

# **UNDERSTANDING THE TRIFOCALIZED EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE PHILIPPINES**

## **Executive Summary**

This case centers on Ms. Yaco, a new teacher who seeks to understand how the Philippine education system is governed. Her main concern is the concept of trifocalization, which divides educational governance among three agencies that is DepEd, CHED, and TESDA. This paper discusses its legal basis, analyzes its effectiveness, and evaluates how it ensures quality and relevance in education. Trifocalization enhances specialization and accountability, but stronger coordination and balanced resource distribution remain essential.

## **Key Strategic Issues**

The main issue is understanding how educational responsibilities are shared among DepEd, CHED, and TESDA. The Department of Education (DepEd) manages basic education from Kindergarten to Grade 12, as mandated by the Education Act of 1982 and reinforced by the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533). The Commission on Higher Education (CHED), under RA 7722, oversees tertiary education and ensures quality standards. The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), created through RA 7796, handles technical-vocational and middle-level training.

All three operate under the 1987 Constitution, which guarantees the right to quality education and directs the State to make it accessible to all (Art. XIV, Sec. 1). The challenge lies in balancing efficiency, coordination, and equity across these agencies.

## **Analysis**

Trifocalization was established to make governance more focused and efficient.

- DepEd ensures foundational learning and literacy.
- CHED promotes quality assurance and academic standards in higher education.
- TESDA aligns training programs with labor market needs.

This structure allows each agency to specialize and address sector-specific issues. Reforms such as RA 10533 (K–12 Program) and RA 10931 (Free Tertiary Education Act) show efforts to enhance continuity across education levels.

However, coordination challenges remain. Policy overlaps, uneven resources, and weak transitions between basic, technical, and higher education still affect system integration. Despite these, trifocalization remains a sound governance model that promotes accountability and responsiveness.

### **Evaluation**

Trifocalization decentralizes responsibilities, enabling better specialization and focus. DepEd handles foundational learning, CHED ensures academic excellence, and TESDA promotes technical skills development are all essential for national growth. Yet, its effectiveness depends on strong collaboration among the three. Coordination gaps and resource inequality hinder the system's full potential. Strengthening cooperation and aligning goals are crucial to sustaining quality education and improving access for all learners.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The trifocalized education system, rooted in the 1987 Constitution and subsequent education laws, provides an organized and specialized approach to governance. It allows each agency to perform effectively within its scope, fostering relevance and quality in education.

For teachers like Ms. Yaco, understanding this structure is vital in recognizing how different education levels connect. To maximize its impact, DepEd, CHED, and TESDA must enhance coordination, share data, and promote joint policy planning. Continuous teacher development, curriculum improvement, and fair resource distribution will help ensure that trifocalization contributes fully to national progress.

## **Reflection**

This case made me realize how important it is, especially for teachers, to understand trifocalization and how it shapes our education system. Knowing the distinct roles of DepEd, CHED, and TESDA helps us see how each contributes to national development. Understanding these differences builds a stronger foundation as we begin our profession, reminding us that teaching is part of a larger system that prepares citizens to take part in the nation's progress.

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