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# Process Evaluation of the CHED K to 12 Adjustment Assistance Program

*Alex B. Brillantes Jr., Karen Dominique B. Brillantes,  
and Justine Beatrice B. Jovellanos*



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## CONTACT US:

RESEARCH INFORMATION DEPARTMENT  
Philippine Institute for Development Studies

18th Floor, Three Cyberpod Centris - North Tower  
EDSA corner Quezon Avenue, Quezon City, Philippines

publications@mail.pids.gov.ph  
(+632) 372-1291/(+632) 372-1292

<https://www.pids.gov.ph>

Process Evaluation of the CHED K to 12 Adjustment  
Assistance Program

Alex Brillantes, Jr., Ph.D.  
Karen Dominique B. Brillantes  
Justine Beatrice B. Jovellanos

PHILIPPINE INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

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## **Abstract**

This paper evaluates the implementation of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) K to 12 Adjustment Assistance Program, established following the full implementation of the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533) in 2016, with the Senior High School (SHS) rollout. This had far reaching implications for the education stakeholders affected, including CHED. Specifically, the transition was expected to adversely affect higher education institutions and faculty and non-teaching staff due to non-enrollment to college of the first two SHS cohorts. But while this transition threatened HEI labor and sustainability, it also presented a rare opportunity to upgrade the country's higher education sector. A key agency in the reform, CHED established the K to 12 Transition Program to (a) provide assistance to the basic education sector, (b) protect higher education from losses, and (c) leverage the transition to make unprecedented investments in higher education. Under the program, CHED designed a number of individual and institutional grants, including Scholarships for Graduate Studies; Instruction, Research, and Sectoral Engagement; Institutional Development and Innovation Grants; and SHS Support Grants, among others.

The transition likewise meant organizational and process adjustments in the CHED bureaucracy that encountered capacity challenges and related concerns. In effect, the program—already on its second year of implementation—has been facing low uptake, program dropouts, and a barrage of complaints stemming mostly from the delayed release of program benefits. It is within this context that the Program was evaluated.

This process evaluation examines the aspects of implementation that have led to said challenges by assessing the program logic and its plausibility, service delivery and utilization, and program organization. This study finds that the Program has to be appreciated as a transition program itself, one wherein an innovative program, spurred by the need to recognize the imperatives of globalization and internal reform, required adjustments to and in the internal bureaucracies of CHED, long steeped in bureaucratic processes and routine, a positive variation of bureaupathology. This has meant the establishment of a transition office in CHED, an ad hoc Program Management Unit, that itself had to go through its own transition measures as it adjusted to the regular CHED bureaucracy. The study has surfaced many of the administrative challenges encountered in the implementation of the K to 12 program, most notably CHED's lack of absorptive capacity, which hindered smooth program implementation, thereby overshadowing the program's innovativeness and gains. Overall, CHED must (re)focus on the broader goal of the K to 12 Transition Program, which is to contribute to making Philippine higher education more globally competitive. It is imperative to redouble collective efforts to develop and design accompanying policies, plans, and strategies to attain this goal.

**Keywords:** K to 12, education reform, higher education, faculty development, K to 12 transition, process adjustments, living allowances, education policy

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## Process Evaluation of the CHED K to 12 Adjustment Assistance Program

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Justine Beatrice B. Jovellanos\**

### 1. Background and objectives

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) K to 12 Adjustment Assistance Program is situated within the context of a basic education reform in the country, which is the shift to the K to 12 system that has only become more imperative in recent years. For the basic education sector, there is a need to improve the basic education curriculum (PIDS 2012), which the addition of two years in high school can accomplish as it decongests it, allowing for more time to master skills necessary for college or employment. For higher education, on the other hand, there is a need to make Filipino graduates' qualifications comparable to that of their global counterparts.

In 2011, the Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organization showed that among the countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), only the Philippines had a ten-year basic education cycle and pre-university education (**Table 1**). This cycle has been compelled to adjust and transform given that the Philippines is also part of the ASEAN integration. It will be recalled that among the pillars of ASEAN integration is the socio-economic pillar that requires comparability in ASEAN members' educational systems, considering the requirements of exchange and mobility of students in the ASEAN, including those in higher education (e.g., credit transfer mechanisms).

**Table 1. Comparative data on durations of basic and pre-university education in the ASEAN**

Country	Basic Education Cycle	Pre-University Education
Brunei	11/12	13/15
Cambodia	12	13
Indonesia	12	13
Lao PDR	12	14
Malaysia	12	14/15
Myanmar	11	12
Philippines	10	10
Singapore	11	11
Thailand	12	12
Timor-Leste	12	12
Vietnam	12	14/15

Source: Presentation by Dr. Ethel Agnes P. Valenzuela, "K to 12 Trends in Southeast Asia", SEAMEO INNOTECH

The need for comparability is further reinforced by several international agreements, such as the Washington Accord, the Bologna Process, and the APEC Agreement<sup>1</sup>, and the recent

\*The authors are PIDS consultants, and are the Co-Principal Investigator, Research Associate, and Research Assistant for the study, respectively. Dr. Alex Brillantes is also a member of the faculty at the National College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines. The authors thank the CHED K to 12 Program Management Unit for the assistance it extended in the conduct of this study.

<sup>1</sup> These agreements stipulate the minimum number of years of education recognized by the signatory countries for several professions (e.g., Engineering, Accounting, and Pharmacy).

incident involving overseas Filipino professionals, in which their lack of two more years of education has threatened the practice of their profession (**Box 1**).

**Box 1. The effect of the 10-year basic education cycle on some Filipino professionals working in other countries**

There have been cases of Filipino professionals working abroad who could not practice their profession due to fewer years of schooling than the standard in the country where they worked. Among them were Filipino engineers and architects in Qatar who were in danger of being unable to register with the country’s Urban Planning and Development Authority (UPDA) and practice as engineer and architects because, lacking two years of basic education, their college degrees are equivalent only to a diploma in Qatar, thereby rendering them unqualified to take the registration exam. Representatives of the Philippine government (CHED, DOLE, and the Philippine Embassy in Qatar) had to hold a high-level dialogue with their Qatari counterparts in 2016, coming to an agreement that the Philippines would prove the equivalency between Filipino and Qatari engineering and architecture education, and that meanwhile, Filipinos would be allowed to take the exam for registration to UPDA.

Source: Official statement of Former CHED Chairperson Patricia Licuanan, February 2016

**Figure 1** presents the beginnings and historical evolution of the K to 12 reform efforts over the past decades. These efforts to transition to the K to 12 system date back to 1949, when the first recommendations to adopt a twelve-year basic education cycle were made. Since then, there have been variations of policies extending basic education, including the restoration of seventh grade in the 60s. However, proposals to lengthen basic education to 12 years were only solidified in recent years.

**Figure 1. Brief history of the K to 12 reform**

Before WWII	After WWII, 1949	1949-1960	1970	1991
Philippine basic education comprised seven (7) years in elementary and four (4) years in secondary.	There were recommendations made to complete the transition to a 12-year basic education system.	Grade VII was recommended to be restored and added to the primary education system.	Add a year to secondary education to better prepare students who plan to skip university education.	Retain the 10-year basic education cycle and have career counseling in primary and secondary schools.
1998-2000	2006-2008	September 2012	May 2013	2013 to present
Prioritize student learning through curricular reforms; add a one-year pre-baccalaureate stage for those enrolling in higher education.	Lengthen educational cycle by adding two years to basic education; extend pre-university education to 12 years total.	DepEd K to 12 implementation gained support with the filing of the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2012.	The bill, known as RA 10533 or Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 was signed into law.	The implementation of the law was phased starting with universal kindergarten in S.Y.11-12. Senior high school was rolled out S.Y. 16-17.

Source: The K to 12 Basic Education Program, Don Bosco Press

The imperatives of continuous reform in education and rapid globalization have been among the factors that culminated in the enactment of Republic Act 10533 or the *Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013*, the law governing the country's shift to the system. The law's implementation was phased beginning with the rollout of universal kindergarten in school year (SY) 2011-2012. In 2016, the Department of Education (DepEd) fully implemented it with the rollout of Senior High School (SHS), marking the beginning of the five-year transition period.

Although the transition is essentially a basic education reform, its enactment has far-reaching implications on the entire education system of the country. For higher education specifically, it has been expected to result in revenue losses for higher education institutions (HEIs) and reduced work or teaching load, if not total displacement of their faculty and non-teaching staff, owing to multi-year low enrolment in colleges nationwide. There have been various estimates of potential displacement that came out<sup>2</sup>, but based on the study conducted by the CHED, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), and the UP Population Institute, about 25,090 personnel may be displaced over five years<sup>3</sup>. The law therefore identifies CHED as one of the principal actors in an inter-agency effort for ensuring a smooth transition to the K to 12 system. More specifically, it details CHED's mandate, as stated in the following provisions:

- Section 5: *“The DepEd shall formulate the design and details of the enhanced basic education curriculum. It shall work with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to craft harmonized basic and tertiary curricula for global competitiveness of Filipino graduates. To ensure college readiness and to avoid remedial duplication of basic education subject, the DepEd shall coordinate with the CHED and TESDA.”*
- Section 7: *“To ensure that the enhanced basic education program meets the demand for quality teachers and school leaders, the DepEd and the CHED, in collaboration with relevant partners in government, academe, industry, and nongovernmental organizations, shall conduct teacher education and training programs.” Specifically, these include (a) In-service Training on Content and Pedagogy, (b) Training of New Teachers, and (c) Training of School Leadership.*
- Section 12: *“The DepEd, the CHED and the TESDA shall formulate the appropriate strategies and mechanisms needed to ensure smooth transition from the existing ten (10) years basic education cycle to the enhanced basic education (K to 12) cycle.”*

Moreover, Section 31 of the law's implementing rules and regulations states that *“In the implementation of the Act, including the transition period, the rights of labor as provided in the Constitution, the Civil Service Rules and Regulations, Labor Code of the Philippines, and existing collective agreements, as well as the prerogatives of management, shall be respected. The DOLE, DepEd, CHED and TESDA shall promulgate the appropriate joint administrative issuance, within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this IRR, to ensure the sustainability of the private and public educational institutions, and the promotion and protection of the rights, interests and welfare of teaching and non-teaching personnel”* (IRR of RA 10533).

In relation to Section 31, the other agencies involved, DepEd and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), have established their own programs to respond to the projected displacement of faculty and non-teaching staff. DepEd has its Green Lane, whereby hiring of

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<sup>2</sup> Includes the earliest estimate of 80,000 published in newspapers in 2013. Source: Draft CHED Report for CCHTE, June 2016

<sup>3</sup> Presentation made by Maria Cynthia Rose Bautista to the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines, “Gearing up for the K to 12 Transition. Updates on the Preparations of the Commission on Higher Education”, 15 January 2016



affected HEI personnel who would choose to transfer to SHS would be prioritized<sup>4</sup>. DOLE, on the other hand, has an Adjustment Measures Program designed for those who would choose not to transfer to basic education<sup>5</sup>. The program provides income support for a number of months, employment facilitation, and trainings and livelihood programs.

### 1.1. CHED's strategy through the K to 12 transition

While this transition threatened HEI labor and sustainability, it also presented a rare opportunity for upgrading the country's higher education sector. Over the past several years, the Philippines has been falling behind its ASEAN neighbors as far as performance in higher education is concerned. Indicative of this is the QS University Rankings for Asia, where in 2015, only the University of the Philippines was ranked among the top 100 universities in Asia, whereas five universities from Malaysia were included<sup>6</sup> (**Table 2**).

**Table 2. ASEAN universities included in the top 300 of QS University Rankings for Asia**

ASEAN Country	No. of Universities Included in the Top 100	No. of Universities Included in the Top 101-300
Brunei	0	1
Vietnam	0	1
Singapore	2	0
Philippines	1	3 <sup>7</sup>
Indonesia	1	6
Thailand	3	8
Malaysia	5	16

Source: QS University Rankings Asia 2015

Among the basic indicators used in comparing countries across regions in terms of the education sector is the country's investment in education. Compared to its ASEAN neighbors, the Philippines has not invested as much in higher education (**Table 3**), with its higher education spending at only 2.7 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)<sup>8</sup> in 2012, which is below Thailand (7.6%), Vietnam (6.3%), Malaysia (5.9%), Indonesia (3.6%), Brunei (3.3%), and Singapore (3.2%)<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, the Philippines has among the lowest Gross Expenditure on Research and Development at less than 0.2 percent of GDP in 2007, much lower than UNESCO's recommendation of one percent of GDP and the other ASEAN countries' research spending (**Figure 2**).

**Table 3. Comparative higher education in Asia as of 2012, \*2010, \*\*2011**

Country	Spending for Higher Education	Per Capita Spending (in USD)	Participation (% of College Age Population in Higher Education)
Brunei	3.3	15,714.8	24.3
Cambodia	2.6*	593.1	15.8**

<sup>4</sup> DepED Memorandum No. 120 s. 2016

<sup>5</sup> Department Order No. 177 s. 2017

<sup>6</sup>Source: QS Top Universities website, "QS University Rankings: Asia 2015" (Retrieved from <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/asian-university-rankings/2015>)

<sup>7</sup> Ateneo de Manila University, University of Santo Tomas, and De La Salle University

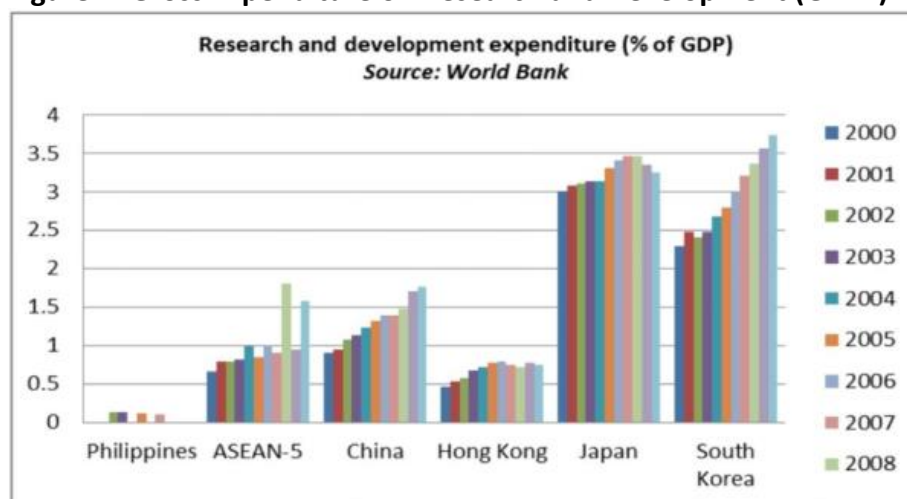
<sup>8</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, "Higher Education in Asia," June 2015

<sup>9</sup> Source: Presentation by Maria Cynthia Rose Bautista to the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines, "Gearing Up for the K to 12 Transition. Updates on the Preparations of the Commission on Higher Education," 15 January 2016

Indonesia	3.6	1,181.4	31.5
Lao PDR	2.8	nd	16.7
Malaysia	5.9	9,752.9	36.0
Myanmar	0.8	nd	13.8**
Philippines	2.7	548.25	28.0
Singapore	3.2	16,246.9	nd
Thailand	7.6	1,882.7	51.4
Vietnam	6.3*	1,326.8*	24.6

Source: Presentation by Maria Cynthia Rose Bautista, "Gearing up for the K to 12 Transition", 15 January 2016

**Figure 2. Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD)**



Source: Presentation of the UP Strategic Budget FY 2015 for the Senate Committee on Finance 2015

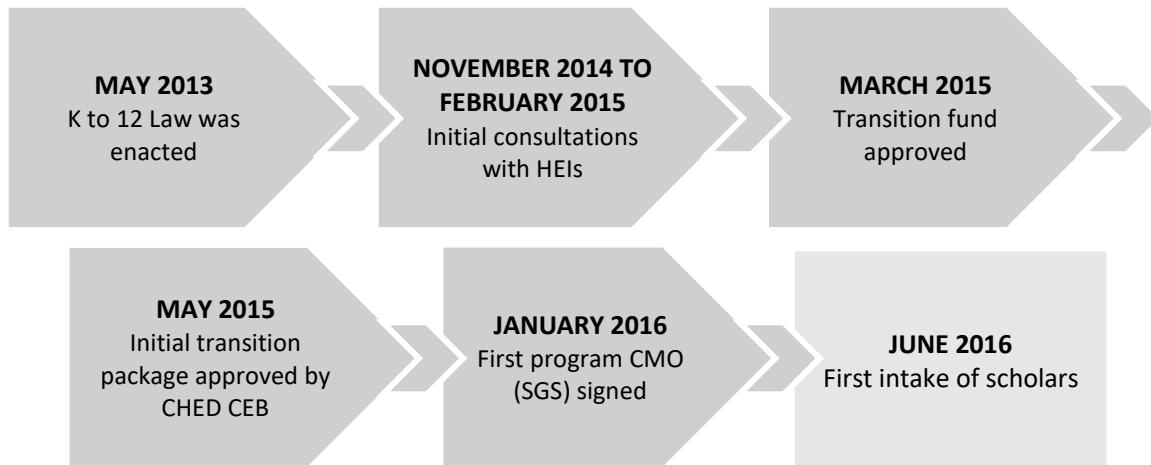
Another indicator is faculty qualifications. Only 11 percent of Philippine higher education faculty have doctorate degrees and 39 percent master's degrees, again falling behind Malaysia (20% and 49%, respectively) and Vietnam (14% and 46%, respectively)<sup>10</sup>. These numbers indicate that, given rapid globalization, the recent ASEAN integration, and the increasingly competitive environment, reforms in the higher education sector has also become imperative for the Philippines.

It is within this context that the CHED K to 12 Transition Program was designed and established by virtue of Commission en Banc (CEB) Resolution No. 210-2015, approved in May 2015. This resolution approved an initial proposed package consisting of five projects "as CHED's responses to simultaneously mitigate the adverse impact to higher education and upgrade the qualifications of the teaching and non-teaching staff" (CEB Resolution No. 210-2015). In a span of two years year, the program has evolved to include several other grants.

It is worth noting that CHED's preparations for the full implementation of the new curriculum began only in early 2015, or two years after the enactment of RA 10533 (**Figure 3**), prompted by a growing concern with the transition's adverse impacts on the higher education sector. This provided CHED with only a year to prepare the components of the development package. Although as early as 2012, a key informant has said that higher education leaders in leading universities have already begun work on curriculum revisions at the college freshman level in anticipation of the implementation of SHS.

<sup>10</sup> Source: Presentation by Maria Cynthia Rose Bautista to the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines, "Gearing Up for the K to 12 Transition. Updates on the Preparations of the Commission on Higher Education," 15 January 2016

**Figure 3. Timeline of CHED’s preparations for the K to 12 transition**



Source: Briefer on the Transition or Adjustment Fund and CEB Resolution No. 210-2015

Currently, the Transition Program has the following components: (i) Scholarships for Graduate Studies (SGS-L and SGS-A); (ii) Instruction, Research (DARE-TO and SALIKHA), and Sectoral Engagement (IRSE); (iii) Professional Advancement and Postdoctoral Studies (PAPS); (iv) Institutional Development and Innovation Grants (IDIG); and (v) SHS Support (Grants, Teacher Training, and Materials Development).

CHED envisions these components to ultimately result in an improved educational landscape in the country, while protecting the higher education sector from anticipated losses. On its second year, however, the program has been facing a host of severe implementation challenges that have resulted in lower than expected program uptake for most of the grants, program dropouts particularly for SGS-L, and a barrage of complaints stemming mostly from the delayed release of program benefits, both for the individual and institutional grants. This process evaluation, conducted by PIDS, thus aims to (i) determine whether the program is being implemented as conceived, (ii) document program implementation, and (iii) examine aspects of implementation that have led to these, by assessing the program logic and its plausibility, service delivery and utilization, and program organization.

It should be mentioned that this process evaluation has originally intended to examine all program components. However, due to issues with obtaining potential respondents and their contact information, the scope of the evaluation was limited only to the three biggest program components in terms of share in the CHED K to 12 Transition budget. These are the individual program component SGS-L and the institutional program components IDIG and DARE-TO.

This paper is organized as follows: Part II lays out the research design and methodology. Part III provides a description of the program and the program logic. Part IV details the implementation or delivery of the three focus program components. Part V discusses the beneficiaries’ assessment of the program. Part VI examines program organization. Finally, Part VII synthesizes the key findings and offers some recommendations for improving program implementation.

## 2. Methodology

This section discusses the evaluation framework used, the research activities conducted, and the respondents included for the process evaluation.

### 2.1. Evaluation framework

This process evaluation adopts a framework that examines three components of program theory, namely, program impact, service utilization plan, and program organizational plan (Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman 2004; Gertler et al 2011). In this framework, program impact theory or logic is assessed in terms of (1) the need the program is addressing, (2) the assumptions critical to the attainment of the program objectives, (3) the feasibility of the program goals and objectives, (4) the adequacy of program resources, components, and activities, and (5) the clarity of target program beneficiaries and program delivery procedures. Service utilization plan, on the other hand, is examined in terms of the program's coverage (i.e., its target beneficiaries and the services delivered) and the beneficiaries' satisfaction with the services and their delivery. Lastly, program organization is evaluated looking into the adequacy of the program's human resource, the presence and quality of necessary functions and operational procedures, and the use of resources available to the program.

### 2.2. Research design

The evaluation was conducted over a period of six months (from July to December 2017), and draws extensively from official program documents, supplemented by Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted with key stakeholders (**Table 4**). These stakeholders are grouped into program implementers and program beneficiaries. Program implementers include the primary beneficiary of this evaluation, the K to 12 Program Management Unit (PMU) at the CHED Central Office (CHEDCO); the K to 12 units of the CHED Regional Offices (CHEDROs); Grants Management Officers (GMOs) of delivering HEIs; CHED offices highly involved in program processes (Accounting and Finance offices); and an allied agency responsible for a program process. Program beneficiaries meanwhile include individual grantees, particularly the faculty and staff scholars, and grantees of the institutional grants, IDIG and DARE-TO.

**Table 4. Focus group discussions and key informant interviews conducted per cluster**

Research Activity	Luzon (QC, Subic, Benguet)	Visayas (Tacloban, Cebu)	Mindanao (Davao)	Total
KII with CHED Accounting and Finance Office	1	N/A	N/A	1
KII with allied agency	1	N/A	N/A	1
KII with IDIG Grantees	0	3	2	5
KII with DARE TO Grantees	0	2	1	3
KII with CHED Auditor	1	N/A	N/A	1
KII with Former Program Director	1	N/A	N/A	1
KII with Former Commissioner	1	N/A	N/A	1
FGD with K to 12 PMU Teams	10	N/A	N/A	10
FGD with SGS – L Scholars	2	2	1	5
FGD with Regional K to 12 Units	0	1	1	2

FGD with Grants Management Offices	1	1	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>33</b>

Source: Authors' tabulation

### 2.2.1. Key informant interviews

KIIs were conducted with the CHED's accounting and finance offices, a representative of an allied agency, and the institutional grantees. Additional KIIs were also conducted with CHED's auditor, a former CHED Commissioner, and the former Program Director, as the need to seek more information arose. The research team also originally planned to interview Chairpersons of the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) for IDIG and DARE-TO, who are involved in approval processes, but due to their unavailability, were no longer included. Overall, the team accomplished 13 KIIs. The following are brief descriptions of the respondents and each KII.

1. A group interview was conducted with representatives of the Administrative and Financial Management Service (AFMS) and Higher Education Development Fund Service (HEDFS), which are involved in the processing of grantees' documents for the disbursement of program benefits, especially during the first phase of the implementation. They were asked questions on how their work affects the processes of the K to 12 PMU, and to identify bottlenecks on their part.
2. As one of the major complaints about the program is the delayed release of program benefits, an interview with the representative of the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), through which the program benefits are released, was also conducted. The informant was also asked questions similar to those asked the CHED offices.
3. The five (5) IDIG grantees and three (3) DARE-TO grantees had to be interviewed separately due to logistical considerations. Except for one HEI respondent, which has both an IDIG and DARE-TO grant, all of the HEI respondents represent one approved project under one of the grants, and these projects are in various disciplines. Among the respondents, only one is at the implementation stage; the rest have yet to receive their project funding. They were asked to describe their experience with the process of applying for the grants and the service of the program implementers, and to give their overall perception of the program.
4. Although not originally planned, an interview with the former Program Director was also done to seek more information on the PMU's management-level matters.
5. The former CHED Commissioner with program oversight was also interviewed to gather further information on the beginnings and rationale of the Transition Program.
6. Another additional interview was with the CHED Auditor conducted to verify information gathered from the grantees and the PMU on a particular issue.

### 2.2.2. Focus group discussions

This evaluation made use of purposive sampling, which gives more weight to the criteria for sample selection than the sample size, in the selection of FGD respondents. Overall, 20 FGDs with four sets of stakeholders were accomplished, described in the following:

1. FGDs with the K to 12 PMU Teams in CHED Central Office (CHEDCO) were conducted to assess the teams' understanding of and compliance with their processes, and discuss difficulties and good experiences in program implementation. All ten PMU

sub-teams representing each grant and support function were included to get a complete picture of program implementation at the national level. Respondents included some of the Team Leads, Technical Staff, and Administrative Officers.

2. FGDs with Grants Management Officers (GMOs) of delivering HEIs (DHEIs) were conducted to assess their understanding of their role, discuss any difficulties with the program processes, and document good practices in overseeing CHED K to 12 scholars in their respective HEIs. All island clusters were represented with the selection of a mix of public and private DHEIs from Davao and regions in Luzon and Visayas. Most of the respondents were the Grants Administrators of the GMOs.
3. To enable the analysis of potential effects of regional differences on implementation, it was targeted to get the perspectives of all regional K to 12 units, but due to scheduling limitations, only those from the Visayas and Davao regions were included. Majority of the respondents were the Project Technical Staff of the units. Based on their responses, the regional K to 12 units were more or less homogenous in terms of concerns and challenges.
4. FGDs with beneficiaries of SGS-L grant included scholars from 2016 and 2017 batches in Cebu and Davao, the areas in the Visayas and Mindanao, respectively, with the most number of grantees. The respondents from Luzon were supposed to come from Quezon City or Manila, the areas also with the most number of grantees. However, due to logistical constraints, only the 2016 and 2017 batches of scholars from the Mountain Province represented the Luzon cluster. It was originally planned to include more scholars to capture a spectrum of program experience, but just as with the regional K to 12 units, themes have been saturated with the current respondents.

The Luzon group consisted of six (6) faculty members from one state college and 14 scholars from a state university, taking up programs in Science Education, Rural Development, Social Studies, Library and Information Science, Language Education, and Soil Science. The Visayas group had 27 respondents from two private HEIs doing doctorate studies mainly in Education. Finally, the Mindanao group had 13 scholars from various universities within Region XI taking up a mix of disciplines, including Computer Science, Theology, Public Administration, Agriculture, Humanities, Educational Leadership, Business Management, and Clinical Psychology. **Table 5** shows the breakdown of the respondents per cluster in terms of the type of HEI they are attending (DHEI), type of their sending institution (SHEI), and the batch they belong to.

**Table 5. Descriptive statistics for individual grantees (SGS-L) per cluster**

	DHEI		SHEI		Batch		Total
	<i>Public</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Public</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	
Luzon	83%	17%	100%	0	50%	50%	20
Visayas	11%	85%	81%	19%	70%	30%	27
Mindanao	18%	82%	45%	45%	45%	55%	13

\*Note: 4% of Visayas participants missed filling out the DHEI portion; 9% from Mindanao participants missed filling out the SHEI portion; and some participants from the Luzon group were not able to indicate whether their DHEI/SHEI is public or private

There were also a number of grantees who shared through email their complaints revolving around the difficulties brought about by the delay in their living allowances, which was a recurring theme during the FGDs with grantees as well.



### 3. The CHED K to 12 adjustment assistance program

The five-year multi-component CHED K to 12 Adjustment Assistance Program has been established in fulfillment of CHED’s mandate to help ensure a seamless transition to the K to 12 system. It has been designed to directly perform CHED’s role in the transition, which are essentially to assist the basic education sector in the implementation of senior high school, align the college curriculum with the K to 12 curriculum, and protect the higher education sector from losses arising from the transition. However, as the transition period also opened up a rare opportunity for the sector to embark on its own reform, the program has also been designed as a massive developmental program for higher education addressing the shortfalls in investment in the sector, as discussed earlier.

In its first iteration, the program had five components<sup>11</sup>, but in a span of two years, it has expanded to include seven grants and two non-grant components (**Table 6**). The grants can be classified into individual and institutional grants. The former have been initially targeted only to higher education teaching and non-teaching personnel retained by their HEIs during the transition, but had reduced teaching or work load. Later on, these grants have been made available even to those who have been completely displaced. Institutional grants, on the other hand, are intended for HEIs or units within HEIs that could propose research or development and innovation projects that are in line with identified priority areas and thrusts. Eventually, these grants have also been made to serve as avenues for individual faculty and staff with reduced teaching or workloads to participate in the program. SHS Support projects meanwhile include teacher training and development of teaching guides, the intended beneficiaries of whom are SHS teachers, and grants targeted to HEI faculty who can lend their expertise to SHS teachers.

Among the individual components, SGS-L has the biggest share of the Transition fund. From a budget share of 39 percent in 2016, it increased to 50 percent the following year (**Figure 4**). Other grants that have also seen an increase in allocation in 2017 were SGS-A, PAPS, and the SHS Training Package. These changes in budget allocation reflect the adjustments made based on the actual demand for each grant on the first year of implementation.

**Table 6. Program components**

The CHED K to 12 Transition Program		
<p><b>Individual Grants<sup>12</sup></b></p> <p><b>Scholarships for Graduate Studies (Local and Abroad):</b> Grants for pursuing a master’s or doctorate degree in CHED-recognized DHEIs in the country and abroad, respectively.</p>	<p><b>Institutional Grants</b></p> <p><b>Discovery Applied Research and Extension for Trans/Interdisciplinary Opportunities (DARE TO):</b> The research component of IRSE enabling groups of deloaded or displaced faculty to participate in research</p>	<p><b>Support to Senior High School</b></p> <p><b>SHS Support Grants:</b> Grants available to faculty with expertise in subject matters currently being taught in SHS, for conducting:</p> <p><b>Action Research Grants:</b> available to individuals</p>

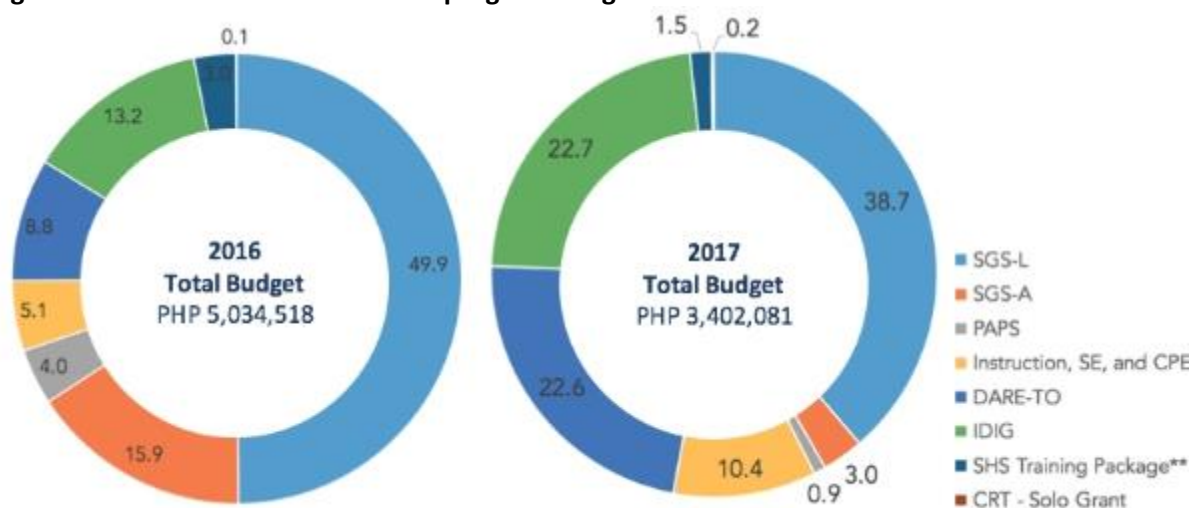
<sup>11</sup> Scholarships for Graduate Studies, Development Grants for Faculty and Staff, Innovation Grants for Institutions, Support to Senior High School Implementation, and Policy Advocacy and Communications

<sup>12</sup> The Program also has the Grants for Displaced (CMO No. 51 s. 2016), but these are subsumed under the other individual grants. It is different from said grants in that applicants must be completely displaced faculty and staff.

<p><b>Instruction, Research, and Sectoral Engagement (IRSE):</b> Grant for undertaking activities such as industry immersion, research, community service and extension, among others.</p> <p><b>Professional Advancement and Postdoctoral Studies:</b> Grant for undertaking non-degree courses relevant to teaching discipline; or postdoctoral studies or research for doctoral degree holders</p>	<p>opportunities or special projects.</p> <p><b>Institutional Development and Innovation Grants (IDIG):</b> Grant for undertaking projects in key areas of growth of Philippine HEIs (e.g., Internationalization, Academic-Industry Linkages, Collaborative Research, and Development of Niche, Priority and Endangered Programs).</p>	<p><b>Content Knowledge Development:</b> available to units in HEIs</p> <p><b>Teacher Training:</b> intended for SHS teachers</p> <p><b>Materials Development:</b> development of teaching guides for 21 subjects taught in SHS</p>
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Source: Different CMOs and component logframes

**Figure 4. The CHED K to 12 transition program budget allocation for 2016 and 2017**



Source: Authors' computation based on the CHED K to 12 PMU financial data provided to PIDS

Note: Total grant budget (P'000) for 2016 = PHP 5,034,518 and total grant budget for 2017 = PHP 3,402,081. Operating expenses are not included in the figures. Values above are in percentages.

In terms of performance (**Table 7**), a comparison of 2016 targets and uptake indicates that slots for most of the grants were not filled, such as for SGS-Abroad, PAPS, and IRSE, among others. As mentioned, this led to the downward revision of the targets for most grants in 2017. However, even after the adjustments to the targets, uptake was still low. On the other hand, there were also grants that performed relatively well in terms of meeting targets, such as IDIG and Teacher Training, even surpassing them. While there is no information gathered that points to why potential beneficiaries are not availing of the grants in the first place, the FGDs offer some insights into decreases in the uptake on the second year of implementation, which shall be discussed later.



**Table 7. The CHED K to 12 transition program's performance as of June 2017**

Grant Name	2016		2017	
	Targets	Actual	Targets	Actual
<b>Scholarships for Graduate Studies - Local (SGS-L)</b>	5,514 new scholars	5,551 new scholars	4,200 new scholars	2,916 new scholars approved  4,516 Continuing scholars being supported
<b>Scholarships for Graduate Studies - Abroad (SGS-A)</b>	170 new scholars	98 new scholars	160 new scholars	46 new scholars  2017 applications ongoing
<b>Professional Advancement (PA)</b>	780 grantees/ faculty trained	58 PA grantees	100 PA grantees  40 CPE Units supported for the conduct of instruction training  32 CPE Units for the conduct of leadership training or advancements in knowledge	18 PA grantees  7 CPE Unit awarded for the conduct of leadership training or advancements in knowledge  <i>Vetting ongoing for additional CPE grantees</i>
<b>Instruction, Research, and Sectoral Engagement (IRSE)</b>	5,280 grantees	313 Individual Research and Sectoral Engagement grantees  646 General Education Instruction grantees	200 Sectoral Engagement grantees  400 General Education Instruction grantees  30 grantees in the Creative Arts and Humanities	87 Sectoral Engagement grantees  2,884 General Education Instruction grantees  <i>2017 CHED-NCCA grants</i>

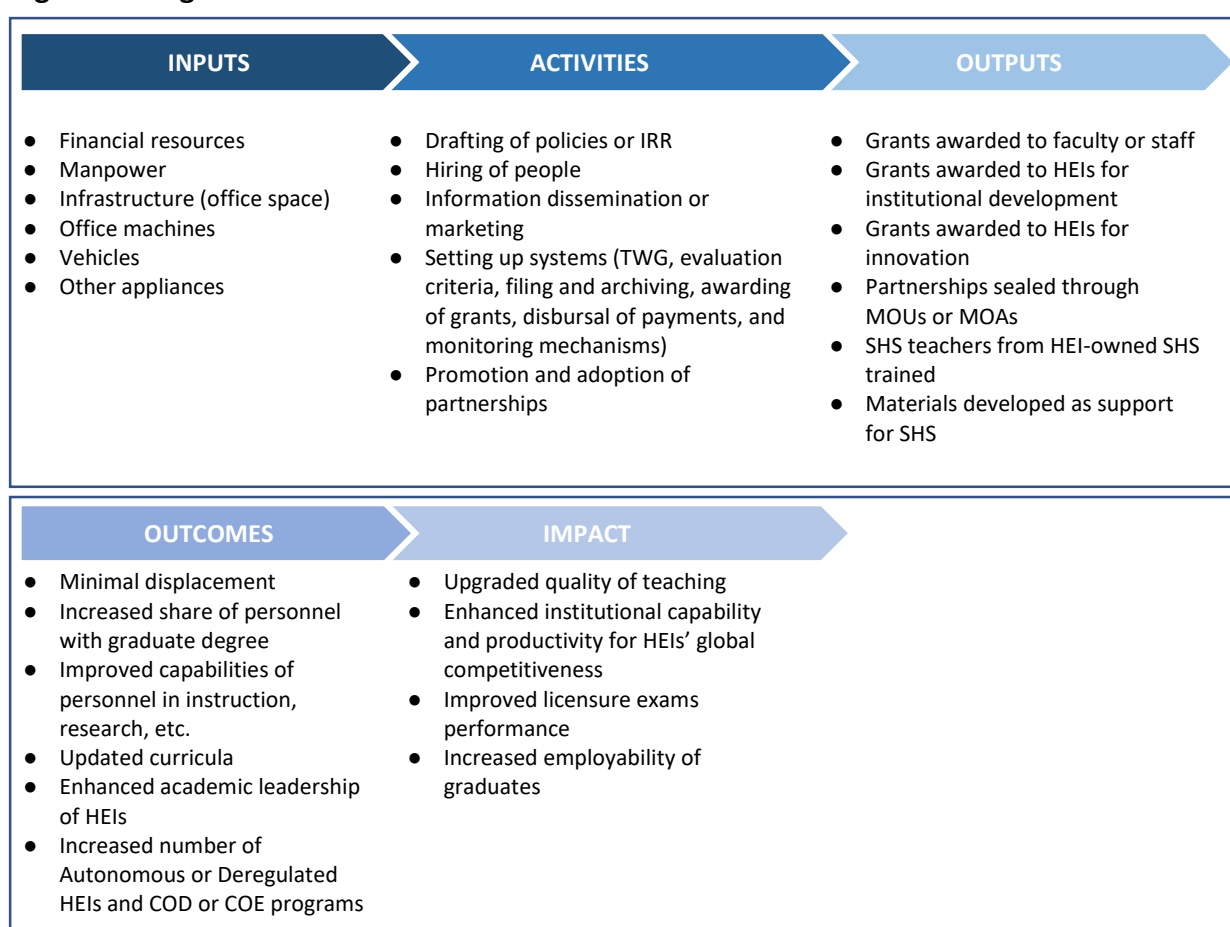
			(SALIKHA: CHED-NCCA Grants)	<i>applications ongoing</i>
<b>Discovery- Applied Research and Extension for Trans/Interdisciplinary Opportunities (DARE-TO)</b>	200 projects	76 projects	20 projects	<i>Call for 2017 Applications to be launched in August 2017</i>
<b>Institutional Development and Innovation Grants (IDIG)</b>	69 Development and Innovation Projects	88 Development and Innovation Projects 18 CHED-Initiated Projects for International Relations	59 New Projects Breakdown: 30 Development Grants 12 Innovation Grants 17 CHED-Initiated Projects	294 Applications received  <i>Vetting ongoing for Development and Innovation categories</i>  162 proposals passed Regional Vetting  <i>Ongoing application and vetting for CHED Initiated Projects Awarding in September</i>
<b>Support for Senior High School Grants</b>	300 grantees	25 grantees	50 grantees	1 grantee  <i>11 applications received (1st wave 2017)</i> <i>Ongoing call for applications (2nd wave 2017)</i>
<b>Teacher Training</b>	4,444 teachers	4,719 teachers from SUC/LUC	4,000 teachers	802 Teachers  <i>Teacher trainings currently being rolled out</i>
<b>Materials Development for Senior High School Support</b>	19 materials developed	19 materials developed	2 materials developed	<i>Materials development ongoing</i>

Source: CHED K to 12 PMU Budget Briefer FY 2018

### 3.1 The program logic

The program’s logical framework is shown on **Figure 5**. Being a major higher education program, The CHED K to 12 Transition Program’s intended overall impact are to improve the quality of instruction in the country and HEIs’ global competitiveness, which are expected to redound to graduates’ performance in professional licensure exams and employability. To this end, CHED allocated about PHP 5.3 Billion in 2016 and PHP 3.6 Billion in 2017<sup>13</sup> to the program, formed a dedicated PMU, and provided the infrastructure necessary for operations. The PMU then carried out the following activities: development of policies and implementing rules, establishment of systems and processes, forging of partnerships with various stakeholders for the implementation of the program components, and dissemination activities to reach the target beneficiaries.

**Figure 5. Program rationale and framework**



Source: CHED K to 12 PMU Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Within the timeframe of the program, the framework indicates that these activities are expected to produce outputs mainly in the form of grants awarded both to individual and institutional beneficiaries and the completion of their respective engagements, partnerships formed, SHS teachers trained, and SHS teaching guides produced. It should be noted, though, that Outputs are supposed to be within the implementers’ full control, which “grants awarded” are not, as opposed to “grants offered.” This is because the former requires the participation of the target

<sup>13</sup> Source: CHED K to 12 PMU’s Computations for Budget Requirements 2018-2020 provided to PIDS

beneficiaries, which is not fully within CHED's control. Thus, these should fall under program Outcomes.

Said outputs are expected to result in the following intermediate outcomes: improved faculty and non-teaching staff qualifications (as indicated by the number of those with graduate degrees) and capacities in various areas of academe work (as indicated by productive outputs in terms of projects, etc.), as faculty and staff displacement are minimized during the transition; improved HEI leadership (as indicated by responsive and sustainable institutional strategies); increased number of institutions and programs with Autonomous or Deregulated and COE/COD status, respectively; and an updated curricula "*at par with international standards*" (PMU Logical Framework).

Critical to the attainment of these intermediate outcomes are the implicit assumptions that, given the transition to the K to 12 system, the constraints to the pursuit of development endeavors faced both by HEIs and personnel are eliminated, hence they now have the opportunity to pursue such activities; and that HEIs and their personnel will take advantage of the grants as it is an alternative to displacement or layoffs. However, at the individual level, program uptake and actual scholar experiences, which are discussed in preceding sections, indicate so far that these assumptions are not strong.

Overall, there is a compelling basis for the interventions developed, which includes the imperatives for higher education reform earlier discussed, and each component's target beneficiaries are well-defined. Further assessment of the actual implementation is needed to determine whether the program so far has what it takes, in terms of inputs and activities, to attain its objectives. This is discussed in the succeeding sections.

#### **4. Service delivery**

This section explains in detail the delivery mechanisms for the three program components this evaluation focuses on.

##### *4.1. Scholarships for Graduate Studies – Local*

The local scholarships' objective is to raise the number of higher education personnel, especially of faculty, with master's degrees to 48 percent and doctorate degrees to 20 percent by 2020, while minimizing the number of the displaced during the transition<sup>14</sup>. CHED sees this as feasible as the transition has been expected to free higher education personnel from teaching or work obligations due to reduced work or teaching loads, enabling them to pursue further studies. Under the local scholarships grant, support is provided for (i) full scholarship for doctorate degree (new or continuing), (ii) full scholarship for master's degree (new or continuing), and (iii) thesis or dissertation grant. **Table 8** shows the benefits the faculty scholars are entitled to.

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<sup>14</sup> CHED originally targets to send 15,000 faculty and non-teaching staff to graduate studies—8,000 for master's degrees and 7,000 for doctorate degrees—during the transition to achieve said numbers.

**Table 8. SGS-L benefits**

	<b>Master's and Thesis Grantees</b>	<b>Doctorate and Dissertation Grantees</b>
Tuition and other fees*	Actual tuition and other fees	
Book Allowance**	Php 10,000.00 / academic year	
Living Allowance	Php 20,000.00 / month	Php 28,000.00 / month
<b>Living Allowance (for terms abroad for transnational programs)</b>	<b>Tier 1 Countries: PHP 40,000.00 / month</b> <b>Tier 2 Countries: PHP 60,000.00 / month</b> <b>Tier 3 Countries: PHP 80,000.00 / month</b>	
Transportation Assistance (for those studying outside their province)	PHP 10,000.00 / academic year	
Thesis / Dissertation / Capstone project Allowance (if applicable)	PHP 50,000.00	PHP 100,000.00
Group Insurance***	PHP 500.00 / year	
<i>Legend:</i> <i>*Not provided to Thesis/Dissertation grantees enrolled in non-DHEIs</i> <i>**Not provided to all Thesis/Dissertation grantees</i> <i>***Subject to availability</i> <i>Tier 1 Countries: Southeast Asian countries except Singapore</i> <i>Tier 2 Countries: Singapore, China, Eastern Europe, and all other countries not included in Tier 1 and Tier 3</i> <i>Tier 3 Countries: United States of America, Japan, Australia, and Western Europe</i>		

Source: CMO No. 4 s. 2017

In terms of design, while the grant has been patterned after CHED's existing Faculty Development Program, there were innovations in its implementation. A unique feature of SGS-L is that access to the grant is by HEI nomination, instead of individual applications. The rationale behind this process is that it helps ensure that the grants are awarded to the target beneficiaries, who are (a) deloaded and displaced faculty and staff, and (b) have the potential to contribute to the HEI, as well as to regional and national development goals, upon return from graduate studies. This, in turn, helps ensure that the component is being strategic in meeting its objectives<sup>15</sup>.

To be nominated for the scholarships, faculty or non-teaching staff must satisfy the following eligibility criteria (**Table 9**). Most notable among these are the criteria on return service obligation and teaching or workload status, as these appear to be the most crucial conditions of the scholarship, the violation of which would be met with severe penalties. Selection of grantees, on the other hand, is based on the strength of nominees' qualifications and the sending institutions' justification of their respective nominations for priority program areas, based on importance and value to the sending institution, regional and national development, and to the discipline or profession. Operationally, the PMU employs the following scoring system. The passing rate is 50, but consideration is given to those getting a score of as low as 45.

<sup>15</sup> CHED has made efforts to assist HEIs in strategically planning for the transition by conducting zonal workshops in mid-2015, whereby HEIs were provided a template for identifying the number of faculty and staff who will be deloaded and displaced and the schedule of their deloading or displacement. CHED encouraged HEIs to base their nominations to the grants on this plan.

**Table 9. SGS-L eligibility criteria**

Full Scholarship for Doctorate Degree	Full Scholarship for Master's Degree	Thesis or Dissertation Grant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Filipino citizen</li> <li>● Has a degree relevant to nomination from a CHED-recognized program and institution</li> <li>● Shall pursue a program aligned with teaching specialization, or justified in terms of contribution to the sending HEI, regional, or national development goals</li> <li>● Will fulfill the return service obligation</li> <li>● Fully or partially deloaded during the scholarship (maximum teaching load of 6 units or workload of 10 hours a week)</li> </ul>		
≤ 50 years old	≤ 52 years old	≤ 60 years old
Shall pursue a CHED-approved graduate program in a DHEI		Shall have taken program coursework and finish the degree in a CHED-recognized DHEI and program

Source: CMO No. 4 s. 2017

**Table 10. SGS-L PMU scoring system**

Evaluation Criteria	Weights	Full Points
Scholastic Record	20%	20
Professional Experience	40%	40
Potential Outcomes*	35%	35
Strategic Direction of the SHEI	5%	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>*Justification must be focused on at least one of the following areas:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Importance and value to SHEI</li> <li>2. Importance and value to the regional and national development</li> <li>3. Importance and value to the discipline</li> </ol>		

Source: CMO No. 4 s. 2017

**Tables 11 and 12** show the process from nomination until the disbursement of the scholarship benefits, based on the PMU's initial and updated process flows. The first process flow is for the process when all the steps were still centralized. Prior to calls for nominations, the PMU conducts regional roadshows, where the program and the nomination process are discussed to representatives of sending institutions. In 2016, nominations were manually done through submission of hard copies of nomination forms and supporting documents. Nominations received then go through several evaluation stages: paper screening done by the SGS-L Team, review and approval of the TWG sitting as the National Screening Committee, and finally, the approval of the CEB. Once grants have been awarded, scholars submit post-award requirements (e.g., scholarship contract, enrollment form) to the Central Office PMU, which checks submissions for completeness and correctness. Correct and complete documents are then forwarded to AFMS, which then processes all the documents required for disbursement of funds. Scholars can then expect their living allowance and other financial benefits to be credited to their cash card accounts in forty (40) days. This entire process takes approximately four months. However for the 2016 grantees, this timeline was not followed.

**Table 11. SGS-L nominations and disbursement flow (initial PMU process flow)**

<b>NOMINATIONS</b>				
Call for applications	Vetting screening	Vetting with TWG	CEB Approval	Memo for signing
<b>~2 months</b>	<b>7 days</b>	<b>1 day</b>	<b>1 day</b>	<b>7-14 days</b>
Announcement	Preparations of certificates for approved DHEIs	Delivery of certificates for approved	Post-approval: update online portal with new program	<b>Total: ~3 MONTHS</b>
<b>After 2-3 days</b>	<b>7 days</b>	<b>2-7 days</b>	<b>7-14 days</b>	

<b>DISBURSEMENT</b>							
HEI remits SOA to CHED	Encoding of SOA to tracker to check whether grants are approved	Checking of the SOA encoding	Checks causes of disparity	Routing for signatories	AFMS Processing	Accounting and checking of validity	Cash office to make deposit and advice
	<b>7 days</b>	<b>2-7 days</b>	<b>1 day</b>	<b>7-14 days</b>	<b>3-5 days</b>	<b>3-5 days</b>	<b>2 days</b>
<b>Total: 25 to 40 DAYS</b>							

Source: FGDs with the PMU teams

The second process flow, on the other hand, already involves the CHEDROs, but only for the collection of documents required for disbursement. Here, the ideal disbursement process is designed to take 62 days, longer than the original timeline. However, in reality, it could take around 41 days to around five and a half months. The minimum duration, 41 days, is the best recorded time for the entire process, which was due mainly to the documents being in order (i.e., complete and correct) and the presence of all signatories that eliminated waiting times. Conversely, the maximum duration is due to incomplete and incorrect documents and the unavailability of signatories. This maximum processing duration has been the more accurate picture of reality thus far, especially for the 2016 batch.

**Table 12. SGS-L disbursement flow (updated PMU process flow)**

			Ideal (in Days)		Actual (in Days)			
			Ideal Processing Time		Minimum Duration		Maximum Duration	
No.	Stage	Steps	Waiting Time	Processing Time	Waiting Time	Processing Time	Waiting Time	Processing Time
1	Receiving	CHEDRO receives complete documents from scholars.	1	5	0	1	0	5
2		CHEDRO sends documents thru courier.	1	1	0	2	0	7
3		CHEDCO receives the documents.	1	1	0	1	2	1
4		PMU receives documents from CHEDCO and forwards documents to SGS-L.	1	1	0	1	4	1
5	Batching	SGS-L receives documents and groups them into batches (2016 and 2017)	2	5	3	5	11	10
6	Masterlist	SGS-L prepares masterlist and forwards to Accounting	2	1	1	1	17	3
7	Pre Audit	Accounting receives masterfile and required attachments. Accounting audits the masterlist by checking the list and the documents given.	2	3	5	3	32	5
8	DV	SGS-L Prepares DV and edit pre-audited masterlist	2	1	0	1	6	2
9	Final Audit	SGS-L forwards DV to Accounting for Final Audit	2	1	1	1	1	1
10		Accounting audits DV and masterlist.	2	1	1	1	2	1
11	Routing	SGS-L routes DV for signature of Team Lead.	1	1	0	1	3	1
12		SGS-L routes DV for signature of Project Director.	1	1	0	1	3	1
13		SGSL routes DV for ED's initials.	1	1	0	1	10	1



14		SGSL routes DV for Chairperson's signature.	1	1	0	1	5	1
15	Authorizatio n to Credit	AFMS signs the signed DV (box B)	1	1	0	1	2	1
16		SGS-L prepares Authorization to Credit	1	1	0	1	1	1
17		SGS-L forwards Authorization to Credit to CASH department.	1	1	0	1	1	1
18		SGS-L forwards Authorization to Credit to Director IV, AFMS.	1	1	0	1	2	1
19		SGS-L forwards Authorization to Credit to Executive Director.	1	1	0	1	5	1
20		SGS-L forwards Authorization to Credit to OC.	1	1	0	1	5	1
21		SGSL sends Letter of Authorization to Credit to DBP thru email	1	1	0	1	0	1
22	DBP Processing	DBP deposits/credits allowance to each scholar's account	2	2	0	2	0	3
<b>TOTAL</b>			29	33	11	30	112	55
			<b>62</b>		<b>41</b>		<b>167</b>	

Source: Copy of Process Flow SGS-L Allowance Disbursement from the K to 12 PMU

Notes: (1) one full batch is assumed to have 150 scholars, (2) duration is in number of working days, (3) data from July to September 2017

Notable observations that can be made on these are that there are too many administrative steps in the process, and that these steps involve and are dependent on many offices.

Another aspect of the SGS-L component is the development of the supply side or the delivering institutions that would accommodate the graduate scholars. Innovations and collaborations between and among HEIs have been encouraged to increase the availability of quality graduate programs, especially in the regions. This is accomplished through the following modes: off-site program delivery, jointly-delivered programs, and consortium-delivered programs. HEIs apply to become delivering institutions through these modes, and their applications are being handled also by the SGS-L team.

#### 4.2. Institutional Development and Innovation Grants

Among the target outcomes of the Transition Program is also the enhancement of the capacities of HEIs as “providers of quality education” (IDIG Logical Framework) in the context of

increased globalization. As is the case for HEI teaching and non-teaching personnel, the transition has also presented an opportunity for HEIs to undertake capacity-development projects. The program thus also offers funding for institutions for the following components:

- (a) *Institutional development* - These are projects that could lead to improved accreditations (e.g., becoming Autonomous or Deregulated institutions), and cultivate programs as potential Centers of Development (CoD) or Centers of Excellence (CoE). These may include quality assurance or organizational strengthening projects.
- (b) *Institutional innovation* - These are projects that enhance the quality of academic programs, research and extension projects, HEIs' responsiveness to industry, and global competitiveness. Projects may include internationalization efforts, development of academe-industry linkages, or development of niche programs, among others.
- (c) *Special initiatives* - These are CHED-initiated projects undertaken jointly with local or foreign organizations.

Approved projects can be undertaken for a maximum of two years and awarded funds of PHP 2 to 5 Million for Institutional Development and PHP 8 to 12 Million for Institutional Innovation. To be eligible for funding, HEIs must meet the following criteria:

**Table 13. IDIG criteria for eligibility**

Institutional Development	Institutional Innovation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● State or Local University and College (SUC or LUC), non-stock and non-profit private HEI</li> <li>● Must have at least one deloaded teaching or non-teaching personnel as part of the project team</li> <li>● Must be CHED-recognized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● State or Local University and College (SUC or LUC), non-stock and non-profit private HEI</li> <li>● Must have at least one deloaded teaching or non-teaching personnel as part of the project team</li> <li>● Must be CHED-recognized</li> <li>● Must have at least one program with Level III accreditation or equivalent or a host of a COE/COD Program</li> </ul>

Source: CMO No. 33 s. of 2016

It should be noted that based on the eligibility criteria, while this component is institutional, it also provides options for deloaded faculty or non-teaching personnel, who might not want to pursue graduate studies.

Application for the grant is done through submission of a concept paper, which will then be developed into full proposals after the pre-screening process. Full proposals then go through the regional and national levels of vetting. Proposals are evaluated based on the following: project's technical merit (25%), relevance and developmental nature or the value-added by the project (40%), and demonstrated capacity of HEIs to deliver stated goals (35%)<sup>16</sup>. Successful grantees follow the same post-award processes for SGS-L.

Some of the projects that have been approved include: *Development of Southern Luzon Hub for Technopreneurship and Innovation* (Batangas State University); *Establishment of a Regional Center for Molecular Diagnostics and Research* (UP Cebu); *Development of Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Engineering Program* (Ateneo de Zamboanga); and *Harnessing High Performance Computing for Emerging Technologies* (MSU - IIT).

<sup>16</sup> Based on CMO nos. 33 and 63 s. 2016

### 4.3. Discovery-Applied Research and Extension for Trans/Interdisciplinary Opportunities

Another institutional grant is the DARE-TO Research Grant, which funds research and innovation activities collaboratively undertaken by HEIs, and provides deloaded or displaced faculty and staff an opportunity to participate in research activities. This program component aims to foster collaborations and partnerships in research, extension work, and other innovation activities during the transition that in the long-run, can improve Philippine higher education’s global standing in terms of research output.

The grant is a maximum of PHP 15 Million for a two-year project in the following platforms: Food Production and Security; Environment, Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change, and Energy; Terrestrial and Marine Resources: Economy, Biodiversity, and Conservation; Smart Analytics and Engineering Innovations; Health Systems; and Education for STEAM<sup>17</sup>.

To access the grant, project proponents must meet several levels of eligibility, that is, in terms of the proposed research, HEI qualifications, the lead researcher’s qualifications, the other research team members’ qualifications, and the funding requirements:

**Table 14. DARE-TO eligibility requirements**

<b>Research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The proposals must be of trans-disciplinary or inter-disciplinary research (3 or more disciplines)</li> <li>● Research must not be basic research and must yield an extension plan/activity</li> <li>● Up to fifteen (15) faculty research team members may take part, provided they are deloaded HEI faculty or personnel directly affected by K to 12 Transition</li> <li>● Outcomes of research must lead to new patents, new avenues of inquiry, and internationally indexed papers.</li> <li>● This research must be conducted by a team representing a partnership of HEIs, as collaborators in the project’s success.</li> </ul>
<b>HEI</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Lead HEI shall receive and manage the funding of the DARE TO Project. As such, HEIs that seek to be a Lead HEI must have no unliquidated funds with CHED.</li> <li>● The Lead HEI should be either:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Autonomous or Deregulated HEI recognized by CHED;</li> <li>– Have a Center of Excellence (COE) or Center of Development (COD) in the discipline relevant to the project;</li> <li>– Or both.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● The HEI must also have a functioning University Research Board to safeguard the work. In addition, Lead HEI SUCs must secure approval from its University Board.</li> <li>● HEIs applying for the grant must not be a Lead HEI for an ongoing DARE TO Grant.</li> </ul>
<b>Lead Researcher</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Is a Filipino citizen;</li> <li>● Is in good health and of good moral character;</li> <li>● Holds a graduate degree relevant to his/her teaching discipline or work specialization, and the area of research being proposed;</li> <li>● Must be engaged or employed, either full or part-time, by the endorsing HEI;</li> <li>● Has completed at least two (2) research projects, while being designated as Program / Project Leader;</li> <li>● Has at least five (5) years of research experience;</li> </ul>

<sup>17</sup> Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, and Mathematics

<b>Research Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Is a Filipino citizen</li> <li>● Is in good health</li> <li>● Holds at least a bachelor’s degree relevant to his/her teaching discipline or work specialization, and the research being proposed</li> <li>● Must not be a current grantee under any of the CHED K to 12 Grants available</li> <li>● At least 2 years of experience in teaching or has already participated in and completed 2 research projects (including thesis)</li> <li>● Must be fully or partially deloaded from teaching or have reduced workload due to the K to 12 Transition Program during the period of the grant.</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All grant amounts MUST not exceed PHP 5 million</li> <li>● Maximum allowable cost for administrative expenses is 10% of the total budget</li> <li>● Submit work and financial plan, itemized by quarter of expected usage</li> <li>● Counterpart funding must be reflected for unallowable expenses such as infrastructure, vehicles, and international travels</li> <li>● Research project must allocate at least 2.5% of its total budget towards the dissemination of research findings to the community in the form of extension plans/activities</li> </ul>

Source: CHED K to 12 Transition Program Website

Application for the grant is also through submission of a concept paper. Shortlisted concept papers undergo another stage of vetting, which is guided by the following evaluation criteria<sup>18</sup>, before being approved by the CEB.

- Project is aligned with: (1) national development agenda, (2) CHED research agenda, and Regional Priority Areas, (3) HEI’s research agenda and development goals, (4) contemporary international developments in its area;
- Project creates impact through: contributing new knowledge, generating innovations in research procedures, leading to inventions, introducing product innovations, resulting in academic publications;
- Project contributes to institution-building by developing the HEI, faculty members, non-faculty research personnel, graduate studies program(s), research partnerships;
- Project objectives are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound)
- The proposal has a robust framework and methodology, identifies and addresses potential ethical concerns, and has a strong monitoring and evaluation plan;
- Project taps into the research expertise of the HEI, has sufficient institutional support, and adheres to the requirements of the DARE-TO Grant-in-Aid.

Successful DARE-TO grantees then follow the same post-award processes for SGS-L and IDIG.

Some of the projects that have been approved are: *Mobile-Augmented Reality Game Engine for Instructional Support (ADMU and ADNU)*; *Monitoring Microbes and Parasites of Public Health Importance in Lettuce and Strawberry Produced in Benguet Province (Benguet State University and St. Louis University)*; *Bioassay and Biostimulant Application of Plant Growth Regulators (Cytokinin, Auxin, and Gibberrelin) in kappaphycus and echeuma species in Davao Region (SPAMAST and USEP)*; and *Policy and Strategic Interventions and the Household-Related Factors Influencing Effectiveness of Solid Wastes Management Program (Siquijor State College, UP Cebu, BISU)*.

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<sup>18</sup> DARE-TO Cycle II Guidelines, August 2017

#### *4.4. Overall implementation challenges and issues*

Through the FGDs with the PMU, especially the concerned sub-teams, the following have been identified as the major issues they are facing in program implementation.

**The volume of scholarship grantees vis-à-vis inadequate available human resources.** On the side of the CHED PMU, there is an imbalance in the distribution of staff to the grant teams. The SGS - L team has as many project technical staff (PTS) as the other units processing a relatively smaller volume of grants. The distribution of staff could have been more proportionate to the number of applications being processed. Moreover, at the CHED Central Office, there are only two permanent staff under AFMS and HEDF authorized to sign on all of the documents being processed for disbursement, and these personnel are also handling responsibilities for the entire Commission. This creates a bottleneck in the disbursement process.

**Issues with applicant submissions.** Delays in the application and disbursement processes are also caused by grantees' incorrect and/or incomplete document submissions, which eventually fall through the cracks in the feedback loop among different offices that process the papers.

**Underdeveloped internal systems.** FGDs also indicate that CHED internal systems and processes are not able to handle the volume of beneficiaries efficiently and effectively. On the first year, the PMU did not have an automated system of receiving and processing applications, which has strained manpower and led to inefficiencies, such as misplacement of documents submitted. This issue is compounded by the PMU's lack of an effective record-keeping system, which could have allowed for real time updates on the status of submissions. Another systems issue is the lack of an integrated communication system within the PMU, as evidenced by the many channels (i.e., email, text, landline, and social media) through which stakeholders could reach the PMU for queries or requests for assistance, resulting in conflicting responses from different PMU personnel and unanswered stakeholder concerns.

**Inadequate monitoring mechanisms.** The PMU has its own Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Team responsible for implementing a monitoring plan, which includes the conduct of grantee surveys and periodic process evaluations. However, the M&E function was performed only recently. To monitor the scholarship component and the grantees, CHED only relies on the monitoring report containing enrollment status and academic performance of CHED scholars in their institutions that GMOs of DHEIs periodically submit. With no comprehensive monitoring system and system failures in the online portal, violations of the program eligibility and conditions thus occur. Some DHEIs have discovered that there are grantees who have not complied with the conditions for deloading. It has been mentioned during the FGDs with the grantees and the regional K to 12 units that there are scholars with full teaching loads and administrative positions while on scholarship. In addition to violations of grant conditions, the PMU is also not able to monitor program dropouts.

#### *4.5. Changes initiated and improvements made*

Due to the extreme delays in the process particularly at the disbursement stage, the PMU has made the significant implementation change of automating the nomination process and devolving several processes to the regional offices, which have ultimately minimized the delays in the disbursement of the scholarship benefits.

**Automation of the nomination process.** In 2016, the program was implemented without an automated system in place because the service provider contracted to develop an end-to-end (application to monitoring) online system failed to deliver by the start of the application period. Nominations by the thousands were thus done manually by submitting hard copies of requirements, which were then manually encoded. For the next application phase, the PMU pushed for the online portal, which eventually worked but only for application, and was very unreliable, hence it was shut down. Recognizing the unsustainability of a manual process, the PMU's own Tech Team instead developed an alternative online portal for the use of the 2017 batch. Feedback on this from both from scholars and the PMU is generally positive as it significantly made the application process easier for them.

**Decentralization.** To address implementation delays, CHED has devolved some of the Central Office PMU's functions, including paper screening of applications and processing of disbursements, to the CHEDROs for handling batches of grantees from 2017 on. While the regional offices depend on the CMOs for implementation guidelines, some regional K to 12 units have designed their own process, as illustrated in **Table 15**. This process has markedly reduced the number of days before scholars could receive their allowances. From at least 40 days, the timeline for the disbursement has been shortened to 10 days.

**Table 15. SGS-L disbursement flow (Region IV-A K to 12 Unit)**

<b>FOR 2017-2018 SCHOLARS</b>	
Scholars' documents received and recorded by Records Unit	<b>1 day</b>
Records Unit forwards scholars' documents to K-12 PMU K-12 PMU reviews appropriateness and completeness of documents K-12 PMU prepares "Masterlist of Grantees for Payment" and submits to concerned signatories	<b>2 days</b>
K-12 PMU forwards scholars' contract for CHEDRO Director's signature K-12 PMU facilitates notarization of signed scholars' contract	<b>1 day</b>
K-12 PMU forwards Masterlist and all supporting documents to Budget Unit; Budget Unit prepares Obligation Request (OR) for certification as to availability of funds	<b>1 day</b>
Budget Unit forwards documents to Accounting Accounting Unit prepares Disbursement Voucher (DV) and submits to Chief Technical Division for certification as to the validity of claims Chief Accountant signs and certifies the availability of cash, completeness of supporting documents and the appropriateness of amount claimed CHEDRO Director signs and approves the payment	<b>1 day</b>
Accounting Unit forwards the document to Cashier Cashier prepares and signs Authority to Debit Account (ADA) and Bank Advice CHEDRO Director or Chief Admin. Officer countersigns ADA and Bank Advice Cashier submits ADA and Bank Advice to LBP	<b>2 days</b>
LBP credits benefits' to scholars' ATM	<b>2 days</b>
<b>Total: 10 DAYS</b>	

Source: SGS-L Processes AY 17-18 MIMAROPA and AY 16-17 Central K12 PMU as of 093017

Notes: Contingent on: (1) completeness and appropriateness of documents submitted, and (2) availability of fund transferred from CHED Central Office

What has also helped hasten the process of disbursement at the regional offices is the now much lower number of scholars being served than at the CHEDCO. When disbursement was

still centralized in 2016 to early 2017 (first and second phase), the ratio of Project Technical Staff (PTS) to approved scholars is 1:925. In 2017 (third phase), after the decentralization of several processes, the ratio of PTS to approved scholars went down to 1:116<sup>19</sup>. This goes to show that the reduced load of those in the regional offices correlates with improved disbursements of allowances in the regions<sup>20</sup>.

## 5. Service utilization

### 5.1. Scholarships for Graduate Studies – Local

The graduate scholarships are targeted to higher education faculty or non-teaching personnel from any CHED-recognized SUCs, LUCs, or private HEIs nationwide, who are either deloaded or displaced during the transition, and who meet the other eligibility criteria (**Table 9**).

Based on program status documents as of June 2017<sup>21</sup>, a total of 8,305 faculty and staff were nominated in 2016, only 5,551 (67%) of whom were approved. In 2017, 3,639 were approved out of 5,130 nominees (71%). The faculty scholars come from 619 HEIs, 54 percent of whom come from small HEIs, 37 percent from medium HEIs, and only nine percent from large HEIs. By sector, both in 2016 and 2017, more scholars come from public institutions (55% and 60%, respectively). In terms of regional distribution, the biggest number of scholars in 2016 are from Eastern Visayas (11%) and in 2017 from Central Luzon (10%). On the other hand, ARMM account for the smallest number of scholars both in 2016 and 2017 (2% and 1%, respectively). In terms of discipline, 59 percent of the 2016 grantees are in STEAM programs, while in 2017 the number drops to 39 percent.

For this evaluation, a total of 44 scholars from Northern Luzon, Cebu, and Davao participated in the FGDs. They were asked questions on their program experience, particularly with the processes and implementers, and their issues and concerns. Their responses surfaced the following:

#### 5.1.1. Issues and concerns

**Difficulties at the application stage.** While there were respondents, specifically from Davao, who expressed that they generally experienced a smooth application process, there were also those who had difficulties at this stage. Some respondents from Cebu noted the inadequate time they had for preparing all the application requirements due to the late dissemination of information on the program. Some also noted their sending institution's unpreparedness to send them as scholars and the initial lack of institutional support, making it hard for them to complete the required documents. Some respondents who went through the process when the online portal was already available, particularly the 2017 batch of scholars, also related difficulties due to the system's slowness and the occasional system crashes that hindered their timely downloading and uploading of requirements. In addition to these, the respondents also noted the confusion and back-and-forth transactions caused by additional requirements asked for after they have been granted their scholarship. They pointed out that this could have been avoided if guidelines posted to the website were only updated, specific, and detailed from the start.

<sup>19</sup> The number of approved scholars used is in the region with the most number of approved scholars for the third phase (Region III), and is based on the CHED K to 12 PMU Budget Briefer FY 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Note: First phase is from June 2016 to November 2016, second phase is from November 2016 to March 2017, third phase is from March 2017 to November 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Based on the CHED K to 12 PMU Budget Briefer FY 2018

**Delayed release of living allowances.** Across all FGD groups, the biggest concern raised is the delay in the release of living allowances, notably among the 2016 faculty scholars. Some respondents from Cebu said that this is especially problematic for those whose sending institutions could not provide bridge funding in case of delayed allowance release by CHED, as stipulated in the CMO for Scholarships. In addition, they expressed that this has had adverse effects on their personal lives, including struggles with money and health, anxiety and depression, and family and relationship problems. This was echoed by respondents in the other regions, who expressed that the months-long delays (10 months for some) have burdened them because they could not provide for their own and their families' daily needs. Many shared that they or other scholars they know have already resorted to loans. Some respondents also related extreme cases of fellow scholars from the province studying in Manila who have been expelled from boarding houses due to inability to pay rent. In general, respondents felt that the intended effects of the program are "being diluted" by these delays. Representatives of delivering institutions which happen to be sending institutions echo the same sentiment, and even expressed feeling that they have compromised their personnel's situation by nominating them to the program. This has deterred them from encouraging participation to the program.

**Inadequate program benefits.** Related to the issue of delayed release of living allowances is the inadequacy of the scholarship benefits to cover both study and living expenses for some respondents, especially as a replacement for the compensation they used to receive as faculty. For some, it has also limited the choice of university to attend. Moreover, there are respondents who perceive this as the primary reason for some grantees' non-adherence to the conditions on the number of teaching or work load that scholars can take on while on scholarship that has provided some grantees with an additional source of income.

**Difficulty communicating with the PMU.** Another major issue among all the respondents is difficult communication with the PMU. Many respondents claimed that they do not get a response to communications sent through email or text, and it is difficult, if at all, to get through the PMU's landline. When they do get a response through email, they only receive canned messages that do not directly address their questions or concerns.

**Absence of timely feedback and status updates.** Respondents across regions also perceive a lack of transparency and accountability especially regarding the status of their allowances. Some respondents said it takes long, if at all, for them to get feedback on the status of their submissions or even an acknowledgment of receipt thereof from the PMU. Some respondents attributed this to a lack of an efficient tracking system. A respondent also shared that there have been cases of their submitted documents getting lost under the PMU's custody, which they did not immediately know about, resulting in delays in processing their submissions and the release of their benefits.

**Other issues.** Respondents likewise mentioned the vagueness of policies; not receiving copies of the scholarship contracts; changes in the requirements or guidelines during the scholarship period, such as the additional documents required by COA (i.e., proof of deloading and certificate of employment); and limited choice of delivering HEIs in the area.

#### 5.1.2. Positive grantee assessment of the program

Despite the overwhelmingly negative feedback on program delivery, there were respondents who appreciated the opportunity for professional growth for higher education faculty that the program provides, and the innovative and even "genius" conceptualization of the transition program, in general. The policy that disallows academic inbreeding was also specifically



mentioned as a good aspect of the scholarship grant. In terms of program delivery, some respondents from Mindanao also noted how the GMOs of their DHEIs have been responsive and helpful to the faculty scholars, especially when it comes to preparing required documents. The same was said about the respondents' respective regional K to 12 units, which they described as generally responsive, approachable, and helpful in facilitating and minimizing back-and-forth transactions for their applications. The decentralization strategy was also perceived as particularly effective for responding to delayed disbursements.

### 5.1.3. Respondents' recommendations

Given their overall program experience, 2016 grantees suggested that the processing and release of allowances be done by region. It should be noted, however, that this is already the process for the 2017 grantees. Recurring recommendations from the FGDs also include providing grantees with regular updates; improving systems for monitoring, feedback, and record-keeping; updating the website regularly; and making use of the portals not only during the application process but for the entire program. Respondents also suggested that the CO PMU should also provide proper orientation to all scholars to clarify processes that are not uniform, monitor scholars who have violated the program conditions, and conduct random visits to institutions running the program. In addition, the grantees emphasized that CHED should issue a moratorium on accepting new batches of scholars until the concerns of the first batches have been resolved.

## 5.2. Institutional Development and Innovation Grants

The IDI Grants are offered to SUCs, LUCs, and non-profit and non-stock private HEIs, which meet the eligibility criteria stated in **Table 13**. Program component status<sup>22</sup> indicates that out of the 2,388 HEIs in the country, only 336 applied for the grant, submitting a total of 550 concept papers. Of this number, 291 were approved by the TWG, 162 by the regional vetting panel, 89 by the national vetting panel, and 88 by the CEB. This translates to an approval rate of only 16 percent. Thirty-three of the approved projects are under Innovation, while the rest are under Development, and these projects were developed by grantees in the areas of Technology, Agriculture, and Engineering. Of the 88 projects, 49 percent are from medium HEIs, 27 percent from small HEIs, and the remaining 24 percent from large HEIs. In terms of regional distribution, projects come from all regions, but the most number of approved projects come from regions IV and V (8 projects each), and the smallest from ARMM (1 project).

To capture data on this program component, this evaluation involved KIIs with representatives of IDIG beneficiaries from Visayas (1 SUC and 1 private HEI), and Mindanao (1 SUC and 1 private HEI). Key informants were asked questions on their program experience, issues and concerns with the program, and what they thought could improve the program. Their responses surfaced the following issues and concerns.

**Lack of monitoring and follow-through.** One of the respondents from Mindanao raised that there appears to be no effort from the CHEDCO to monitor how the grant is being used by the institutional grantees. The respondent expected auditing a few months after the project commenced, but there was none, thus they conducted their own to avoid complications in case of future auditing.

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<sup>22</sup> Based on the CHED K to 12 PMU Budget Briefer FY 2018

**Delayed release of project funding.** As in SGS-L, most respondents related that there are also delays in the release of IDIG funds. One of the respondents has yet to receive the project funds months after the awarding of the grant. For another respondent from Mindanao, its team has already received the funds, but the delay caused it to adjust the project timeline. On the other hand, another respondent said that its project has already received 80 percent of the funding. For those with pending fund releases, what compounds the problem is that they have not received any word about the status of their grant.

**Lack of communication.** One of the respondents' main issues with the PMU is their lack of feedback and proactive communication, although assigned personnel are responsive when grantees initiate communication. Most of the respondents said that there has been no feedback from the grant team after awarding the grant. A respondent suggested that the PMU needs to develop a more efficient feedback or tracking form. A respondent also raised that it was not clear who the point person is for the project as the assigned personnel keeps changing, and when they would instead raise concerns to the regional office, it was not able to address situational concerns and still had to await response from CHEDCO most of the time. Therefore, they are more likely to experience delays if communication is coursed through the regional office. A respondent likewise related that confusion arises at times from conflicting statements from the PMU and the regional office.

**Inconsistent support across Regional K to 12 units.** Most respondents said that the application process has been straightforward and relatively problem-free. However, the interviews reveal that the respondents had different experiences due to differing quality of the support extended by the regional offices to applicants. Some respondents mentioned that the process for crafting the proposal was well-guided by CHED. Another who comes from a different region, on the other hand, said that orientations and workshops on proposal writing were not organized by other regional office. In terms of overall support, some respondents perceive the CHEDRO in their respective regions to be very helpful in interpreting the guidelines from CHED and making sure that the submissions are correct. However for other respondents, the CHEDRO in their region has not been as supportive.

### *5.3. Discovery-Applied Research and Extension for Trans/Interdisciplinary Opportunities*

As of June 2017, the PMU has received a total of 229 applications for the DARE-TO grants, 67 percent of which are from public HEIs. Of the 229 applications, 76 research proposals have been approved, and 62 percent are from public HEIs. The most number of approved projects come from NCR (22%), while there are regions where no project was approved, including Region I, ARMM, and then NIR.

KIIs were also conducted with DARE-TO grantees to capture their experience with the program component. Questions asked were similar to those for IDIG grantees, and these yielded almost the same responses regarding issues and concerns.

**Lack of feedback and follow-through.** All the respondents said that the application process was easy and not problematic, especially with the online submissions. The major concern the respondents cited is the lack of feedback on the status of the proposals. One respondent said that it did not help that there was no well-defined timeline for the process, so applicants were not aware of what to expect. In 2017, though, the respondent said that this was improved on when timelines were posted on the program website.

**Delayed release of project funding.** As with the other grants SGS and IDIG, DARE-TO grantees also experienced months of delays in the release of their project funds. The respondent from Visayas said that the whole process has already taken a year, and still they have not received their funding, just like the other respondents. In effect, they have not started their respective projects, which has caused anxiety to some members of the project team, who were faculty whose teaching load was affected by the transition.

**Inconsistent communication and transparency issues.** While a respondent said that the program staff assigned to DARE-TO were communicative and that there was no problem reaching them, most said that communication of updates was problematic, as the reason for delays and the proposal not being approved were not made clear. In effect, the respondents perceived a need for greater transparency in the process.

## **6. Program organization**

This section examines how the CHED K to 12 Transition Program is organized, looking into these areas of assessment: organizational structure and capacity, program functions, operational procedures, coordination with stakeholders, and the utilization of resources. The different perspectives of key stakeholders on the issues and concerns relating to said areas were captured through FGDs and KIIs.

### *6.1. Organizational structure and capacity*

As mentioned earlier, CHED has created an ad-hoc Program Management Unit to operationalize the Transition Program. The PMU has 11 sub-teams that can be divided into grant and support teams. The grant teams include those handling SGS-L, SGS-A, IDIG, College Readiness (previously SHS Support), and IRSE, which has three sub-teams (Professional Advancement and Instruction, DARE-TO and SALIKHA grants, and Sectoral Engagement). Meanwhile, the support teams include Administration and Technology, Finance, Communications, Interagency, Monitoring and Evaluation, and the Office of the Project Director. As of December 2017, the PMU has nine team leads and 69 technical and administrative staff, or a total of 78 members<sup>23</sup>.

Most of the PMU members are young, with an average age of 27, and all of whom are contractual. FGDs conducted with them reveal a self-admitted inadequacy of knowledge of the CHED bureaucracy and of government administrative rules in general. The PMU's HR records show that only a few of them have had prior government experience. The PMU has taken steps, however, to familiarize themselves with government administrative rules, including asking for an official and up-to-date operations manual, which they could not be provided with. This issue could have been addressed by assigning a permanent CHED officer to oversee the administrative aspects of the implementation, a move that was initially taken but not sustained. But aside from government experience, the KIIs with permanent CHED personnel also surfaced that some PMU personnel also lacked the requisite background for the positions that dealt with their office, particularly in accounting and finance.

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<sup>23</sup> Source: PMU HR Updates

Notwithstanding the PMU's inexperience in government, its staff profile has been beneficial to the Program as far as the following are concerned: program marketing or information dissemination campaigns, program innovations, leveraged technologies for operations, and the speed with which tasks were carried out at the PMU level. The interview with the PMU's Communications team indicates that other CHED offices have even acknowledged that the PMU's marketing efforts should be replicated within CHED.

On the question of adequacy of manpower, some teams believe that they are understaffed considering the volume of work they are handling. **Table 16** shows an imbalance in the distribution of personnel to teams, based on indicative personnel to client ratios for the grants teams. For instance, SGS-L in 2016 had 6 staff handling 8,305 nominations, translating to a ratio of 1 personnel for every 1,384 nominees, which was way higher than the ratio for the other teams<sup>24</sup>. To address the SGS-L Teams' manpower shortage, the PMU's practice has been for staff from other teams to take on SGS-L tasks as need arises. The new Project Director said this could have been avoided in the first place had the IT system for grants administration, which they were counting on and had an external service provider develop, only been able to deliver their system requirements.

The problem of manpower inadequacy could be resolved with additional personnel; however, given that the PMU is already big relative to the other CHED offices, it has been difficult for them to request more personnel. Similarly, the unit could not ask for plantilla positions due to the temporary nature of the program.

**Table 16. Staff distribution in the CHED K to 12 PMU**

SUPPORT TEAMS		GRANT TEAMS		
Team	No. of Staff	Team	No. of Staff	Personnel-Client Ratio
OPD	3	SGS-L	6	1 PTS : 1,384
Admin and Tech	11	SGS-A	4	1 PTS : 26
Finance	0	IDIG	3	1 PTS : 183
Communications	6	CRT	6	1 PTS : 4
Policy and Interagency	4	IRSE	10	1 PTS : 52
M&E	5			

Sources: CHED K to 12 PMU Organizational Structure and Human Resources Manual (as of September 2017), Budget Briefer FY 2018

## 6.2. Program functions

In terms of performance of necessary program functions, it is instructive to refer to the program CMOs, which detail the program design and govern the implementation of each program component. Since the Program significantly involves the provision of grants, a primary function necessary is grants administration, which includes processing of applications and grantee selection, among others. The CMOs likewise detail many aspects of the program components that need monitoring, including adherence to contracts (both for the individual and the institutional grants), grantee status and performance for SGS-L, project progress and fund

<sup>24</sup> These ratios were computed by dividing the number of applications a team handled by the number of personnel in the respective team. For some of the components, though, not all the assigned personnel handled grants (e.g., some CRT personnel worked on teacher training and materials development, and not all the IRSE personnel worked on the SE grants) as some worked on developing the policies. But even if these are taken into consideration, personnel to client ratio for the administration of the grants would still be significantly unequal across the grant teams.

utilization for IDIG and DARE-TO, and even the performance of delivering institutions; hence the need for the monitoring function. Moreover, being a massive program in terms of number of beneficiaries and amount of program funding involved, there is also a need for financial accounting and client support functions.

**Table 16** shows that the CHED K to 12 PMU is structured such that the PMU teams cover all these program functions. There is a team managing each grant component, as well as each support function commonly present in projects or programs. However, this evaluation finds that not all of these functions are adequately performed. In particular:

- As of the evaluation period, the Finance team has no staff of its own. The financial accounting function is instead performed by the Administrative Officers of the grant teams, who do not necessarily have finance or accounting backgrounds.
- The monitoring and evaluation function was not originally built into the program, and was only incorporated in mid-2016. But even after the M&E team was formed, it only assumed real M&E functions in 2017 as team members were taking on tasks of the other teams where their roles were embedded.
- Although the grantees can directly communicate with the grant teams and that there are staff members serving as client support, the FGDs with grantees and other stakeholders indicate that these channels have not been consistently effective in addressing grantee and other stakeholders' concerns.

### *6.3. Operational procedures*

Assessing whether the PMU is functioning well internally, this evaluation also looks into its operational procedures. It has been found that:

- The PMU has clear process flows for implementing each program component, and these are adhered to. However, the grant teams could not stick to the prescribed timelines as some steps in the processes depend on other offices, for instance, the processing of allowance disbursements done by the AFMS and HEDFS.
- In relation to the above, some PMU personnel expressed that there are no clear inter-office administrative processes and procedures between the PMU and these offices. For instance, the requirements for processing the disbursement of program benefits seemed arbitrary, resulting in back-and-forth transactions between the PMU and said offices, which in turn have resulted in delays in the release of the benefits. A particular requirement that has caused a stir in 2017 was the certificate of deloading required by COA post-audit despite it not being required in the policy.
- There is a lack of a systematic and centralized way of managing knowledge on administrative matters. There is no system for sharing with or cascading lessons learned to all PMU teams; hence, not being able to know of and learn from other teams' errors, the other teams end up committing the same.
- As for working with external stakeholders, such as DBP, there are no established procedures for coordinating with them. This could be due to a lack of a communication plan with all the stakeholders.

### *6.4. Coordination with units external to the PMU*

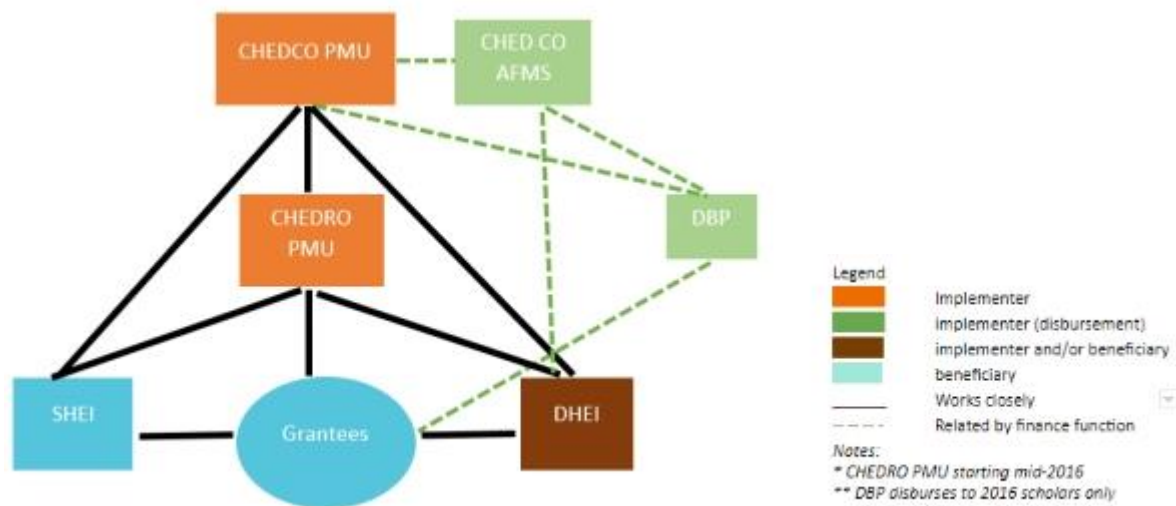
As indicated in the preceding discussion, several actors are involved in the implementation of the Program. The primary unit responsible is the PMU, which works directly under the Office of the Chairperson. Prior to the decentralization of some processes, it worked directly with all

the stakeholders, which include the program beneficiaries or grantees, their sending institutions (SHEI), the delivering institutions (DHEI, for the scholarships; government, industry, and civil society partners for the other grants), CHED Central Office's AFMS and HEDF, and DBP. **Figure 6** shows the relationships among these stakeholders. This evaluation also sought their perspectives on the implementation of the program.

#### 6.4.1. CHED leadership

Being an office working under the Chairperson, there is adequate support to the program from the CHED Commission En Banc (CEB), as indicated by how most PMU concerns are always acted on favorably. FGDs with the PMU teams and interviews with a former Commissioner also reveal that the CEB shows interest in the program components and has been impressed by the work and idealism of the youthful PMU leadership and staff. At the regional level, FGDs with the regional K to 12 units also indicate adequate program support from Regional Directors.

**Figure 6. Program stakeholders**



Source: Authors' rendition

#### 6.4.2. Administrative and Financial Management Service/Higher Education Development Fund Service

AFMS and HEDF are the CHED offices that process all documents required for the disbursement of program benefits and for running the program activities, particularly during the first year of implementation. The K to 12 grants are only among the programs of the entire Commission the financial aspects of which these offices are handling. Despite this volume of work, these offices only have one or two plantilla staff authorized to sign documents, which creates a bottleneck in the disbursement process. Personnel from these offices acknowledge that additional plantilla staff could help relieve this bottleneck. They likewise echoed the following concerns regarding the program: the PMU staff's lack of government experience and finance or accounting background, and the PMU's internal coordination problem, which have caused inefficiencies. In particular, they observed a lack of thoroughness in checking documents being submitted to them, leading to the delays in the processing of disbursements. This could, however, also be related to the lack of a definitive checklist of required documents that the PMU noted in the FGDs.

#### 6.4.3. Regional Office K to 12 Units

Regional K to 12 units consist of three Project Technical Staff, a permanent focal person, and a permanent alternate focal person. They also have their own bookkeeper and accountant just for the K to 12 grants, precisely to absorb the additional workload—something the Central Office has not done. Although some major program processes have been devolved to the regional offices (e.g., disbursement of allowances for 2017 scholars), they feel that they act merely as a conduit as decisions are still made at the Central Office. Guidance for implementation at the regional level also comes from the Central Office through the CMOs and other issuances. Despite this, there are still regional differences in implementation due to (a) different interpretations of policies, and (b) the discretion the Regional K to 12 units are given in spending their budget, conducting activities, and designing administrative processes. For instance, some regions held activities in support of grantees, such as the proposal writing workshops for IDIG grantees in Davao, which were not conducted in some regions in the Visayas.

Despite these differences, the regional K to 12 units included in the study have similar concerns regarding implementation. One is inadequate and difficult communication with the CHEDCO PMU, especially on urgent matters. Regional units in the Visayas have said that they could not answer grantees' questions and concerns satisfactorily because matters concerning grantees are also not being communicated to them. The Davao K to 12 unit has expressed the same concern, adding that day-to-day complaints from scholars still need to be confirmed with the CO. The unit has also said that there is actually a tracking system from the CHEDCO PMU shared among all regions, but it is not user friendly and not regularly updated, which has only led to confusion. A Visayas K to 12 unit, on the other hand, has said that they do not have access to the online portal that contains transactions and concerns between CHEDCO and the scholars and that could be a reference for addressing scholars' complaints. It is due to these concerns that the Visayas K to 12 units feel that the CHEDCO PMU could be more transparent. Another similar concern is the unclear policies or guidelines coming from the CHEDCO. K to 12 units in the Visayas have noted that memos and policies are vague on some provisions. The Davao K to 12 unit's responses support this and added that the guidelines were only clarified in 2017.

The FGDs have also surfaced a slight tension between the CHEDCO PMU and the regional K to 12 units arising from the latter's perceived gap between the policies and orders coming from the CO and their realities as frontliners. The respondents have suggestions on improving regional and CO relationship and program implementation (e.g., enforcing adequate sanctions for grantees who violate the contract and spelling out the process for it), but none of those have been adopted. They also expressed that they would appreciate being consulted on some matters, especially because they are the frontliners.

In addition, FGDs have also revealed how regional K to 12 units have improved on the processes usually complained about in the CO. For instance, the unit in Davao has kept an efficient record-keeping system, through which they can monitor all their scholars' transactions to avoid overlooking and doubling disbursements, the transmittals to provide quick confirmation to scholars verifying their submissions, and all the files and documents being submitted to the CO for tracking.

#### 6.4.4. Grands Management Offices of DHEIs

Grants Management Offices are units in DHEIs made up of existing DHEI personnel who oversee the K to 12 scholarship and graduate program delivery and handle the K to 12 scholars' concerns in their respective institutions. A GMO consists of a Grants Administrator, usually someone with a high administrative position, an Admissions Officer, and a Technical Officer. However, DHEIs with less than 50 scholars are only required to have a Grants Administrator. Specifically, GMOs are tasked to periodically submit monitoring reports and scholars' supporting documents to CHED and attend information dissemination activities organized for them. Some of the FGD respondents were not fully aware of these responsibilities in the GMO, while some said they were overburdened with these tasks for the program without commensurate compensation, as they are only to be given honoraria, which have also not been disbursed.

Asked about program concerns, respondents from different regions have various concerns, some corroborating the earlier information gathered from other stakeholders. Respondents from Luzon have raised the issue of the burden of compliance with the requirements for the scholars, which they think calls for a simplification of the process to promote the scholars' actual study. They have also noted the confusion caused by redundant processes, such as the submission of similar documents to CHED both by the scholar and the DHEI (e.g., copy of grades), and the lack of flexibility in the required documents (e.g., certificate of enrollment, which are labelled differently by HEIs), which has caused back-and-forth transactions and contributed to delayed disbursements. This concern has also been shared by respondents from Mindanao. In general, they have this perception that the PMU is inexperienced in higher education or graduate studies, resulting in a lack of understanding of the grantees' cases. But on a positive note, they think that the PMU is working hard to cope with the volume of work.

All the respondents from the Visayas, on the other hand, have been concerned about the challenge of coordinating with the PMU. They all agree that it was difficult to get through the PMU line, so communication with them was challenging. Respondents from Mindanao have also raised this issue, saying that it would take a week or a month before getting a response despite having communicated through different channels. Visayas respondents have also voiced their concern about scholars' problems that they could no longer control as a DHEI, such as the more than 6 units of teaching load that sending institutions still assign despite the policy prohibiting it.

Other than the already mentioned, respondents from Mindanao have also disclosed that there are scholars who dropped out of the program because of the unavailability of programs, which could have been addressed had CHED proactively facilitated the formation of HEI partnerships for the development of off-site programs, for instance.

The FGDs also reveal that GMOs differ in the level of support they extend to their K to 12 scholars, something also mentioned in FGDs with grantees. Some DHEIs in Luzon have made processes easier for K to 12 scholars by having special lanes for them during enrolment. In Mindanao, there are DHEIs that provide bridge funding to help the scholars while they wait for their late living allowances. DHEIs also provide their own orientation to scholars, conduct one-on-one consultations, and do close monitoring.



#### 6.4.5. Development Bank of the Philippines

DBP is CHED’s partner institution involved in the disbursement of grantee benefits through their cash card facility to 2016 grantees. While DBP is used to large volumes of transactions, they faced some challenges in catering to the CHED grants. For one, CHED has not specified fixed dates (e.g., 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of the month) for the release of allowances unlike their other clients, preventing the process from running like clockwork. Consequently, the branch handling the CHED grants would receive numerous calls from scholars inquiring about the status of their allowances’ release, which they could not fully answer.

To help lessen delays at least in setting up an account with them and problems caused by the maximum allowable amount in the cash card account, DBP has proposed a shift from the cash card facility to a regular savings account for the scholars. DBP is also setting up a text blast system to provide scholars with real-time updates on their allowances.

#### 6.5. Utilization of resources

This evaluation also looks into how the PMU has utilized its financial resources thus far. **Table 17** shows that for 2016, obligated funds were much lower than the budgeted funds for all the program components, suggesting that program uptake was lower than expected. Members of the PMU explain<sup>25</sup> that this was because assumptions on faculty and staff displacement turned out to be incorrect, hence the overestimation of the displacement number, which served as the basis for the program budget. On the first year of implementation, the PMU learned<sup>26</sup> that some higher education faculty were not displaced because they went on to teach senior high school offered in HEIs. There were also HEIs that did not let go of faculty and staff because they had college entrants--those who were SHS early adopters and those on the Lifelong Learner Track<sup>27</sup>. Taking these and the information on actual program uptake into consideration, the PMU made a downward revision of the 2017 budget.

The PMU’s other explanations<sup>28</sup> for the underspending include timeline-related issues, such as the “*lack of alignment between the fiscal and the academic calendar,*” and a coordination issue, specifically the “*lack of clear understanding of required submissions to trigger release of living allowance.*” (PMU Problem Analysis of LFPs 2016)

**Table 17. Budget per grant vs. fund utilization for 2016 and 2017**

Project	Indicator	2016 FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS (in ‘000s)		2017 FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS (in ‘000s)	
		BUDGETED	ACTUAL	BUDGETED	ACTUAL
Scholarship for Graduate Studies and Professional Advancement	Number of graduate scholarships and fellowships/grants awarded for professional	1,948,361 (SGS-L)	<b>1,444,214</b> (67%)	1,696,908 (SGS-L)	<b>46.9 M*</b>
		151,305 (SGS-A)		542,052 (SGS-A)	
		44,533 (PAPS)		136,700 (PAPS)	
		<b>Total: 2,144,199</b>		<b>Total: 2,375,660</b>	

<sup>25</sup> These are additional information that came out during the presentation of the findings to the PMU.

<sup>26</sup> Based on the PMU’s Problem Analysis of LFPs as of December 2016

<sup>27</sup> Memo from the Chair June 13, 2017

<sup>28</sup> Based on the PMU’s Problem Analysis of LFPs as of December 2016

	advancement				
<b>Faculty and Staff Development</b>	Number of faculty with opportunities for industry immersion and extension	<b>521,442</b>	<b>52,457 (10%)</b>	<b>191,921</b>	<i>Ongoing trainings</i>
Instruction, Research & Sectoral Engagement Grants	Number of GE Training Participants				
<b>Research Grants</b>	Number of research projects awarded	<b>1,138,205</b>	<b>286,670 (25%)</b>	<b>300,000</b>	<i>Call for Applications in August 2017</i>
<b>Institutional Development and Innovation Grants</b>	Number of institutions availing grants for development and innovation	<b>1,142,908</b>	<b>547,276 (47%)</b>	<b>450,000</b>	<i>Vetting ongoing; 162 proposals passed regional vetting</i>
<b>SHS Training Package</b>	Number of HEI faculty trained	<b>77,927</b> (Budget includes CRT grants)	<b>71,516</b>	<b>102,000</b> (Budget includes CRT grants)	<i>802 ongoing trainings</i>
	Number of HEI faculty/staff undertaking action research		<b>9,862</b>		<i>Q3 Call for Applications</i>

Source: CHED K to 12 PMU Budget Briefer FY 2018 and authors' percentage computations

Note: This figure is the amount obligated at the CHED Central Office. At this time, disbursement to 2017 scholars is already regional, hence this figure excludes the funds for said scholars.

It can also be noted that given the substantial program funds and level of underutilization, allocation could have been made to items that could help run the program, for instance, a comprehensive IT infrastructure.

## 7. Key findings and recommendations

It will be recalled that discussions on the introduction of the K to 12 program as a reform measure dated much earlier than the enactment of the law in 2016. As early as 1949, there were already recommendations to complete the transition to a twelve year basic education program. The fact that the Philippines was only one of the three countries in the world that did not have a K to 12 basic education cycle was itself another reason for the serious consideration of the adoption of the K to 12 system, if only to make the Philippines more globally competitive. Hence, consciousness about the eventual adoption of K to 12 in the Philippines was not lost among those in the education sector, including those in higher education.

While the adoption of the K to 12 system posed challenges to higher education, it is important to note that it has also allowed for the introduction of long-overdue reforms to the sector. The K to 12 Transition Program that CHED has developed targets to address the persistent shortfalls

in the country's higher education spending, which has led to the country's poor standing relative to its ASEAN neighbors that has, in turn, affected the country's competitiveness. With the scholarships and other development grants under the program, the program aims to upgrade higher education faculty's qualifications and HEIs' institutional capacities, the impacts of which are expected to trickle down to the quality of college graduates in the country and of education, in general.

To prepare for the adoption of the K to 12 program, informal measures have been made among leaders of the higher education community in 2012, including those in the private sector. Interestingly though, the relatively late involvement in the K to 12 program (the law was enacted in 2013, but the K to 12 transition program in CHED formally begun in 2016) could have been a reason for the lack of time for the CHED bureaucracy to prepare for the transition process itself, considering that scholarships for affected personnel were begun that same year. The PMU did not anticipate the high volume of work that came with the rollout of the program, especially in terms of the scholarships applications that had to be processed by the limited number of staff, who themselves were adjusting to the operational needs of the program. This was critical considering the magnitude of the task that involved several programs, the core of which was the awarding of scholarships to affected faculty and staff.

The study thus concludes that the program's implementation be understood within the context of CHED's absorptive capacities and capabilities to process the massive applications for the grants that certainly challenged CHED's established bureaucratic procedures and processes. The K to 12 Program Management Unit, created to operationalize the Program, encountered a number of mostly administrative concerns and challenges that hindered smooth implementation. These included the following:

**Inadequate preparation for K to 12 Administration and Operation.** The K to 12 Program was initially seen by CHED as a program to be led by the Department of Education. This may explain why CHED came relatively late into the program. More specifically, this includes the organization of the PMU and the design of various forms assistance for "displaced" and affected faculty, including providing options - including scholarships - during the transition. It was within this context that CHED was unable to adequately prepare and build internal capacities to take on the massive demands of K to 12 on the higher education sector. (That being said, it must be recognized that philosophically, CHED's engagement with the K to 12 took on different forms that antedated the legislation through its full participation in the technical panels and committees in the development of the senior high school curriculum.)

**Lack of absorptive capacities of CHED and its PMU.** Respondents from various sectors (including scholars, CHED central office, and the PMU itself) articulated the concern that due to massive applications received by the program, CHED's absorptive capacities were severely challenged. This was characterized by the fact that the PMU that was supposed to spearhead the program implementation had difficulties in coping with the work demands considering that most of them in the PMU were quite young (a number of whom were fresh recruits and a number of whom had limited or no experience nor exposure to actual workings of government) and were therefore unfamiliar with the demands of a bureaucracy marked by rigid processes and procedures. The lack of familiarity with long-established government rules and procedures was supposed to be obviated by the initial move to deploy a "senior" and experienced technical personnel of CHED to the PMU. However, such a move was not

sustained. Notable also is that no permanent CHED staff have been added to offices highly involved in program processes despite additional workload in the area that has been one of the implementation bottlenecks.

**Inadequate implementation systems.** Notable is the lack of an effective monitoring system with which potential problems can immediately be addressed, for instance, violations of the conditions of the scholarships. In addition, tracking systems are underdeveloped and not updated, hence the stakeholders' complaints on lack of information on program status (e.g., application, disbursements, etc.).

**Slow internal administrative processes and procedures** – especially in the processing of allowance of the scholars have had some negative outcomes including scholars dropping out of the program. At the macro level, this has also resulted in lower uptakes, as the enormous delay of release of the allowances of the first two batches of scholars has become the mark and image of CHED.

**Unclear inter-office administrative processes and procedures between the CHED offices and the K to 12 PMU.** For instance, unclear requirements for the processing and disbursements of program benefits resulting in back-and-forth transactions between the PMU and CHED's accounting and finance office, which in turn, have resulted in delays in the release of the benefits.

**Poor communication and coordination, absence of feedback mechanisms.** Almost all of the different sets of respondents mentioned difficulty in communicating with or reaching the PMU and the lack of timely feedback or status updates as among their major issues with the program.

However, as we have suggested, the transitional nature of the program must be appreciated with lessons being learned as it was being implemented. Because of the delays experienced by the program, specifically in the implementation of Phases One and Two for academic years 2016 and 2017 that entailed centralized processing, administrative reforms were adopted by the program, including decentralization, mostly by deconcentration of processes to the regional offices of CHED. This measure markedly improved the delivery of the program, mostly in terms of the processing and release of living allowances to the scholars.

However, despite said improvement, negative perceptions of the program have already overshadowed its positive aspects, such as the assistance it has been able to extend to basic education, the opportunity for professional growth the program provides, and its innovativeness that has paved the way for the creation of new and needed graduate programs that were unavailable before, especially in the regions; for increased HEI collaborations for the delivery of programs and in research endeavors; for the formation of partnerships among academe, industry, and other sectors; and for the conceptualization of research projects with practical relevance and positive potential societal impacts.

Based on the foregoing, some recommendations for improved program implementation include the following:

- Review the policies, streamline operational procedures, and rationalize required documents with the goal of reducing the burden of compliance for the grantees
- Sustain and strengthen deconcentration processes initiated in 2017;

- Continuously build the capacities of CHED PMU staff including on basic government accountability mechanisms and procedures and communication;
- With the whole goal of sustaining the gains and institutionalizing the program within CHED, begin the process of requesting regular plantilla staff from the Department of Budget and Management for CHED who will be responsible for institutionalizing the K to 12 program gains within CHED.
- Improve measures to strengthen communication and exchange between CHED K to 12 PMU and stakeholders;
- Upgrade the communication infrastructure of CHED in general and PMU in particular to enable and facilitate access to information of all stakeholders, including program implementers in CHED and clients, such as scholars and educational institutions. This includes the use of appropriate and globally competitive state-of-the-art IT systems within the framework of easy access to information by stakeholders.
- Together with the stakeholders (especially the scholars and institutional grantees), prepare a sustainability and follow-through plan that would build upon the gains of K to 12 initiatives. This includes the development of a continuous tracking, monitoring, and communication system with mechanisms that would enable grantees to “give back” within the broad context of improving the system and making Philippine higher education more globally competitive, which after all has been one undergirding philosophy of K to 12 as provided for in the law RA 10533.

The process evaluation surfaced many administrative challenges in the implementation of the K to 12 program from the perspective of CHED. Unfortunately, these challenges—framed mostly within the context of absorptive capacities, including the delivery of living allowances to scholars, a number of whom belonged to the sector of personnel displaced as a result of the transition—seem to have overshadowed the broader goal of the K to 12 Transition Program.

Perhaps, given the immediate lessons from the administration of the program, it may be time to once more refocus and take a look at the broader goal of the much needed imperative to improve our competitiveness in higher education among the community of nations.

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