

## Article



## Impact of Policy Implementation on Education Quality: A Case Study on Philippines' Low Ranking in International and Local Assessment Programs

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### Abstract

In the recent report released by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Philippines was ranked as one of the lowest in Mathematics, Science, and Reading Comprehension among 79 participating countries. The country also ranked low in other assessment programs, including TIMSS, SEA-PLM, and NAT. Despite the educational reforms established to improve the Philippine Education System, the Philippines remains low and significantly below its neighboring countries regarding quality education. Therefore, this study (1) describes how the Department of Education has undertaken the objectives of R.A. 10533, (2) determines the effect of policy implementation on the ranking of Philippine education quality in local and international assessment programs through the perspective of education experts, and (3) identifies the importance of local and international assessment programs in analyzing the current condition of education quality in the Philippines. This research has employed a qualitative approach using thematic analysis on narratives coming from (1) DepEd-OUCI, (2) DepEd-BEA, and (3) Education Policy experts, as well as documents used by the Department of Education and the Curriculum Consultative Committee. This study concludes that there are still challenges plaguing the implementation process. Hence, the need for further improvement in certain aspects is enumerated in this research. Moreover, considerable discrepancies in the disorganized and incoherent implementation system amongst and within the Department of Education, administrators, and other stakeholders, as well as confounded policy interpretation due to system instability, were all deduced.

### Keywords

Curriculum, policy implementation, PISA, assessment, Enhanced Basic Education

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## **Introduction**

Due to the drastic changes in the educational system, online distance learning is one of the alternative modalities to sustain continuous educational programs during pandemics, which develops the new literacies in Information Communication Technology (ICT) necessary to improve 21st-century learning. The students practice 21st-century skills such as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity in instructional technological tools (Bedir, 2019; Budiarti et al., 2021; Hendy, 2020; Pardede, 2020). In online learning, the learners collaborate with their classmates through virtual meetings, email, messenger, and google and Microsoft collaboration links in online applications. Internet access is used for communication between the teacher and students and students to their fellow students by using varied technological applications that exchange information between the messenger and the receiver. At the same time, the learners practice critical analysis on how to manipulate technical tools with the procedural steps on how to use the learning materials. Also, the students become independent learners who discover and search the lessons with creativity and productivity. Thus, the learners become creative in operating computer-based learning in the classes where the learner construct their learning designs. Therefore, reviewing the learners' online education skills is crucial in new normal times.

The United Nations released its Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, which are set to be provided with a plan of action coordinated by all participating countries towards achieving it by 2030. One of its goals is to guarantee an inclusive and good quality of education that will instill lifelong learning applicable to one's daily life (UN, 2015). In addition, the United Nations intends to solve the issue of the growing problem of maleducation due to the unclear reception of formal learning as a fundamental human right and the discrepancy between the standard of basic education from a local and global standpoint (Thaung, 2018). To combat this problem, states, through accountability, coordination, and regular monitoring, reviewing, and financing, must be able to resolve the low quality of primary education, inequitable access to higher and technical vocational education, and ingraining of skills that can be used for work, inequality in gender, and education on global citizenship.

The Philippines is no exemption among countries experiencing the effects of the growing global recession. According to the World Bank (2019), a growing learning crisis exists in relatively emerging economies like the Philippines, Kenya, Tanzania, South American countries, etc. Because of this, the World Bank posited that the lack of substantial and extensive monitoring in policy and curriculum implementation is the root cause of a persistent global learning crisis.

National agencies such as the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) continuously campaign towards awareness and resolving the issue (Roldan, 2018). The highlight of the government's actions was the enactment of the Enhanced Basic Education Act, or Republic Act 10533 last 2013, which sought to reform and improve the existing curriculum by adjusting the standards and principles that educational institutions must uphold to improve the quality of education in the Philippines and compete in a global scale. The Department of Education, the central agency for implementing the enumerated standards, was mandated by the law to partner with agencies like Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Technical Education for Skills Development Authority (TESDA). Different local and international assessment programs were adopted to gauge the necessary actions, such as Programme for International Student Assessment, Trends in International

Mathematics and Science Study, Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics, and National Achievement Test (Elliott, Stankov, Lee, & Beckmann, 2019).

However, despite the actions by the government and seven years of implementation of the law, there is minimal to no progress in terms of the quality of education manifested by the Philippines' low ranking (Roman, 2019). It is for this reason that this study aims to know the impact of administrative negligence in terms of implementing Republic Act 10533 in the Philippines' low ranking and why the Philippines is heading on a downward trajectory.

With the condition of the Philippine education system, it is evident that an aspect of the system needs to be checked to get into the cause of this issue. Hence, this study aims to determine the impact of implementing state education policy in the Philippines on international and local assessment programs. Specifically, this study intends to evaluate whether the objectives of R.A. 10533 are being emphasized by the Department of Education, determine the effect of policy implementation on the ranking of Philippine education quality in local and international assessment programs, and identify the importance of local and international assessment programs in analyzing the condition of education quality in the Philippines.

The study intends to provide an understanding of the importance of global consciousness in the decline of quality education in the country. Existing literature provided various approaches to factors that affect the student's academic performance and determinants of quality education. However, these studies focus only on the environmental factors that affect the student's academic performance and their linkage to the teachers' quality of teaching. The lacking discussion led this study to focus on the Philippines joining PISA and SEA-PLM. Hence, the Top-Down Approach of the Implementation Process of Public Policy theory manifests an avenue for disseminating curricular data from the macro-institutions to its micro-counterparts (Marsh & Huberman, 1984). Also, the premise of this theory will aid in understanding that the interventions of the institutions and administrators play a considerable role in fulfilling the objectives of RA 10533 through standard monitoring and implementing procedures for education quality improvement. Furthermore, this research may be presented to the Department of Education to develop better policies for educational reforms since the study evaluates the government agencies' compliance with curriculum implementation and its development based on the standards presented in Republic Act No. 10533.

This research has utilized the Top-Down Approach of Implementation, co-authored by Paul Sabatier and Daniel Mazmanian in 1979 in their journal article entitled, "The Conditions of Effective Implementations: A Guide to Accomplishing Policy Objective." This theory considers policy framers as the principal element of the implementing process of a policy and takes policy implementation as an administrative and managerial process more than a politically motivated procedure (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1979). This theory was created to respond to the growing dispersion of comprehension of the limited extent of applicable programs and types of policymaking and implementing institutions.

The Top-Down approach posits that decisions by government officials are the starting point of the policy implementation process (Sabatier, 1986). The framing of policies is succeeded by raising specific questions revolving around the process of implementation itself, such as the extent of the implementing action in achieving the goal, the extent of the impact of policy, aspects affecting the implementation, and the reformation of the policy based on responses that

are given after undergoing a process of evaluation. This theory also argues that there are six (6) necessary conditions for a successful and efficacious implementation: (a) Obvious and stable provision of objectives; (b) Sufficient justification of causation; (c) Legalization of the implementing process to enhance the urgency for compliance of the officials and target groups; (d) Officials' commitment to an effective and productive implementation; (e) Maintained political support from interest groups and constituencies; and (f) Socio-economic factors that may have an impact on the support of people to the policy. The discourse on its merit continues today since its publication (Bardach, 1978; Berman and McLaughlin, 1976; Elmore, 1978; Jones, 1975; Lance, Lautenschlager, Sloan, & Varca, 1989; Murphy, 1973; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). The applicative properties of the theory were already being tested in different fields to know the limits and boundaries of its capabilities, such as its application in disseminating curricular data from the macro-institutions to their micro-counterparts (Marsh & Huberman, 1984).

The premises of the Top-Down theory aided this study in arguing that the burden of advancing the policy and evaluation is on the educational institutions, i.e., the Department of Education and the whole Curriculum Consultative Committee, affirming that the knowledge in the national-scale curriculum implementation is the lead determinant of practical curriculum reformation. Using the approach, this study argues that enhancing the focus and attention of the national agencies in implementing the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 can increase the ranking and rating of the Philippines in both local and international assessment programs.

## Literature Review

### *Curriculum and Policy Implementation*

The curriculum is a prime factor in enhancing students' academic participation and performance (Yu & Mocan, 2019). It is a chosen, arranged, unified, and evaluative provision of experiences among students that will help them attain different learning objectives, resulting from development and maturation for its application in real-life situations (Mulenga, 2018). Thus, the educational system of the Philippines is no different from its neighboring countries because it also passed through phases of improvement due to the dramatic changes brought by educational evolution (Guzman, 2003). However, despite numerous educational reformations, it is still clear that any systematic change in the education system should be accompanied by a high level of pro-activity, which defines the system's quality. It is a process that involves focusing on exceeding expectations, continuous development, and sharing responsibilities (Schargel, as cited in Guzman, 2003). Therefore, if the education system will firmly contribute to the improvement of a proper social order to fight social ills, then there should be a sustained re-examination of its retooling since it has become clear that reforms introduced at both national and local levels are geared toward the achievement of effectiveness, quality, responsiveness, and excellence (Guzman, 2003). Also, students who experience an improved curriculum have seen a significant improvement in interest and engagement in learning. It also manifested positive student development, resulting in better performance (Yu & Mocan, 2019). Therefore, in order for the Philippines to be as progressive as it can be and be globally competitive, the education curriculum shall adhere on a specific set of standards that the Department of Education, with its cooperation with Commission on Higher Education and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, which includes the following: (a) Student-centered, inclusive and development-focused curriculum; (b) Curriculum shall always remain relevant, responsive to national issues and Research-based; (c) Curriculum shall be careful and