencito, 2016). Despite the secrecy of the high court, an insider revealed that a decision to halt K-12, which had taken years of planning and strategizing, was "not likely." and "it would be impractical to revert to the previous system at this point" (Punay, 2016).

To achieve the supporting coalition's plans for implementing the K-12 school system, various initiatives were taken to assure its feasibility. Some of these initiatives included important changes such as addition of specialized tracks and restructuring of the curriculum, preparing teachers for the new curriculum, and allocating more budget for the Department of Education to provide more infrastructures, facilities, and services. The following sections summarize these new developments.

- *Curriculum Development and Reforms*

The Department of Education, with the assistance of CHED, designed a unified and globally competitive education curriculum for the basic and tertiary levels. There was a consensus among the Department of Education, CHED, and TESDA not to replicate any basic education courses and to prepare a college-ready curriculum for the tertiary level. During this process of curriculum development, other national government agencies and key individuals in the school system were consulted to ensure the making and implementing an effective curriculum.

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization K-12 Toolkit designed a few reformative measures for different educational levels. First, kindergarten was made compulsory and free to all children up to the age of five years. It was also decided that School Readiness Assessment Examination will be administered by the Department of Education to check if the student is ready for Grade 1. Second, Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education was proposed to become the medium of instruction for grades 1-3' additionally, the National Achievement Test for Grade 6 students would be replaced by an End-of-Grade 6 Assessment which would serve as an entry pass to Grade 7. Third, it was proposed to divide the usual four years of high school into two—junior and senior high schools. The K-12 curriculum at both levels would follow a spiral approach to ensure the expertise to evolve from simple to complex manner, for which a subject or topic may be covered several times, adding new information each time with the lesson learned at previous levels. Next, it was also proposed that Grade 10 students would take the End-of-Grade 10 Examination instead of the National Achievement Test. The End-of-Grade 12 Examination would be the entry pass for college. Lastly, Career Pathways or optional courses that focused on specializations in academic, technical-vocational, and entrepreneurship field would also be offered. It was envisaged that Career Pathways would enable students to get the Certificate of Competency which the TESDA will award only to successful students. It was proposed that, apart from TESDA, assessments can be also carried out by other government and non-government agencies viz., The National Commission for Culture and Arts could assess students for art-related career path; the Philippine Sports Commission could assess for sports-related careers; and TESDA or other foreign language institutes could assess foreign languages (Philippine Department of Education, n.d.a., n.d.b.).

- *Teacher Training*

The second initiative to support coalition's plans for implementing the K-12 school system was Teachers' Training programs. A series of training sessions were conducted on significant features and core elements of the K-12 curricula for teachers teaching Grade 1 to 7 (up to first year of junior high school) with effect from the school year 2012-2013. The training of trainer's program for the implementation of Grade 1 curriculum was handled by subject area conveners, curriculum writers, and trainers on Mother Tongue-Based education from the Department of Education regional and division offices. Half of the trainers for the Grade 7 curriculum came from teacher education institutions, centres of excellence, and centres of development in education identified by the Department of Education. The other half were expert trainers in each subject area from the Department of Education regional offices. In both training courses, the Bureaus of Elementary and Secondary Education offered participants an orientation on the curriculum framework as well as assessment framework for elementary and secondary levels (GovPH, 2012).

- *Financial Allocations*

The third initiative to support coalition's plans for implementing the K-12 school system included financial recommendations. Ever since the recommendations for financial

allocations were approved, the pro-K-12 coalition witnessed a drastic increase in the department’s financial budget. This budget was to be utilized for the establishment of more buildings, teachers’ recruitment, textbooks, seats, and so on. For instance, to prepare for the final year of K-12 implementation, the Department of Budget and Management under the 2017 People’s Proposed Budget (2016) increased the budget for the education sector from \$8.1M in 2016 to \$10M in 2017 (Mateo, 2015; Rappler, 2017).

Other budget allocations for the education sector included: (a) Basic Education Facilities—amounting to \$2.4M—to construct 37,492 classrooms and supplementing 2.9 million seats for the schools undergoing K-12, including Senior High school students; (b) Learning Resources—amounting to \$285.7M—for publishing 55.8 million textbooks and instructional materials. It also included Science and Mathematics equipment, to be used in 5,449 schools, and 30,697 ICT packages, for the Department of Education Computerization Program; (c) Additional manpower was allotted \$387M to create an additional 53,831 teaching items and provide 13,391 teaching and nonteaching positions; (d) For the tertiary level, states, universities, and colleges would get \$1.2M to fund the development and innovation of buildings and facilities of 114 schools, and the expansion of the students’ Grants-in-Aid program for the alleviation of poverty, which assisted 38,719 beneficiaries; (e) CHED would receive \$265.9M to support the Student Financial Assistance Programs, to extend aid to 445,836 beneficiaries; the K-12 Transition Program agreed to finance 12,257 scholarships for graduate studies, 1,883 faculty development grants, and 125 institutional and innovation grants; and (f) Technical-Vocational Education would receive \$137M, which will be divided into \$43.7M for the Training for Work Scholarship to have 293,333 Training for Work Scholarship enrolments and graduates to fill up the skills gaps in the job market; \$4M to support 11,000 beneficiaries under the Private Education Student Financial Assistance; and \$14M for the Special Training for Employment Program that will support 51,910 beneficiaries.

For the school year 2017-2018, the Department of Education funded or subsidized \$2,733,460 Senior High School public and private students. Moreover, 54,604 Senior High School learners taking the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood Track were able to take their specialization subjects in private institutions through the Joint Delivery Voucher Program for ‘Senior High School’ - ‘Technical-Vocational-Livelihood’ amounting to \$16M. For 2018, the government allocated \$10.8M (Philippine Department of Education, 2018).

Table 3.

Allocation of Resources and Budget from 2010-2015

| RESOURCES | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Teacher-hiring | 11,347 | 13,268 | 15,253 | 58,793 | 29,444 | 39,066 |
| Classroom | 3,291 | 12,513 | 16,332 | 34,686 | 33,608 | 41,728 |
| Budget (USD) | \$3.2M | \$3.8M | \$4.4M | \$5.4M | \$5.7M | \$6.7M |

Note. Adapted from <http://www.deped.gov.ph/infographics/k-12-infographics>

The support coalition also instigated the “Voucher Program,” where the government could financially support Grade 10 students from private and public Junior High Schools

to enroll in the Senior High School program in private high schools, private colleges or universities, state universities or colleges, and technical-vocational schools starting in School Year 2016-2017. Specifically, Junior High Schools students from public and private schools under the Education Service Contracting would be automatically given vouchers. Education Service Contracting was a program mandated by the government to provide tuition subsidies to public elementary school graduates who were accepted to study in private high schools. Other Junior High Schools students studying in private schools were also permitted to apply, even if they were not an Education Service Contracting grantee. If accepted for the voucher program, they received 80% of the value of the voucher. The voucher gave a 100% value for students from public Junior High Schools and 50% for those who entered state or local universities or colleges. There were no grade requirements for the voucher program, but those who chose to enroll in private schools needed to follow the admission requirements (Philippine Department of Education, 2016b, 2016c).

During the final year of the first round of implementation, the government allotted the highest budget to the education sector. It was proposed to allocate \$13.97M for 2018 – a \$3M increase from the previous budget. The budget would be divided between the following: Department of Education for the K-12 implementation and creation of new job opportunities; the States, Universities, and Colleges (SUCs) for the improvement of their respective institutions; the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for scholarships, grants and other financial assistance for higher education students; and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for the training and education of those students who wanted to improve their technical skills (Philippine Department of Budget and Management, 2018). Prior to new funds allocations, owing to financial constraints, parents used to worry that their children’s diplomas would be ‘held hostages’ because they could not afford the school expenses. Due to the high expenditure of schools and colleges, junior college teachers were also at risk of losing their jobs, since in the new system now there would be fewer years (shorter time span) and fewer subjects to teach at the tertiary level (Shahani, 2015). Calderon (2014) also commented upon the slow process of building the infrastructures.

However, with the inflow of the funds, Budget Secretary Abad stated that “Before, we were doing only 6,000 classrooms a year. But now, we have 40,000 classrooms. What compounds the situation for the department of Education is the acceleration of the requirement of the K-12, and the problem is the capacity does not expand as fast as the requirement. This is what we call growing pains; it takes a longer time for the Department of Education to adjust.” Apart from the building of infrastructures, there was also an unused school building budget from 2014-2015 of \$908M (Philippine Department of Education, 2018). The Department of Public Works and Highways also mentioned the Department of Education’s slow decision-making and neglecting the approved construction sites (Diaz, 2015).

Commenting upon the financial allocations, undersecretary Briones stated that the department wanted to prioritize the “sense of urgency,” shown by people to get the things fixed first before proceeding to other developments. It was believed that if the government waited for things to be in order, it would take several years before the basic education system could be fixed – especially when other potential problems arose during the waiting

time. It was also stated that the people affected by these reforms not to settle for what was given and that the government was doing its best to “correct whatever needs to be corrected” (Philippine Department of Education, 2018). For 2018-2019, the Department of Education expected around 29-million learners from both public and private elementary and secondary schools nationwide, and around 1.5 million Senior High School students. To ensure that there was less congestion in public schools, Briones suggested that Department of Education should work overtime to monitor the construction of classrooms (Hernando-Malipot, 2018a). On the other hand, the opposing coalition—specifically the Makabayan bloc—highlighted such unsolved problems of the current educational system such as the lack of materials and facilities, shortage of classrooms, and insufficient resources failing to sustain students’ needs. There was also an increase in the primary and secondary school dropout rates since the beginning of the K-12 implementation (Rosario, 2018). Philippine Business for Education Executive Director Basillote recognized these inadequacies existing in the schools and reiterated that the government should maximize the spending of the allocated budget to cover the lapses and needs of the education sector (Hernando-Malipot, 2018b).

Conclusion

As a developing country, progress and growth are an imminent change that the Philippine society must face, sooner or later. The next leaders responsible for running the country and securing its development are the youth. It is important to secure their future and make sure that they are well equipped with enough knowledge to function in society. It is the responsibility of those who control and monitor the whole process. The proposal for the transition of the school system to a globally competitive one was inherently good. There was no doubt that students, as early as high school, were being trained in specialized fields. However, as good as the intention was, the implementation seemed to overstep some constitutional provisions and bring more disadvantage to the public.

Utilizing the ACF to compare and contextualize the policy beliefs and actions of the actors showed the relationship between the variables inside the policy subsystem and their political dynamic. The K-12 policy subsystem in the Philippines was polarized between the supporting coalition, consisting of the administration, education department, and related government agencies, and the opposing coalition, headed by the ACT teacher union, educators, and school/college administrators. These two coalitions were formed due to foreseen unjust implementation of the K-12 and the urgency to improve the Philippine education system. The supporting coalition believed that K-12 was the silver lining to the declining level of Philippine education and that continuing the implementation would result in globally competent students. In 2013, the administration signed and implemented the new system with the support of the Department of Education and the Department of Budget and Management.

On the other hand, the opposing coalition believed that the K-12 carried a heavy burden, specifically financially, to the parents and students. The K-12 also violated some of the constitutional rights and failed to have a proper discourse with the affected individuals. The opposition coalition held various protests and filed 6 petitions in the

Supreme court. Regardless of the petitions, protests, and outcry of the public, the judiciary body dismissed these petitions and gave the verdict to proceed with the full implementation of the K-2 law. The negativity surrounding the implementation was expected to last for a couple of years only and would wane away gradually as schools and other education-related sectors were getting financial support for the implementation of the K-12 system.

The analysis shows the impact of policy actors' roles on the verdict of the Supreme court and the perception of the public. Since the supporting coalition had the support of the government and other department heads, the policy decision was seen as an inevitable end to this conflict. On the other hand, the opposing coalition had the public support and sympathy, and their belief was geared towards public welfare. Nevertheless, it was revealed that a consensus was being built up that turning back now would lead to more confusion and damage, especially when K-12 was in the final stage of implementation. It was also evident that the supporting coalition was putting out more resources to cover the financial needs and continuously improving the curriculum to make it globally competitive. With the Department of Education having a bigger budget for the K-12, the key players in the education field should at least make sure that school resources (i.e., buildings, chairs, etc.) were well-provided and everything was accounted for.

The question at these stages arises: what should the government have done prior to its implementation? First, according to the opposing coalition, the government should have been more transparent in its decision-making. Something as big and impactful as introducing a new school system required discussions with the people who were bound to be affected by this transition. This study recommends that the government should create more opportunities for dialog between the Department of Education and administrators and parents. Various policy stakeholders need to communicate seamlessly by establishing a system of "governance" rather than "government". For instance, in the case of South Korea, the National Education Committee was scheduled to be launched by July 2022 with the hope of promoting a consistent education policy based on social consensus (Korean Ministry of Education, 2021).

Second, it is required to ease the public fear and trouble that would help parents and teachers to cooperate and be more supportive of the implementation. The Philippine government needs to carefully consider the issues raised by the opposing coalition in the school system reform. In other words, active publicity and support are required to raise awareness by explaining to the public the legitimacy of the innovation in the new Philippine school system. Third, the government should also continuously allocate more budget to assure a smooth flow and teaching in the classroom. House Speaker Alan Peter Cayatano even observed the inadequacy of Department of Education funds for the effective and efficient implementation of K-12, specifically creating more opportunities for graduates and training grounds for the teachers. Deputy Speaker representative Mikee Romero also highlighted the necessity to increase and maintain the financial support for education programs to produce high-level graduates and attract more investors (Punay, 2019). Therefore, the government should allocate more funds to the education sector and make sure that they are well-distributed to the respective education organizations.

Every educational reform process faces a variety of unexpected problems. If the

government ignores these problems and proceeds with an unplanned approach, it will be difficult to achieve the desired outcome. Therefore, it is important to diagnose the causes of the problems and to come up with improvement measures to overcome them. The current study has reiterated upon the need to collect and reflect upon the views of the opposing coalition in the whole process of educational reforms and transition to K-12 system to boost performance.

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