

# Embracing The K-12 Curriculum: Accounts of Teachers and Students of Bansalan Central Elementary School, Bansalan East District, Davao Del Sur

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*Abstract* — The purpose of this study is to determine and describe the understanding and implementation of K to 12 according to the accounts of teachers (10) and students (10) of Bansalan Central Elementary School in Bansalan, Davao del Sur. It is descriptive in that the data were obtained through interviews, were analyzed, coded and the themes were described. The findings of the study are as follows: This study aimed at identifying/investigating the practices of public school teachers in the implementation of K+12 curriculum and the underlying problems and challenges along with its implementation with an end view of determining the teachers' best practices to come up with a more effective implementation of the Senior High School: lack of seminars, trainings and reading materials, lack of rooms, resources, technology and books, teachers are confused yet appreciative, teachers are frustrated yet flexible, and teachers are powerless yet vital. Perspectives of both teachers and students were gathered. There were separate discussions of the respondents' perspectives: teachers – two more years added to education of child, and implementation is complicated; students – lack of instructional materials, and unprepared for implementation. A detailed step-by-step guide on how I will conduct a curriculum gap analysis which is my proposal to enhance our basic education: Step 1: Review the current curriculum content and pinpoint the skills and knowledge learners should possess at the end of their learning; Step 2: Compare this against the actual skills and knowledge learners have demonstrated; Step 3: Identify any gaps between the expected and actual outcomes; and Step 4: Implement interventions to address the identified curriculum gaps.

*Keywords* — *K to 12 Curriculum, Perspectives, Challenges, Implementation, Improvement*

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## I. Introduction

From the different positive notes on the implementation of the K-12 program, a number of challenges were also seen and experienced by parents, teachers and students. Despite all the problems found as a result of the implementation of this new curriculum, many had believed that the long-term effects of the K to 12 program were very beneficial to all Filipino graduates. Therefore, support and encouragement for the betterment of the new educational system implemented by the government be shown by all Filipinos. By investing more time and resources to education, national growth and development can truly be achieved.

This study would like to know the perspectives of teachers, and students on the implementation of K to 12 programs in the country. This research used a systematic procedure to analyze the data. The main instrument of this study is the interview technique. The voices of teachers and students are given avenues through their narratives and responses.

Specifically, it wishes to answer the following questions:

1. What are the challenges of the K to 12 program upon its implementation?
2. What are the perspectives of teachers, and students on the implementation of this new curriculum?
3. What are the proposed plans that would address the gaps seen in this new curriculum?

The K to 12 Education Program changed many facets of the basic education system such as its philosophy, structure, and curricula (Okabe, 2019). One can argue that more than the “whats of teaching”, the K to 12 Program also altered its “hows”. These reforms are very much evident in the changes in the different curricular activities such as lesson planning, teaching and classroom management, and learning assessment. For instance, it is notable that while there are materials that are easily downloadable for the teachers, the Enhanced Basic Education Law promotes a relevant and culturally sensitive curriculum which makes contextualization a key feature of the new curriculum. Because of this, teachers are expected to contextualize, indigenize, or localize the lessons as may be necessary to ensure that the learning would be responsive to the needs of the students (GovPH, 2019).

#### *Challenges in the implementation*

There are also related policies that affect teaching and classroom management in K to 12 classrooms. One of the most significant of these is the child protection policy (DepEd Order 40, s. 2012) which seeks to protect “children in school from abuse, violence, exploitation, discrimination, bullying, and other forms of abuse.” This policy affects the manner by which classrooms should be managed by teachers.

Moreover, with the promotion of learner-centered teaching and constructivist learning, it is expected that the teacher will provide opportunities for the learners to actively engage in the learning process through interactive and collaborative activities. Student diversity also requires differentiated teaching. In addition, teachers are expected to be gender sensitive (DepEd Order 32, s. 2017) and inclusive.

Finally, with the new competency-based curriculum, assessment of learning became focused on performance tasks (DepEd Order 8, s. 2015). Another aspect that changed dramatically was the shift from student ranking to a new, criterion-based policy on awards and recognition (DepEd Order 36, s. 2016). This order further promoted holistic development as it moved away

from focusing on academic achievement, and gave equal recognition to a wide range of student achievements such as leadership and social responsibility.

### *Perspectives of Teachers and Students*

Villena, Reyes and Dizon (2019) argued that teachers are the most important people in curriculum implementation, while Vilches (2019) asserted that teachers are a major influence upon whether educational reforms will succeed, or not succeed. While teachers had been viewed as technicians in the past, Fink (2020) asserted that teachers are more than just passive implementers of change. Change is not something that the system does to them, but something that must be accomplished along with the teachers. Vandeyar (2019) further emphasised how change started “with the personal change of the teacher.”

However, in spite of the key role that teachers play in curriculum implementation, Ornstein and Hunkins (2019) asserted that implementation fails on many occasions because the “people factor” is often neglected, as education tends to focus so much on modifications of the programs and processes. In the Philippine implementation of the K to 12 curriculum,

Vilches (2019) argued that the short and abrupt training left many of the teachers confused with their new roles in the new curriculum. Specifically, challenges that haunt teachers as they implement the new curriculum include: (1) the evolving role of the teacher in the face of curriculum reform; (2) a mismatch between the goals of the new curriculum and the realities of the local classrooms; and (3) flow of communication and engagement (Vilches, 2019). Indeed, curriculum implementation is a challenge among teachers, especially in terms of how they should implement curriculum policy at the classroom level.

In the K to 12 program as cited by Madamba (2019), the DepEd official further stated, teachers are provided guides aligned to the new system. But teachers can modify these modules to fit the needs of their students. She also mentioned that consultations were made with the local government units and nongovernment organizations on the K to 12. The education expert also pointed out that providing quality education cannot be done by schools alone, but partnership is a must.

On the other note critics have always looked on to parents as the primary victims of the K12 education system. Given the additional two years in high school, they insist that this program will bring no good and only additional financial burden for poor Filipino families.

During the survey conducted in the study of Mohammad (2019) the parents were still commenting and asking so many questions as if K -12 is a new program. Is K - 12 really needed or necessary? Is the additional two years the answer to the emerging problems in our country? “Why not invest in teachers' education and on their salary to be able to hire competent ones instead of adding two more years?” These are the same questions asked several times especially by the

parents. Some believe, simply adding two more years in the education of a child does not guarantee that the child will have the skills they hope to achieve.

Mohammad, N. (2019), stressed that some parents viewed this program in a negative light, which gave them and their children a different burden both physically and financially, but some parents viewed the program positively and thought that it helped learners to choose and decide the career that best suits their skills. Different perspectives were identified from various studies from those individuals who were involved with the change of the educational system of the country.

#### *Proposals in Minimizing the Gaps in K to 12 Curriculum*

Government should take an initiative in reviewing and legislating all the academic policies at all levels. Mass promotion is not a key to solving the problems of drop-outs and poor performance of the students, it is the quality of teaching not the minimum quality standards which have been emphasized. Mass promotion has been much emphasized in our educational system nowadays but basing the principles of assessment this slogan is very contradicting.

Assessment in terms of students' acquisition of knowledge and skills with imbued values should be the valid instrument in measuring the performance of each learner. Then provided that intervention is done over and over and yet the students are still not performing, let be that students should be retained. Retention policy should be strictly implemented though this has a big impact on the school's performance but on the other hand, this gives and allows the students to strive more for learning because learning must not be sacrificed.

The government must take into consideration in addressing the problems encountered in the current implementation of the k-12 curriculum, such as: a. content-based training and workshop, b. no to bulk of document responsibilities, c. core function in instruction must constitute a bigger percentage on the teachers' responsibility, c. principles of assessment and d. overall the government must revisit and review the curriculum and be it legislated.

The K - 12 Basic Education Program is the flagship program of the Department of Education in its desires to offer a curriculum which is attuned to the 21st century. This is in the pursuance of the reform thrusts of the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda, a package of policy reforms that seeks to systematically improve critical regulatory, institutional, structural, financial, physical, cultural and information conditions affecting basic education provision access and delivery on the ground. The department seeks to create a basic education sector that's capable of attaining the country's Education for all Objectives and the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015 and President Noynoy Aquino's 10-point Basic Education Agenda by 2016. These policy reforms are expected to introduce critical changes necessary to further accelerate, broaden, deepen and sustain the department's effort in improving the quality of basic education. (Esther & Ethel, 2019) The K-12 education system is the public education system that most people are familiar with today. Composed of 13 grades, kindergarten through 12th, it refers to the public school system in all of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and parts of Europe as

well. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact history of education, as it has been occurring in some form for centuries in all parts of the world. The K12 Program has been initiated by the Aquino administration where students will have to undergo a new system of education.

The Enhanced K-12 Basic Education Program is a DepEd program that will improve the standard of education and give more opportunities for graduating students. School year 2012, Philippine education officially implemented the K to 12 curriculum. Everyone knows the country (in public schools preferably) is drastically left behind in terms of curriculum adjustments.

Grade 1 entrants in SY 2012–2013 are the first batch to fully undergo the program, and current 1st year Junior High School students (or Grade 7) are the first to undergo the enhanced secondary education program. (Kynemarie, 2019) Nolledo (2019) Article XIV of the constitution which focused on education in which section I states that “the state shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all”. The K – 12 Program “We are the last country in Asia and one of only three countries in the world with a 10- year pre-university program” (SEAMEO, 2019) The Department of Education has formally launched its K - 12 Program, which adds 2 years to basic education in the country. This means that aside from kindergarten, 6 years of elementary, and 4 years of high school, students will have to undergo an additional 2 years of study in senior high school.

The Department of Education (DepEd) is currently implementing mother tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) as part of our K-12 reform. This is not a purely pedagogical strategy for language but a learner-centered approach. By using the language students are comfortable with, the MTB-MLE in the enhanced curriculum helps them develop the language skills they need to learn the fundamentals of various subjects from kindergarten to third grade, and to move seamlessly from home to school. Children clearly learn best when we use the language they understand, especially in elementary education. Additionally, prior to the launch of MTBMLE, studies had shown that language skills mastered with the mother tongue can enable students to learn a second and subsequent language faster.

The program has the following twin objectives: To give every student as opportunity to receive quality education based on an enhanced and decongested curriculum that is internationally recognized and comparable; Develop a curriculum that is rational and focus on excellence; Produce a pool of highly qualified and adequately trained teachers; Achieve high academic standards, especially in Mathematics, Science and English at all levels; Produce graduates who are globally competitive and whose credential are recognized internationally; To change public perception that high school education is just a preparation for college; rather, it should allow one to take advantage of opportunities for gainful career or employment and/or self-employment in a rapidly changing and increasingly globalized environment; produce graduates who possess skills and competencies that will allow them to be productive members of the society or pursue higher education; through coordination between the academic and business sectors, to change industry

hiring practices into account the enhance skills and competencies of K to 12 graduates (DepEd, 2020).

The goal of implementing the K to 12 Basic Education Program is to create a functional basic system that will produce productive and responsible citizens equipped with the essential learning and employment. This is in line with the agenda of President Aquino of having quality education as a long term solution to poverty. The K to 12 Education vision from the Department of Education (DepEd, 2019) every graduate of the Enhanced K to 12 Basic Education Program is an empowered individual who has learned through a program that is rooted on sound principles and geared towards excellence.

Truly, the implementation of the K to 12 program of the Department of Education is a great help to every student but which has a noble purpose for every Filipino pupil or student. From their own point of view or perspective this is another burden on the part of the students and parents. It will add to the financial problem of the individual family, and the advantage of implementing this program are for the people who want to continue studying or work abroad because the curriculum is almost parallel to another country. These are some of the problems that this study is going to focus on and to hear the sentiments of the parents regarding the implementation of K - 12 program (Jennilyn, 2019).

One of the aims of the Department of Education is to prepare the students to be globally competitive. To achieve this, educational reforms of the government must also focus on the mastery of English as the second language. Such an attempt will greatly help to harness the productive capacity of the country's human resource base towards international competitiveness. Competitiveness may be gauged from sociolinguistic competence of a person. Sociolinguistic competence is the ability to use language appropriate to a given communicative context taking into account the roles of the participants, the setting and the purpose of interaction. It is the ability to use and respond to language appropriately, given the setting, the topic, and the relationships among the people communicating, particularly the lingua franca of the educational society and community, in its various contexts and dimensions relatively guarantees the teachers competitive advantage in the complex society like the Philippines (Alatis, 2019).

Learning theories have two chief values according to Hill (2022). One is in providing us with vocabulary and a conceptual framework for interpreting the examples of learning that we observe. The other is in suggesting where to look for solutions to practical problems. The theories do not give us solutions, but they do direct our attention to those variables that are crucial in finding solutions.

There are three main categories or philosophical frameworks under which learning theories fall: behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism. Behaviorism focuses only on the objectively observable aspects of learning. Cognitive theories look beyond behavior to explain brain-based



learning. And constructivism views learning as a process in which the learner actively constructs or builds new ideas or concepts.

Merriam and Caffarella (2019) highlight four approaches or orientations to learning: Behaviorist, Cognitivist, Humanistic, and Social/Situational. These approaches involve contrasting ideas as to the purpose and process of learning and education - and the role that educators may take.

Behaviorism focuses on the idea that all behaviors are learned through interaction with the environment. This learning theory states that behaviors are learned from the environment, and says that innate or inherited factors have very little influence on behavior.

Cognitivist is a learning theory that focuses on how information is received, organized, stored and retrieved by the mind. It uses the mind as an information processor, like a computer. Therefore, cognitivism looks beyond observable behavior, viewing learning as internal mental processes.

Humanistic learning theory emphasizes the freedom and autonomy of learners. It connects the ability to learn with the fulfillment of other needs (building on Maslow's hierarchy) and the perceived utility of the knowledge by the learner.

The theory of social situations has two main ingredients. First, it offers a unified way to represent social environments, namely, by means of "situations." Second, it offers a unified criterion for the recommendations, namely, that the "standard of behavior" (for the given situation) be "stable."

## II. Methodology

This study is done by using qualitative research showing how the researcher came to the necessary data for this study, and how these data were analyzed, interpreted and presented in the easiest way possible. This study utilized interviews as the most important in order to achieve the purpose of this study which is to determine and describe the opinions, thoughts and feelings of teachers and students of Bansalan Central Elementary School of Bansalan, Davao del Sur. It is descriptive in a sense that the data obtained were analyzed and described. The researcher used interviews and observations as her research instrument. Based on the result of the interviews conducted, she was able to determine the details of this study.

The participants of this study consisted of 10 teachers and 10 students of Bansalan Central Elementary School. The study used random and purposive sampling where the respondents only qualifies because of the purpose of the study. Therefore, teachers were chosen randomly from those since all the teachers were implementers of the new curriculum. Other criteria for the teachers

were: taught at the identified school for 3 years or more; residents of the locality; of either sex; and implemented the new curriculum.

The students were also chosen randomly with the purpose of having immersed in the new curriculum. Since older students in Grades 4, 5 and 6 were deemed more open, friendly and outspoken, the researcher chose from these grades those who will be involved in the study. The ten (10) students were broken down as follows: 3 from Grade 4, 3 from Grade 5, and 4 from Grade 6.

The interview method was used because it presents a life-like environment in which the respondents were allowed to have group discussions about their perspectives on the implementation of K to 12. This study complied with the requirement in conducting interviews pegged at three interviews in order to properly compare and contrast data across groups. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were constructed based on the research questions.

Among qualitative analysis methods, thematic content analysis is perhaps the most common and effective method. It can also be one of the [most trustworthy](#), increasing the traceability and verification of an analysis when done correctly.

### III. Results and Discussion

This study aimed at identifying/investigating the practices of public school teachers in the implementation of K+12 curriculum and the underlying problems and challenges along with its implementation with an end view of determining the teachers' best practices to come up with a more effective implementation of the Senior High School: *lack of seminars, trainings and reading materials, lack of rooms, resources, technology and books, teachers are confused yet appreciative, teachers are frustrated yet flexible, and teachers are powerless yet vital.*

Perspectives of both teachers and students were gathered. There were separate discussions of the respondents' perspectives: *teachers – two more years added to education of child, and implementation is complicated; students – lack of instructional materials, and unprepared for implementation.*

A detailed step-by-step guide on how I will conduct a curriculum gap analysis which is my proposal to enhance our basic education: *Step 1: Review the current curriculum content and pinpoint the skills and knowledge learners should possess at the end of their learning; Step 2: Compare this against the actual skills and knowledge learners have demonstrated; Step 3: Identify any gaps between the expected and actual outcomes; and Step 4: Implement interventions to address the identified curriculum gaps.*



### *Discussion*

While this study has documented the realities of Filipino teachers as K to 12 curriculum implementers, readers should take the findings with caution for two reasons. First, the participants in the study were recruited from just one school in one province from South Philippines. It is plausible that basic education teachers from a particular division or province have a context that is not representative of the overall population of public school teachers. Therefore, the findings or insights acquired from the findings cannot be generalized as true for all teachers in the country. Second, K to 12 curriculum implementation in the study was operationalized in a broad way and the researchers did not attempt to examine it in light of the teachers' actual pedagogy in the classroom and how the policies may have shaped their choice of specific instructional or assessment strategies in the classroom.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding these limitations, the findings advance the literature on Filipino teachers' experiences in the implementation of the K to 12 curricula by providing a description of how a select group of Filipino teachers make sense of their experiences as curriculum implementers. Hence, our understanding of Filipino teachers in this time of curricular and educational reforms may further expand through the conduct of similar studies on Filipino teachers' cognitions, motivations, and actions in the implementation of curriculum programs and policies. For instance, a quantitative study that could take into account the views and experiences of a significantly higher sample of Filipino teachers in implementing curriculum policies could complement the findings of the present study.

This study concludes with the idea that the success of curriculum implementation depends largely on how teachers understand and implement K to 12 curriculum. Therefore, emphasis must be given to making it certain that our teachers are provided with the resources and support that they need in order to traverse a world that they are only starting to learn to live in.

### **IV. Conclusion**

In the midst of multiple demands and changes surrounding education today, the Philippine's basic education initiated its own transformation through a number of reforms. How these reforms will see the light of day in the classrooms is influenced by teachers who are active implementers in the process. Findings from the present study showed that the teachers' role as curriculum policy implementers in their classrooms is characterized by the experience of tensions. The three tensions identified in the present study shows how teachers struggle, yet find ways to realize the goals of the change initiative. The tensions are reflections of the reality that teachers continuously face challenges but that they strive to adapt to the roles assigned to them by the reform. It could be observed, however, that while some efforts yield positive experiences, other aspects of the experience require an on-going support from the education system, if we are to turn their challenges into the changes that we desire to achieve.

Indeed, in-service training from the DepEd should be stronger and more developmental in nature, in order to facilitate the adaptation of Filipino teachers to the new curriculum, whereas pre-service education should be re-calibrated in order to purposively develop teacher education students who are capable and highly competent to perform their tasks and responsibilities in the K to 12 framework. Moreover, there is also a need for school principals and other school leaders to be further supported as they themselves are curriculum implementers. As school leaders and instructional supervisors, the way principals communicate and translate curriculum policies to their teachers will strongly affect how teachers implement the policies and teach in the classroom. Similarly, it is also vital that teacher understand how basic education recognizes their power in promoting change so that they would find the confidence to give voice to their concerns. While it is true that different contexts mean different interpretations of the policies, the teachers' concerns regarding their experiences in policy implementations has to be reported officially. This will facilitate a two-way communication providing a genuine evaluation of the curricular policies, thus addressing the danger of engaging with the "dialogue of the mute".

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### **AUTHOR'S PROFILE**



### **CATHERINE S. MEPARANUM**

Catherine S. Meparanum born on June 30 1979, she is a dedicated educator and with deep passion for shaping the future through education . Born as the daughter of Ernesto Hernando P. Sosmena and Teresita P. Sosmena Catherine's upbringing instilled in her a strong sense of responsibility and compassion.

After completing her Bachelor's degree in Education at St. Mary's College of Bansalan Inc. in 1999.

Catherine embarked on a journey in the field of education. Over the past decade , currently teaching in Bansalan Central Elementary School. She has served diligently in the Department of Education , where she has positively impacted countless young lives.

Driven by her commitment to continuous growth and learning , Catherine is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Educational Management at Rizal Memorial Colleges Inc. in Davao City. Through her studies she seeks to enhance her skills and knowledge to better serve her students and contribute to the advancement of the educational system.

Catherine's belief that "children are the hope of the nation" serves as the guiding principle in her work. She is dedicated to nurturing the next generation of leaders, instilling in them the values of integrity, resilience and empathy.

In addition to her role as an educator .Catherine also a loving wife to Glenn T. Meparanum and a proud mother to her son Sean Glenn.

With her unwavering dedication to education and her profound belief in the potential of every child, Catherine S. Meparanum continues to make a positive impact on the lives of those around her, inspiring hope and shaping the future of her nation.