

Philippine Education: Roadmap and Challenges



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Rich people know that they can pass on money to their children, they can pass on land, they can pass on titles, but there is only one gift that workers can give to their children and that is good education. This is the basis for the hope that the children will live better lives, be able to move to a job, to a position within their countries and within their societies that is different and better than the one they enjoy.

—Albert Shanker (Education International)

NO DOUBT we are experiencing once again the social dilemmas in Philippine education system. A cursory look at the sector reminds us of the years of neglect, underinvestment and mismanagement of the entire system, resulting in a vicious cycle of continuing vulnerability of the basic sectors in our society – the marginalized and excluded children and adults – in reclaiming their right to education.

Despite the Constitutional guarantees and other domestic legislations that seem to support education, critical gaps in education performance remain. Public expenditures in education do not reflect the real cost of the increasing enrolment, inflation and other needs of schools. The perennial problems of shortages of classrooms, chairs, textbooks and qualified teachers are at the root of the deteriorating quality of education. The catch-phrase, 'no child left



behind' is hardly the scenario in far-flung areas, where schools are either non-existent or serve as relocation sites for families and communities displaced by armed conflict, natural calamities or other forms of development aggression.

Trends in Philippine education

Access to Early Childhood Care & Education

Early child care and development (ECCD) programs have been increasingly recognized as important interventions in preparing children aged 3-5 for elementary education. There have been policy discussions to include the latter stage of the pre-school education as part of the formal education ladder of the primary school level. At the moment, this remains an optional decision especially for parents.

The School Readiness Assessment done in 2006 reveals that only 35% were school ready. This data can be attributed to the following factors such as: a) low investment in ECCD services; b) rising number of children vis-à-vis very little support for alternative delivery modes of learning to ECCD; c) attitudinal problems among parents such as prioritizing older children for ECCD, over-protectiveness, fear of security, among others; and d) need for continuing education of various ECCD service providers.

As an important intervention for attaining Education for All (EFA) goals, it was recommended that the expansion of ECCD coverage among all children aged three to five years old be continued, but with the following critical adjustments: a) identify and encourage the most cost-effective and quality-assured ECCD programs; and b) make sure that the most disadvantaged children get into these programs. The operational focus of the recommendation is therefore to use public funds from national and local governments to carry out this recommendation (*Philippine EFA Plan, 2000-2015*).

Participation in Basic Education

For school year 2006-2007, an estimated 20 million students were enrolled in some 50,000 public and private schools around the country. According to the Department of Education (DepEd),

combined enrolment in public schools over the last 5 years has been growing at an annual average rate of 2.1%. This means that 374,000 children are added each year in the public school system, entailing additional provisions of at least 7,500 teachers and classrooms. DepEd figures also indicate that for the last 20 years, enrolment grew faster at an annual rate of 2.72% on the average, a rate that is even higher than the actual growth in population.

While access and participation rate improved significantly, internal efficiency, cohort survival, and completion rates for basic education have generally been going down. A study commissioned by the World Bank noted that for every 1,000 Grade I enrollees, “312 do not complete elementary schooling, 249 finish the six-year elementary at an average of 9.6 years due to repetition, and only 439 finish elementary in six years.” What is most alarming is that among the 688 who complete elementary education, “only 7 graduates score at least 75% in achievement tests in English, Science and Math, which is the standard for mastery of required competencies.” (Cited in *the Draft Education For All, Department of Education, August 2004*)

There is much to worry about, because around 4.4 million Filipino children are not going to school. Continuing and increasing fall-out of children from the school system is a glaring picture of the poor holding capacity of the Philippine education. Poverty and related factors were the main reasons cited for not attending school. Some of the children are engaged in child labor and other forms of employment to augment family income. Some cited the high cost of education, housekeeping work and school-related issues for not attending school.

The Quality Gap

The poor and declining quality of education is clearly shown by the consistently low scores obtained by pupils in achievement tests administered by the DepEd over the years. The increases in test results show only marginal improvement and the scores fell far short of desirable levels. Students score very low in science, particularly the 4th year pupils.





National Achievement Test (NAT) Results (in Mean Percentage Scores)

	NAT	NAT	NAT
Subject Area	SY 2002-2003	SY 2003-2004	SY 2004-2005
	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Elementary	43.55	48.05	58.76
English-RC	41.80	48.42	59.15
Science	43.98	46.66	54.12
Mathematics	44.84	49.08	59.10
		4 th Year	4 th Year
Secondary		44.36	46.80
English-RC		50.08	51.33
Science		36.80	39.49
Mathematics		46.20	50.70

Source: DepEd, FY 2006 Budget Proposal, October 2005

The Philippine EFA Plan 2015 further reports that within the context of the completion data presented, for every 1,000 Grade 1 entrants, only 7 primary school graduates will attain 75% mastery level in the achievement tests for English, Math and Science after an average of 7.31 years.

Proportion of Teachers Who are Not Science/Math Majors

SUBJECT	MAJORS	NON-MAJORS
General Science	42%	58%
Biology	44%	56%
Chemistry	34%	66%
Physics	27%	73%
Math	80%	20%

Source: DepEd, FY 2006 Budget Proposal, October 2005

The mediocre performance of students partly reflects the poor quality and lack of competencies of teachers to handle the subjects they teach. A major factor that explains the low achievement scores of students in science is the lack of teachers with proper training in the science subjects.

An equally important concern is the lack of equity in the deployment of teachers which can be a point to consider in resolving the issue of teacher shortage. The re-assignment of teachers is restricted by law in recognition of their rights as mandated by the special law on teachers (RA 4670, the Magna Carta for Teachers) and also as

a safeguard against arbitrary decisions imposed by school administrators. If this element could only be discussed by education stakeholders, especially the teachers' organizations and the DepEd, as a way of addressing resource gaps and provision for generous incentives and premiums to teachers, perhaps we may be able to minimize such shortage. Certainly, teachers will not be forced to leave the profession or migrate to other countries if the granting of pay increase, promotion schemes, teacher development and recruitment will be addressed to strengthen professionalism and to improve the performance of the teacher sector.

Apart from this serious problem, classroom shortage is not fully addressed. For 2007, the estimated classroom backlog is placed at 20,742 classrooms if schools practice double-shifting. Classroom shortage, in effect, is equated to increase in class size which basically affects the quality of learning outcomes. As DepEd says, an ideal class size is 45:1, but in reality the ratio is 55 students or more, in a cramped and poorly ventilated classroom.

Under-spending on education, continuing deficit

In a study commissioned by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), Dr. Rosario Manasan (2006) noted that the huge resource gap for basic education for 2007-2015 needs P357 billion (under a high cost and MTPDP GDP assumption) or about P40 billion per year in added resources for basic education. For 2007, the estimated resource gap is P32 billion.

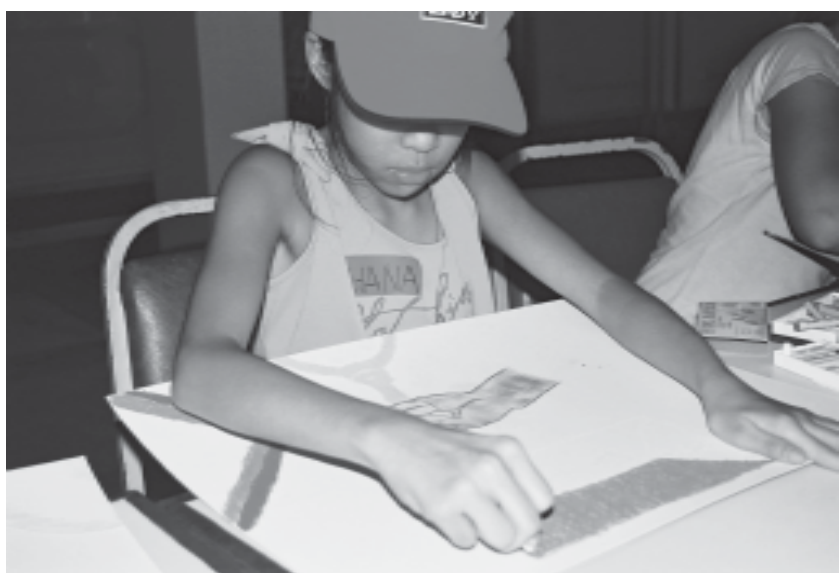
This financing gap suggests that the Philippines is under-spending on basic education. Though there was a budget increase for education at an average rate of 5.2% over the last 10 years, the proportion of the DepEd budget to the national budget went down. In 1997, the national expenditure on basic education was about 3.2% of the Gross Domestic Product. This has gone down to 2.5% by 2001 and further declined to 2.1% by 2005. These have profound implications to per capita expenditure on basic education in real terms from P397 in 1997 to P339 in 2001 and P289 by 2005 (based on 1985 prices). (Manasan, 2006)





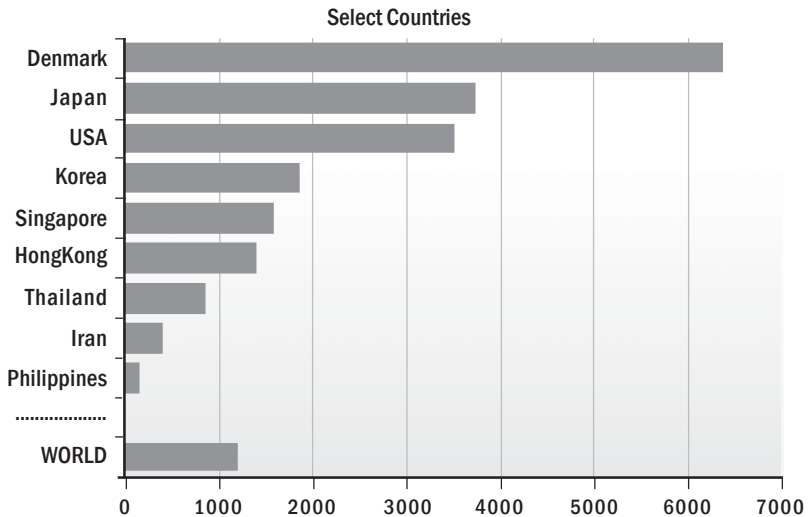








COMPARATIVE SPENDING PER PUPIL



International Comparison

- The Philippines spends about P5,500 per pupil (Elementary and High School)
- The US spends close to P200,000 per student
- World average is about P40,000 per student
- The Philippines spends only one-sixth of what Thailand spends for education; and about one-tenth of Singapore

New Trends in Higher Education

Spiralling cost of private tertiary education. Since education is now "in the sights of entrepreneurs", the cost of education in the private tertiary schools continues to rise, such that there has been an exodus of students from private schools to state colleges and universities. A significant change in the enrolment levels – from a growth rate of 6.4% in 1997 to a decline of 2.8% in 2002 – has affected private tertiary schools.

From a 10% share of all college students in 1980, enrolment share of SUCs increased to 21% in 1994, and 34% in SY 2002-2003. For the period 1997 to 2003, enrolment in public higher educational institutions grew rapidly by an average of 9.62% per year.

Low priority given to tertiary education. From a high growth rate of 10.5% in 2002, nominal budget for SUCs has registered negative growth rates in 2005 (-3.85%) and 2006 (-1.2%). This is illustrative of the declining share of the entire education sector in the national budget.

The share of the national government's financing for the SUCs has consistently declined through the years – from 85% in 2001 to 77% in 2005 – as schools are compelled to shoulder expenses on specific items. As a net effect, SUC spending per student declined by 23% – from Php 17,000 in 2004 to Php 12,930 in 2006.

Low performance of graduates in national licensure examinations. This can be attributed to the quality deficiency in higher education such as the low faculty profile, and lack of necessary facilities to support research and extension services.

Impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on higher education. This has transformed the operating landscape as well as the content and modes of delivery of higher education which is a welcome development. But the negative side of it is the expanding digital-divide especially since this technology is considered as a profitable investment for multinational corporations. Instead of improving the quality of education and lessening the burden of the faculty in the creative modes of delivery of education, these commercialized technologies are limited to those who have the means. Those who cannot afford these technologies are left out of the benefits of ICT.

Role of market in higher education. Orientation of course offerings are driven by the imperatives of a market-driven economy. Even the governance of universities is influenced by the market rules. As a consequence, new forms of managing the schools have been introduced such as privatization, corporatization, franchising and multi-campus school systems as well as the higher education system of pricing of tuition fees. The government's role is more in the provision of regulation and less on guaranteeing equity and non-discrimination.



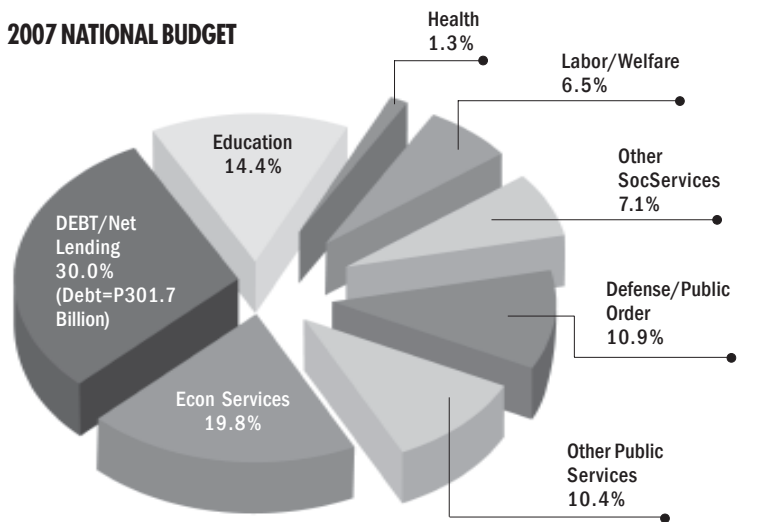


Commercial presence of offshore schools, twinning arrangement with local schools, and joint ventures. This poses serious problems to the country such as distortions of the local academic provisions, undermining indigenous institutions, labor market distortions and exposures to high cost of tuition. Proper management and regulation should be provided by the government through the Commission on Higher Education..

Brain drain and lack of qualified teachers. With more Filipino teachers lured to overseas teaching jobs which promise higher pay and better working conditions, the shortage of qualified teachers only worsens. But the problem of migrating teachers is not solely about the resulting local shortage. These migrant teachers encounter discriminatory practices in the receiving countries, such as disparity in pay and benefits compared to local teachers doing the same job and with the same qualifications. The government has an obligation to its migrant workers: it must ensure that its overseas workers, such as teachers, enjoy the same rights and status as those in the host countries.

Who Gets the Biggest Slice?

2007 NATIONAL BUDGET



A P40 billion peso additional budget for education per year is just a small slice of the total debt service.

Covering the resource gap

While there are economic and political constraints that govern national budget appropriation, the government has to have more will if it wants to overcome the downhill slide of Philippine education. Here are some proposals:

- Savings can be generated by reducing military expenditure considering that combined AFP and PNP budget is nearly the same as spending for basic education.
- If all legislators (senators and congress representatives) put all their Pork Barrel into school buildings, the amount can eliminate the shortage in just two years.
- A World Bank study estimates that P48B is lost annually to corruption. This amount is 3 times more than what is needed to cover the resource gap in basic education.
- Higher and better package Official Development Assistance (ODA) for basic education; and better/optimized management of the Special Education Fund (SEF) for critical input and investment in quality education.
- Decisively resolve the debt issue to favor social services like education and health.

Central to this advocacy is the assertion that education is a basic right.

- ✓ The State should ensure adequate provisions for education
- ✓ Investing in education and human development will ensure economic progress and social development.
- ✓ Education is everybody's business; hence, social partnership of all stakeholders should be mobilized to attain quality education for all.





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