

# Philippines

## Curriculum development

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|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Estimated population (1995)  | 67,800,000 |
| Public expenditure on education as percentage of Gross National Product (1995) | 2.2        |
| Duration of compulsory education (years)                                       | 6          |
| <b>Primary or basic education</b>  |            |
| Pupils enrolled (1995)   | 11,541,570 |
| Teachers (1995)  | —          |
| Pupil/teacher ratio  | 35 :1      |
| Gross enrolment ratio (1995)   |            |
| —Total   | 107        |
| —Male  | 108        |
| —Female  | 107        |
| Net enrolment ratio (1995)   |            |
| —Total   | 90         |
| —Male  | 89         |
| —Female  | 91         |
| Estimated percentage of repeaters (1992) <sup>1</sup>                          | 2          |
| Estimated percentage of drop-outs (1995)                                       | 30         |
| School-age population out of school (1995)                                     | 1,000,000  |
| <b>Secondary education</b>   |            |
| Students enrolled (1995)   | 4,809,863  |
| Gross enrolment ratio (1995)   |            |
| —Total   | 79         |
| —Male  | —          |
| —Female  | —          |
| <b>Third-level enrolment ratio (1995)</b>                                      | 29.7       |
| <b>Estimated adult literacy rate (1995)</b>                                    |            |
| —Total   | 95         |
| —Male  | 95         |
| —Female  | 94         |

Notes:

1. Last year available.

Source: UNESCO statistical yearbook, 1998, Paris

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Educational legislation and policy*

The education sector (along with other government agencies) has the task of contributing to the achievement of national development goals espoused in the country's development plan. The general purpose and goals of education in the Philippines have been cited in the national constitution. Section 3(2), Article XIV of the Constitution states that:

*All educational institutions shall inculcate patriotism and nationalism, foster love of humanity, respect for human rights, appreciation of the role of national heroes in the historical development of the country, teach the rights and duties of citizenship, strengthen ethical and spiritual values, develop moral character and personal discipline, encourage critical and creative thinking, broaden scientific and technological knowledge and promote vocational efficiency.*

These goals have been translated into educational policies and further elaborated as the basic (elementary and secondary) education framework.

#### *Elementary and secondary education*

The 1982 Education Act identifies the aims of both elementary and secondary education. For *elementary* education, the aims are: (a) to provide the knowledge and develop the skills, attitudes and values essential to personal development and necessary for living in and contributing to a developing and changing social milieu; (b) to provide learning experiences which increase the child's awareness of and responsiveness to the changes in and just demands of society and to prepare him/her for constructive and effective involvement; (c) to promote and intensify the child's knowledge of, identification with, and love for the nation and the people to which he/she belongs; and (d) to promote work experiences which develop the child's orientation to the world of work and creativity and prepare him/her to engage in honest and gainful work.

The regional level basic education aims and objectives reflect those at the national level, but are modified to suit local conditions and concerns. For *secondary* education the aims are: (a) the provision of general education that was started at the elementary level; and (b) the preparation of students for college and/or the world of work.

### ***Curriculum policies and legislation***

Curriculum policies are usually set forth by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports through various orders, circulars, memoranda and bulletins. They are aligned with national priorities and contribute to the achievement of development goals. However, several laws passed by the national legislature specifically relate to the school curriculum: Section 3(10), Article XIV of the Constitution mandates the study of the Philippine Constitution; Section 6, Article XIV, designates Filipino as the language of instruction; Section 19(2), Article XIV, states that: 'All educational institutions throughout the country shall undertake regular sports activities in co-operation with athletic clubs and other sectors'. Republic Act No 4723 mandates music teaching in the schools. The most recent curriculum-specific laws designate: (a) lengthening of the school calendar from 185 to not less

than 200 school days per school year; and (b) integration of concepts on human rights, the environment, dangerous drugs and computer education.

### ***The Basic Education System***

Basic education in the Philippines is free and compulsory at the elementary level only. The basic education system in the Philippines is composed of six years of elementary and four years of secondary education—a total of ten years. Compared to many countries, this is a relatively short time period. Filipinos complete their basic education at the age of 16 or 17 years. They then proceed to institutions of higher learning to obtain a post-secondary vocational/technical institution degree or a certificate. Table 1 provides a general overview of the country's basic education situation.

TABLE 1. The Philippine basic education system

| Indicator                                | Elementary | Secondary | Total      |
|--|------------|-----------|------------|
| Number of schools                        | 38,631     | 6,673     | 45,304     |
| Enrolment                                | 9,354,451  | 3,940,587 | 13,295,038 |
| Number of teachers                       | 334,822    | 146,102   | 480,924    |
| Number of children per class             | 34         | 32        |            |
| Enrolment rate                           | 92.70%     | 62.25%    |            |
| Source: Office of Planning Service, 1998 |            |           |            |

Elementary and secondary schools are either government-supported or privately-funded. At the elementary level, the government schools constitute 92% of the total; at the secondary level, their share is 60%. The school year in the Philippines begins on the first Monday of June and ends on the last Friday of March. The school year for the elementary and secondary levels consist of not less than 40 weeks or 200 days. Class sessions are held Monday to Friday and the school year is divided into four grading periods.

### ***Administrative structures of curriculum development***

The education system is decentralized. The central/national office is engaged in policy formulation; while the regional and the division offices are the implementing bodies. Supervision of schools is accomplished at the regional and sub-regional levels.

## **THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

### ***Administrative structures of curriculum development***

Development of the basic education level curriculum is the responsibility of the Central Office Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education, Curriculum Development Divisions. This bureau defines the learning competencies for the different subject areas; conceptualizes the structure

of the curriculum; formulates national curricular policies. These functions are exercised in consultation with other agencies and sectors of society (e.g. industry, socio-civic groups, teacher-training institutions, professional organizations, school administrators, parents, students, etc.). The subject offerings, credit points and time allotments for the different subject areas are also determined at the national level. In this sense, a national curriculum exists in the Philippines.

However, while curriculum implementation *guidelines* are issued at the national level, the actual *implementation* is left to school-teachers. They determine the resources to be used; teaching and assessment strategies and other processes. Furthermore, schools have the option to modify the national curriculum (e.g. content, sequence and teaching strategies) in order to ensure that the curriculum responds to local concerns.

### ***Language of instruction***

A *bilingual policy* is in use whereby both English and Filipino are instructional mediums. At the elementary level, English language, science and health are taught in English; while Filipino, civics and culture, good manners and right conduct (GMRC/character education), home economics, livelihood education, music, art and physical education are taught in Filipino. At the secondary level, English language, science, mathematics, technology and home economics are taught in English; while social stud-

ies, values education, physical education, health and music are taught in Filipino.

### ***Curriculum design***

The approach to curriculum design in the country is based on content topic *and* competency. The Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) prescribes competencies for the subject areas in all the grade/year levels. The DECS Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education develops, publishes and disseminates these learning competencies to the field. Most of the subject/learning areas have a list of learning competencies expected to be mastered by the children at the end of each grade/year level and also at the end of elementary/secondary schooling. Some subject/learning areas have a combination of both (i.e. learning competencies under each content/topic). The curriculum is designed to be interpreted by teachers and implemented with variations. Schools are encouraged to innovate and enrich or adapt, as long as they have met the basic requirements of the curriculum.

In this context, the regional science high schools offer an enriched science and mathematics programme whereby students take additional science and mathematics subjects. In some private schools, English, science and mathematics subjects are taken in lieu of values education; this is because subjects like religion, moral values and ethics already have been incorporated. In addition, students are required to participate in co-curricular activities. These are managed by students with the teacher as facilitator/moderator (see Table 2).

### ***Teaching methods and learning activities***

The curriculum plan (learning competencies) does not present teaching methods and learning activities that teachers must follow in implementing the curriculum. The guiding philosophy is that the creativity of teachers is stimulated by the option to plan and use the appropriate teaching/learning activities independently. However, teacher's manuals or guides do incorporate higher-level content areas and suggestions for teaching and assessing.

### ***Learning materials***

Until 1987, the government directly managed and supervised the production and distribution of textbooks and manuals through the Instructional Materials Development Council (IMDC). However, this responsibility was transferred to private publishers with the passage of the Book Publishing Industry Development Act (RA 8047). This Act also provided for the adoption of multiple rather than single textbooks. Currently, learning materials and textbooks developed by the private sector are submitted for

evaluation to the Instructional Materials Council Secretariat (IMCS)—an agency attached to DECS. Approved textbooks are listed in a catalogue from which school-teachers and principals select those that are to be purchased for their respective schools.

Other teaching/learning support materials available in the schools include guides or manuals, teacher support/, workbooks for students, apparatus for science and technology, and home economics, video and cassette tapes, educational computer software, charts, maps and models. All of these must also be submitted for evaluation at the national level before they can be released for purchased for school level use.

### ***Evaluation***

At the national level, the National Educational Testing and Research Centre (NETRC) has the task of administering the national achievement tests to students leaving the education sector. For grade VI this means administering the national elementary achievement test and, for year IV, the national secondary assessment test. The tests cover five subject areas and are based on the elementary and secondary level learning competencies. The examinations are administered annually, towards the end of the school year. The results provide the bases for policy formulation and educational reforms. At the regional and division levels, diagnostic and achievement tests are administered to a sample group depending on the availability of funds. No examination is required for admission to public secondary schools.

The purposes of the school-based assessments are: (a) to improve the teaching/learning process; (b) to identify students' strengths and weaknesses; (c) to determine the students' subject area performance and/or achievement levels and; (d) to report student progress to parents. Although there are four periods annually at both elementary and secondary levels where students are examined in each subject, formative and summative evaluation are undertaken regularly. Paper and pencil tests are the most common forms of examination in the schools.

## **ISSUES AND CONCERNS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

Issues and concerns abound in almost every aspect of the Philippine curriculum development and implementation process and at every bureaucratic level. Several of these are described below. Table 4 provides an overview of the curriculum decision-making process.

TABLE 2. The new elementary school curriculum

| LEARNING AREAS   | Weekly time allotment (minutes) |             |           |          |         |          |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------|-----------|----------|---------|----------|
|  | Class I                         | Class II    | Class III | Class IV | Class V | Class VI |
| Character-building activities  | 100-150                         | 100-150     | 100       | 100      | 100     | 100      |
| Filipino   | 300                             | 300         | 300       | 300      | 300     | 300      |
| English  | 300                             | 300         | 300       | 300      | 300     | 300      |
| Mathematics  | 200                             | 200         | 200       | 200      | 200     | 200      |
| Civics and culture   | 200                             | 200         | 200       | —        | —       | —        |
| History /geography/civics  | —                               | —           | —         | 200      | 200     | 200      |
| Science and health   | —                               | —           | 200       | 200      | 200     | 200      |
| Arts and physical education, home economics and livelihood education | —                               | —           | 200       | 200      | 200     | 200      |
| Optional   | —                               | —           | —         | 200      | 300     | 300      |
|  |                                 |             |           |          |         |          |
| Minutes per week   | 1,000-1,150                     | 1,000-1,150 | 1,500     | 1,700    | 1,800   | 1,800    |
| Minutes per day  | 220-230                         | 220-230     | 300       | 340      | 360     | 360      |

TABLE 3. The new secondary education curriculum

| Subjects                             | 1 <sup>st</sup> year |      | 2 <sup>nd</sup> year |      | 3 <sup>rd</sup> year |      | 4 <sup>th</sup> year |      | Total number of units |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|------|----------------------|------|----------------------|------|----------------------|------|-----------------------|
|                                      | Min.                 | Unit | Min.                 | Unit | Min.                 | Unit | Min.                 | Unit |                       |
| English                              | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 4                     |
| Filipino                             | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 4                     |
| Science and technology               | 400                  | 2    | 400                  | 2    | 400                  | 2    | 400                  | 2    | 8                     |
| Mathematics                          | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 4                     |
| Social studies                       | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 4                     |
| Physical education, health and music | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 4                     |
| Values education                     | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 200                  | 1    | 4                     |
| Technology and home economics        | 400                  | 2    | 400                  | 2    | 400                  | 2    | 400                  | 2    | 8                     |
| Minutes weekly                       | 2000                 | 10   | 2000                 | 10   | 2000                 | 10   | 2000                 | 10   | 40                    |
| N° of minutes daily                  | 400                  |      | 400                  |      | 400                  |      | 400                  |      |                       |
| N° of hours daily                    | 6hrs 40'             |      | 6hrs 40'             |      | 6hrs 40'             |      | 6hrs 40'             |      |                       |

TABLE 4. The curriculum: who makes which choices?

| ASPECTS OF THE CURRICULUM          | CENTRAL LEVEL<br>• DEPARTMENT<br>• BUREAU<br>(Elementary/Secondary)<br>• NETRC  | REGIONAL/DIVISION LEVEL<br>• SUPERVISORS<br>(Region, Division and District)  | SCHOOL LEVEL<br>• ADMINISTRATORS<br>• TEACHERS<br>• COMMUNITIES  |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| AIMS AND OBJECTIVES                | Formulates and determines educational aims and objectives supportive of national development goals.   | Formulates and determines specific vision, mission and objectives of the region/division/district  | Formulates the vision, mission and objectives of the school<br><br>Determines specific cognitive, affective and psychomotor instructional aims and objectives        |
| CURRICULUM PLAN                    | Develops national education policies, standards and programmes for curriculum implementation.<br><br>Formulates learning competencies.                                | Implements and adapts educational programmes to suit regional/divisional needs and cultures  | Implements budget of work based on the Learning Competencies<br>Modifies/adapts the curriculum to learners of different needs and abilities                          |
| METHODS AND APPROACHES TO LEARNING | Conducts research/studies on innovative approaches and recommends those that are effective.<br><br>Recommends strengthening of and continued use of effective methods | Conducts teacher training programmes on strategies found to be effective<br><br>Conducts research, field tests and demonstrates new teaching methodologies | Uses appropriate methodologies and innovative approaches<br><br>Employs activities that enhance lifelong and life-wide competencies                                  |
| MATERIALS                          | Exercises control over evaluation and distribution of text-books and other educational materials  | Supervises the selection and distribution of instructional materials to school divisions<br><br>Ensures availability/adequacy of instructional materials   | Supervises the use of instructional materials by learners and teachers<br><br>Procures materials based on approved list<br><br>Adopts indigenous learning materials  |
| EVALUATION AND EXAMINATION         | Administers national examinations<br><br>Conducts studies/research on student performance   | Conducts supervisory visits<br><br>Provides technical assistance<br><br>Administers examinations   | Administers formative and summative tests; uses results to improve teaching-learning process<br><br>Makes report of student performance to parents, school officials |

## Design

In addition to the fact that the Philippines has one of the shortest time spans for the completion of basic education, studies point to curriculum *overcrowding*. Every day, learners must study and do homework in seven of the eight subject areas. When combined with the learning competencies required for each grade/year level, this has proven to be excessive. Reports that science and mathematics content cannot be completed in one school year have confirmed this observation. In this context, a backlog occurs and a carry-over of the previous year's content and competencies to the following school year adversely affects the teaching/learning process. Furthermore, the *scope* and *sequencing* of education (from elementary to secondary level) have also been identified as design defects. Here, content and skills gaps—as well as overlaps and duplications—have emerged. While overlap and duplication further aggravate the curriculum overload, the gaps have helped to produce elementary school graduates who are not entirely ready for secondary school.

Frequently, the inability to limit the number of core or basic subjects has led to curriculum overload. The national examinations are limited to the five subject areas of English, Filipino, science, mathematics and social studies. Very few concepts are included from other subject areas. However, lobby pressure from professional groups to include or increase the time allotments for other subjects has had an impact (i.e. subject area practitioners who demand home economics teaching for both sexes, or an increased time allotment for physical education) with the result that programming problems have occurred.

## Implementation

For the nationwide implementation of the present school curriculum, there has been massive training of school-teachers and orientation of school heads and supervisors. However, the national-level training of trainers' programme was watered down at the regional and division levels and this affected the school implementation.

Another major concern is the availability of instructional materials—most of the time there are none or, if available, they are inadequate. The instructional materials deficit includes not only the students' textbooks and teachers' manuals, but also science and vocational subject facilities, equipment/apparatus and supplementary teaching/learning materials. Other barriers to effective curriculum implementation are large classes, teacher availability (for the specialized secondary subject areas) and quality of instructional supervision.

## Follow-up

Three main concerns regarding the institutionalization of curriculum reforms are the quality of local leadership, monitoring and evaluation, and sustainability.

Local leadership is critical to a smooth reform implementation. Since the local/field offices are the implementing bodies, institutionalization of the reform is dependent on their priorities and capabilities. Unfortunately, curriculum improvement is often a low priority for local education leaders. The result is curricular reform

misimplementation; or misinterpretation of guidelines and procedures.

Monitoring and evaluation of curriculum implementation are also key activities that are not effectively attended to. For example, not all the elementary schools are visited because there are so many of them. Also, the secondary schools are seldom visited because supervisors are unable to provide technical assistance on specialized subject matter. While supervisors at the regional level are subject specialists, those at the division level are mostly generalists.

Because most reforms are foreign-funded, post-funding sustainability is usually a concern. Sustainability concerns encompass not only the financial aspects—rather more frequently, it is the technical and management aspects that are problematic. In most cases, the success of a reform depends on the quality and feasibility of the proposals/plans for sustainability.

## CURRICULAR REFORMS IN THE PHILIPPINES

### *Reform rationale*

The results of a comprehensive appraisal of the Philippines education system revealed that a great deal was desired as far as the quality of education was concerned. There was a need for students to develop higher critical, logical thinking skills; communication skills, values development and/or general manual skills for higher education or the world of work.

It was also projected that, due to financial difficulties, students would remain in the government schools and families would begin to move away from the private schools to less expensive public schools. Therefore, the public school sector had to be prepared to accept anyone wishing to complete basic education. The comprehensive appraisal reports became the basic reference documents for improving the quality and efficiency of the education system, and enhancing its utility in terms of access and equity.

Finally, it was recognized that, unless greatly improved, the system's existing capacity would be unable to cope with the educational demands generated by the escalating competitiveness of a growing technological society. Thus, the curricular reforms were also undertaken in order to meet the constant new demands being made on the system.

### *Reform implementation*

The reforms were implemented after project preparation was undertaken (with the assistance of a foreign-funding organization). Two major initiatives were launched. Both were geared towards *overall quality, access and efficiency* improvements in education sector performance—during and beyond the project cycle. New curricula, with mass training of teachers, were components of the *Program for Decentralized Education (PRODED)* and the *Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP)* which focused on the elementary and secondary levels, respectively.

The PRODED was funded with a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The project aimed to introduce improvements in

policy, management and other sectoral concerns in order to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in the operation and administration of the elementary education system. One of the sub-projects was curriculum development.

The SEDP was premised on the fact that the PRODED would bring about higher quality and an increased secondary education student intake. After six years of implementation of the new elementary education curriculum, the 1989 elementary school graduates became the first students for the new secondary education curriculum.

### ***Outcomes***

The reforms at the elementary and secondary levels have been implemented over the last fifteen and nine years, respectively. Current indicators are that PRODED and SEDP have indeed succeeded in improving the quality of basic education and in making the sector more effective and efficient in the delivery of basic educational services.

As for outcomes related to the implementation and management of reform, the PRODED and SEDP have meant added responsibilities and accountability for all those involved—from policy makers to programme implementers and target beneficiaries. Mechanisms and structures needed for the efficient implementation of the

reforms have been given priority. Competencies of those involved in curriculum development and implementation are upgraded regularly, so that they may discharge their functions and responsibilities more effectively. Lessons learned from the reform implementation are providing useful baseline information for future reform and development programmes.

The curriculum is continuously undergoing refinement to ensure its relevance to changing needs and demands. The ongoing basic education curriculum review has provided for more indepth indigenization/localization of the curriculum and integration of information technology or multimedia resources in the teaching/learning process. Benchmarking has provided valuable and reliable data about school and student performance. At this point in time, significant improvements in the learners' and schools' performances have been recorded. See Table 2 for an overview of curricula.

### ***Future prospects***

In the context of international assessments, the educational performance of the Philippines still needs a lot of improvement. The need for the curriculum to develop students who are *globally competitive* is another factor with which the educational sector will have to contend in the future.