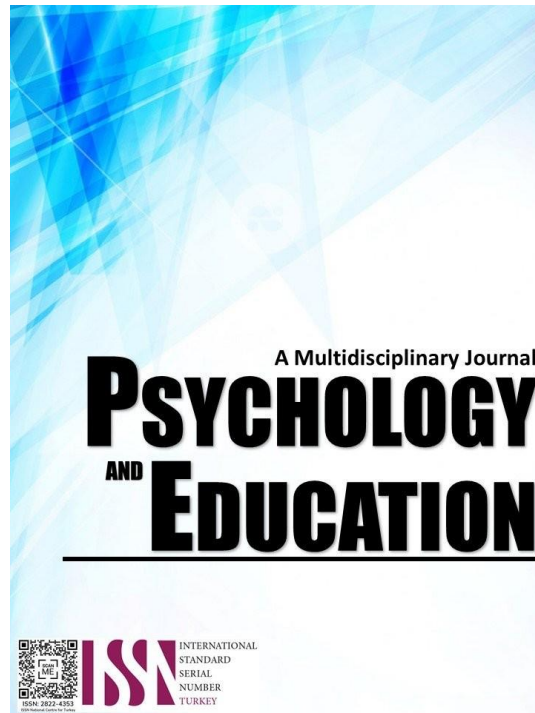


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Enhancing Basic Education Standards: A Framework for Quality Advancement

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Abstract

This qualitative study was conducted to identify and assess the current status of public education standards in the Philippines through the lived experiences encountered by the school heads of the Division of Bohol. A descriptive qualitative design was used, and (18) school heads from the Division of Bohol were the study's respondents. The result shows that accessible instructional materials, application of the appropriate pedagogical approach, dedicated and committed teachers, highly qualified teachers, well-trained teachers, specialized teachers, sufficient facilities and laboratories, enough funding, sufficient budget for maintenance and other operating expense (MOOE), enough budget for faculty development programs are factors that contribute to the quality of education. Furthermore, the measures that could be taken to improve the Philippine education system are infrastructure development, strengthening partnership and collaboration among stakeholders, prioritization of faculty development, and hiring of full-time non-teaching staff were the identified actions.

Keywords: *challenges in philippine education, factors influencing education quality, public education standards, recommendations for education improvement, school heads' lived experiences*

Introduction

Despite the good intention of the Philippine government to give quality education, there were alarming indicators that the Philippines was amid an education crisis. According to a 2018 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development assessment, Filipino children scored lowest in mathematics, science, and reading among 79 countries (OECD). It was the most extensively disseminated source of information regarding news about the crisis in education. In math and science, 15-year-old students in the Philippines got an average of 353 and 357 out of a possible 489 points, while the average score in the OECD was 489 points.

According to the OECD's 2018 PISA Country Report for the Philippines, it was noted that "Fifteen-year-old learners in the Philippines failed in reading, mathematics, and science more than those in most participating nations and economies." The Dominican Republic and the Philippines came in last place, performing the worst out of all the countries. It has been estimated that over 80 percent of students in the Philippines need help to satisfy the basic reading competency requirement. This represents the biggest number of low achievers out of all the countries and economies participating in the PISA program. The year 2000 marked the beginning of regular administration of these examinations, which are now performed once every three years. The Philippines scored lower than just the Dominican Republic in the mathematics and science tests conducted in 2018; in reading, the Philippines is in the last.

In 2019, The Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) conducted the third international test and found that just 10% of Filipinos fulfilled the reading competency levels, 2% in writing, and 17% in mathematics. The same result was revealed based on the recent assessment conducted in 2019 by Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which showed a noticeable decline in Philippine education because out of 58 countries, respectively, the Philippines scored the lowest in mathematics and science. Filipino students face a number of significant challenges in learning because of insufficient public investments in education.

In accordance with PISA estimates, the Philippine government spends less than 10% of the OECD average per student. The federal budget for education in 2020 is projected to be 13.5%, down from 17% in 2017. The optimal proportion is 20%. Our neighbors' equivalent percentage, including Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam, exceeds 20%.

Consequently, the Department of Education has a tremendous vision and mission for Filipinos, as well as very ambitious ambitions, but it cannot disregard the system's significant shortcomings. The government supported projects and programs, are only addressing the bigger backdrop of the problem, neglecting the micro difficulties facing by the teachers and pupils. The government has a good plan, but when it comes to putting it into action or implementation, obstacles and problems are being encountered. The perspectives of individuals directly affected by these statutory policies (teachers, students, and parents) have been examined in several studies. There is, however, a tendency for the majority of studies to focus solely on the outcomes of policy implementation.

The objective of this study is therefore to fulfill the role played by the school principals in the Division of Bohol by identifying and evaluating their perspectives on the current situation of the public education system's standards in the Philippines. In order to determine the underlying themes that may arise from their encounters, this objective's lived experiences will be discussed. The narrative or verbal data of the study will undergo a full presentation and discussion to suggest applicable actions. In order to determine what worked well,



what needed to be improved, and how we can achieve sustainable development through quality basic education, this research analyzes the factors contributing to the decline in the quality of the Philippine educational system through the lens of school administrators.

Research Questions

The main purpose of this study was to identify and assess the current status of the standards of Basic Education in the Philippines through the perceptions of the school heads in the Division of Bohol. Specifically, the study pursued to answer these questions:

- 1.What dimensions that contribute to the quality of Philippine Education in the following facets
 - 1.1 Instruction;
 - 1.2 Faculty;
 - 1.3 Infrastructure; and
 - 1.4 Finance?
- 2.What measures to be put in place to enhance standards in Philippine education?
- 3.What policy implications can be proposed based on the result of the study?
- 4.What framework can be proposed to advance standards of quality in basic education in the Philippines?

Methodology

Research Design

The qualitative design was chosen as the research method for this study because it is flexible and permits an in-depth understanding of what is being studied. The outcome of qualitative research is a comprehension of a complex issue that can extend existing experiences or strengthen what is already known. The purpose of this study was to promote an understanding and analysis of the factors that contribute to the deterioration of the quality of the educational system in the Philippines, using the perspectives and experiences of school administrators in the Division of Bohol. The reason for selecting this study design is that it enables the investigation to address multiple perspectives simultaneously.

Participants

The locale of the study were the three congressional districts of the Division of Bohol. Public school heads in both the elementary and secondary levels are managed by Department of Education, Division of Bohol. The study, being qualitative, significantly looked into the content of responses of the participants through the interview.

The participants were the eighteen (18) school heads from the Division of Bohol, six (6) from the 1st District, six (6) from the 2nd District, and six (6) from the 3rd District, who are currently serving as Academic Heads at public secondary schools for the 2022-2023 school year. They are the purposefully chosen direct participants in the study, as they offer their experiences as school administrators in the current state of Philippine education. As they had the option to refuse or withdraw from the study, their participation was voluntary. If they declined or withdrew, the researcher had to find additional school administrators who were willing to participate in the study.

Table 1. *Distribution of Research Participants*

<i>Department of Education Division of Bohol</i>	<i>No. of Participants</i>
First District	6
Second District	6
Third District	6
TOTAL	18

Ethical considerations

An informed consent letter was provided to the participants with a written description of the study and approval from the division superintendent and their respective public school district supervisor. Additionally, they were assured of confidentiality or anonymity and informed that they could withdraw their participation without penalty. They were also informed that if they wish not to answer a question during the interview, the researcher or interviewer can on to the next question. Then, an interview was scheduled based on the participants’ availability and convenience.

Instruments

An interview schedule was used in this study which contains questions that are descriptive in nature. It has four (4) major questions that elicit the eligibility of the school heads as participants in this study, their expectations, considerations, and their lived experiences

in the current situation of basic education in the Philippines. The researcher-made interview schedule was structured to guide the participants in sharing their experiences. The participants were given in advance the interview schedule before the actual interview happened which was done through face-to-face and virtual interview. An audio recording device was also used to keep a recorded narrative data which were transcribed in order to be used in the analysis. The interview guide was:

1. Instruction

- a. What is the current quality of instruction in the Philippines?
- b. What are the impacts of having accessible instructional materials to provide quality education?
- c. Does the pedagogical activities/assessment able to achieve the learning outcomes?

2. Faculty

- a. What are the qualities of faculty in the Philippines?
- b. Do the teachers have sufficient training and exposure to achieve the learning outcomes?
- c. How effective does the faculty's teaching strategies in the student's academic performance?
- d. Does the teacher have the expertise to teach the subject/s?

3. Infrastructure

- a. What is the current quality of infrastructure in the Philippines?
- b. Does the school infrastructure can cater to the number of students?
- c. Do the school has relevant infrastructure facilities to cater to the learning requirements for effective delivery of instruction?

4. Finance

- a. How does financing affect the quality of education in the Philippines?
- b. What is the relevance of being able to finance quality education?
- c. Does the school has a sufficient budget for maintenance and other operating expense?
- d. Does the school have enough budget for faculty development programs?
5. What measures could be taken to improve the Philippine education system?
6. What other actions can you suggest improving the quality of education in the Philippines?

Procedure

A letter of request was sent to the Schools Division Superintendent of Bohol and Public Schools District Supervisors prior to beginning data collection. After receiving an approval letter, the researcher adhered to the important guidelines in conducting the study. Open-ended, loosely structured statements were primarily collected through audio recordings as part of the oral interviews. Each participant could choose between a virtual interview through the Messenger app or a face-to-face interview, depending on their preference.

The researcher set a schedule for the interview with each participant's availability and convenience. Eighteen (18) direct interviews were conducted; the initial interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes, and the follow-up interview lasted approximately 10 minutes. The researcher used an interview schedule which was provided to the participants prior to the actual interview. This is aimed to elicit personal life vignettes that illustrated the participants' own experiences regarding the current status of the basic education in the country. Van Manen (2014) refers to this as lived experience descriptions.

A second set of interviews provided an additional opportunity to explore nascent topics that emerged during the early data interpretation stages (Vagle, 2014). Also, the second interview served as a means of prolonging engagement with the participants to provide a second opportunity for the 18 participants to clarify their initial responses, which increased the validity of the narrative data (Creswell, 2013). Transcriptions of each interview were conducted manually by the researcher.

As part of the interview process, participants were offered the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interviews to verify their accuracy and correct any transcription errors. A code name was also assigned to each participant in order to maintain anonymity. In conducting the study, proper protocol was observed in the purposive interview. Lastly, confidentiality of the information was maintained throughout the conduct of the study in accordance to the Data Privacy Act.

Results and Discussion

1. Factors that contribute to the quality of Philippine Education

1.1 In terms of instruction, the result revealed that factors that contribute to the quality of Philippine Education are accessible instructional materials and application of appropriate pedagogical approaches.

1.2. In terms of faculty, the result unveiled that dedicated and committed teachers, highly qualified teachers, well-trained teachers and specialized teachers are the factors that faculty contribute to quality of education.

1.3. In terms of infrastructure, it was shown that sufficient facilities and laboratories are the factors that promote to the quality of education.

1.4. Lastly, in terms of finance the result has shown that having enough funding, sufficient budget for maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE) and enough budget for faculty development programs are financial factors that contribute to quality of education.

2. To enhance standards in Philippine education, the measures that could be taken to improve the Philippine education system are infrastructure development, strengthening partnerships and collaboration among stakeholders, prioritization of faculty development program, and the hiring of more full-time non-teaching personnel.

Conclusion

As the standard of the quality of basic Philippine Education has been a growing issue, this study concludes that several factors contribute to the quality of public basic education in the Philippines. Quality education is assured when schools continue to improve and focus on applying differentiated instruction, more pedagogical approaches, appropriate and sufficient instructional materials to both teachers and students. Moreover, schools with better infrastructure can provide a better quality of education.

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

(1) The administrators must look for funds and initiatives to send faculty for development programs to ensure up to date skills and improve the level of capacity to be more responsive to the needs of the students. (2) The school must strengthen partnership and collaboration among stakeholders to allow participation and active engagement in education development. (3) The Department of Education (DepEd) may use this study as bases for policy implications as well as prioritization of program and projects that will address the deteriorating problem on the quality of basic education in the Philippines. (4) The study may be used as future reference in conducting related studies to make more generalization on the deteriorating problem on the quality of basic education in the Philippines. (5) Based on the result of the study, infrastructure development, strengthen partnership and collaboration among stakeholders, prioritization of faculty development Plan and hiring of full-time non-teaching staff were the identified actions.

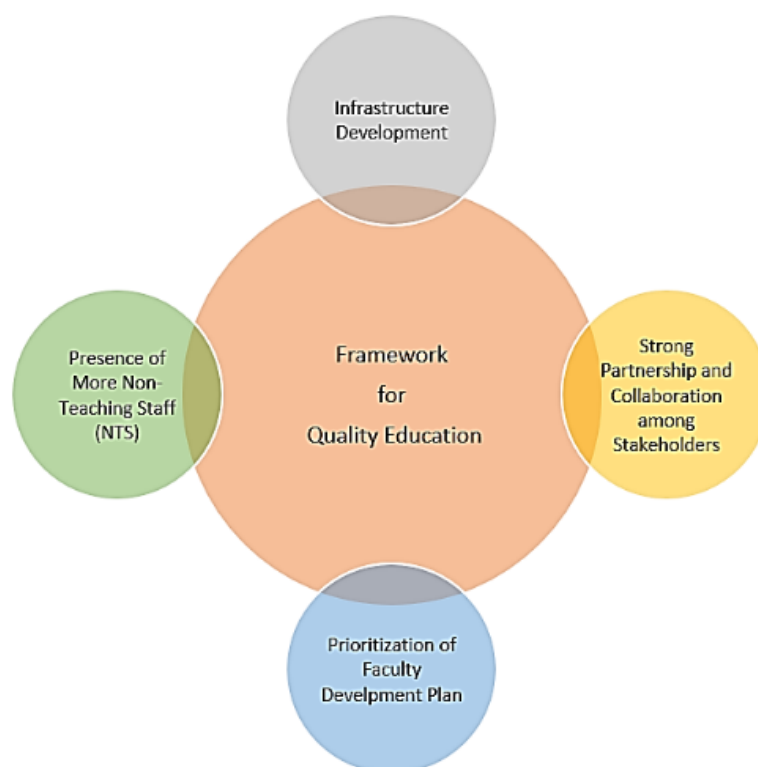


Figure 2. *Framework for Quality Education*

To propose a framework for Quality Education in the Philippines, some key components that could be included are the following:

1. **Strengthening Teacher Quality:** Improving the quality of teachers is a critical component in improving the basic education system in the Philippines. This could involve developing better teacher training programs, providing ongoing professional development opportunities, and offering incentives for high-performing teachers.
2. **Enhancing Curriculum and Pedagogy:** Improving the curriculum and pedagogy is also essential to arrest the deterioration of basic education in the Philippines. This could involve revising the curriculum to align it with current trends and needs, ensuring the use of appropriate instructional materials, and promoting student-centered teaching methods.
3. **Enhancing Access to Education:** Ensuring that all children have access to basic education is a fundamental step towards arresting

the deterioration of basic education in the Philippines. This could involve providing financial assistance to low-income families to cover the cost of schooling, improving school infrastructure, and increasing the number of schools in underserved areas.

4. Increasing Parental Involvement: Parental involvement is crucial in ensuring that children are motivated and engaged in their education. This could involve encouraging parents to be more involved in their children's education, providing information and resources to support parents, and establishing parent-teacher associations.

5. Enhancing Monitoring and Evaluation: Effective monitoring and evaluation are crucial to ensuring that progress is being made towards improving the basic education system. This could involve developing a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework, establishing clear performance indicators, and regularly reviewing and updating the framework based on the results of the evaluation.

6. Overall, a comprehensive framework that addresses these key components would help to advance the quality of the basic education system in the Philippines. Such a framework would require the collaboration and cooperation of all stakeholders, including the government, educators, parents, and students, in order to achieve sustainable and long-term improvements in the basic education system.

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