



Adding Two Years in Basic Education Advantageous To The Poor
A joint statement of Philippine Business for Education (PBEEd)
and the Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations (COCOPEA)
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We welcome government's pronouncements, as proposed by its Presidential Task Force on Education (PTFE), to move towards adding an additional 1-2 years in what they have named as the Philippine Main Education Highway. We are concerned, however, that the PTFE's primary focus in adding years at the tertiary level, through a pre-university initiative and possibly increasing the number of professional subjects, will not address the problems that exist in our educational system.

We reiterate that any effective solution should meet two parameters: (i) the introduction of any additional schooling—at least 2 years more according to global standards—in pre-tertiary education (called pre-university by some, basic education by others), and (ii) the need for Government to develop funding strategies to meet this objective. Government will have to finance the bulk of this, as most students prior to entering tertiary education come from the public schools. We believe both parameters are reasonable, for the following reasons:

1. The main deficiency is in the pre-tertiary/basic education system. A review of our basic education secondary and tertiary curricula, compared with that of the United States, shows a remarkable similarity of coverage (with the exception of AP subjects in high school, which are optional in the US). If the content is similar with the US, then we are simply cramming far too much subject matter into too few years. The result: little or poor learning. For many, additional years on the tertiary level may be too late an intervention.
2. A 10-year basic education system creates high school graduates at the age of 16-17 years old. At this point, they will be too young to be hired by most companies. Since only 20% of HS graduates continue on to tertiary education (generally due to finances), that will leave 80% of HS graduates with limited job opportunities. This is strongly anti-poor.
3. Adding 2 years on the tertiary level simply transfers the cost of the deficiency from government to parents. Given that there is a strong correlation between educational attainment and income levels, this will increase income inequality in the Philippines, which is against the Government's thrusts.


4. Previous Studies have shown that additional 1-2 years is doable and that cost is a non-issue. If neighboring Vietnam and Laos can finance their education system's move to 12 years, why can't the Philippines?

An expanded basic education system has been a consistent policy and institutional reform key proposal since the 1970s. To finally move forward on this proposal, we call on government to open up the dialogue further and entertain other options beyond its proposed pre-baccalaureate model. We strongly recommend a focus on learning and achievement goals rather than on perceived constraints.

Rather than focus on all the reasons why we cannot do the things we must do, let us set our minds to doing all we can to move Philippine education forward.



MSGR. GERARDO C. SANTOS
Chairman
COCOPEA



DR. CHITO B. SALAZAR
President
PBEA