ADVANCING THE K-12 REFORM FROM THE GROUND

A CASE STUDY IN THE PHILIPPINES

Carmela Oracion, Vignesh Louis Naidu, Jasmine Ng, and Vicente Reyes, Jr.

ADB SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WORKING PAPER SERIES

ADB

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

Advancing the K-12 Reform from the Ground
A Case Study in the Philippines

Carmela Oracion, Vignesh Louis Naidu, Jasmine Ng, and Vicente Reyes, Jr.

No. 66 | April 2020

Carmela Oracion is the director of the Ateneo Center for Educational Development. Vignesh Louis Naidu is the director for operations at The HEAD Foundation. Jasmine Ng is an executive for projects and communications at The HEAD Foundation. Vicente Reyes, Jr. is an honorary associate professor at the University of Queensland in Australia. He is also an associate professor at the Centre for Research in Educational Leadership and Management at the School of Education of the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom.

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

ADB

The ADB Sustainable Development Working Paper Series presents data, information, and/or findings from ongoing research and studies to encourage exchange of ideas and elicit comment and feedback about development issues in Asia and the Pacific. Since papers in this series are intended for quick and easy dissemination, the content may or may not be fully edited and may later be modified for final publication.

Corrigenda to ADB publications may be found at http://www.adb.org/publications/corrigenda.

Note:
ADB recognizes "Hong Kong" as Hong Kong, China.

CONTENTS

TABLES

ABSTRACT

In response to the long-standing crisis faced by its education system, the Philippines has embarked on a major and comprehensive education reform known as K to 12 (K-12). School leaders closest to the ground are in a very good position to lead "bottom-up" initiatives which can make the K–12 Reform work. This paper suggests taking advantage of existing mechanisms and structures and upscaling relevant and beneficial professional development programs to aid school leaders in the challenging task of supporting and advancing the K–12 Reform. The Certificate in Educational Studies in Leadership, designed and delivered by the University of Queensland in partnership with the Ateneo Center for Educational Development and The HEAD Foundation, is one case study of cost-effective and scalable leadership development for the Philippines. Through such strategy, the country may be able to achieve significant results in scale, in contrast with scattered and short-lived successes.

Keywords: principal, K–12 Reform, school-based management, school leadership, educational leadership, communities of practice, information communication technology (ICT), blended learning, professional learning development

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I.   INTRODUCTION: THE PHILIPPINE CONTEXT

1.   Various assessments of Philippine education, beginning with the Monroe Survey of 1925, have brought to the fore recurring wicked problems in basic education in the country. Regrettably, the implementation of one reform after another, geared toward addressing the lingering problems identified in these assessments, has not succeeded to improve the quality of education in terms of sustainable outcomes on a national scale. Curriculum changes and innovations in teaching practices have come and gone but "at the start of every school year, print and broadcast media project without fail, a perpetual education crisis that the mainstreaming of successful reform initiatives could have addressed" (Bautista, Bernardo, Ocampo 2008, p. 5).

2.   The critical and urgent need to improve the state of basic education prompted the Philippine government to launch in 2012 what many refer to as the most major and comprehensive education reform in the history of the Philippine education system. The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10533), also known as the K–12 Reform, was envisioned by the government as a key solution to the long-standing crisis faced by basic education in the country.

3.   Prior to the K–12 Reform, the number of years of formal schooling in basic education in the country was one of the shortest in the world. The K–12 Reform seeks to establish an inclusive and high-performing education system by lengthening the compulsory basic education cycle to 13 years, covering kindergarten until Grade 12, as well as decongesting and enhancing the basic education curriculum to enable learners to master basic competencies. With great determination to implement the reform as immediately as possible, the government broadcast to the entire nation the intended benefits of the K–12 Reform to Filipino learners and their families, the anticipated contributions of the reform to the progress of society and the country's economic growth, as well as the projected improvements in regional and international recognition and competitiveness (SEAMEO INNOTECH 2012). While there was no disagreement on the goals, there was much opposition to the initiative, centered on whether the country's teachers, schools, and administration were in a position to implement the reform (Oxford Business Group 2017).

4.   In general, reforms are aimed at changing what teachers do in order to improve what students learn. The repeated cycle of failed reforms point to the need to pay equal and simultaneous attention to all the different factors involved in making structural reforms work. Cuban (2013, p. 114) asserted that one fundamental error of policymakers is the thinking that "redesigning, replacing, or renovating key structures—school governance, organization, and curriculum—will dramatically change teacher instruction and student learning." Similarly, Allen and Glickman (2005) pointed out that simply changing the organization or structure of schools is not sufficient to bring about meaningful change. Attentiveness to the different considerations affecting the implementation of reforms, especially large-scale reforms, is vital and can perhaps be guaranteed better by those on the ground more than those at the top of the hierarchy. The people on the ground have a better understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities in the schools.

II.   K–12 REFORM AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

5.   The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines has been exerting great effort to provide support toward the success of the reform. It reported the following from 2010 to 2016: 230,104 teacher items (permanent positions) were created, considerable teacher training was rolled out, learning resources were produced and made available, instructional tools and equipment were procured

and distributed, and over 38,000 classrooms were constructed (Andaya 2016). However, the World Bank (2016) asserted that despite a renewed focus on basic education by the Philippine government, further increases in both capital and recurrent public spending are needed. The report also recognized that there have been significant improvements in the learning environment in schools, but emphasized that more still needs to be done in terms of the sufficiency and quality of facilities, adequacy of teachers, and opportunities for teachers to improve their skills.

6.   The Report of the Task Force on National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) Transformation: Proposed Detailed Design (2019) indicated that since the introduction of the K–12 Reform, there have been huge gains in improving access to basic education, and contrary to the concern that the initiative would increase drop-outs, there has actually been a marked growth in the number of drop-outs that have returned to school (table 1). The report also indicated that participation rates are up with 27 million Filipino children and youth enrolled in schools from kindergarten to Grade 12 (Table 2). According to DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones: "DepEd is now in a better position to wage a decisive campaign for major upgrade in education quality" (Task Force on NEAP Transformation, p. xxi). This may be a daunting challenge, but it is also a worthy target which various stakeholders should support in line with the aspiration for the country to catch up with its neighbors in the region and the rest of the world.

7.   This section suggests relevant and beneficial professional development programs for school principals and other school leaders on the ground to aid them in the challenging task of supporting and advancing the K–12 Reform. Ideally, the programs should take advantage of existing mechanisms and structures so that successes already gained from the actual experiences of schools may be reinforced or enhanced. Such a way of proceeding may give the country a fighting chance in the attempt to produce significant results in scale, in contrast to scattered and short-lived successes.

Table 1: Balik-Aral Learners, 2015–2018

Year	Elementary			Secondary			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2015	60,880	37,999	98,879	38,657	20,595	59,252	99,537	58,594	158,131
2016	117,683	82,584	200,267	95,681	74,767	170,448	213,364	157,351	370,715
2017	94,644	57,760	152,404	98,584	50,756	149,340	193,228	108,516	301,744
2018	70,049	37,759	107,808	96,925	49,450	146,375	166,974	87,209	254,183

Note: Balik-Aral Learners are learners who re-enrolled in school after having previously dropped out of school.

Source: Task Force on National Educators Academy of the Philippines Transformation, 2019.

Table 2: Participation Rates in Basic Education, School Years 2016–2017 and 2018–2019

Level of Education	Gross Enrollment Rate			Net Enrollment Rate		
	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Kindergarten to Grade 6	106.34%	104.21%	102.65%	96.04%	95.76%	94.80%
JHS to SHS (Grades 7–12)	87.76%	85.55%	91.58%	75.33%	75.94%	79.93%

JHS = junior high school, SHS = senior high school.

Source: Task Force on National Educators Academey of the Philippines Transformation, 2019.

A.   Top-Down, Bottom-Up Approach

8.   The "top-down, bottom-up" approach which Fink and Stoll (2005) cited is worth considering in the continuing implementation of the K–12 Reform in the Philippines. According to Fink and Stoll, scholars in the 1990s suggested that change occurred best using such an approach where the larger system provided direction and support, and the actual change process was left to schools through school-based decision making and school development planning. A top-down, bottom-up approach to school improvement can facilitate alignment between top-down directives and interventions and bottom-up initiatives and energies.

9.   Importantly, Fink and Stoll (2005) asserted that a school must be viewed as the center of change, rather than just the focus of change. If schools are to be regarded as centers of change, then the leadership of the school principal, along with those who supervise the principal (supervisor, assistant superintendent, superintendent), cannot be ignored. Such core leadership is crucial in ensuring that contextual conditions such as availability of resources, participation of the community, and regard for local culture figure in the implementation of large-scale reforms. This core group, especially the school principal, can serve as the crucial link between the goals of a reform and theoretical knowledge about school improvement processes, and the daily occurrences on the ground which involve interdependent relationships and realities faced by the schools. In the Philippine context, such relationships on the ground are complex and the realities faced by the majority of public schools are brutally challenging. Without the support for reform-driven policies from these school leaders who are closest to the ground, very little substantive change can be expected in the daily lessons.

10.   The particularly central role of the bottom-up component in the top-down, bottom-up approach is supported by the premises about the process of social change and the people for whom development is advocated, which Bautista, Bernardo, and Ocampo (2008) pointed out. Such premises from Kaplan cited in Bautista, Bernardo, and Ocampo (2008) which are relevant to this discussion include understanding that the whole point of development is to enable people, as subjects, to participate in the governance of their own lives by expanding their human capabilities; key actors on the ground (teachers, school heads, parents, other stakeholders in the case of education) are human agents and should to be trusted to make decisions affecting their lives; and, given human agency, the direction of change cannot be imposed from the outside.

B   School-Based Management and the Leadership of the School Principal

11.   In the past decades, many countries have embarked on various forms of school-based management reforms which essentially entailed devolving more authority and resources to schools. The goal of school-based management (SBM) was to improve teaching and learning conditions and student outcomes by bringing decision-making closer to the ground. It is assumed that school-level decision making will minimize bureaucratic practices and encourage principals, teachers, and parents to exert greater initiative in meeting the needs of students and the community.

12.   In the Philippines, the Local Government Code of 1991 (RA 7160) articulated a national policy of decentralization. In line with this, the DepEd (formerly Department of Education, Culture and Sports) sought to hasten the decentralization of education management through its 10-year master plan (1995–2005) by giving more decision-making powers to local school officials in terms of school repairs and maintenance as well as the procurement of textbooks, supplies, and equipment (Primer on SBM and Its Support System 2005). The following features of SBM are clear from the document:

> School-based management is defined as the decentralization of
> decision-making authority from central, regional and division levels to
> individual school sites uniting schoolheads, teachers, students as well

as parents, the local government units and the community in promoting effective schools. Its main goal is to improve school performance and student achievement, where decision-making is made by those who are closely involved with resolving the challenges of the individual schools, so that specific needs of students will be served more effectively. Its objectives are to (i) empower the schoolhead to provide leadership; and (ii) mobilize the community as well as local government units to invest time, money and effort in making the school a better place to learn, thus improving the educational achievement of the children. (Primer on SBM and Its Support System 2005, p. 3)

13.   Importantly, the primer identifies the school head as the leader in SBM. It also reiterates the section in Republic Act 9155 (An Act Instituting a Framework of Governance for Basic Education) which specifies that "the school head must exercise instructional leadership and sound administrative judgement of the school." The Republic Act is a declaration that the government recognizes the importance of a decentralized management system and stakeholder participation in the pursuit of quality education for all and states that "school heads shall have authority, accountability and responsibility to

(i)   set the mission, goals and targets of the schools and develop the school improvement plan (SIP);
(ii)   be accountable for higher learning outcomes, implement the curriculum, develop the school educational program, create an environment conducive to higher learning, introduce new and innovative modes of instruction to achieve higher learning outcomes;
(iii)   administer and manage personnel, physical and fiscal resources of the school, recommend staff development, encourage staff development, accept cash donations; and
(iv)   establish school-community networks in support of school targets and to contribute to community development."

14.   Such scope of authority, accountability, and responsibility should be sufficient devolution of important decision-making authority that can enable school heads to develop, adapt, implement, and facilitate programs, projects, and services, taking into consideration the particular characteristics and actual resource needs of schools. Unfortunately, the World Bank (2016) reported that most schools in the Philippines have not yet gone very far in implementing SBM. Furthermore, the report also stated that the Public Expenditure Tracking Survey and Quantitative Service Delivery Survey (PETS-QSDS) revealed in 2014 that most elementary and high schools had put in place only the lowest level of SBM, implying that these schools merely had a minimum number of arrangements in place for community participation and for taking action to improve learning outcomes. According to the report, the main weaknesses identified by school principals revolved around issues related to school autonomy. The principals mentioned that schools had discretion over only very small amounts of funds, and moreover, the discretionary funds provided by DepEd come with certain conditions over their use. For example, they were allowed to use the funds for recurrent items such as utility payments and small repairs, but not on learning materials and equipment which are essential in the teaching-learning process.

15.   Effort should be exerted to take advantage of the SBM approach to serve as the bottom-up component in the top-down, bottom-up strategy for making the K–12 Reform work. It is a mechanism that is already in place and the wheel does not have to be reinvented. Policy suggestions from the World Bank (2016) report that include providing further training to school principals, school governing councils, and parent-teacher associations on SBM; building the capacity of district and division supervisors to mentor schools in the implementation of SBM; increasing maintenance and other operating expenses or MOOE funds; and increasing the authority of schools over other funds are particularly crucial in strengthening the implementation of SBM.

16.   Illustrative examples of bottom-up initiatives in the public school system in the country that have yielded significant positive results are instructive. The Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) from 1998 to 2006, which incorporated SBM as a key component, highlighted the inspiring stories of heroic school leaders who managed to turn their schools around. The TEEP experience showed the importance of leadership at the division- and school-levels for effective policy implementation.

> Apart from Ms Monica Sison of Avocado Elementary School who revived the spirit of a school and a community in Negros Oriental, they (inspiring stories) include Jacinto Aguilar Elementary School's "wonder woman" – Teacher-in-Charge, Ms Melissa Salma who won over skeptical stakeholders by walking her talk – donating six months of her salary to stop the further deterioration of her school and mowing the school grounds herself to set an example; Ms Marilou Juanitas of Bahoyan-Yapu Multigrade School, who returned to serve her poor community and transformed, by her actions a culture of indifference that bogged down her school; Ms Rea Coles of San Roque Elementary School who focused on improving school facilities and nutrition, shelling funds from her own meager income to paint the school and subsidize poor parents and pupils, motivating students to achieve, and the community to rise to the occasion; Ms Amy Ronquillo of Pisaan Elementary School who injected fun into learning and tremendously enhanced the School's library collection through sheer resourcefulness via the Internet; and Mr Jerry Arizala, who won the hearts of a cynical community and whose students have since returned to commit their own lives to educating children in Maximo Lazaro Elementary School. (Bautista 2005, p. xxiii).

17.   The TEEP stories indicated that "the school head is a dynamic leader who (i) demonstrates personal improvement and encourages staff development, (ii) has the ability to connect with people and pursue teamwork, (iii) assumes responsibility for action to achieve the school's mission, and (iv) creates an environment of empowerment or sharing his/her powers with others (Primer on SBM and Its Support System 2005).

18.   Similar noble stories were uncovered in the exploration of the traits and behaviors of 12 school principals associated with improved student achievement in public schools in Quezon City as measured by the National Achievement Test (Oracion 2012). The study revealed that the 12 principals had great **professional will** which was manifested in the following ways: using their authority and position deliberately to improve the situation, exerting great effort to overcome challenges, setting high expectations for the NAT, and assuming responsibility for the outcomes of interventions. They also **confronted the brutal facts** of their situations in very powerful ways on various occasions. They introduced or strengthened programs to address the brutal realities, put in place disciplinary measures for staff, and networked with various stakeholders. They established a **culture of discipline** in the school by setting the example, intentionally addressing the teachers, students, and parents who lacked discipline, and giving important roles to the hardworking and serious staff. Finally, their **capacity to build relationships** with various stakeholders stood out as a common behavior among the 12 principals.

19.   Those who work closely with public schools in the country will declare with great conviction that there is a lot of good work happening and similar stories on the successful transformation of schools are plenty. Unfortunately, many such transformations are short-lived, usually fading away along with the departure of the school leader who championed the school improvement process. Such phenomenon is not uncommon in the Philippine context where *bagong hari, bagong ugali* (new king, new behavior) actions recklessly bring an end to even the most worthwhile and promising initiatives. Thus, there is

a need for development programs to empower school leaders to understand and advocate school improvement, and equip them with the necessary competencies to execute positive actions which can build up to major accomplishments.

C.   School Leadership Preparation and In-Service Training

20.   The Task Force on NEAP Transformation (2019) emphasized that career progression programs for school heads should support them in the following areas: (i) leading strategically, (ii) managing school operations and resources, (iii) leading teaching and learning, (iii) developing self and others, and (v) building connections. The report likewise maintained that programs for supervisors must assist them in the following capacities: (i) supporting curriculum management and implementation, (ii) strengthening shared accountability, (iii) fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and (iv) developing self and others. Sindhvad (2009) added that for leaders to feel confident in their ability to lead change efforts, their jobs need to provide them the opportunity to set directions, build relationships and gain commitment from followers, and take the actions necessary to overcome obstacles.

21.   In an environment like the Philippines, where SBM has been established within a traditionally hierarchical system, such opportunities have to be provided deliberately, judiciously, and systematically through some kind of a pattern similar to what was described by Chapman (2002) for the Asia and Pacific region. He explained that training is organized in three ways (training of entry-level supervisors and managers, extended training in fundamental skills for existing managers and technicians, and professional development and skill upgrading of existing managers) and conducted through in-house training, centralized government training facilities, nongovernment training facilities, and on-the-job training. Training of entry-level school leaders would be absolutely necessary given that in the Philippines, as in many other places around the world, outstanding performance as a classroom teacher usually serves as sufficient prerequisite and qualification for a leadership or administrative position and most public school principals end up assuming the position without formal training. Unsurprisingly, the major reason for the deficiencies among school leaders is that training is often unavailable, inadequate, or inappropriate (Chapman 2000). Sindhvad (2009, p. 50) asserted that the average Filipino school principal would benefit from training that guided them through instructional leadership experiences directly in their own school setting. However, how and to whom such training is offered remains an issue since the DepEd has yet to mandate school principal training.

22.   In the Philippines, new reform initiatives usually serve as impetus for massive training programs for both school leaders on different levels in the hierarchy and teachers. For example, in 2003, when SBM was incorporated as a distinct governance mechanism in the TEEP, school heads were trained to assume the dual function of instructional leadership and administrative management (Bautista 2005). Additionally, coaching and mentoring especially of DDU (disadvantaged, depressed, and underserved) schools on the procedures and processes of implementing SBM was prioritized (Primer on SBM and Its Support System 2005).

23.   The way massive training programs have been undertaken deserves some rethinking. Such large-scale training programs which utilize the train-the-trainer approach have been regarded as efficient in terms of completing target numbers within a reasonable amount of time in support of systemic reforms. Unfortunately, the process of cascading the training down to the ground through an initial set of trainees have led to the diminution of quality of the training programs. The perceived ineffectiveness of train-the-trainer and cascading processes substantiate a partiality for blended learning programs as alternatives to purely face-to-face sessions. Future professional development activities can be designed following the methodology in some programs which have been organized in such manner in the past.

24.   In 2006, in support of Republic Act 9155, SEAMEO INNOTECH developed and implemented a flexible learning program, the Instructional and Curricular Excellence in School Leadership for Southeast Asia or ICeXCELS, which was a tripartite collaboration among the SEAMEO INNOTECH, the Department of Education, and Higher Education/Teacher Education Institutions. Intended for public school principals throughout the country, ICeXCELS was a short course on instructional and curricular leadership comprised of two flexible learning modules which are self-instructional and self-paced, incorporating adult learning principles. Online discussions via a learning management system provided an interactive component to the program which was primarily delivered through printed modules (Mendoza, Gempes and Atienzar 2016).

25.   A qualitative study of 14 school heads from Panabo City Division, Davao del Norte, Philippines who participated in the program revealed that prior to the program, most of the participants focused mainly on their administrative role and relegated instructional leadership to the sideline (Mendoza, Gempes, and Atienzar 2016). They acknowledged that the conversion in their perception and practice of their roles led to the transformation of their teachers, in particular, and the schools, in general. They faced challenges such as teachers' acceptance of innovations they were implementing, lack of resources, time constraints, but claimed that the course enabled them to look for means to address the issues and concerns.

26.   Sindhvad (2009) explained that the ICeXCELS required the principals, in collaboration with their teachers, to come up with action plans directed toward addressing problems in their school setting related to management, communications, and community relations. Throughout the process, the principals were guided by experienced trainers. Sindhvad stressed that the principals felt confident in providing instructional support upon engaging in training activities that involved hands-on experience in their own school setting. He underscored this finding as important to the design of school leadership training because it implies that training activities should guide instructional leadership tasks situated in the actual work environment.

27.   In recent years, the NEAP, having been mandated to respond to the demand for professional competence as well as management and leadership excellence in the educational community, has concentrated on leadership programs. In support of the K–12 Reform, which stipulated that principals undergo workshops and trainings to enhance their skills in their role as academic, administrative, and community leaders, the DepEd, through the NEAP and the Human Resource Development Division rolled out the School Heads Development Program (SHDP): Foundation Course.

28.   The SHDP intended to improve the capacity of the school heads to manage their schools as well as prepare aspirants to handle the responsibilities of a school head (DepEd Memorandum No. 192, s.2016). There are three modules in the training design: The School Head as Instructional Leader, The School Head as Organizational Leader, and The School Head as Exemplar. The program requires participants to embark on an application project, which involves identifying a specific school concern which, when addressed, would deliver the best impact on school measures in 3 months. Significant milestones achieved at the end of each month were to be presented in a colloquium organized by the regional offices, currently this approach is a work-in-progress in relation to the rollout of SHDP.

29.   Recently, The HEAD Foundation (Singapore), the University of Queensland's School of Education, and the Ateneo Center for Educational Development of the Ateneo de Manila University embarked on the second offering of the Certificate in Educational Studies in Leadership (CESL) Program, a professional development program integrated with an action–research component that focused on developing the leadership capacities of school leaders. Over a 3-month period, each participant completed a capstone project that required the conceptualization and implementation of a transformational action project (TAP). This program forms the basis of the later sections of this paper.

III.   CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATIONAL STUDIES IN LEADERSHIP

30.   The experiences of the Philippines in the implementation of educational reforms have continuously pointed to the pivotal role of school leaders closest to the ground and indicate the need to provide them with relevant training. In systems like the Philippines, an individual's appointment to a position of leadership[1] is a function of his or her qualifications, performance as a classroom teacher, and years of service. The Philippines requires all potential principals to take a written examination, but no structured professional development is provided for entry-level school leaders.

31.   The leadership development programs cited earlier provide valuable insights on the characteristics of useful training programs. In terms of delivery mode, an amalgamation of face-to-face, online, self-directed, or blended strategies may be indispensable given the usual busy schedule of school leaders and the geography of the Philippines. Andragogic methods such as problem-solving exercises, case studies, reflection sessions, benchmarking activities, as well as coaching and mentoring sessions may be useful. There are many success stories from all over the country which can serve as a source of lessons on leading strategically, managing school operations and resources, leading teaching and learning, developing self and others, building connections, and other aspects of school improvement. It must also be mentioned that incorporation of some form of hands-on experience in the school leaders' own school setting seems appealing. Such strategy is simultaneously a learning process that involves the actual work environment, and an attempt to address a concrete problem in the school setting.

32.   The Certificate in Educational Studies in Leadership (CESL) introduced in the earlier section is a suitable pilot program to provide a case study of cost-effective and scalable leadership development for the Philippines.[2] Due to its small and compact nature, CESL provides a promising mode of contextualized professional development designed for high-performing leaders (note that CESL is already in its second successful run). CESL fits nicely into the existing NEAP mode, as it can be seen as an "external stakeholder" that has a proven track record that fits within the ecosystem approach "whereby NEAP shall engage a wide range of internal and external stakeholders in the development and delivery of professional learning programs" (Section 7, Implementation of the NEAP Transformation).

33.   Twenty-one principals, teachers-in-charge, and educational officials from Nueva Ecija province, Marawi City, Quezon City, and Valenzuela City, of the Philippines participated in the CESL program. These school and educational leaders were selected based on their leadership experience, their commitment and passion to transform their schools, and for their potential to rally their communities and lead change in their schools.

A.   Program Design

34.   The CESL program was intentionally designed as a blended program, allowing the organizers to leverage technology to keep costs manageable, while giving the participants access to high-quality international educators. The blended model utilized in the Philippines consisted of four online courses administered by the University of Queensland, covering topics like foundations of leadership, perspectives in educational leadership, fundamentals of educational leadership and change, and transformational education from the lens of design-based research, and four face-to-face sessions in the Philippines led by the program's lead trainer. The face-to-face sessions were designed to provide the participants with the opportunity to brainstorm, debate, design, and evaluate a transformational action project (TAP) in

---

[1]   School leaders for the purpose of this paper will refer to teachers-in-charge, principals and above.
[2]   It is important to note that the very first implementation of CESL was in 2018 as a tripartite partnership between the University of Queensland, The HEAD Foundation, and the State University of Jakarta.

their respective institution. The presence of the lead trainer during the face-to-face sessions provided the participants with a knowledgeable sounding board to brainstorm the challenges they faced in their institution, and possible TAPs that could address these issues. The lead trainer also helped the participants situate their TAP within the theoretical learning that was taking place, particularly through the online modules.

35.   Site visits that were conducted during the third face-to-face session provided the school leaders with tangible examples of transformational activities in the education and corporate spheres. The visited sites intentionally included non-educational institutes for the participants to better grasp transformational projects as they occurred in the corporate for-profit sector. This may have been jarring to career educators, but the authors believe it was necessary in forcing them out of their comfort zones to confront the challenges that they were faced with in new and innovative ways.

36.   At the Asian Development Bank (ADB), education specialists gave the school leaders an overview of how international organizations work with the Government of the Philippines and more specifically, DepEd. This helped the school leaders understand the priority and target goals of education in the Philippines and in the region, which helped them to refine the scope of their TAPs. School leaders also visited Ateneo Junior High School, a premier high school in the Philippines. While many school leaders are familiar with the concept of student-centered learning, many still have not implemented it in their schools. At Ateneo Junior High School, the school leaders saw student-centered learning in action as well as how teachers used technology to aid them in their teaching. The school leaders were exposed to easily achievable practices and were encouraged to advance their schools' aspirations in teaching and learning.

37.   The visit to Accenture Liquid Studio provided fresh, innovative ideas and solutions to some simple yet commonly occurring and vital needs in a complex interwoven system like the school system of the DepEd in the Philippines. Equally important was the visit to Makerspace Manila, which introduced new ways of thinking and ideation, including experiential learning and problem-based learning, something very necessary as the education system tries to keep up with the ever-evolving circumstances, needs, and opportunities offered by the 'Volatility', 'Uncertainty', 'Complexity' and 'Ambiguity' world.

B.   Transformational Action Projects

38.   The transformational action project (TAP) is a critical element and major output of the CESL program. During the first face-to-face session, participants were made to brainstorm and share challenges that they faced in leading and administering their respective institutions. These included, among other problems, managing at-risk students, engaging with parents and the broader community, keeping their teachers motivated, and incorporating technology in the classroom. Peer learning and sharing with critical friends allowed for the participants to receive feedback and share learnings from other school leaders who may face similar challenges. The session, which lasted 3 days, presented participants with an opportunity to focus on a particular challenge to work on and resolve during the CESL course.

39.   For the 3 months that followed, participants refined, implemented, and tracked the progress of their TAPs, incorporating learnings from the online courses as well as feedback from their stakeholders, the program's lead trainer, and their peers. Just as technology was used to conduct the CESL program, many school leaders also utilized technology to transform their schools. In one school in Marawi City, technology was used to create and maintain a database of student profiles. The school leader and teachers could better understand their students and the reasons behind certain behaviors which they exhibit, and then develop strategies to keep students engaged in class. In Quezon City, keeping up with trends, a principal led a project to train her teachers to design and implement lessons using digital materials. As the teacher's students are steeped in technology, they created interactive digital materials for mathematics which are more appealing, relevant, and familiar to her students.

40.   A leader from Nueva Ecija city designed a project that combined both communities of practice and technology. A focus group was created to address the different challenges met by the kindergarten teachers in Talavera North District of Nueva Ecija by building, sharing, and expressing knowledge to improve their pedagogical skills. Like the CESL program, the focus group was done face-to-face in a learning circle, as well as online using the Google Classroom platform. Data collected revealed that teacher-participants perceived the learning circle as a venue to communicate with peers and provide opportunity to reflect, coinciding with the findings of Wheatly (2002) that the element of conversation is the willingness to be challenged and allow one's beliefs to be critiqued, for objective analysis of ideas to be gained.

41.   On 26 October 2019, the 21 CESL participants presented their TAPs to an invited audience of over 100 local and international educators at the Ateneo de Manila University. They shared the rationale for their TAPs, the implementation process, as well as the challenges and lessons learned along the way. Many attributed the success of their projects to their stakeholders' participation and commitment as well as the extensive use of "Communities of Practices" through meetings, surveys, and feedback sessions with "Critical Friends and Mentors" which helped them to learn effectively and continuously refine their TAPs.

C.   Communities of Practice

42.   The importance of peer learning for educators is well understood and generally appreciated by experts around the world (Gonzalez 2009, Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2004, Jackson and Bruegmann 2009, Printy 2008, Zwart et al. 2008). The Philippines has a tradition of peer learning among classroom teachers but have yet to institutionalize that practice among school leaders. The line extension of this practice to school leaders is a natural and necessary step in allowing the Philippines to develop a world-class education system.

43.   The CESL program created a space for educators, despite their diverse backgrounds and school profiles, to rally around the common goal of creating a conducive environment for their students to learn. Through the four face-to-face sessions, participants got to engage in intellectual and robust discussions to improve their schools, within and beyond their TAPs. Many of the challenges faced by school leaders are neither unique nor insurmountable. From this program, the writers observed that many school leaders faced the challenge of effectively engaging the broader community in which they were located. School leaders were keen to engage the parents of their students to provide their charges with a more holistic education, but were unsure about the best approach. Through discussions with other participants, they came to learn of methods that had been successfully employed and were able to contextualize and replicate these methods. If a wheel had been invented, there is no good reason to reinvent it. Communities of practices allow these best practices and resources to be shared, and technology can amplify the reach of these ideas and resources, potentially reaching people outside of their communities of practice.

44.   By utilizing online platforms, particularly Padlet, this program extended this community of practice to the digital world where participants can learn and collaborate at their convenience, unconstrained by the physical and geographical distance. Technology also allows for the easy sharing of resources and content to help one another improve their schools' teaching and learning.

45.   At the same time, professional relationships and networks are formed through the close collaborations of these leaders. With the sharing of ideas, resources can also be pooled together and projects can be scaled up to other schools, leading to bigger opportunities for change. The CESL TAPs are intended as pilot projects, and successful projects can be replicated in the four cities, with the pilot school acting as a trailblazer, a hub of knowledge and a resource center.

IV. CESL: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING DEVELOPMENT THROUGH BLENDED LEARNING

46.   Information communication and technology (ICT) has revolutionized the provision of vital services to the developing world. One particular area where the impact of ICT is apparent is in the use and application of mobile technologies. This can be clearly seen in the big jump in mobile technology usage in what the World Bank describes as "low and middle income countries" and more significantly, the increase of mobile technology applications pertaining to development economics, such as mobile banking services in rural areas (Donner 2008). Another area in which ICT has made impressive inroads is in the use of telecommunications toward aiding health service provision in remote areas of the developing world. This is also known as telehealth (Wootton et al. 2009). One prominent area where ICT continues to make an almost exponential impact is in the application of various initiatives in education (i.e., ICT facilities provision, teacher training in the use of ICT, creation of learning management systems) particularly in developing world contexts (Hawkins 2002). The potential and promise of ICT usage in addressing critical service delivery gaps in the developing world has been acknowledged by ADB:

> The ADB social protection operational plan, 2014–2020 recognizes ICT as a potential sector for investment and knowledge work to strengthen social protection programs in its developing member countries (DMCs). In recent years, with assistance from ADB, many DMCs have expanded their social protection programs and developed national social protection strategies (Handayani et al. 2017).

A. The Online Learning Phenomenon

47.   The last decade has seen a dramatic increase in online learning. Some have even claimed that this is a "truly exceptional phenomenon – pedagogically effective, cost-efficient and socially-beneficent" (Curran 2001, p. 113). In this section, the definition of online learning will be adopted from the influential work of Moore and Kearseley who describe it as "teaching and planned learning in which teaching normally occurs in a different place from learning, requiring communication through technologies as well as special institutional organisation" (Moore and Kearsely 2012, p. 2). More importantly, this section further proposes that the potential advantages that can be derived from online learning can be translated into professional learning approaches. This can be attained by incorporating Guskey's sequential guidelines in ensuring that online affordances can be built into professional learning programs consisting of "(1) student learning outcomes, (2) new practices to be implemented, (3) needed organisational support, (4) desired educator knowledge and skills, and (5) optimal professional learning activities" (Guskey 2014, p. 11).

B. Blended Learning as Online Professional Learning

48.   Traditionally, professional learning has been carried out through face-to-face or F2F approaches. In the last 3 decades, the explosion of ICT has ushered in professional learning implemented through online systems. Given these two very disparate approaches, some scholars have identified that blended learning is a modality that combines traditional F2F along with online approaches (Garrison and Kanuka, 2004; MacDonald, 2008; and Tao, Ramsey, and Watson, 2011). Some other scholars have defined blended learning as an approach that combines F2F modes and distributed learning that allows the possibility for "lecturers, students, and content to be in different locations" (Williams, Bland, and Christie 2008, p. 43). What seems apparent is that a precise scholarly definition of blended learning remains elusive. For this section, a practical definition of blended learning is appropriated from the Department of Education and Training, New South Wales, Australia: "learning which combines online and face to face approaches" (2003, p. 2).

49.   There are several manifestations of online professional learning modalities that currently span the globe, among those that are most prevalent are Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), *Coursera,* and connectivist MOOCs (cMOOCs) (Clarà and Barbera 2013). Alongside these predominantly online learning modes, one particular hybrid type of online affordance described as blended learning seemingly enjoys a loyal following: "while learning technologies and delivery media continue to evolve and progress, one thing is certain: Organizations (corporate, government, and academic) favor blended learning models over single delivery mode programs" (Singh 2003, p. 54).

50.   It must be pointed out, however, that effective enactment of blended learning is a deliberate process warranting a very careful alignment between the nature and functions of institutions and its targeted goals and objectives. Some have emphasized that blended learning "requires high quality support at all levels: organizational infrastructure, course and faculty development, as well as consistent student support mechanisms" (Moskal et al. 2013, p. 23). This section supports this contention and goes on to reiterate that apart from organizational context and its consistency with program goals and objectives, on a more specific level, effective modes of blended learning are typified by an active "interaction with course content, with course instructors and among course participants" (Swan 2002 p. 44).

C.   Key Characteristics of Online Professional Learning Development

51.   Several commentators have expounded on the idealized features of online learning (Dabbagh and Bannan-Ritland 2005) while others have theorized on the relationships that should be present among learners and teachers in online learning spaces (Swan 2004). For this section, the key characteristics of online learning are derived from the ongoing studies that have been undertaken by the Australian Institute for Teaching and Learning (AITSL). In its quest to search for approaches that best represents the interface of teaching practice and student learning outcomes, AITSL has developed the Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders in 2012, which has been endorsed by, among others, the Education Ministers at the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood. The charter underscores three key characteristics of what it describes as a framework to establish high quality professional learning development (PLD): "relevance, collaboration and a future focus." Arguably, these characteristics are "applicable to online PLD as other more traditional face-to-face arrangements, while online provision widens the scope for solutions to problems of relevance, collaboration and future focus" (Quinn et al. 2019, p. 406).

V.   CESL: RELEVANCE, COLLABORATION, AND A FUTURE FOCUS

52.   This section explicates on the foundations of the design principles behind CESL as these are embodied in the Transformational Education Leadership program (TransformLEAD@21) (Reyes 2019). The core features of CESL are built upon the three characteristics of effective online professional development described by the Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders. Doing so was an attempt to ensure the appropriateness and efficacy of enacting blended learning approaches for the CESL.

A.   Ecologies of Learning

53.   CESL as a PLD built on blended learning approaches needed to possess "relevance" particularly to the key stakeholders that participate in the program. As such, in the planning and implementation of CESL, a deliberate attempt was made to establish ecologies of learning that recognized the critical contextual features of the different stakeholders involved in the program. Contemporary research on education reforms contend that stakeholder participation emerges as the most impactful component of authentic education transformations (Reyes 2016). Furthermore, Biesta (2012) argues that learning

needs to be bespoke, as it cannot be disconnected from either content or context, and therefore schooling ecologies become an essential factor in both planning and implementation of any PLD initiative (Biesta 2012). One of the most important components of the CESL is the conceptualization, creation, implementation, and evaluation of a transformational action plan (TAP) that each participant is required to complete as a capstone project of the program. A fundamental trait of these TAPs is that they need to be clearly contextualized: they should reflect the most timely and, more importantly, relevant transformational educational issue that each of the CESL participants is keen to explore and undertake.

B.   Embedded Connectedness

54.   Built on the notion of collaboration, CESL as a unique PLD employed blended learning approaches to be able to achieve "collaboration" among its key stakeholders. As such, employing a combination of face-to-face (F2F) alongside online approaches, or blended learning, fits very nicely with the goal of fostering collaboration or what some scholars describe as "embedded connectedness" (Quinn et al. p. 412). A specific manifestation of embedded connectedness unique to CESL is the cloud-based Padlet that tracked the conceptualization–implementation–feedback–reflection loop of each of the participants of CESL This online platform remains a fundamental component of CESL. In the F2F sessions conducted for the CESL, as an essential component of the blended learning approach, the lecture-workshops as well as the selected industry visits were specifically designed to allow each of the participants to become familiar with and to eventually enact continuous professional learning as a situated practice: "that is, an arrangement deeply embedded in classrooms, schools, communities and broader educational organisations" (Quinn et al. p. 412).

C.   Future-Focused Professional Learning Development

55.   Future-focused PLD is defined as a practice where "participants engage in tailored and agentic inquiry into teaching and reflective practice" (Quinn et al. 2019, p. 410). Furthermore, in a comprehensive scan of the most current reviews of existing online PLD programs that are built around effective PLDs as outlined in the AITSL Charter, Quinn et al. unearthed five distinct trajectories of what they describe as future-focused PLDs: (i) integrated PLDs, (ii) bespoke PLDs, (iii) design-led PLDs, (iv) market-led PLDs, and (v) open PLDs. Another essential component of the CESL program is the structured critical reflective practice sessions undertaken during the F2F lessons. These reflection sessions were designed to allow all the participants to become familiar with the principles of reflective practice. An online discussion forum among all the CESL participants became the concrete output for each participant to document their continuing reflections and how these are then translated into transformational educational policy and practice.

D.   Insights from the CESL Experience

56.   CESL was designed as a blended learning approach to professional development that was anchored on effective PLD principles of relevance, collaboration, and a future focus. The combination of F2F sessions alongside online modalities built on an online foundation was designed to establish foundations of what is referred to as practice architectures, a social activity with three key dimensions: "sayings," "doings," and "relatings" (Kemmis et al. 2014, p. 132).

57.   Leadership professional development occurring in cycles often works more effectively with time allocated between each session to be utilized for the implementation in schools with teachers and parents, review, discussion with peers, and line managers before commencing the next cycle. As a blended training program, participants did not have to be away from their schools for long periods of time and are more likely to concentrate on the training program. Also, in the work stations, matters which require the attention of the school leaders do not have to be unattended to for long periods of time. Therefore, the blended learning features of the CESL make it possible for school leaders to participate

in professional development without disrupting operations in the work stations very much. For these reasons, professional development programs designed in a manner similar to the CESL program can be easier to scale up. This is an imperative if significant gains are to be achieved in the huge system within a reasonable amount of time.

58.   The desired short-term outputs of CESL was for the participants to conceptualize, operationalize, and evaluate context-specific transformational action plans on specific education issues. The TAPs emphasizes collegiality, focus on real local issues, and the fact that leadership is about recognizing the need for change and taking responsibility. It is about not only making decisions but taking decisions through team implementation. These outputs could hopefully be the start of attaining a critical mass of reform-minded school leaders keen on addressing the tremendous challenges that face K–12 Philippine education reforms. The long-term outcome of CESL is to create a corps of leaders who would nurture and establish cultures of transformations—built on practice architectures—in their own contexts.

> Practices and practice architectures exist in a constitutive and reciprocally influential relationship. As such, effective PLD is (potentially) transformational when the sayings, doings, and relatings of students, teachers, and school leaders, in turn, develop and sustain transformed practice (Quinn et al. 2019).

59.   CESL as a PLD built on blended learning approaches has proven to be an efficacious approach toward addressing some of the reform challenges facing K–12 education in the Philippines. The blended approach allows the program to be relevant, collaborative, and future-focused. In this manner, it has the potential to create a ripple effect of contextualized reforms: starting small and rippling through a wider impact. More importantly, the CESL, as it deliberately promoted the creation and establishment of practice architectures via critical reflective practice, provided each of the participants an opportunity to build authentic cultures of transformational education.

60.   The CESL has demonstrated alternative modes of course delivery, encouraged collegial practice, and focused on the identification of issues and the importance of specific timely responses. The CESL constructivist approach to learning and problem solving will provide a great model for the school heads to consider when managing their own and their teachers' professional development in the future.

61.   The acid test of the CESL relates to the replicability of its success in the future and its scalability. In this regard, it is important to point out some of the factors that will promote the likelihood of a successful scaling up of the CESL. First, the success of the TAP feature of the CESL depends on the presence of institutional support from the DepEd central office, regional offices, and the school division offices (SDOs). The usefulness of the TAP as an approach to learning requires that participants be given (i) opportunities to practice what they learn, (ii) "opportunity to seek clarification and additional help in applying new approaches, and (iii) encouragement and support for having successfully implemented the ideas" (Chapman 2002). These opportunities and incentives for innovation are not easy to come by in DepEd, being highly hierarchical and bureaucratic. Note that other training models with a similar feature as the TAP (i.e., which requires participants to design and implement a "re-entry project") have been less successful precisely because of the lack of such opportunities and incentives. Second, the ability of school leaders to exercise empowered school governance is constrained by the amount of discretion they have over school resources. Such discretion is very low in most DepEd schools, largely because of their limited school maintenance and other operating expenses or MOOE budget. Third, the ability of school leaders to influence schooling outcomes is also constrained by their limited access to data on the National Achievement Test. Despite the breadth of the data collected available from the Learner Information System and the Enhanced Basic Education Information System, which are obtained from the schools themselves, the access of SDOs and schools to these critical information and their ability to analyze them from a management and instructional leadership perspective appears to be limited.

VI.   CONCLUSION: CAN CESL BE INTEGRATED INTO DEPED'S SYSTEM?

62.   The compact and flexible nature of Certificate in Educational Studies in Leadership (CESL) makes it a suitable addition to the recently formed National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) mode, where CESL and its proponents can be seen as an external stakeholder. A question that may arise is the following: can CESL or similar stand-alone initiatives be integrated into the Department of Education (DepEd) system? This paper argues that this question needs to be made even more precise: what is the existing DepEd system? Following the lead of scholars and commentators who have undertaken careful analyses of DepEd, claims made about the organization is that it is dysfunctional and prone to corruption (Reyes, 2010 and 2016) and mired in crisis (Diola 2014), However, despite these challenges, specific programs of DepEd encounter breakthroughs (Ling, Khatri and Jha 2010) while local educational leaders experience successes (Reyes 2019). It can be argued therefore that to define DepEd as a "system" is slightly premature as it is still very much a "work in progress," made even more relevant with the introduction of recent grand scale reforms (i.e., Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda). In DepEd's current state of re-development, we argue that CESL, with its unique design features, can form part of the wide array of evolving professional learning development (PLD) programs of the bureaucracy.

63.   The Philippine society has a very high regard for education, and families strongly believe that good education is an individual's ticket to a good job, a good future, and better quality of life. Even the poorest of families will make all the sacrifices just to get their children to school because good education is envisioned to be the primary path out of poverty. In addition to a good grasp of basic subjects, quality basic education at present includes mastery of 21st century skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and technology literacy. Unfortunately, results from achievement tests such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study indicate that the country has a long way to go, having ranked 65th in the world based on data from 2003. Such a challenge is even more heightened by the size of the education system which at present covers 47,025 schools and about 27 million students from kindergarten to Grade 12.

64.   Moving up the quality of basic education in the country from its present levels is unquestionably an immense challenge. Evidently, the improvement of the quality of basic education in the country has to be pursued aggressively and systematically without delay. Investing in the training of school leaders who can make the greatest difference in creating the conditions in schools, which can in turn enhance student achievement, cannot be optional. A good starting point would be relevant and systematic school leadership preparation and in-service training for both would-be and current principals, supervisors, and superintendents. This is certainly no simple task. The current data on the number of principal and supervisor positions contained in the Task Force on NEAP Transformation (2019) magnify the challenge (tables 3 and 4). The numbers undeniably indicate the serious and pressing need for both entry-level and in-service programs for principals and other school leaders. Entry-level training for those who will be appointed to unfilled positions may have to be prioritized but similar attention should also be given to incumbent school leaders.

65.   The shift from access to quality, which the government is intensely advocating at this point, is laudable and timely. If the K–12 Reform is to lead to transformative effects in the quality of basic education in the Philippines, the aspiration and intention to pursue quality at this juncture in the history of education in the country must be operationalized and implemented resolutely. This endeavor will necessarily require school principals to have a better understanding of teaching-learning practices and an improved grasp of administrative and management processes suitable to the context of the schools they lead. In the coming years, the scarcity of resources will likely continue to be part of reality, hence, school principals will need to have the ability to look for inputs and actions that can result in significant

Table 3: Number of Principal Positions

	POSITIONS	FILLED	UNFILLED	TOTAL
ASP2	Assistant School Principal II	386	1,014	1,400
SP1	School Principal I	12,024	2,724	14,748
SP2	School Principal II	5,114	588	5,702
SP3	School Principal III	1,763	109	1,872
SP4	School Principal IV	1,037	63	1,100
SPSP1	Special School Principal I	2	1	3
ASP3	Assistant School Principal III	0	12	12
ASP1	Assistant School Principal I	2	15	17
SPSP2	Special School Principal II	2	1	3
ASSP	Assistant Special School Principal	0	1	1
	Total	20,330	4,528	24,858

Source: Task Force on National Educators Academy of the Philippines Transformation, 2019.

results in student learning despite such situations. Therefore, strengthening and supporting school level management in ways that can lead to improvements in student achievement are imperative and urgent. The powerful stories of school principals (and other school leaders) who have succeeded to improve their schools are illuminating. Moreover, the design of training programs cited in this paper serve as important inputs that can be used as basis for upscaling these programs rapidly.

66.   In light of this, the CESL has a number of good features. First, it veers away from the massive train-the-trainers, cascade down approach of most DepEd-provided trainings. At the same time, its duration is not too long (3 months) so as to discourage school leaders from enrolling in the program.[3] Second, unlike other training programs for school leaders, the CESL appears to be less focused on imparting specific skills, say in running a school. Instead, it appears to pay more attention to higher level concepts and principles of leadership (both instructional and administrative). Third, its use of the blended approach where part of the training is delivered online further enhances its flexibility to fit the busy schedule of school leaders and helps in reducing the program's cost. Fourth, the requirement for participants to design and implement a transformational action project (TAP) that addresses the unique and specific challenges they face in their schools helps ensure that the participants are able to apply the theoretical concepts and principles of educational leadership to the real-life problems they face. Fifth, this program has incorporated the use of technology well not only in the delivery of the CESL program itself but also in imparting to participants how to use new technology to transform their schools.

Table 4: Number of Supervisor Positions

Positions	Filled	Unfilled	Total
Chief education supervisor	495	20	515
Education program supervisor	2,493	238	2,731
Public schools district supervisor	2,324	235	2,559
Total	5312	493	5,805

Source: Task Force on National Educators Academy of the Philippines Transformation, 2019.

---

[3]   Many teachers wishing to shift toward the school administration career track enroll in a full-fledged masters degree program in education management.

67.   Having successfully run this program, the organizers are keen to replicate it within a specific community in the Philippines. Several lessons are particularly important. First, committed school leaders are critical to the success of any program to champion the cause and rally supporters. Communities of practice, with guided reflections and regular meetings, are also integral to the program. Second, technology should be used as an aid to complement teachers and school leaders, rather than using technology to replace human capital. As society and school systems become more technologically advanced and technologically enabled, it is imperative to continue promoting the value of teachers and school leaders in transforming their schools and communities, and continue investing in the training of these leaders to contribute to their nation's development. It is in this context that the organizers are discussing with other institutions in the Philippines to conduct region-specific programs. Having a more targeted, region-specific program will allow the organizers to tailor the program to the specific needs and contexts of the region, and to better observe the long-term impact of this program on a community within the Philippines.

REFERENCES

C. Brook and R. Oliver. 2003. Online Learning Communities: Investigating a Design Framework. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology,* 19, 139–160.

C. Curran. 2001. The Phenomenon of On-line Learning. *European Journal of Education,* 36, 113 132.

C. Diola. 2014. Philippines' Education Crisis Far from Over—UNESCO. *The Philippine Star.* 23 January.

C. Jackson and E. Bruegmann. 2009. Teaching Students and Teaching Each Other: The Importance of Peer Learning for Teachers. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 1 (4): 85–108.

D. Chapman, 2000. Trends in Educational Administration in Developing Asia. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36(2), 283–308.

D. Chapman, 2002. Management and Efficiency in Education: Goals and Strategies*.* Manila: Asian Development Bank and Comparative Education Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong.

F. Quinn et al. 2019. Developing, Situating and Evaluating Effective Online Professional Learning and Development: A Review of Some Theoretical and Policy Frameworks. *The Australian Educational Researcher,* 46, 405-424.

Factfish .2019. *Philippines: TIMSS, Mathematics, Mean Performance, Grade 8, Male.* https://www.factfish. com/statistic-country/philippines.

G. Biesta. 2012. The Future of Teacher Education: Evidence, Competence or Wisdom? *Research on Steiner Education,* 3, 8–21.

Government of the Philippines. 2001. Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001. https://www. officialgazette.gov.ph/2001/08/11/republic-act-no-9155.

Government of the Philippines, Department of Education. 2005. *Transforming Education on the Ground: Fifty Stories of School-Based Management Under the Third Elementary Education Project.* Manila.

Government of the Philippines, Department of Education. 2016. *School Heads Development Program: Foundation Course.*

Government of the Philippines, Department of Education. 2019. *DepEd Highlights Gains in Access in Education as It Pivots to Enhancement of Quality in Proposed 2020 Budget. https://www.deped.gov.ph.*

Government of the Philippines, Department of Education. 2019. *Implementation of the NEAP Transformation. https://www.teacherph.com/neap-transformation/.*

Government of the Philippines, Task Force on NEAP Transformation. 2019. *Report of the Task Force on NEAP Transformation: Proposed Detailed Design.*

H. Hodkinson and P. Hodkinson. 2004. Rethinking the Concept of Community of Practice in Relation to Schoolteachers' Workplace Learning. *International Journal of Training and Development,* 8(1). pp.21–31.

H. Singh. 2003. Building Effective Blended Learning Programs. *Issue of Educational Technology,* 43, 51–54.

J. Donner. 2008. Research Approaches to Mobile Use in the Developing World: A Review of the Literature. *The information society* 24, 140–159.

K. Swan. 2002. Building Learning Communities in Online Courses: The importance of interaction. *Education, Communication & Information,* 2, 23–49.

K. Swan. 2004. Learning Online: A Review of Current Research on Issues of Interface, Teaching Presence and Learner Characteristics. In J. Bourne and J. Moore (eds.). *Elements of Quality Online Education, Into the Mainstream.* Needham, MA: Sloan Center for Online Education.

L. Cuban. 2013. Why So Many Structural Changes in Schools and So Little Reform in Teaching Practice? *Journal of Educational Administration,* 51(2), 109–125.

L. Gonzalez. 2009. Teaching Math for Social Justice: Reflections on a Community of Practice for High School Math Teachers. *Journal of Urban Mathematics Education.* 2(1) Spring/Summer 2009: 22–51

L. Mendoza, G. Gempes and E. Atienzar. 2016. The Pedagogical Journey of School Heads: ICexCELS Learning Course in Context. *International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research,* 7(6), 1092–1103.

M. Bautista, A. Bernardo and D. Ocampo. 2008. When Reforms Don't Transform: Reflections on Institutional Reforms in the Department of Education. *HDN Discussion Paper Series, PHDR* Issue 2008/2009, No. 2, 1–64.

M. Clarà and E. Barbera. 2013. Learning Online: Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), connectivism, and cultural psychology. *Distance Education,* 34, 129–136.

M. Moore and G. Kearsely. 2012. *Distance education: A systematic view of online learning,* United Kingdom, adsworth Cengage Learning.

M. Wheatley. 2002. Some friends and I started talking. *UTNE Reader.* https://www.utne.com/community/some-friends-and-i-started-talking.

N. Dabbagh and B. Bannan-Ritland. 2005. *Online Learning: Concepts, Strategies, and Application.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson / Merrill / Prentice Hall.

N. Khattri, C. Ling and S. Jha. 2010. The Effects of School-based Management in the Philippines: An Initial Assessment Using Administrative Data. *Policy Research Working Paper No. 5248.* Washington, DC: The World Bank, Education Sector Unit, East Asia and the Pacific Region.

Oxford Business Group. 2017. Education Reform in the Philippines Aims for Better Quality and More Access. https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com.

P. Moskal, C. Dzuiban and J. Hartman. 2013. Blended Learning: A Dangerous Idea? *Internet and Higher Education,* 18.

R. Hawkins. 2002. Ten Lessons for ICT and Education in the Developing World. *In G. Kirkman et al* (eds.) *Global Information Technology Report 2001-2002: Readiness for the Networked World.* New York: Oxford University Press.

R. Wootton et al. 2009. *Telehealth in the Developing World,* Ottawa: International Development Research Center.

R. Zwart et al. 2008. Teacher Learning through Reciprocal Peer Coaching: An Analysis of Activity Sequences. *Teaching and teacher education,* 24(4). pp. 982–1002.

S. Handayani et al. 2017. Improving the Delivery of Social Protection Through ICT: Case Studies in Mongolia, Nepal and Vietnam. *ADB Sustainable Development Working Paper Series.* No. 50, 1–25. Manila: Asian Development Bank.

S. Kemmis et al. 2017. Learning as being 'Stirred In' to Practices. *In* P. Grootenboer, C, Edwards-Groves and S. Choy (eds.). *Practice Theory Perspectives on Pedagogy and Education: Praxis, Diversity and Contestation.* Singapore: Springer.

S. Printy. 2008. Leadership for Teacher Learning: A Community of Practice Perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(2). pp. 187–226.

S. Sindhvad. 2009. *School Principals as Instructional Leaders: An Investigation of School Leadership Capacity in the Philippines,* PhD dissertation, University of Minnesota.

T. Guskey. 2014. Planning Professional Learning. *Educational Leadership,* 71, 11–16.

V. Reyes. 2010. The Philippine Department of Education: Challenges of Policy Implementation Amidst Corruption. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 30* 4, 381–400.

V. Reyes. 2016. *Mapping the Terrain of Education Reform: Global Trends and Local Responses in the Philippines,* New York, Routledge.

V. Reyes. 2018. *TransformLEAD@21: Transformational Educational Leadership in 21st Century Contexts - Policy and Practice* https://transformlead21.com/

V. Reyes. 2019. School Leaders in the Midst of Reforms: Crisis and Catharsis in the Philippine Education System. In S. Hairon and J. Wee (Ed.), *Perspectives on School Leadership in Asia Pacific Contexts* (pp. 109–131) Singapore: Springer Singapore.

World Bank. 2016. *Assessing Basic Education Delivery in the Philippines.* Washington, DC.

Advancing the K-12 Reform from the Ground
A Case Study in the Philippines

This paper describes the implementation of the Certificate in Educational Studies in Leadership (CESL) in the Philippines as a professional development initiative delivered in a customized blended learning mode. The design principles of this promising pilot leverage on the use of technology, activation of communities of practice, and planning and implementation of context-specific transformational action projects targeted at education leaders. The authors contend that CESL fits within the leadership development ecology of the Philippine Department of Education and the National Educators Academy of the Philippines for the 21st century. As a transformative development program, CESL can be one of the many ways to jumpstart and sustain authentic education reforms.

About the Asian Development Bank

ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty. Established in 1966, it is owned by 68 members —49 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.