

Fostering a Humane and Green Future: Pathways to Inclusive Societies and Sustainable Development



“Transition plans” and K to 12 implementation fidelity

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Abstract: The first cohort of students who passed through Senior High School has by now graduated from college. But any meaningful evaluation of K to 12's impact on educational and labour market outcomes must first consider the effect of DepEd-approved “transition plans” that allowed thousands of students from select high schools to enter tertiary education a year (sometimes even two years) earlier than expected. In this paper, we describe the practices of 21 such high schools from NCR by interviewing over 60 students, parents, and teachers. We categorise the transition plans into three types: batch-wide acceleration, compressed instruction, and bridging programmes, in what we believe to be the first attempt to document the uneven implementation fidelity of the K to 12 programme from 2014 to 2018.

Key Words: K-12 transition, compressed learning time, implementation fidelity

1. INTRODUCTION

In academic years 2016-17 and 2017-18, De La Salle University accepted between a thousand and two thousand first-year students, a figure over 40 percent of its historical annual intake of 3,500. This was unusual because, like other higher education institutions in the Philippines, DLSU expected nearly zero enrollment during those so-called “Lean Years”, as students were meant to complete an additional two years of Senior High School in compliance with Republic Act No. 10533, better known as the enhanced basic education programme, or K to 12 Law of 2013.

Under the reform, students would have to undergo 12 years of pre-university education, compared to the previous 10, a cycle the Philippines shared only with Angola and Djibouti (Department of Education, 2013). K to 12 mandated one year of kindergarten, six years of grade school, four years of what would now be called junior high school, plus two years of senior high school, or Grade 11 and 12.

Much has been written about the implementation of K to 12, in particular the lack of preparation and resources to implement modified

competency-based curricula, the shortfall in classrooms and qualified teachers, and the economic impact on secondary and tertiary institutions. Almost completely ignored is the impact of DepEd Order No. 42 s. 2015 (DO_45_s2015), which lists the conditions under which students might enter college in AY2016-17. These included 28 private schools from NCR deemed to have approved K to 12 transitions plans and had previously offered a seven-year elementary education programme, the 54 “SHS modeling schools” who took part in SYs2012-13 and 2013-14, and the 94 public and private schools deemed to have been early implementers of K to 12 in SY2014-15.

In this paper, we present accounts of how these transition plans were actually carried out, as described by students who experienced them, parents who knew of them, and teachers who implemented them. Our findings show that any future attempt to evaluate the impact of K to 12 on education or labour market outcomes should pay close attention to the uneven implementation fidelity of the programme, and the sometimes startling practices permitted under so-called K to 12 transition plans.

Fostering a Humane and Green Future: Pathways to Inclusive Societies and Sustainable Development



2. METHOD

2.1 Sampling

We conducted semi-structured interviews in August 2022 using, among others, the following questions: *were you able to follow the prescribed timeline of Grades 1-6 of grade school, then Years 1-6 of high school? What, if anything, did your school do to make it possible to graduate from high school and enter college earlier? Could you describe them as precisely as you can, based on your experience? How were these interventions implemented, were they selective or meant for your entire batch; were they optional or mandatory? How did class schedules, pace and type of instruction, class requirements and workload change during this time? As far as you know, do these measures continue?*

2.2 Analysis

From recordings and transcripts, we organised narrative blocks and converted them into codes using open coding, which became the basis for creating a typology of practices. The purpose of this work is a kind of investigative reporting: on-the-ground, verbatim descriptions of practices, rather than judgments or evaluations of K to 12 implementation of the type seen, for instance, in Trance and Trance (2019).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample private schools started to implement the K to 12 curricula in SY2012-13. Their respective transition plans covered Grades 1 to 6 or 7 (if applicable) during SY2011-12 (see Table 1). The schools' first to fourth year high school students at that time were exempted and continued to follow the old Basic Education Curriculum (BEC).

Table 1. Covered Cohorts of the Transition Plans

BEC		Enhanced BEC (K to 12)			
		New Curriculum			
SY1112	SY1213	SY1314	SY1415	SY1516	SY1617
Gr. 1				Gr. 6	Gr. 7
Gr. 2				Gr. 7	Gr. 8
Gr. 3	Implementation Period of			Gr. 8	Gr. 9
Gr. 4	Transition Plans			Gr. 9	Gr. 10
Gr. 5				Gr. 10	Gr. 11
Gr. 6				Gr. 11	Gr. 12
Gr. 7				Gr.12/4th Yr	
		Old Curriculum			
1 st Yr	2 nd Yr	3 rd Yr	4 th Yr		
2 nd Yr	3 rd Yr	4 th Yr			
3 rd Yr	4 th Yr				
4 th Yr					

Table 2 shows that the majority of student participants (68.4%) graduated senior high school (SHS) in 2019 and just over a third (35.09%) were in Grade 4 at the onset of their schools' transition programmes.

Table 2. Number of Student Participants

Number of Students by SHS Graduation Year		Number of Students by Grade Level During the Implementation of the Transition Programme	
Year	Frequency (% to Total)	Grade Level	Frequency (% to Total)
2020	6 (10.5%)	Gr. 8	1 (1.8%)
2019	39 (68.4%)	Gr. 7	7 (12.2%)
2018	11 (19.3%)	Gr. 6	16 (28.0%)
2017	1 (1.8%)	Gr. 5	13 (22.8%)
		Gr. 4	20 (35.09%)
Total	57 (100%)	Total	57 (100%)

Three key categories emerged from the interview data. Transition programmes involved a combination of batch-wide acceleration, compressed instructional time, and/or bridging programmes.

3.1 Batch-wide Acceleration

With this, schools "mass promoted" their students to the next level, allowing them to skip a grade. For example, a Grade 4 student in SY2011-12 would be accelerated to Grade 6 in SY2012-13, thereby skipping Grade 5. The schools' main consideration for this transition strategy was alignment to DepEd's age requirement per level. However, the tradeoff included compromised curriculum, in which lessons were skipped, squeezed, skimmed or fast-tracked; and increased pacing of lessons and workload.



Fostering a Humane and Green Future: Pathways to Inclusive Societies and Sustainable Development

Based on interview accounts, two types of acceleration occurred (see Table 3) during the transition period: 1) Grade Skipping (acceleration to next level) or 2) Grade Telescoping (compressing multiple academic years into one or two school years).

Table 3. School's Batch-wide Acceleration Type

School	Grade Skipping	Grade Telescoping	Implementation Period
A	/		SY1112-1213
B		/	SY1314-1415
C	/		SY1213-1314
D		/	SY1213-1314
E	/		SY1112-1213
F	/		SY1213-1314
G	/		SY1213-1314
H		/	SY1314
I	/		SY1112-1213
J	/		SY1213-1314
K	N/A	N/A	
L	N/A	N/A	
M		/	SY1314
N	/		SY1213-1314
O	/		SY1112-1213
P	/		SY1112-1213
Q	/		SY1112-1213
R	/		SY1213-1314
S	/		
T	/		SY1213-1314
U	/		SY1112-1213

Sample verbatim descriptions on batch-wide acceleration and its consequences follow.

Schools A, C, G, P, Q, U:

“— they made us bump up a grade. So for example, if I started Grade 5, they made us skip Grade 6, and it made us go straight to Grade 7.” (Student)

“— we made a mass promotion, meaning that we promoted or made the student one grade higher. For example, if they were in grade five, the next school year, they were made to attend grade seven. If they were in grade six, they were made to attend the next academic year, grade eight. So it was a mass promotion.” (Teacher)

“— kasi based from the DepEd order, dapat if the learner is 6 years old dapat nasa Grade 1 na siya, so yun yung adjustment na ginawa nila. Even the preschoolers, they jumped to Grade 1. Yung iba they

missed kinder kasi nga they had to follow the age bracket...” (Teacher)

“— Pero yung accelerated class ng Grade 5, they moved, as far as I can remember, parang hindi sila nag-Grade 7. Ang movement nila was Grade 8, parang ganun, parang nagaccelerate sila ng two years as compared to their batchmates kasi ang advanced class kasi sa (redacted) ay advanced din yung mga curriculum nila. Merong mga additional skills na tinuturo na hindi tinuturo sa regular classes. Kaya mas na-aadvance sila ng 2 levels ahead, parang ganun yung nangyari, may ganung transition.” (Teacher)

“Under the acceleration, I would say the lessons were crammed. I think yung lessons nung grade 5 and grade 6, like especially in math, science, and english...they were crammed tapos yung mga hindi na kasya within that one academic year...it was put aside.” (Student)

“So ang sabi samin if you can also include other skills from Grade 7 pwede naman siya. Kaso sa sobrang dami nga, medyo hindi na rin talaga naging possible na talagang buongbuo kasi para kang magtuturo ng dalawang grade level in one kung lahat icoconsider mo yung Grade 7.” (Teacher)

“But because of how fast that they wanted us to finish our subjects within a year, they only gave us like three months, three or four months of studying per quarter. And unlike prior to the curriculum, we had about five or six months because it was only trimester. So you had so much more time to understand the subject, and it gave us breaks in between. Like, I remember they used to give us like two weeks of lessons and then a quiz. And then when senior high school came, it was every week ata may quiz...” (Student)

3.2. Compressed Instructional Time

In adopting a batch-wide acceleration transition programme, schools had to adjust their curricula and compress instructional time. As observed, the schools employed these common tools and practices: shortened school duration, shorter lecture time and vacation period, removal of subjects, less application of concepts, integration of requirements, faster pacing of lessons and/or extended class schedule.

Sample verbatim descriptions on compressed instructional time and its consequences follow.



Fostering a Humane and Green Future: Pathways to Inclusive Societies and Sustainable Development

Schools B, D, F, K, L, R:

“— imbis na twelve years, parang eleven years lang since nung grade five, doon nag-start sa K to 12 ata. So yung grade five, grade six, and grade seven namin, imbis na three years naging two years lang. Then if I remember correctly, may extra one month lang na...like imbis na two months yung summer, naging one month na kasi parang yung dagdag na one month na yun... yun na yung need para ok lang na two years instead of three years.” (Student)

“— so nangyayari is in those 1 hour, tatlong different classes yung ihahandle ng isang teacher for that subject. So for example, for our Math teacher, for the first 40 minutes of our class, what we’ll do is that mag sasagot muna kami ng DLAs, as we call it, yun yung parang worksheets namin before. So for 40 minutes, we need to answer the questions in the DLAs and understand the concept or lesson by ourselves. So parang more on mas kami yung gumagawa compared sa teacher. And then after that 40 minutes, yung teacher, mag vivisit lang sa classroom namin and then that's when magtuturo siya tapos if you have any questions, we have to answer it.” (Student)

"So what we did is, instead of having 10 months for that school year ang ginawa naming nagtrim down kami when it comes to number of months...kahit October diba may sembreak wala kaming sembreak. di kami nagsam break just to make sure tuloy na tuloy yung school year hanggang mahabol namin and then maka-align kami dun sa num– sa school year ng K to 12...So after, after you did the bridging program sa Grade 4 you will go straight to Grade 5. Tapos parang ano lang kami, weeks of break lang– a week or 2 instead of having yung mga 3 or 2 months na vacation." (Teacher)

"I think..naalala ko kasi is that they removed some minor subjects like TLE, yung mga ganon. Naalala ko either may isang project na binigay sa amin or they just integrated it into other subjects parang mas ishorten. And typical (redacted) school yung (redacted). So even during that time, they removed the (redacted) subjects altogether. I think that's it." (Student)

"For example, yung requirement ng math, gagawa ng polygons or whatever... they might integrate it with art or english, para isa nalang yung requirement na kailangang ipasa." (Student)

"because of that we also had to take classes during Saturdays...it was more on for catching up on the missed lessons kasi minsan, ever since the bridging

program started, everything was more rushed, so there were some classes na we missed..like important lessons na we’re supposed to take up, so that’s what the enrichment classes were for." (Student)

3.3. Bridging Programmes

Most schools complemented their batch-wide acceleration with bridging programmes — either 1) taken during summer terms (one to three months) or 2) included in levels before and/or after the skipped level or 3) a combination of both. Because of the compressed instructional time, schools prioritised core subjects (Math, Science, English and Filipino) to be discussed and taught in the bridging programmes.

Table 4 shows how schools scheduled their bridging programmes to supplement their respective transition programmes.

Table 4. Schedule of Bridging Programmes

School	When the Skipped Level was Bridged
A	grade after the skipped level
B	summer and within the compressed SYs
C	grade after the skipped level
D	summer and within the compressed SYs
E	grade after the skipped level
F	grade before and after the skipped level
G	grade after the skipped level
H	summer and within the compressed SYs
I	summer
J	summer
K	summer and distributed among several SYs
L	incomplete information
M	summer and within the compressed SYs
N	summer
O	summer
P	grade after the skipped level
Q	grade after the skipped level
R	grade after the skipped level
S	optional
T	summer
U	grade after the skipped level

Sample verbatim descriptions on bridging programmes follow.

Schools H, I, J, M, N, O, S, T:

Fostering a Humane and Green Future: Pathways to Inclusive Societies and Sustainable Development



“— Meron kaming summer term, so yung summer term na ‘yon cinompaact siya for du’n sa grade 7 namin...so parang technically cinrash course lang namin yung grade 7 and then onwards na kami to grade 8.” (Student)

“So we attended three months of school...’yun yung equivalent ng grade five namin yung summer classes na yun.” (Student)

“— For the step-up program, they hand-picked students based on our birthday, so our age, academic performance, and SAT scores. They weren't very specific about it, they just mentioned it. They gave out letters to show to our parents instead of an orientation. And everything was optional.” (Student)

“— No na, two years/summers lang siya ginawa as far as I know since di naman lahat ng students nagqualify to be part of the step up program. Parang lahat ng pwede na nilang iinvite, nainvite na nila. So it stopped na rin after a while.” (Student)

“Dahil nga ‘di kami nag-Grade 7, parang ‘di maiwasan na bumalik doon sa Grade 7 lessons. Parang ganon ‘yung naging tendency. Even though na nag-Grade 7 kami since may mga hindi kami alam na kasama sa Grade 8 lessons, edi ‘yon parang nagre recap na rin dahil wala kaming alam.” (Student)

“Yung pinaka-adjustment was we only had 25 days so super fast pace niya because we had to do like everything na 7th graders learned in one year for 25 days. Tapos unlike usual classes, we had to learn at least one to two chapters for each of the subjects a day para matapos namin lahat.” (Student)

“But in terms of the courses and the subjects, we merely stuck on the basics...I mean the core subjects na lang talaga. Yung minimum learning competencies. So we just merely stuck to that and there were siguro lack in some specialization subjects, elective subjects...so that we can focus on the minimum requirements.” (Teacher)

4. CONCLUSIONS

When the Department of Education invited schools to design K to 12 transition plans via DepEd Order 31 s.2012, it did so on the basis of best-effort and good-faith implementation. We present evidence based on verbatim descriptions of actual implementation within 21 NCR private schools that the K-12 transition plans all involved considerable compromises in actual learning time. These practices warrant more systematic investigation as they affected high school graduates entering the most highly-ranked universities in the country, whose educational and labour market outcomes will have to account for the drastic departure from K to 12’s intended design.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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6. REFERENCES

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