

Public Education in the Philippines: Social Inclusion and Education Access

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Abstract

I have had many ask me questions about education in the Philippines so I decided to write this paper on education in my country beginning with the history. I am an advocate of multilingual education and initially wanted to concentrate on that approach. Schools were taught bilingually with English being the main second language. I actually learned English before Tagalog, the official language of the Philippines; my first language being Ilocano, the language of the Cagayan Valley. This paper will also touch upon the case of Multigrade schools in implementing educational innovation. I will be concentrating on the public education system of the Philippines and the organization of public schools as well as highlighting the effective means of macro level and micro level Multigrade programs. Studies suggest that Multigrade schools, i.e. those with classes that are mixed in age and ability, can be a cost effective means of raising students over all achievement in school. This study examines the association between teacher education, teacher effectiveness, and teacher morale. It will also show that teacher leadership is directly linked to student success. In particular, the time spent on direct instruction and other kinds of activities predicts positive achievement gains.

In the process of learning in schools; teacher education, teacher effectiveness, teacher morale and teacher leadership are important standard measures for professional autonomy. The purpose of this study is to determine factors contributing to all these types of quality measures in both schools, public or private. The significance of Kindergarten to 12 grade in Philippine public schools as an approach to equity and opportunity for all Filipino children and changing the traditional nature of education in the Philippines indicates that they are ready to compete with other countries.

I will discuss the evolution of literacy, describe adult literacy background and the influence of the development of literacy in both rural and urban areas of Philippine's three largest Islands: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. It concludes that to overcome the stigma of literacy failure due to lack of informal knowledge or the effective formal schooling, youth and adults have tried to improve access to literacy education by providing more public spaces. Policies in literacy for adults can vary in the characteristics of teaching and teaching requirements. Adult literacy program expansion may attract more students who want to better educate themselves. This would alleviate the stigma of not knowing how to read.

Philippine Public Schools:

Social Inclusion and Education Access in the Philippines

Introduction

Go to the people.

Learn from them.

Love them, Help them in their work.

And when their work is done

The best that they will say about it is:

“We did it all by ourselves”

(Chinese Proverb)

This paper will discuss Public Education in the Philippines. It seeks to assess the importance of public schools, school quality and children’s achievement through the medium of education. Using data from the Philippines, I will be presenting facts, data, and tables to describe specific research studies in our system of public schools in the Philippines.

Systems of education around the world, particularly those of developing countries and underdeveloped countries, were beset upon by the wrath of the Spaniards and the blistering words of Bishop Leaders within the Catholic Church with the trend of low performing students and outrageous shortages of school supplies and materials. De Guzman (2006) of University of Santo Tomas, in his article, *Reform in Philippine Basic Education Viewed from Key Elements of Successful School – Based Management of Public Schools* described and exposed the ugly truth inside the Department of Education in the Philippines. He emphasized that the Philippine public schools are characterized by poor monitoring, low accountability levels and a mediocre evaluation system. Teachers and principals are unmotivated as well as the spirit of graft and corruption leading to unimaginative approaches to teaching and learning. The education institution is challenged to identify how power and authority can be a root of all evil acts, now known as the *megatrends* in Philippine public schools.

CHAPTER 1

SPANISH EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Historical Background: Addressing the social context 1863 Spain's Educational Decree.

The year is 1983. I have graduated from a Barrio elementary school and find myself in the city of Manila a year after. A third class jeepney (a small, crowded bus) marked the new beginning for me of high school education in one of the densest public schools in the city. On school days I walked for around half an hour from my home to my school. This is very common for community children. My school is located in a remote area, as other schools were too remote and transportation access was impossible.

The Philippines, with a population of 104,280,890, are scattered over 7,100 islands. In *The Community Education in the Philippines*, an article by Anderson (1958), the goal of bringing education programs to the Philippines is described as distinct, ambitious and promising. Researchers and policy makers have been aware that this project is designed to promote the fullest growth and development of Filipino children and to bring about improvement in a wide ranges of community activities. Based on the report, no other single movement is credited with doing as much to improve social and economic conditions in the Philippines.

The year 1803 is a significant year for education in the Philippines. An educational decree was established, the last in a long time of royal decrees issued by Spain. This pertained to the education of Filipinos and it reflected the guidelines for a liberal, secular state. In *The Impact of Spain's 1863 Educational Decree on the Spread of Philippine's Literacy and Language Acquisition* Hardacker (2012), describes the role of the Spanish missionaries as the "ilustrados" who taught adults in Castilian – Spanish language. Local individuals couldn't understand Castilian so the Spanish missionaries switched to vernacular teaching later. It was

the Spanish who created literacy community schools throughout the island. Filipinos learned the basics that gave way to a feeling of independence by being able to read and write. That is, literacy becomes the center around which all other problems in society revolve.

Although it took a decree full of conflict and arguments, the great Council of the Indies in Madrid imposed what were the laws of the colony, which lasted until 1863. Under this decree the catholic leaders returned to teaching in Spanish. There were separate schools for boys called the “Augustinians” and for girls “Escuela Pia” during this era. The wealthy Filipinos, also referred to as “ilustrados” the same title as the missionaries, were provided accompaniment to schools and were given good accommodations. In this view, I can only think that colonial education brought little benefit to the Filipinos. Normal schools, religious missionary schools actually, employed inexperienced teachers. This is where they got their training and were established with Spanish friars having full control of the education system and over the missionaries in the schools.

In the article *Aspects of Literacy and Educational Attainment in the Philippines*, Bennett (2012), discusses that there was resistance during this period. There were cries of defiance and there were deaths. The families’ animal property and lands for field work were taken away from them. Filipino families were being silenced, helpless and their voices were just a blur. Sadly, they were the victims of three centuries of exploitation. The history of abuse during their occupation was ugly. The exploitation was the same whether they refused to attend school or not. This continued throughout the 300 years of Spanish rule.

Spain's decree made an impact. Spanish missionaries continued to educate Filipinos and as an incentive, the requirement for Spanish fluency was a confinement. The authoritarian rule of Spanish colonization lasted for 350 years. I did not believe it then, I do not believe it now that the obligation of Spanish missionaries was to speak to one another and to produce literate Filipinos. Educating Filipinos was an object of curiosity and in barrios Filipinos learned the basics which allowed them a certain amount of personal independence. The educational decree of 1863 was marked to be the last in a long line of royal decrees issued by Spain pertaining to the education of Filipinos and it greatly affected the guidelines for a liberal and secular state. During this time, education was a very essential component of the colonial state's primary aim in the Philippine islands; known as the spread of Catholicism. Hardacker (2012) posits that the Catholic education was included in a provision for Spanish language instruction, which later was viewed as disseminating the "one true religion" in this country. Spanish became the medium of instruction in elementary, secondary and in higher education. Colleges and Universities were controlled by Bishops and nuns. At the time, wearing uniforms was strictly imposed in all schools, as it is even to this day.



Figure 1: Group of Spanish Cardinals with Filipino elite children.

Credit: Paul Jeffrey, Social Documentary Photographer in the Philippines

Source:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=History of Education in the Philippines Still Images](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=History%20of%20Education%20in%20the%20Philippines%20Still%20Images)

Distribution of Schools in 1887

According to Hardacker (2012), a number of public schools were outlined and there were about 3,000 parochial schools in the entire archipelago. In Manila, the colonial center for administration had only one public primary school attended by 80 students. By the end of Spanish colonization, the self-reported result revealed that there were about 2,153 public schools with enrollment relatively close to 200,000. Throughout the Spanish regime, the government rarely had sufficient funds to keep the school functional and there was a dearth of financial and other resources to support public education. One of the problems they were facing at that time was the shortage of books, writing materials and an inadequate supply of qualified teachers in public schools. These Spanish-language schools were unfortunately under the control of the local governors who also appointed teachers. During this era the Church was mightier than the state; you could say the church *was* the state. Nevertheless, the materials and financial resources were imported from Spain and Mexico.

Filipino Nationalist Propaganda provided a new hope with the arrival of the Americans in the country following the Treaty of Paris in 1898. According to the record, Philippine Library of Congress (2011), this treaty marked the end of the Spanish-American war and the major conflict concerned the Philippines and marked the entrance of the United States into the Philippines. The American Government paid twenty million dollars to Spain for possession of the Philippines. Spanish rule was soon forgotten and replaced by Western ideals. This year was very significant because in this period, the common Filipino children set foot for the first time in community schools. The Philippines public school system was established by the Public Act No. 74 n 1901. Enacted into law by the Philippine Commission, the Act created the Department of Public Instruction, laid the foundations of the public school system in the Philippines, provided for the

establishment of the Philippine Normal School in Manila and made English as the medium of instruction. President McKinley announced the policy of “*benevolent assimilation*,” an ideology that expressed great faith in the necessity of public schools.

In *The Public School System in the Philippines*, French (1905) described the indirect benefits under the discretion of the friars in Catholic schools. The most interesting to me in the course of my reading was when I came across this article by French. There was the apparent care the Americans actually had toward the native Filipinos. The indirect benefit the author is referring to of the Spanish rule is the number of schools built across many different areas of the islands. I find I am fascinated by the fact that when the Americans came to teach that almost no Filipino in any of the outlying communities spoke any Spanish or even wanted to. When spoken to in Spanish everywhere the locals would only stare blankly and not respond. In English there seemed to be an eagerness to speak with simple words. I wonder if this is due to wanting to please the new occupiers or if there is more acceptance; perhaps a little of both.

The Spanish with their 300 years of occupation accomplished little. French observed that the Philippine islands were like no other nation on earth. Nowhere else was there a wider variation of cultures and languages with completely different beliefs of life and afterlife. This is what is faced by the teachers; shipped in like cargo and actually sometimes referred to as such.

A highly centralized public school system was installed in 1901 by the Philippine Commission by virtue of Act No. 74. The implementation of this Act created a heavy shortage of American teachers so the Philippine Commission authorized the Secretary of Public Instruction to bring 600 teachers from the U S A. They were the Thomasites; who got their name from the ship they arrived on, the U.S.S. Thomas (Republic of the Philippines, Dept. of Education). These American men and women came to teach boys in the morning and girls in the

afternoon, however school supplies were not provided, and not a single teacher had been provided with a furnished classroom or a school which was established by the help of the treasury.

The Thomasites were plunged into a mess of hurriedly built buildings, no knowledge of cultures and this was even during the rainy season when there was not much food. This author referred to this as comedy being the almost farcical efforts of the Thomasites to mine for their provisions and live in these elongated huts called *nipa houses*. It is astonishing to me that the Spanish did nothing or perhaps could do nothing to bring cultures together. Perhaps they tried, but in dealing with all the different populations, and with arrogance and condescension, they only elicited resentment and resistance. The author refers to even the children smiling and nodding and saying things that made them seem shallow and vapid. The occupation was brutal and this is how they learned to deal with the Spanish. Do not express your thoughts and anger the occupiers.

However, energy of the educational effort of Catholic schools which according to French has been a long operative in the islands, education was difficult to access. Filipinos who wanted to continue higher education found it impossible. There were few who were selected by the highest priest. In such a view, efforts by the Filipino people to educate themselves lay in Church affairs. The problem continued to spread, and by the turn of 1907 there were more Filipinos who were not educated. Hardacker (2012) asserts that social class remained static and immobile and access to education became even harder for impoverished Filipinos, while the aristocracy traveled the world to look for literacy and educate themselves in different languages and cultures.

In a contrasting opinion, Bennett (1969) argued that Western ideals were just starting to colonize the country and education was not available to everyone. Filipinos needed to come forward with hopes that their agonies would be heard. Along with the respect for learning and western ideals, a new knowledge had come to the Filipino people. That is, they were simply calling for a clear set of literacy and education programs, but more importantly the ability to communicate with others, the ability to read documents and print their name. Signing a document was very confusing task and many Filipinos had no idea where to look for a help. The position of the Spanish colonization was exceptional in that the Filipino's learned absolutely nothing. The assumption was that the Filipino populace in the country had benefited from free education, not simply in training courses in colleges and universities. Higher education came up with coerced medical policy procedures for all women, especially in Catholic schools.

Pregnancy testing was enforced every 3 months for all women and became a standard. Of increasing importance was the belief that through limiting population growth and through education was a way to get out of poverty. During this time, French (1905) described that students in colleges and universities were required to take Spanish classes. Examinations were both "oral" and "written". Vocational and Technical training was also taught in Spanish. Home Economics and History classes were taught by skilled missionaries and Filipinos were trained in academic and non – academic areas all in Spanish.

In my own time, as a child, I would listen to the stories of my grandmother handed down and of my mother. Neither she nor my mother spoke Spanish even though it was required. This is resistance at its most obvious; even though much of the Philippine population did adopt the ways of the Catholic Church in spite of the many different religions throughout the islands. One common theme even now in the stories passed to me and I will pass on; the Philippine people

hated the Spanish. Both my mother and grandmother would actually hiss the word hated when referring to them. Both mother and grandmother were subject to these pregnancy tests.

Chapter Summary

Philippine's public education, the 350 years of direct contact under the Spanish Rule, gave rise to a broader spectrum or wider educational variations, to put it another way. The lines of emphasis and issues and its major transformation as a system of education, left us the significance of the Spanish Education Act of 1863. Spanish religious ideals and its influence will remain as a means of reform in the teaching of language and as a means of support since the establishment of community schools throughout the Philippines.

CHAPTER 2:

AMERICAN STUDIES IN THE PHILIPPINES

American Era and the Community Schools



Figure 2: American Colonization in the Philippines

Credit: Paul Jeffrey, Social Documentary Photographer in the Philippines

Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=History of Education in the Philippines Still Images](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=History%20of%20Education%20in%20the%20Philippines%20Still%20Images)

American influence in education filled the Catholic churches with new life. Education policies were beginning to change. For three decades the Filipinos had everything to learn and governors made use of every American woman and man on the islands to teach. However many faults the system of education or its spread may have had and the many mistakes its various agents may have made during those times; the truth is that today, there are nearly three hundred thousand Filipino children enrolled in the public schools, with an average attendance of about quarter a million all over the Philippine islands. The *American Speech Journal* (1925) in a further report stated that the voices of the Education Commissions stressed the use of English language and chose education reforms over agriculture and trade. It was not wholly an academic decision that was brought originally, but the report of the Commission on education gave President McKinley the governing power to decree a free public school system modeled after the American system. For that matter, there was also money involved in that the American government paid \$20 million dollars for Philippine possession at that time. The paragraph below was a speech by the education Commission:

The introduction of teaching of English into these schools was received with great satisfaction by the Filipino natives in Manila. The young Filipinos display of considerable aptitude for learning new tongues and it believed that if this policy is followed out English can within a short time be made the official language of the Philippine archipelago. The Commissions strongly recommends that it be done. This report goes on to say:

The introduction of English, wherever made, had been hailed with delight by the people, who could hardly believe that they were to be encouraged to learn the language of those in authority over them.



Figure 3: Images of USS Thomasites teachers in the Philippines 1898
Source: <http://en.wikipilipinas.org/index.php?title=Thomasites>

Interestingly, this view became a comprehensive framework in educating Filipino natives and was recognized by President McKinley that a language that would be spoken and understood was indeed essential for the development of Filipinos and their advancement in civilization.

Organization and Administration of Education in the Philippines

Department of Education Vision (www.depEd.ph.gov)

*We dream of Filipinos
 who passionately love their country
 and who values and competencies
 enable them to realize their full potential
 and contribute meaningfully to building the nation
 As a learner – centered public institution,
 the Department of Education
 continuously improve itself
 to better serve its stakeholders.*

The Philippine educational ladder follows the 6 – 4 – 4 plan of education and it is considered one of the shortest education cycles in the world. This would be 6 years of

elementary, 4 years of secondary and 4 years of tertiary education. Connected to the idea of organization, municipal schools and the administration of public school in the Philippines began to establish elementary courses for six consecutive years of education of intermediate level (Grades I – VI). Under the provision of the Commonwealth Act 381, several municipalities had already constructed larger schools for the secondary level adding another four years of high school commonly known as first year to fourth year (I – IV). This is the equivalent of 7th grade to 11th grade in the American grade level system. Then comes the next tier with the approval of the senate, the Governor General and the Director of Education who, by the way, is appointed by the governor general. In higher education, a four year college or university was developed and all levels became more highly organized.

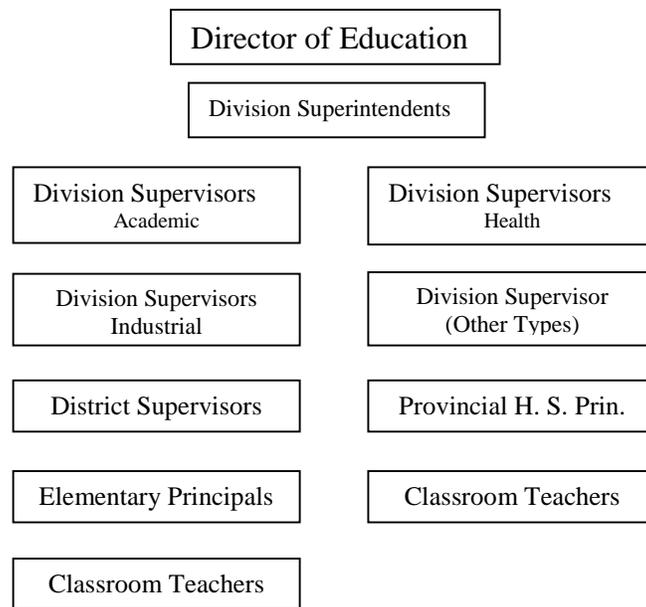


Table 1: Diagram of the Organization and Administration of Education in the Philippine Islands. **Source:** Phi Delta Kappa International Journal (1928)

Pressures and incentives driving the need for education come from multiple directions.

Public schools and their broadened scope rapidly increased enrollment rate. By 1947, the Philippines was on the road to economic recovery after World War II. The education field

lumbered into modern times. Morrison (1953) discusses the structural changes and the basis for public schools. For instance, the Department of Education regulated both public and private schools. Following the establishment of Republic Act 6655, free public secondary education in 1997 was centralized. This was very beneficial to me during this year and others like me. I could not have accomplished as much without the free high school education program. I was born poor and wanted to do more.

Education reform in the Philippines was based on the notion of fairness. The nation's 2000 education policy for education is served as bridge for academic possibilities and rewards. De Guzman (2007), writing about Philippine decentralization initiatives, described in his review that, the Philippine public school system is considered as one of the largest in the world. The Department of Education (DepED) Fact Sheet (2005) reports that there are approximately 41,989 elementary and secondary public schools and 7790 private schools under the supervision and regulation of the Department of Education.

I remember when I attended the Manila public schools; I sat most of the time on the floor because there were not enough chairs. It was hot and so dry and we were sweating, but there was nothing that we could do. I had to stay in that school because it was the closest to my house and the reality is that it was the same scenario in other schools. Indeed, some schools were worse than the one in which my parents had enrolled me. The table below is a graph representation of public school enrollment at all levels.

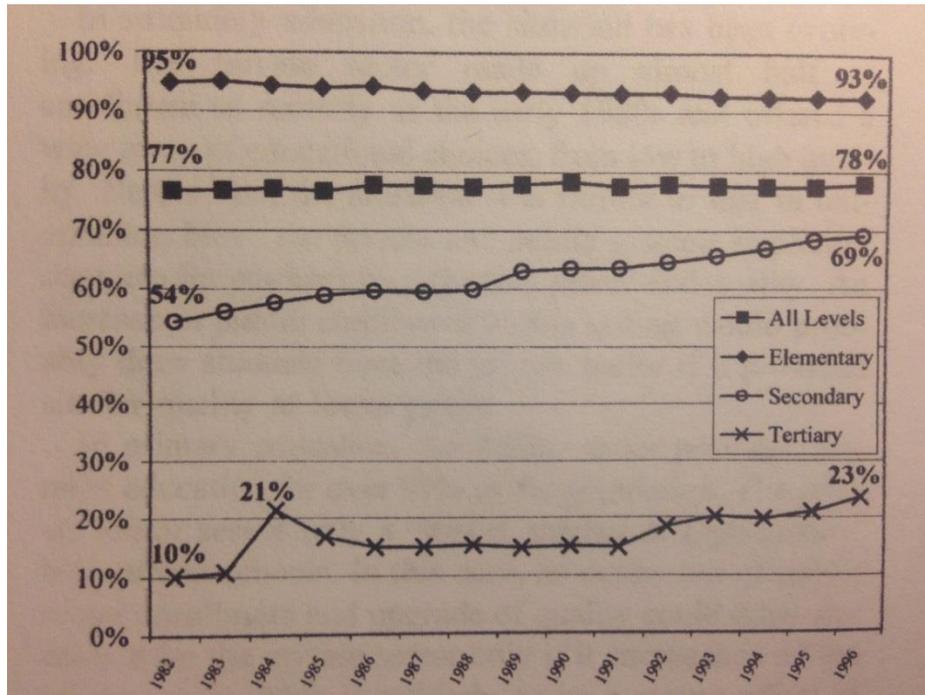
Philippines 2000

Table 2: Public Sector Enrollments: percentage of total enrollments, 1982 - 1999.

Source: www.deped.gov.ph/datasets

The goal of the Philippine's 2000 policy was to provide a new perspective in public schools and in classroom instruction. Due to the insufficient education rate during this period, President Fidel Ramos designed this platform to advance the achievements in education particularly in youth literacy; and the platform was also to target high enrollment rate. Its main focus was to improve equal access and provide higher quality of basic education in the Philippines. Education policy makers, supervisors, principals and teachers came to see for themselves and experience the change in public school settings. A new education reform for bridging the gap was put forth by the Department of Education and instilled new ideas in the field of public school education. Beyond this, stimulated by overwhelming population growth, elementary and high school enrollment flooded the public schools in urban and rural areas. Jimenez & Sawada (2001) suggest that there was indeed an increased enrollment in both public

and private schools. They also suggest that this increase was undoubtedly fueled by a rapid construction of public schools between the years 1986 to 1998. For instance, total public enrollment rose up to 114%. Public education in the Philippines was fully implemented during the early part of the 20th century. Jimenez & Sawada explained that before that time, students attended religious institutions as well as non-sectarian schools. This led to the provision and tradition of a larger role for the public school system that still persists today, particularly at higher education levels.

So this particular year, the enrollment for primary, secondary and tertiary levels accounts for over 90% and provides free education to the entire population demonstrating a strength in the Philippines, where the public sector, according to Jimenez & Sawada (2001), is strictly not homogenous. Thus, it is very understandable that the quality of education in all levels of public schooling covers the spectrum from excellent to poor. However, the effect on the private sector would depend on whether the increasing enrollment is attracted from the private systems due to the high cost of tuition or from the youth who would otherwise not seek to pursue higher education. It is not possible to come up with prior predictions as to what the effect is. The answers may vary depending on the level of education.

Historically Grimes (1928) described three main reasons why the Philippines had very low achievement standards in education:

1. Almost insurmountable language difficulties.
2. Filipino teachers largely untrained.
3. The curriculum is not adapted to the needs of the Filipinos.

He argued that the language problem overshadowed all others for it had political as well as educational significance. English is the only language used as a medium of Instruction. There

were regulations in Spanish language and fines were imposed for the use of Spanish and there are penalties for the use of among eighty native dialects in schools.

Some of this is true today. For example: in my own school, we are not allowed to speak Ilocano but were required to speak Tagalog when Filipino subjects are taught. The rest of the subjects were strictly taught in English. This applies to the use of any other native language anywhere. I remember every time I spoke Ilocano by mistake, instead of Tagalog, the official language of the Philippines or English, I would be fined five pesos.

The struggle in English language revealed the difficulty of the student's task to use his own language, which is Tagalog. For example, the American child brings to school six years of training in language expression which the Filipino student does not. This means that for Filipinos, every element of their school work is challenging. In addition, the prevailing view that students' languages represented a "handicap" is highly problematic and deficit-oriented.

On the whole, Symaco (2013) emphasized the Philippine's low achievement status. First, the public school curriculum is not adapted to the needs of the Filipino children. Second, the curriculum was "transplanted" practically without any modification. It is a curriculum that to this day is being sharply criticized even in America.

The Role of Public School Teachers

Evidently, public schools could not function without the passion and devotion of teachers. According to Symaco, 2013, the typical elementary school teacher in the Philippines has a very difficult job. The school day usually starts at 7am and continues to 6 pm. The enrollment of 115 students to 1 teacher ratio is too much. Classrooms are inadequately furnished with books and other instructional materials in very short supply. For a ten months year, teachers are paid a very meager salary. Besides teaching children in schools they are also

expected to organize community councils for improving living conditions either in the city schools or in barrio schools. Teachers are frequently expected to teach non-school youths and adults, sponsored by parent – teacher associations, civic clubs and private institutions. Many teachers carry this responsibility in addition to their regular classroom instruction and receive no extra compensation for the extra work that they do. For this time consuming job, the full time Filipino teacher receives an average of less than \$400 per month (about \$6 per day).

Assuming then that teachers are vulnerable to the overall influence of public school settings, it is regarded here that a direct measure of the teacher's existence is that they facilitate an adequate and meaningful learning for every student. There are a lot of questions as to the wisdom of burdening teachers with these additional duties, important as they are. Some educators believe that too much time and energy is being diverted from formal teaching, sometime at the children's expense. Most teachers need in service training for their jobs. They need more competent skills to be able to teach complex subjects. They need special preparation to demonstrate professionalism and they need workshops, seminars, meetings, conferences and activities that carry on at the national level. Today, the strengthening and expanding of the public schools programs is one of the major aims in the Philippines.



Figure 4: Image of elementary students in their uniforms city schools.

Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=images+of+public+schools+in+the+philippines&biw//>



Figure 5: Filipino students sitting on the floor in class session. I had my share of this for 6 years.

Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=images+of+public+schools+in+the+philippines&biw//>



Figure 6: High school students during class lecture are typical in an open gym.

Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=images+of+public+schools+in+the+philippines&biw//>



Figure 7: College students sitting on the school ground. University of the Philippines

Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=images+of+public+schools+in+the+philippines&biw//>

Chapter Summary

Considering the progress of popular education in the Philippines and the use of the English language in both public and private schools suggests that this effort has helped the Philippines as a developing nation, especially the fostering of free public education. United States' input towards education encouraged the Philippine government to establish an equal opportunity for all Filipino children and families to actively endeavor to pursue education, and that through acquiring an education; they could improve their personal and social well-being. The American education base model helped bring Filipinos new hope to move forward. Its strong influence in introducing schemes of learning will always be a guiding principle for the Filipino students to perform better in the production of achievement growth and academic success.

CHAPTER 3:

EDUCATION ACCESS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Philippine Education towards Decentralization

When the century's old Education system was no longer working, the Philippines set a new milestone to improve and centralize public schools. The education system integrated a reorganization plan. Systems of education around the world, particularly in developing countries, differ and according to De Guzman (2007) changes in structure were suggested, aimed at increasing efficiency and effectiveness. He termed this education process as the system of decentralization. In Webster's dictionary" decentralization" is defined as breaking up a concentration of government authority, industry, population, etc. in a main center and then distributing more widely. De Guzman (2007) stated the concept of decentralization was prompted under the administration of President Fidel Ramos in (1990 – 1996). This means that schools have to operate through the various tasks of responding to the varying needs of the

different regions. The bigger the system, the more efficient must be the parts in order to function successfully and the more autonomous the schools become. De Guzman goes on to say that where appropriate decentralization deals with less government in order to enable the private sector and civil society to assume a number of functions conventionally done by the government. Improved effort accounts responsibility and ensures better school quality. I think that Filipino people value education so much that the Education Commissions take this decentralization perspective all the way to a global perspective that enabled the Filipino students to compete internationally; thus giving them the opportunity to accelerate their potential and empower their contributions for educational improvements.

Multigrade Schools

Most developing countries provide multigrade system in public schools. In *Constraints to Implementing Educational Innovations* Benveniste & McEwan (2000) “Multigrade” is defined as those with classes that are mixed in age and ability. This means that this system can be cost – effective in raising students’ performance and can be very beneficial in poor countries.

According to Benveniste & McEwan (200) multigrade settings in developing communities have wide acceptance and study suggest that it is a very common good educational practice in the Philippines, since the country is experiencing low enrollment in primary school, especially in rural areas.

The Department of Education established Multigrade schools mainly to provide primary education to children living in rural areas. In my own experience, having attended three years in a multigrade classroom, I found I not only had no problem with it but I feel it actually broadened my experience. It is very typical for a Multigrade classroom to have only one teacher. In this type of classroom setting, from the experts’ point of view, we can expect a few setbacks and

other kinds of constraints. Benveniste & McEwan (2000) discussed this in the case of the multigrade system; the constraint that they both refer to is the lack of teacher input such as teacher training, or self-instructional textbooks.

Thus far, teachers play a key role in determining whether and how children are being educated, which may or may not be aligned with education policymakers' initial plans but for the sake of implementation and organization. I believe that altering the "core" educational practice does not delineate the student's over all learning capacity.

Multigrade System in Macro and Micro Level Features

Attention turned to a major problem of multigrade implementation. The essence of public service and the setting up of an educational innovation of a large scale is a difficult challenge. Multigrade schools have to follow strict rules and core education practice regulations. To better understand what 'core' means is, consider how Benveniste & McEwan (2001) defines this term:

How teachers understand the nature of knowledge and the student's role in learning and how these ideas about knowledge and learning are manifested in teaching and classwork. The "core" also includes structural arrangements of schools, such as the physical layout of classrooms, student grouping practices, teachers' responsibilities for groups of students, and relations among teachers in their work with students as well as processes for assessing student learning and communicating it into students, parents administration, and other interested parties" (p. 35).

The fact that core educational practices in rural areas in the Philippines are often centered in a rigid format in teachers' lecture instructions, students passively copy from the blackboard, participation is not encouraged, and rote memorization is a typical norm.

Benveniste & McEwan (2001) argued that multigrade implementation is problematic in regard to the core. For instance, teachers would move away from their traditional role as direct educators who guide students' independent efforts to acquire learning. As a result, the multigrade classroom foundation would appear very different and shifting away from the common teaching model, which would not work anyway, because multigrade programs are designed to facilitate collaborative learning.

These results suggest the importance of basic primary education in rural areas and teacher experience that is more traditional. As mentioned earlier in regards to constraints, another finding in other studies in having multigrade classroom is the criticism of quality measurements. In the book, *Schools, school quality and achievement growth: Evidence from the Philippines*, Bacolod & Tobias (2006) considered "class size". They argued that this particular finding is consistent with other studies of schooling in developing countries. In *Engaging the Community, Targeted Interventions: Achieving Scale in Basic Education Reform* Nebress (2009) suggested two approaches to improving multigrade education in the social context of Philippine schools:

- Attending to the macro-problems through creating the absorptive capacity of schools and clusters to take in and implement significant reform and improvement.
- Attending to the micro-problems through targeted and focused interventions to address priority needs, both academic and non-academic. This means meeting the schools where they are, setting next level targets with them, and moving them to improved stages (p. 232).

However, the multigrade system feature is not unique to the Philippines as this is also practiced in other countries; Cambodia and Indonesia to be specific. According to Symaco

(2013) in *Geographies of Social Exclusion*; Education Access in the Philippines, she states that there are one million students enrolled in multigrade schools under the education policy known as Education for All (EFA). She also emphasizes in reference to multigrade schools in Vietnam, that the Multigrade curriculum content is seemingly superfluous and inadequate due to the school location which is very remote, and consequently, no teachers want to respond to job postings.

Clearly, location affects participation in education and access to other social services, by rural areas or urban areas in the region. The Philippine government and the centralized education system of the country add to the overall improvement and success of multigrade school development is very essential to all Filipino people. Of course, given the education for All Education Act, we can expect the expectations are going to be high with no exemptions for the quality and access of education in all parts of the country. The distinct dependency feature of multigrade programs particularly in some areas that was discussed in terms of distance and location; the evidence is regrettable because in these particular areas children, youth or adults do not benefit from the program itself. There is a disproportion to education access. This goes to show that there is still a lot that needs to be done and it is my recommendation for urgency to respond to this most dire of places in the country and to persistently respond to education inclusion.

K to 12 Basic Education: The Right Choice

Figure 8: Kindergarten with the Department of Education, Philippines

Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=images+of+teachers+in+the+philippines//>

One other relevant line of research in Philippine Education is the significance of K to 12 curriculums in Philippine public schools. Changing the traditional state nature of education indicates that they are ready to compete with other countries. There was no Kindergarten program in my school or any other school in the 1980's when I started. This recent new program will benefit millions of children in the Philippines to start their education early. I feel that a kindergarten education background could have benefited me, but this is not to say that my education background is inadequate. To provide some focus and context, according to the Department of Education (2016), the K to 12 Program covers 13 years of basic education with the following key stages:

- Kindergarten to Grade 3
- Grades 4 to 6
- Grades 7 to 10 (Junior High School)
- Grades 11 and 12 (Senior High School)

Although the Philippines has opted to go with the 12-year program, the reason behind this is that the Department of Education (2016) found K to 12 to be the best practice for learning under basic education policies, plus it is also a recognized standard for students and professionals globally. The Philippines is in the midst of enforcing changes in education curriculum. There was recognition and acceptance that our government is playing a major role in this effort. The basic education practices were deeply embedded in Philippine's education system and beliefs and would change only through direct implementation of the newest curriculum. Through the establishment of K to 12, the approach has produced very dramatic impact on public schools. According to the Department of Education (2016), the Commission on Education personnel was brought to full scale. Last year, 2015 was marked for the implementation of Senior High School (SHS) for the year 2016 – 2017. Up until this time, K-12 did not include senior high school.

Far more of the conservative planning in all divisions of Department of Education (2016) in the DepEd.gov.ph website, the education policy makers has constructed plans for a new interpretation of K to 12 curriculum. The following plans are briefly described below:

- Classroom: Department of Education has built 66, 813 classrooms from 2010 to 2013. At least 5 thousand classrooms goes to Senior High Schools (SHS)
- Teachers: From 2010 – 2014, Department of Education is targeting two kinds of teachers: Core subjects teachers and specialized subject teachers per track. The

Department of Education plans to hire 37, 000 teachers only for Senior High School (SHS)

- Textbooks: Learning materials for elementary are being produced while textbooks for Senior High Schools are being bid out.
- Curriculum: First time in history that this particular curriculum is digitized and made accessible to the public (www.deped.gov.ph/features).

Many programs have been implemented but this system is still far from sufficient. After all, the program is just getting started. Ultimately, as the country approach is universal, the standards are underway to address this. Major changes have occurred in the Philippine education society and its economy. It seems reasonable to accept that the K to 12 programs represents a substantial and equitable approach to provide education to those students who are unable to afford the continuing high rising cost of education.

Chapter Summary

In the Philippines, K to 12 implementation is powerful development for this generation, and it will create a sustainable opportunity by expanding the definition of Education for All (EFA). Education access in the Philippines is a big enterprise that must reach out beyond schools to give chance and hope to millions of students in the country. I am convinced based on the facts and evidence that I presented, that we have a good understanding of Philippine Education. Changing attitudes is essential. These attitudes say that everyone deserves quality education and now policies include the dialects and languages spoken in the outlying provinces. Gone is Tagalog only, and classes are becoming bi-lingual, even tri-lingual. I was joyful when I went to the deped website and found instructions being presented in Ilocano, my first language, as well as Tagalog and English. This is happening all over the Philippines.

There have been only three major education reforms enacted in the Philippines since Japanese occupation to Philippines 2000, Education for All (EFA) and now the newly establish education policy K to 12; this as a promise to end the achievement gap in the country. It is my belief that the K to 12 education program will make a difference in moving toward the goal of equal opportunity in a continuing developing society. My position is that my tiny country continues to show gains in educational context to this day.

CHAPTER 4

I AM A TEACHER, NOT A SAINT



Figure 9: Ramos Elementary School Teachers

Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=images+of+teachers+in+the+Philippines//>

Like most students, when it comes to talking about teachers, each student has a unique story to tell. One unique memory for me is this:

I remember, while attempting to read English, hearing my teacher let out a scream that seemed to echo in all corners of our classroom. I looked up to be greeted suddenly by the hard blunt edge of an eraser being bounced off my forehead followed by the white powder of chalk dust covering my face and in my eyes. I came up sputtering. “Don’t you know how to read?!” The next thing that followed was my teacher standing directly in front of me holding a very thick book. I was ordered to stand out in the sun holding several of those books in my tiny hands as a punishment. I cried for hours, I felt anger and hatred. The next day, I chose to keep to myself and say nothing. Many of us were subject to her discipline. She would hit our hands with a bamboo stick to the point of leaving marks. She was eventually transferred after parents complained. Disciplining a teacher like this is unusual, but her treatment was over the top. My parents were irate.

When a teacher genuinely cares enough to know her/his profession and is experienced to educate and inspire, there must be a passion to teach and to the students. My statement here is that my teacher should not have been in the classroom. Of course, we can all agree that a harmonious and supportive relationship with the teacher can influence a student’s interest and even shape a student’s morality. In the process of learning in schools, teacher education, teacher effectiveness, teacher morale and teacher leadership are very important standard measures for professional growth and skills. The purpose of this study is to determine factors contributing to all these types of quality measures in both schools, public or private.

Teacher Education in the Philippines

The preparation of Filipino Teachers is the main focal point in growth of the educational system in the Philippines. From the Spanish American post-colonial period, education access in the country has received the continued support and attention of the government. Through the Commonwealth Period, during then after the Japanese occupation (1941 – 1970), new demands were placed on the preparation of Filipino teachers, which was considerably rigid and schools were greatly affected. This was the transition period, when the colleges tried to expand and improve teacher education curriculum, to bring teachers closer to the community and to the public schools. Savellano (1999) stated in *Teacher Education in the Philippines* that beginning with this period the Philippines and Japan both agreed ideologically to establish an East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, meaning that the Japanese Military administration required the orientation and retraining for all pre-war Filipino teachers for the purpose of college institutions. He also found in his study that only the state colleges of education allowed to reopen were those that trained teachers for elementary schools.

Before a teacher could teach, a curriculum of Bachelors in Elementary Education (BSE) Savellano (1999) asserted that the integration of major and minor subjects served as a foundation in teaching areas and to keep with the broader fields of knowledge. In today's standard, a teacher is required to have the College of Education for Masters and Doctoral programs leading to teaching. In doing so the schools are not only producing teachers, but the purpose of higher education programs was to develop different types of educational personnel needed by the educational system. Of course, we want better teachers, Savellano (1999) pointed out. That is, the overall success of students is positively associated with successful teaching. It must be noted that good teaching does not automatically occur when teachers know their subject. By offering

other research points of view, Lunenberg (2000) argues in *Educational Administration Concerns and Practices* that the knowledge of subject matter does not necessarily make a person a good teacher of that subject, however, it seems reasonable to conclude that teachers with good instructional skills would be more effective if they have in depth knowledge of the subjects that they are teaching.

Taken together, these findings indicate increasing opportunities for choice to deliver quality instruction. Watson (2000) in *School Effectiveness and School improvement* assumes that the image of the teacher education student as intellectually inferior to other teacher candidates must change. He stated that teacher education institutions in the Philippines can contribute to this goal by addressing both external and internal factors. He states that the external factors of teacher education institutions must continue to work with education policies and professional organizations for the improvement of teachers' salaries and working conditions and for the creation of incentives for all qualified students to pursue higher education programs and go back into teaching. Furthermore, Watson's idea of internal factors is that teacher education institutions should give strong considerations for entrance exams and provide make up exams for students who wish to prepare to be a teacher and give those students chances to meet the requirements. Watson believes that alternative standards would attract more students in the major field.

Teacher Effectiveness: Focus and Design of Quality Education

Another primary key to assess education quality suggested by De Guzman (2007) in his study, the following concerns how teacher effectiveness enhances quality teaching. De Guzman (2007) pointed out in his recommendations to demonstrate effectiveness in the classroom includes:

- providing licensing test to qualify all college graduates to teach and determines promotions
- imposing higher admission requirements for pre-service teacher education, establishing centers for excellence for teacher education to lure in the best candidates
- Providing scholarships for teacher education and improving and expanding teachers' benefits including dental care and free legal services. (p. 56)

On top of these recommendations, using the data available from De Guzman (2007), the Philippine Economic Society (1999) establishes fairly broader teacher effectiveness quality measures which are briefly stated below:

- (a) Make teaching the primary activity of teachers and eliminate various distraction that remove teachers from classroom on a regular basis. (These include the current practice of assigning teachers to administrative and clerical functions in school and local district offices, involving teachers in fund-raising activities during school hours, and engaging teachers heavily in the electoral process);
- (b) expand the mandate of local school boards to include decision making over teacher deployment, promotions and incentives that hold promise for effecting improvements in the quality of teaching; and
- (c) provide incentive schemes that will reward teachers for what they know and do, as measured by objective, multi-faceted performance assessments rather than simply how long they have been in the system.
- (d) Widening the pay structure within grade levels allows differentiation among teachers by measured competencies and performance (p. 618).

In addition, while there are opposing sides relating to teacher effectiveness, Gaziel (1998) in *School Based-Management as a Factor in School Effectiveness* stated that the fact still remains that teacher effectiveness, which is rooted in their professional growth and commitment, can be achieved if sufficient benefits and professional autonomy are being offered to them. However, in the case of a developing country like the Philippines, teacher effectiveness raises implications for policy and practice. Such measures would provide an even more complete variation in teacher quality over time and provide a much firmer approach based upon future curricular improvements in the classrooms.

Teacher Morale: A Variable for Positive Climate

Teacher morale is a one of the biggest concerns in schools among education professionals because of the high incidence of teacher burn-out which can lead to unacceptable or inappropriate behaviors towards the students. For example, Nidich & Nidich (1986) in her article *A Study of School Organizational Climate Variables Associated with Teacher Morale* discuss teachers who have a negative or a positive view in regards to his/her interaction with the students. These authors stated that teacher morale is subsequently related to student social development. According to Nidich & Nidich (1986), schools assessed as being more satisfying had teachers with a more positive view of the workplace. However Boocock (1996) in *The School as a Social Environment for Learning* stated that teacher morale is most directly affected by the behavior of the student and in return affects teacher performance, which then completely affects students' performance in school. It was also found in this particular study, that when teachers were given a greater voice in making decisions regarding classroom instruction, teacher morale was higher in the school. This suggests that variables that are the best predictors of teacher morale are also most likely those that are open to educational intervention.

Teacher Leadership

Although we find some negative association in teacher effectiveness quality measures, still, the findings are exploratory. Additionally, teacher leadership does directly assess the effects of instructional leadership activities inside the classroom. A related article takes into account a deeper understanding on how important teacher leadership is in teacher instructional practices. In *Engaging the Community, Targeted Interventions: Achieving Scale in the Basic Education Reform* Nebres (2009) indicated teacher leadership was a critical variable in determining high performing schools.

Nebres (2009) explains that in the Philippines, the Department of Education's main goal is to improve school performances and students achievement through decisions made by all those closely involved with resolving the challenges of the individual schools so that the particular needs of the students will be served more effectively. The DepEd objectives were to empower the teacher's leadership and provide efficiency to mobilize the community as well the local units to invest time, money and effort in making the school a better place to learn, thus improving the educational achievement of the children.

Given these standard measures, Nebres (2009) set up a framework that integrates teacher leadership at play in schools:

- Leadership (dynamic school teachers)
- Strong partnerships with local government units (LGUs) or parent – teacher community associations (PTCAs)
- Access to basic inputs such as classroom and textbooks
- Focused teacher competency development or in service training (INSET)
- Support system as the district/division levels (p. 240).

Teacher Accreditation in the Philippines

To expand opportunity, education policy makers must be supported by policies that improve opportunity in teacher accreditation. Savellano (1999) in *Teacher Education in the Philippines* emphasizes that under the Philippine Association for Teacher Education (PAFTE) is responsible for accrediting teachers. According to Savellano (1999), through the years the agency has demonstrated its commitment to promote, upgrade, and maintain standards of teacher education through a variety of professional activities, at both national and regional levels. She believes that the invaluable contribution of PAFTE to teacher education was upgrading the status of teaching as a profession. This contribution has been recognized by other agencies such as:

- Department of Education (DepEd), an agency responsible for regulating and managing the Philippine system of basic education,
- Commission on Higher Education (CHED), an agency that formulates and recommends development plans, policies, priorities, and programs on higher education
- The Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) is an agency responsible for the administration, implementation and enforcement of regulatory policies on the licensing of various professions and occupations in the Philippines (p. 260).

The governing principles of Philippine education are that teachers are strictly monitored by these agencies; with the implementation of Republic Act No. 9293, an act designed to strengthen the regulation and supervision of the practice of teaching in the Philippines and prescribing licensure examination for teachers and for other purposes. Savellano (1999) reported

that the function of these agencies is to assist in the accreditation of continuing professional education programs for teachers. The association's directive to enhance quality for teacher education is manifested in its dynamic and continuing program of professional activities for its members; relevant researcher extension activities for the faculty of teacher education institutions; the writing of books for professional education courses, communication with policy makers and the establishment of agencies and organization in Philippine education.

Chapter Summary

Schools in this case, may be better served if teachers integrate leadership in instructional activities as a representation of every day practice. Focusing on all of these standard quality instruction measures and getting the community involved would be useful for furthering understanding that teachers cannot do all this on their own. Teachers also need support in order to influence student behavior and student learning. The lesson learned here is that initiatives on lesson guides are worth noting. It is also important to note that the success of schools is dependent in the huge role they play in their effort to make change.

CHAPTER 5:

THE STORY BEHIND NUMBERS

Alternative Learning System, Inclusive Education: The Story behind the Numbers

Biggs & Bruder (1967) report the following:

Education in general and language education in particular, should be concerned with helping not only children but adults form Eyes that are powerful, imaginative and critical; Eyes that are able to critique the world as one constantly construct and reconstructs that world through interaction with others; Eyes that delight in the beauty and wonder of all

things, but especially in the wonder and beauty of texts skillfully and imaginatively used (p. 38).

It is disconcerting to me and I wonder why there are so many adults in my country who cannot read or write. Literacy was pushed in my family and I have always felt such a sense of accomplishment after finishing a book. It was through books that I have journeyed through time, or visited a strange land or became familiar with a culture very different from my own. Always, I felt so much has been added to who I am. A book unread, a book that can't be understood, is of little use as a pencil to someone who can't write. It is unfathomable to me.

Current Trends in Literacy

In the article *Communication Channels and Functional Literacy in the Philippine Rural Areas* by Young & Hunt (1962), the authors defined “*functional literacy*” as the ability to read and comprehend enough of what is read to pass this comprehension on to others.

Greenberg & Lackey (2006) noted that the Filipino people simply called for a clear set of literacy goals and strategies for implementation planning, and desired the ability to communicate with others, the ability to read documents and be able to print their name on the bottom of the paper. Signing a document was a very confusing task for many people and they had no idea where to look for a help. For example, drawing from the most recent survey on literacy skills Greenberg & Lackey explained that some adult learners in the literacy programs reported that adults' inability to read and write well is problematic because they are being confronted with literacy issues in their daily lives. The Philippine people are just now facing the reality and therefore realizing how deficient their reading and writings skills truly are. Greenberg & Lackey described different emotions that adults go through. Some individuals with low reading and writing abilities displayed feelings of shame, while other individuals choose to display

defensive acts and tried to hide poor literacy skills at the mention of anything that might expose literacy issues. During the course of voters' registration I remember clearly my personal interaction with an old woman, and I witnessed her personal conflict and watched her fear when she was presented with a form to fill out.

Lola, my grandmother, was a 77 year old Filipino woman who recognized letters and numbers at the second grade level. She never completed elementary school and failed to earn any degree. She was forced to drop out of school because her mother told her that education was not important and that women were destined to stay in the home takes care of her husband, siblings and children. Lola wanted to go back to school but felt it had become too late. She had very poor reading and no writing skills, but had excellent verbal skills in Ilocano, the language of the Cagayan Valley. She was sometimes afraid to meet teachers because of memories of feeling embarrassed and hopelessness in social settings. Through my interactions with my grandmother I witnessed her deep sadness and regret, and she often expressed those regrets in describing her struggle to not even being able to read a simple magazine in our own language and she so wished she could read the Bible, being a very religious person. An individual who reads below a second grade level struggles so much in completing paper work. It was my grandmother who was the inspiration for all of us to be educated beyond high school. Knowing all the obstacles and frustrations she'd been through, she demonstrated other strengths that helped her to survive and I am proud to call Lola, a friend and a great grandmother. She told me

I did not go to school and I did not have the education like your mother did. My parents were illiterate and I can't read, I can't spell but I can write my own name. I am illiterate my granddaughter. She said in a very soft voice. I love writing my name and I just love to look the picture in books. There was a sudden sadness between me and grandma but I

remained very quiet. I don't blame your mother at all". As she said it, she covered her face with her dirty hands and started crying. She looked at me and said quietly, "your mother is a good teacher and I am very proud of her." There was a smile between her tears. I found myself crying too. She squeezed my hand, so tiny in hers, and signaled me to fetch some water from the well (Lola, personal communication).

I think of my grandmother, being one of the disadvantaged adults in her time, urging me to read and write until I thought my head would explode. I have memories of my mother back in the 1980's pushing me to study my ABC's, to master number operations, to speak my language fluently, and English, and what it meant to be literate as very vital components in order to function every day. Such a story brought consequences for my mother and made me think that for an individual to understand a bunch of numbers or letters. Non-reading adults really did not know what to do.

In a personal interview, six months after completing a Master of Education course; my mother Ester, a teacher, stated she was continuing to work on her own literacy skills and had been teaching local adult education classes for eight consecutive years. Ester was a 68 year old Filipino woman and a public school elementary teacher. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and has taught multiple grade level for 25 years. She also received a few Teachers' Award and Woman of the Year Award (Region II Women's Representative) from the Department of Education. Every Saturday morning, the beginning of a typical class, it was time to help adults learn how to read and write. She encouraged spouses, children, relatives or friends with reading and understanding difficulty what it's like to read a pesticide label specifically for rice farming. During the course of her class she had consistent attendance and active

participation (classes met 5 hours per week). She taught vocabulary skills, fluency and reading comprehension abilities especially to farmers who could not read chemical labels.

Ester was and is a professional in social work settings and strong promoter of literacy in her community. She had many takers and her class grew with many of her students being thirteen year old girls with babies. It filled her with dismay to see such babies already having babies. She is excellent in both speaking and writing but barely passed her Spanish class. She showed care and sympathy to those people who struggled every day and told them to *never be afraid to open a book*. She used her own money to buy schools supplies such as pad paper, chalk and crayons.

Through my interactions with her I watched her constantly force my father to sharpen dozens of pencils for her adult students and I was appointed as her official “eraser girl”. When she encountered hindrances, instead of becoming disappointed or frustrated to non-responsive participants, she helped them by giving words of encouragements and used real life situations they could relate to and learn from. Some of the participants left and never came back when presented with difficult tasks, but those participants who overcame literacy obstacles learned reluctantly to face the reality without any fear and even became skilled hagglers in the market. The image of her holding a bamboo stick pointing to every word on the black board as her students repeated after her became one of my favorite memories with my greatest teacher, my lovely mother.

Mothers can help their children begin to deal with day-to-day reading habits. To expand the opportunity of my literacy is something that my parents have passed on to me. Since we all learn from our experiences it is clear that in order to gain literacy in reading and in writing it has to be worked for. Even with the rebels occupying our valley, terrorizing our schools, threatening

and even murdering our teachers, school went on and our classes were extremely full; sometimes 140 students to one teacher. We went to school in fear because all we wanted was to learn, especially to learn to read. It is true that culture plays such an important part in going to school. The biggest problem with growing up literate is that very often we are interrupted by difficulties of life. Young girls at the age of 13 are expected to work in the fields, take care of families and many were already pregnant. As mentioned earlier, many of these young girls ended up in my mother's adult classes.

My mother's education had and continues to have a significant impact in my success in school. I am a proud Filipina. I was born and raised in the Cagayan Valley, a farm girl, in a small town known as a barrio Santo Thomas to be exact. I come from an educated family because my grandmother demanded it. I went to a community public elementary school and moved to Manila when I was a third grader. In my elementary years I struggled in learning Tagalog and did not give up. I was ridiculed and it was difficult to make friends. I was sent to a Catholic private institution for my high school and by the time I completed, I was fluent in Tagalog and my English continued to improve. By age sixteen I was computer literate and won gold and silver medals in Spelling Bee contests. I believed teaching was for me so I pursued BS Degree and I majored Preschool. I also went to a private school during college years. For many reasons, I engaged in social work interactions and taught Preschool for seven years in a Montessori school. A really big difference in my schooling compared to that of my grandmother and mother is the availability of technology and my enthusiasm to learn other languages, Japanese in particular. I dream to be an aspiring linguist and I am yearning for more.

I was able to travel on my own and visit Hong Kong and Singapore and become acquainted with a culture very different from my own. If not for the ability to read and write I

would not have been able to get on the plane and I would not have been able to access the subway train or the public bus. Always, I felt so much has been added to who I am.

Spence (2001) stated that teaching literacy had given her fulfillment and rewarded her in many ways. She described a truth for her, in that teaching literacy is like rivers that unite us. It is no less true of those traces of hidden letters and words which we call texts. The ink has not yet dried and this we know; that we can discern the outlines of those older scripts, scribbled images on cracked walls which made it possible to many to come about and thereby almost efface them. She has inspired many people including me.

I also learned that literacy is measurable. DeYoung & Hunt (1962), measured literacy through tests. Both authors claimed the importance of understanding literacy and the mass media. They pointed out that the Philippine government bureaucracy is more experienced than many neighboring independent countries but still faces enormous challenges with regard to literacy issues. In spite of Government policy focusing on the importance of universal primary education, children miss school completely, attend for only a short time and classes are large. The lack of funding makes it difficult to add more teachers and schools. Therefore this continues to be an ongoing problem.

Determining Functional Literacy

A survey team of educators and psychologists used reading tests to measure literacy skills of mostly adults and the tests were administered in English and all major Filipino languages. In the Philippines, there are more than 70 languages, 9 of which are considered major dialects that are widely spoken in the country. The participants in this survey are the male head of household, housewives, out of school males and out of school females. The findings of this study are shown below and the main focus participants are the housewives groups only. The subject respondents

were 128 participants determined as poor readers or non-readers enrolled in adult literacy curriculum. The age range is from 19 to 70 years, the average being 30.3 years old. The educators and psychologists in the adult literacy claimed that at least 63% of the overall samples were literate but the test showed an alarming and very inadequate result in that of 19.2% who claimed to be literate adults could not perform on the lowest structure of functional literacy in any of the languages of the test provided. This study by Cristobal (2015), based on the report taken from Literacy in the Philippines, reflects a trend that older adults rather than the younger group were very likely to attend literacy programs.



Figure 8: A teacher leads an adult literacy class in Bataan Valley on the Island of Northern Philippines. (ALC) Adult Literacy Curriculum about an hour and a half's walk from the main road.

Credit: Paul Jeffrey, Social Documentary Photographer in the Philippines:

Source: [http://kairosphotos.photoshelter.com /search?KW=Philippines&I/](http://kairosphotos.photoshelter.com/search?KW=Philippines&I/)

The article *Learning and Unlearning: the Education of Teacher Education* Cochran-Smith (2013) noted that in the process of learning to become a literate adult, questions of injustice play some role; referring to the role of society in how adults are viewed as illiterate, often as being incompetent. Many interviewers or researchers are aware of the difficulties of listening to participant's testimonials. The researcher's subjectivity can extend beyond the truth of what is being expressed by the participants. In addition to wondering how we are going to do

this, we have to consider the significance of the questions we are going to ask. Taken from the *Journal of Education Horizons* (1987), these six credible questions were asked and answers are provided. This research was conducted in the Philippines as part of the study.

1. What do you remember about learning to read?
2. Was it pleasant, or was it painful?
3. How do you feel about it today?
4. What was learning to read like?
5. What problems do you have with reading?
6. What caused your reading problems? (p. 337)

When asked if they could read, 98.2 % said they could not read and 16% said they could. However the non-reading adults admitted that they had a reading difficulty. When asked what type of material they read on a daily basis, respondents most often preferred the newspaper. Seven percent reported that they read comics or magazines and 2.3% reported they read real books. In response to the question, “What do you remember about learning to read?” the participants answered that they had no memory of the event. The respondents’ answer to the question, “Was it pleasant, or was it painful?” was that they acknowledged feeling somewhat pained and uncomfortable. Most of the participants answered the question, “How do you feel about it today?” saying that they felt a sense of struggle day to day and the majority reported to be feeling emotional about the struggle.

The participants responded to the question, “What was learning to read like?” with “very shameful” “very difficult” and “happy.” When they were asked, “What problems do you have with reading?” 100% of the participants responded they felt they were not progressing, had difficulty in pronunciation and the participants said such things as “big words are hard to

pronounce” “some words – I’ve never seen them before”, “I don’t know how to say them”, “Have problems with sounding out the ends of words”; this in their native tongue of Tagalog.

In the last question, “What caused your reading problems?” 88% of the participants answered they blamed themselves.



Figure 9: A 65 years old elderly woman learning how to write; the oldest student in the group of females.

Credit: Paul Jeffrey, Social Documentary Photographer in the Philippines

Source: <http://kairosphotos.photoshelter.com/search?KW=Philippines&I/>

Young & Hunt (1962) described literacy community programs as using several approaches. First, the direct approach which takes place as the educator works directly with the community in a setting not necessarily in the classroom such as an office or a gym; and second, the indirect approach, is the use of indirect vocabulary through being read to and through reading on their own and also attempts to make the subject matter of instruction as functional as possible in order to achieve better understanding and adequate learning. These experiences can serve the well-being of the adult student and afford the opportunity to learn more about the social world.

Is it possible get future educators and researchers to take a very serious interest in educating and what it means to be an *illiterate* adult? As such, Biggs & Bruder's (1987) findings of the difficult truths and injustices of literacy is very personal. In their studies, the amount of schooling among the participants varied. Roughly $\frac{1}{2}$ of 128 participants completed only second grade; $\frac{1}{4}$ of 128 participants completed only 4th grade and $\frac{1}{20}$ had not finished elementary education.

Greenberg (2006) discussed adult literacy program's potential contribution to improving adult literacy in the Philippines. In the table below, Greenberg demonstrates how we are measuring literacy and how important this measuring is for the use and understanding of any given communication program. With the exception of the English language, the participating native languages are from the biggest islands known as Luzon - *Ilocano* is the major dialect, Visayas - *Cebuano* is the dominant native dialect and Mindanao where *Hiligaynon* is widely spoken. English is the second language in the Philippines and the medium of Instruction in Elementary, Secondary and Tertiary schools and Tagalog is the official language of the Philippines.

The Measurement of Literacy

Test	Male Head	Housewives	Out of school Male	Out of school Female
English	18.2%	22.3%	10.6%	13.2%
Tagalog	28.4	38.2	10.2	22.3
Ilocano	34.8	29.5	32.4	34.5
Cebuano	13.6	16.5	16.6	9.1
Hiligaynon	19.4	18.1	16.6	23.1
On all tests	18.2	21.6	17.2	19.8

Table 2 – Scores received on Functional Literacy Tests by housewives Group
Source: De Young and Hunt (1962)

The *Journal of Educational Horizons* (1987) shows data results from the article Proportion of Literacy in Non-literate Adults. The above table reveals variations between the participants of the household and in the performance of different languages. *Tagalog*, the official language in the Philippines and widely spoken in Manila area, *Ilocano* comes next, the language of the largest island in the country and I am proud to call it my first language, had the highest discrepancy between claim and performance. Scores from the literacy tests were primarily either “good” or “fair”. The scores for housewives showed alarming results scoring the lowest ranking group. This indicates that participants who passed the literacy test did so with a very clear margin. Studying functional literacy within the city schools in the Philippines is very complicated and required extensive examination using class grouping before exploring the literacy test and scores.

Bennet (1969) argued that within different geographic locations, literacy opportunities differed. For example, urban populations are usually more literate and have higher grade attainment than individuals in the rural areas. We can give the impression of reasoning and behind the motivation of each participant in the literacy test is significant effort and I will agree, based upon personal experience, this statement seems to be true. Bennett (1969) and Greenberg (2006) have different findings in their survey due primarily to the location of the survey. Bennett conducted his survey in Luzon, a very large area and very much developed. Greenberg (2006) studied locations that were inaccessible with very few schools nearby where getting to these locations would sometimes require a 20 mile journey to find a school.

I support the argument by presenting Bennett’s (1969) view of literacy and educational attainment; particularly the province of Luzon has been recognized among those few provinces that have the highest recorded rates of literacy. For this reason we can think that this particular

area of the Philippines has been providing adequate learning for non-literate adults. Bennett (1969) introduced the apparent differences in attaining adult literacy describes as; a) the province or the barrio environment one lives in; b) his or her sex gender; and c) whether or not the adult learner lives in an urban or rural area. Of importance is how progressive, and by this I mean flexible and adaptable, the municipality is in which the participant resides. Some of these approaches will be more appropriate than others and some approaches produce better and reliable results than others. Bennett claimed that there is at least a 30% point difference between urban and rural areas and that the populace living in a progressive municipality are the most literate residents. Between genders there is a 5% point difference between the males and the females. On average, males are believed to be the most literate followed by the females. Literacy rates vary between urban and rural. Rural males fall in range of 65 % to 91% and for rural females the range is 65% to 88%. Rural females were determined to have the lowest rates of literacy and indicated the greatest amount of geographic variation.

There is the simple point that non-reader adults and their families need to know the location of literacy programs that are available in town. The learning acquisition for all the participants is extremely different, many of whom were elementary drop outs unable to continue school.

The elegance and the fluency of one's literacy skill is, of course, essential and looking back and based on the findings, it is very obvious to me that there is so much more research to be done. Clearly more adult literacy programs need to be made available to all Filipinos to have a greater impact. Biggs & Bruder (1987) also suggested that the background for adult literacy in the Philippines is influenced by family habits in their everyday lives. However, the participants

of this study did not seem to have the difference within their family's literacy background that was expected. According to this study:

- Roughly 1/3 of the parents of these adults did not set foot in schools.
- 96 % of the parents spoke their native languages and not English.
- 85% of the participants reported that the remaining member of the family is unable to read or write.
- 48.6 % of the participants reported that their children were experiencing trouble with reading and writing in school.
- 95% of the participants reported that no one had read to them as children and family members reported same (p. 37).

In addition, it was anticipated that the absence of formal schooling, from the experiences of the participants, affected and changed their progress in both reading and learning. Biggs & Bruder (1987) explained that this specific question was intended to elicit information about the reading process – decoding, deconstructing, comprehension, learning vocabularies and memory recall. This is because most of the subjects were in reading programs focused on solving specific reading skill problems and this was a reasonable question for an interviewer to ask in his or her research. Aside from better reading programs, according to Lee (2015) in *Reading in the Philippines*, the overall improvement in teacher training, teaching materials and reading programs have also contributed to the rising numbers in functional literacy. With the implementation of the K-12 program on a nationwide scale, which began during 2012 – 2013 school year, there is now a broad emphasis on mother tongue literacy, which is being promoted in 12 languages including English and Filipino. There is also an emphasis on language literature

in the country and subjects are incorporated in the curricula, with effective communications skills being the main focus in teaching literacy.

Chapter Summary

Consistent with the growing amount of research in adult literacy from all over of the world, it is important to understand that it is necessary to assist the adult learners with registering and attending the literacy programs that he or she needs to enroll in order to not feel overwhelmed with the process. More importantly, it is important to understand that adult individuals with low literacy skills to expect reading difficulties and not forget to acknowledge that they also have other strengths that have helped cope with the turmoil and circumnavigate their struggles. In the shadow of my mother, educators are just beginning to open their eyes to their inner strength and help them realize that they can function in society but more importantly, having a supportive reading culture is the best way to foster literacy for all ages.

Conclusion

Though efforts to reform the delivery of education services in the Philippines are fostered through school based management, the fact still remains that overall management of the education system follows the decentralization project. In spite of the fact that management responsibilities in education reforms expanded to barrio schools to city schools, the fact still remains that the Department of Education, the central office of education located in Manila, is still in full control. However, despite the lack of a formal mandate and pedagogy, there is somewhat a degree of devolution has already taken place. It should be noted, nonetheless, that the power and authority sharing trickling down to the school has been a competition for money. The Philippine's public school system remains as one of the systems that provides education to students. I remain hopeful, that although the Philippine school system may not reach all students, it will flourish and that education advocates will continue to improve and advance.

These findings indicate that the failure to learn what is required in order for the participants to learn how to read and write is tagged at a very high price. Every non-reader adult in the Philippines carries the emotional burden of being confined and trapped in an iron cage of this intellectual linguistic handicap.

Recognizing this truth and understanding the discipline of adult literacy is an eye opener for all educators and researchers alike. For me it is such a painful view of adult literacy in this study. I am in deep sadness and I know this for a fact that it is not through any fault of their own that that non-reader adults fall through the cracks. It is one of the ironies that the ability to read and write "texts" fluently is evidence of a "literate self". The anxieties that I have found in my research study about this topic helped me to realize how fortunate I am.

In my eyes, these anxieties are not for short term and they do not fade away by blinking our eyes. I would like to reiterate that there is power in literacy. As a reading and writing enthusiast I know that literacy is the baseline to improve and grow. There is a lot to be done and I can say that in my country there is still a lack of good reading programs that can go beyond teaching basic minimum literacy and actually promote a love for books that could mean so much more. I wish there were a way for me to change this. It would take planning and the implementation of programs that are easy to access and enroll together with advertising through media. Perhaps one day I can. My friends and country persons want to learn and are eager for these programs.

My short journey through this has been enlightening and I hope it will be as much for you as it was for me.

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