

The K-12 Program of the Department of Education

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Abstract

As the Department of Education prepares for the 13-year basic education curriculum for schools in the Philippines, the Psychological Association of the Philippines (PAP) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Technical Panel for Psychology expresses its concern on the lack of communication (and possible attention) on the equally important non-academic formation of students. The following recommendations are made: 1) develop a parallel non-academic curriculum; 2) train teachers in these courses; 3) include a course on introductory psychology or an equivalent course; 4) allow the hiring of school psychologists alongside guidance counselors; and 5) adopt a holistic developmental perspective in caring for and protecting children.

The Department of Education has in the past years been working towards the implementation of the K-12 program that is designed to “provide sufficient time for mastery of concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners, and prepare graduates for tertiary education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship.” The extension of the basic education to 12 years seeks to boost the quality of Philippine education to make it at par with that of other countries. The K-12 program is described to have six salient features: 1) strengthening early childhood education through universal Kindergarten, 2) making the curriculum relevant to learners, 3) ensuring integrated and seamless learning, 4) building proficiency through use of mother tongue based multi-lingual education, 5) provision of career tracks and 6) nurturing holistically developed Filipino.¹

In the past year, several consultations have been conducted on the content and implementation of the K-12 program. In such presentations, emphasis has been made on the curriculum of the major subject areas and the provision of programs that will prepare students for vocational or non-academic careers. What has not yet been communicated to the public is a curriculum and provisions to support the non-academic formation of our students. The lack of attention to the non-academic formation is critical considering that:

- The goal of the K-12 program that every graduate is equipped with information, media and technology skills, learning and innovation skills, effective communication skills, and life and career skills. However, these competencies require time to develop and attention needs to be given to the design of a curriculum that will develop these.
- In the recent years, issues such as bullying and violence have become issues of concern in schools. Currently, Department of Education’s has partnered with non-profit organizations and other entities to provide training and information to teachers and parents on child protection. These efforts are commendable and should continue. However, beyond awareness and capability building, it is just as important to consider how this can be embedded in the curriculum, culture, systems and structures of each school. For example, providing students with modules on assertiveness, personal safety, gender

¹ <http://www.gov.ph/k-12/#about>

sensitivity, valuing diversity may go a long way in helping create an environment of safety for our students.

- Part of the success of the K-12 curriculum hinges on the ability of students to discern their career goals and to obtain the necessary training to prepare them for this. However, currently it is reported that only a minority of public schools have legitimate guidance counselors and with some schools having only 1 guidance counselor for thousands of students.
- The dearth of guidance counselors in schools is exacerbated by the lack of licensed guidance counselors and low enrollment in guidance and counseling. One possible opportunity, however, is the rise in popularity of Psychology and the implementation of the Psychology Law that now licenses psychologists.
- In the K-12 program, classes that are typically given to college freshmen and sophomores will be offered in grades 11 and 12. The most recent curriculum shows that courses on Math, English, History, etc will now being offered in grades 11 and 12. However, Introduction to Psychology, a course that used to be required for all college freshmen, is no longer a requirement in the K-12 program.
- During one consultation meeting, the CHED Technical Panels in Psychology and Guidance and Counseling recommended that to address the dearth of guidance counselors and need for supervision on career directions, a class on Personal Development/Effectiveness be offered to provide a venue for students to discern their career directions. However, this proposal was not accepted.

Given all these, we ask that the Department of Education to consider the following recommendations:

1. Develop a non-academic curriculum parallel as part of the K-12 academic curriculum;
2. Develop modules and train teachers to implement the non-academic curriculum given the dearth of guidance counselors;
3. Include Introduction to Psychology (or an equivalent course) as a required course in the K-12 curriculum;
4. Hire school psychologists as alternative to guidance counselors; and
5. Encourage public schools to consider non-academic issues and take a holistic, organization development perspective in building a culture conducive to the caring and protection of children.

Prepared by: Psychological Association of the Philippines
Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Technical Panel for Psychology