

Comments on the Senate Resolution No. 522 “IMPLEMENTATION OF RA 4670 (MAGNA CARTA FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS)” and Senate Resolution No. 526 “QUALITY OF TEACHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND TEACHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS”

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We commend the issuance of the Senate Resolution No. 522 which highlights the review of RA 4670 otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Public School Teachers, particularly, on highlighting the issue of use of teacher time and SRN 526 which highlights the importance of the quality of teacher education and training. These resolutions put on spotlight a critical factor in improving education quality – the teachers.

On the use of teachers’ time

We agree with the Senate Resolution 522 that to improve education quality the key is for teachers to focus on teaching in classrooms and not be unnecessarily drawn to other responsibilities demanded on them. PIDS research documented how teachers are drawn into non-classroom related activities such as implementation of government programs including elections, census, antidrug, deworming, feeding, etc.² with implications on education quality. In addition, interviews with teachers reveal that even within schools it is a common practice to add responsibilities to teachers without commensurate reduction of teaching responsibilities as if teachers have unlimited time. These are exemplified by assigning teachers school-related responsibilities without so much regard for teacher time such as being focal persons for many programs such as Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)³, Senior High School (SHS)⁴, etc.

There is a need to re-examine the six hours of actual classroom time in Magna Carta. Given the presumed 8 hours of work for any full-time job, that leaves only 2 hours for preparing lessons and assessing students, teacher meetings and much less if non-academic responsibilities are added. On the aspect on non-school responsibilities, we should adopt the principle we have for everybody else,

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² David, Albert and Vizmanos (2019) “Pressures of public school teachers and implications on quality” PIDS Policy Note 2019-01. Available at: <https://www.pids.gov.ph/publications/6779>

³ Monje, Orbeta, Francisco-Abrigo and Capones (2019) “Starting Where the Children Are’: A Process Evaluation of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Implementation,” PIDS DP 2019-06. Available at: <https://www.pids.gov.ph/publications/6865>

⁴ Brillantes, Orbeta, Francisco-Abrigo and Capones (2019) “Status of Senior High School Implementation: A Process Evaluation,” PIDS DP 2019-13. Available at: <https://www.pids.gov.ph/publications/6905>.

all non-school related responsibilities should be made optional at the choice of the teacher rather than making them mandatory.

Applying the Magna Carta rule of standard 6 hours class time for all levels maybe sub-optimal. The pattern in OECD countries showed lower classroom teaching time as one goes the education ladder. ⁵

Finally, we should invest in a rigorous accounting of how teachers' time are used in both teaching and non-teaching functions. Only then can we convert the generic idea of overburdened teachers into actionable points. Only then can we pinpoint precisely how much should we reduce teaching load whenever we assign school-related and non-school related responsibilities.

Education system has two components – public and private

As we review the Magna Carta, let us not forget that the education system has two components – the public and private sectors. As we review the policies for public school teachers, we should always consider the implications of whatever policies we adopt on private school teachers. While the proportion of students in private school is low at the lower grades, this rises as one goes up to secondary schools. For instance, the enrollment in SY 2019-2020 shows that the public to private ratio is 90 is to 10 in Grade 1 but this is 57 to 43 in Grade 12. We should always be reminded of this sharing in adopting policies for teachers. In addition, the NAT and PISA test results show that private schools are performing better than public schools in reading, science, and mathematics. This should remind us that there is a better performing private component of the education system.

On Teacher Education and Training

Pre-service training and preparation

We also note the low passing rate of teachers in Profession Board examinations. This says a lot about the teacher training in the country. We would like to point out that the passing rate for teachers' board is even lower than the national average passing rate among the 46 professional boards examinations. For instance, data from the Professional Regulation Commission posted in the Commission on Higher Education website⁶ showed that for the period 2014 to 2018 LET-elementary (all years) and LET-secondary (except for 2017, 2018) have lower passing rate than the national average. In addition, in three of these years (2015, 2017, 2018) the passing rate in LET-elementary is the lowest.

In-service training

There is no question about the desirability of supporting improvements in-service training of teachers. The question is how? We point out a need for a better system for (a) assessing training needs, (b) monitoring implementation, and (c) evaluating impact of training provided.

⁵ OECD (2019) "HOW MUCH TIME DO TEACHERS SPEND TEACHING?" in Education at a Glance 2019, pp. 414-432. Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2019_62fbb20d-en

⁶ https://ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2004_2018-PRC-natl-pass-rate-from-2393-heis-as-of-18June2019.pdf

Before conducting any training, we need to assess better what training is needed. WB and AusAID study⁷ highlights the weak diagnostic system. It laments lack of even the basic data on who is being trained and the type of training was provided.

We should not be satisfied with counting the number of training provided, counting the number teachers trained, and counting how much we spent. These are mere indications that trainings have been conducted. It does not yet say anything about delivering on the training objectives – the reason for conducting the training. It is as if we assume that when the training is done the objectives are automatically attained – a bad assumption to make. Even if we were able to conduct the right kinds of training, there are still many more things we need to do to know whether the objectives of the training conducted has been attained. First, we need to monitor and assess the manner of implementation. The manner of implementation can tell us a lot about the outcome of the training. Finally, we need to assess whether the training was able to deliver on its objectives. This whole system from determining training needs to assessing whether the training conducted delivered on their stated objectives should be built in any in-service training system.

Finally, the pandemic has highlighted an additional competency that teachers should be trained for – teaching remotely. Given the frequency of emergencies that many parts of the country is exposed to, such as typhons and floods, the experience of teaching remotely during the pandemic should be harnessed to inform the training on this newly realized important competency.

There is promise for in-service training for teachers delivered by the private sector

In addition to the public training system provided by the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP), there are valuable experiences in in-service teacher training provided by the private sector such as those provide by the Private Education Assistance Committee (PEAC) as part of the Educational Service Contracting (ESC) program. In interviews and an online survey of teachers and school administrators⁸ who availed of the PEAC administered training showed they were highly satisfied with the training. This indicates the effectiveness of the training. The trainings were also found to have incentive effects in improving the learning experience of students both by school administrators and teachers.

⁷ WB and AusAID (2016) “Developing a proficient and motivated teacher workforce in the Philippines.” Available: <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/pt/351711468567066113/pdf/106950-REVISED-PH-PETS-QSDS-Note-3.pdf>

⁸ ADB (forthcoming) “Assessment of the Education Service Contracting (ESC), Senior High School Voucher Program (SHSVP) and Joint-Delivery Voucher Program for Senior High School Technical-Vocational-Livelihood Specializations (JDVP-TVL)”