The State of Philippine Public Basic Education: Problems and Approaches

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Despite booming economies and a huge population, a big shortage of skills and talent in Asia*

- Serious shortage of professional staff, legal and medical professionals, ICT personnel, good managers and accountants

- Illustrate:
  - India: by 2010 shortfall of IT professionals will reach 500,000 (NASSCOM)
  - China: over next 10 years, it will need 75,000 good managers; currently, it only has 3,000 - 5,000 (McKinsey Global Institute)

• Illustrate (cont.):

- China: currently, only has 4,000 general medical practitioners. If it wants community hospitals for its 500M urban residents, it will need 160,000 doctors (Jui San Society report to Chinese Party Congress)

Bottom-line

Schools and universities are unable to keep pace with rapid economic growth and may not unless drastic measures are adopted--soon!
Skills shortage comes in two forms

• Rising wage costs
  ➢ Fast rising executive pay
    e.g. HR Director in Shanghai gets $250,000/year
  ➢ b. Pay rise for low level staff well above inflation rates

• High staff turnover
  ➢ As much as 30% in some places in Asia
    - puts upward pressure on wage costs
  ➢ Huge problem for expanding companies
Bad News: Shortage to Get Worse

- Increased inflow of investments, plus growth of domestic companies

- Demographics: Shrinking labor forces. By 2050, in Japan, >33% will be over 65; in China, >329M will be over 65

- Bigger threat - it may take generations to fix education problems
Response to Serious Talent Shortage

• Global spending for education growing: 5-6% of GDP (RP: 2.7%)
• Kids are spending more time in school (12 years, while only Mongolia and Philippines have less) and preparing for higher order skills
• Governments overhauling education systems: increasing access to higher levels of education and introducing innovations in content and delivery at all levels
• Private sector investing heavily in all levels of education
And the Philippines...

- Continues to grapple with issues of corruption, poor governance, poverty, social conflicts and political survival
- While the decades old systemic crisis in education persists
Education Crisis 1: Poor Competency of Population*

- Among 10-64 year old population, only 41% are HS grad or higher; 65% can read, write, compute and comprehend; 84% can read, write and compute but not comprehend, 89% can only read and write

- 9.16M (or 16% of population) are functionally illiterate: 98% of unschooled, 35% of elementary drop-outs, 29% of elementary graduates are illiterate youths and adults

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- 2003 NSO test results conducted with 25,000 Households
- Dr. Mario Taguiwalo, “Politics of Basic Education Reform”, June 2007
Education Crisis 2: Poor Competency of those in School

- 1,000 children enter Grade 1: 312 drop-out before Grade 6 (2/5 between G1-3; 3/5 between G4-6)
- Of 638 elementary graduates, 439 complete in 6 years; 249 complete in 9.6 years due to repetition
- Of 638 elementary graduates, only 7 mastered all minimum competencies for elementary level
- Only 23% of Grade 6 pupils are independent readers in English
Education Crisis 3: Entrenched Exclusion*

- More children who do not finish school or fail targeted competencies are boys, or from poorest families, or with least educated parents, or from poorest regions, or from rural areas
- 1/5 of poor families have children 7-14 years old who never attended school or dropped out early (compared to only 1/10 of non-poor families)
- 25 years old or more adults who are poor have 3 years less schooling than non-poor counterparts

Taguiwalo, June, 2007
Education Crisis 4: Meaningless Credentials*

• High School diploma does not mean much: 44% not mastered English, 52% not mastered Math, 74% not mastered Sciences competencies

• College diploma does not mean much: only 2-7% of college graduate applicants to ICT jobs are accepted

• Even professional license does not mean much: 46% of practicing M.D.s in Visayas did not pass competency-based test - admitting patient, administering correct drugs or oxygen

  Taguiwalo, June 2007
The Good News

We have a comprehensive, well thought out and broadly supported response, the convergence of reform initiatives and experience from the time of Bro. Andrew, Sec. Raul Roco, Sec. DJ de Jesus, myself and Sec. Jing Lapus

The Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda
Response to Crisis: Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA)

Five Key Reform Thrusts:
1. Get all schools to continuously improve
2. Enable teachers to enhance their contribution to learning outcomes
3. Increase social support to attain desired learning outcomes
4. Improve impact on outcomes from early childhood education alternative learning systems providers and the private sector
5. Change institutional culture of Department of Educations (DepEd) to support key reforms
School-level stakeholders improve their own schools continuously

- **Rationale:** People most involved and affected by the school’s operations are the best people to lead change

- **Key Policy Actions:**
  - A head for every school
  - A process of continuous school improvement
  - A school-based resource management framework
  - A school’s driven DepEd representation in Local School Boards of LGUs
Teachers Raise Teaching Standards to Help Improve Learning Outcomes

• Rationale: Teachers have the greatest stake and most direct influence in raising teaching standards

• Key Policy Actions:
  ➢ A framework for competency-based standards for teaching
  ➢ A rolling 5-year projection of new teacher hires
  ➢ Progressive upgrades in division-level teacher hiring practices
  ➢ Regional, division and school targets for distribution of class sizes
  ➢ Division and school focus on improving teaching practice in schools
  ➢ Other sources of teacher hires adopt division practices
  ➢ Pre-service teacher education and licensing to support future hiring standards
DepED Engages Influential Institutions and Key Social Processes to Support National Scale Targets

• **Rationale:** People from different spheres can help not only students learn better but also strengthen society’s support for teachers, schools and educators to improve learning outcomes

• **Key Policy Actions:**
  - A national strategy in support of learning in English, Filipino, Math and Science
  - A national quality assurance framework for basic education schooling
  - An institutionalized national forum for multisectoral coordination in support of basic education
  - A program and institution for forming basic education managers
ECCD and ALS Providers and Private Sector Increase Contribution to National Basic Education Outcomes

• **Rationale:** Effective convergence of ECE, ALS, Private Sector and Public Schools will maximize learning impact of each one

• **Key Policy Actions:**
  - Local delivery models for cost-effective early childhood education
  - Enhanced and accelerated ALS coverage
  - A private sector strategy for basic education
DepEd Changes Its Own Institutional Culture to be Responsive to BESRA Thrusts

- **Rationale:** The culture of the institution must change so reforms it is pushing may succeed.

- **Key Policy Actions:**
  - A strategy for institutional cultural change integrated into organizational plans for central, regional and division offices.
  - A new national budget framework for basic education.
  - An ICT strategy for basic education.
But then along comes the Cyber Education Project

- ICT, like CyberEd, is not new to DepEd, is the subject of various public-private partnerships and can enhance success of BESRA

- But the proposed CyberEd Project raises serious concerns: inappropriate for our needs, beyond DepEd’s experience and expertise to manage, too expensive for our requirements

- In many ways, similar to ZTE/NBN Project
The Cyber Ed Project: A Solution Not Responsive to Underlying Causes of Public Education Crisis

- **DepEd Analysis:** high drop out rate, poor competency of those who stay, meaningless credentials of those who finish due to lack of pre-school preparation, poverty, malnutrition and poor health, transportation problems. DepEd Solution: electronic multi-media technology is THE answer?

- **Donor Driven Solution:** dictated by proposed technology and available financing than thorough technical feasibility study and appraisal

- **At best, ICT, like CyberEd, can only complement or improve upon, but not replace, the formal schooling system**
The CyberEd Project: Not DepEd’s Core Competence and Function

- DepEd’s business is education, not a connectivity technology provider; little ICT management and expertise
- Critical (but flawed) assumption: teachers are equipped to mediate between students and technology
- CyberEd assumes courseware development expertise that DepEd does not have
- CyberEd reverses existing policy successful in many PPPs: focus on core function, outsource non-core functions/government is enabler, private sector implements, operates and maintains
CyberEd Project: At P26.48B, Inappropriate, Hugely Expensive, and Burdens Schools

- More basic programs--pre-schools, school feeding, dental and health programs, mother tongue instruction, reading proficiency, better workbooks--can better address drop-out and poor performance problems, not technology
- Absent competitive bidding, cost comparison with other options not possible, but huge outlay is unprecedented, unwarranted and may end up wasted
- Lack of “total ownership cost” analysis burdens schools and communities with additional but unstated expenses--such as maintenance and repairs, retrofitting of classrooms, security, satellite access charges, training, replacement costs, and other operating costs, such as supplies, consumables, electricity
What to Do with CyberEd?

- Re-design and scale down CyberEd to reflect real needs and capabilities of DepEd in the context of BESRA
- Outsource procurement, installation, training, operation, maintenance and upgrade thru competitive bidding
- Pilot on a small scale, evaluate and make adjustments before full implementation
- Apply rest of funding to more critical priorities, as defined in BESRA
Liberal Contribution to Public Basic Education Reforms

- More than three decades of reform initiatives have not made a dramatic dent on the public basic education crisis
- Public education system cannot reform itself just from within
- Pressure for reform must also be induced from the outside
Education--a matter of right, a matter of choice

- Empower parents: right to choose the education for their children and power to make schools accountable to them, not to the bureaucracy

- Create choices: Expand voucher system and introduce other schemes, such as cash stipends (Bangladesh), tuition-fee reimbursements (India), funding public schools on a per student basis (SanFo)
Encourage Competition among Schools

- Strengthen private schools, as providers of quality education and as viable businesses
- Facilitate private investment in schools through micro-finance type of loans for infra, chain of schools thru JVs and education investment fund, venture philanthropy for R&D for innovation in curriculum and learning
- Explore other options of expanding supply of schools, such as foundation schools run by parents, teachers’ coops, civil society ventures
Policy and Political Advocacy for School Choice

- Bring message of school choice to parents, politicians and bureaucrats
- Influence policymakers to support innovative policy changes, such as expanded voucher system, per-child funding of public schools, incentives for innovative financing schemes for private investment in education
- Research and development for applicability of school choice ideas and schemes
- Pilot Projects on innovative schemes
Thank you.