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## Lived Experience of Principals in the Implementation of K to 12 Program in the Philippines

**ABSTRACT:** *The implementation of the K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program in 2012 was major education reform to address the challenges of the Philippine society in the midst of globalization, ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) integration, and changing education quality standards. After few years of implementation of K to 12 Program, there were a number of researches and critical reviews of the K to 12 Program that highlight its curricular dimension, its logistical nightmare, and its challenges and opportunities; but there is a dearth of study that delves into the lived experience of the school principals in the process of implementing the K to 12 Program. The objective of the study unfolds the lived experience of six public school principals in Manila as they implemented the K to 12 Program. This paper explored the lived experience of principals in the implementation of the K to 12 Program, which led to the identification of vision, creativity, passion for excellence, harnessing of stakeholders, strong commitment, and leadership as major drivers of K to 12 implementation. The principal as the key actor in the program implementation at lower level of education bureaucracy: (1) needs effective leadership qualities; (2) practices principal empowerment; (3) believes that political will as necessary component for effective implementation of education reform; (4) serves as effective communicator of change; (5) accepts that resistance as a feedback mechanism; (6) asserts that stakeholders' participation in K to 12 Program; and (7) needs support system. The study was conducted in Manila, Philippines, which employed a phenomenological approach with 6 participants in six public secondary schools.*

**KEY WORDS:** *K to 12 Program; Principal Empowerment; Education Reform; Leadership.*

### INTRODUCTION

For a country to attain economic prosperity, “revolution in education” is vital according to former PM (Prime Minister) of the United Kingdom, David Cameron (in HoCOR, 2011; Coughlan, 2013; and Evans, 2015). Different countries are constantly changing their national curricula to respond

to the challenges of the global economy. In the Philippines, K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School)’s Curriculum was implemented last 2012 as a way to respond to the challenges of rapidly changing global village (*cf* Jorgenson, 2006;

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ICEF Monitor, 2013; and Okabe, 2013).

In 2000, a gathering of world leaders was held in Dakar, Senegal, a World Education Forum, which was held to recommit and attain the EFA (Education For All) goals by 2015. These EFA goals as set by world community are one of the bases of the implementation of the K to 12 Curriculum in the Philippines; BESRA (Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda); and EDCOM (Congressional Commission on Education)'s Report of 1991, among others (Guzman, 2003; Peters, 2007; and Ainscow & Miles, 2008).

In 2000, the largest gathering of world leaders dubbed as Millennium Summit adopted the UN (United Nations) Millennium Declaration. The world leaders committed their governments to a new global partnership to reduce poverty and set out a series of time-bound targets to be attained by 2015. More specifically, the target for Goal 2 is to ensure that by 2015, children all over the world will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling (Rosenfield, Maine & Freedman, 2006; Bajoria, 2011; and Chopra & Mason, 2015).

After 2015, the UN worked with all the governments, civil society, and other stakeholders to build on the accomplishments of MDGs (*Millennium Development Goals*). After 2015, UN embarked with the ambitious post-2015 development agenda, known as SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), which was conceptualized at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012. There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals, but the goals related to education is No.4 (Quality Education) – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (NRC, 2017; and Chopra & Mason, 2015).<sup>1</sup>

Another important trend in the global stage of education is the development of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The P21's Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning was:

[...] developed with input from teachers, education experts, and business leaders to define and illustrate the skills and knowledge students need to succeed in work, life, and citizenship, as well as the support systems necessary for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning outcomes. It has been used by thousands of educators and hundreds of schools in the U.S. and abroad to put 21<sup>st</sup> century skills at the center of learning (Perez, 2017).<sup>2</sup>

The P21 Framework is another pressure on the part of various national education institutions and agencies to calibrate their national curriculum, so that they will be aligned and at par with global standards. Certainly, the P21 Framework is one of the bases of the K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program in the Philippines (Trilling & Fadel, 2009; Reyes, 2014; and NGA, 2017).

The ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) integration is another big reason for curricular innovation in the Philippines, due to the challenges and opportunities that should be addressed and seized, respectively. The AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) Blueprint 2025 aims to achieve the vision of having an AEC by 2025, that is highly integrated and cohesive; competitive, innovative, and dynamic; with enhanced connectivity and sectoral cooperation; and a more resilient, inclusive, and people-oriented, people-centred community, integrated with the global economy (ASEAN Secretariat, 2015; and Pitsuwan *et al.* eds., 2017).<sup>3</sup> Due to the challenging requirements of economic integration, including changes to domestic laws and in some cases constitutional changes, it missed its target. In the coming years, though, ASEAN Integration is inevitable; thus, this made our country adjust to the global education standards (Bajoria, 2011; West, 2012a and 2012b; and Pitsuwan *et al.* eds., 2017).

<sup>1</sup>See also, for comparison, "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". Available online at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld> [accessed in Manila, the Philippines: November 3, 2018].

<sup>2</sup>See also, for comparison, "21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills" in *The Glossary of Education Reform*, on August 2015. Available online at: <http://edglossary.org/21st-century-skills/> [accessed in Manila, the Philippines: November 3, 2018].

<sup>3</sup>See also "ASEAN Economic Community". Available online at: <http://asean.org/asean-economic-community/> [accessed in Manila, the Philippines: November 3, 2018].

Considering the fact that the Philippines is a labor exporting country with more than 12% of its population as OFWs (Overseas Filipino Workers), the more reason for the national government to provide an education system that will respond to the need of the global labor market. In this context, PIDS (Philippine Institute for Development Studies), in 2012, stated as following here:

*The short duration of the basic education system is also a disadvantage for the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), especially the professionals, and those who intend to study abroad. DepEd further claims that the Filipino graduates are not automatically recognized as professionals abroad, because the ten-year curriculum is usually perceived as insufficient (PIDS, 2012).*

Thus, another imperative for the Philippines is to enact necessary laws and adjustments in order to be compliant with the demands and standards of the global labor market. In pursuit of quality education, the Philippine government has undertaken various initiatives to address and arrest its perennial education problems. In 2005, for example, the DepEd (Department of Education), in consultation with various education stakeholders, formulated the BESRA (Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda) with the primary aim of institutionally, systematically, and nationally improve the education outcomes. So, from 2006-2010, DepEd was guided by this major thrust of BESRA to improve the quality of education in the Philippines (cf CSFC-NC, 2009; DepEd, 2010; and Abulencia, 2012).

Under the leadership of President Benigno Aquino, the national government spelled out its 10-point agenda on education, which are as follow: (1) The 12-year basic education cycle; (2) Universal pre-schooling for all; (3) *Madaris* education as a sub-system within the education system; (4) Technical-vocational education as an alternative stream in senior high school; (5) Every child a reader by Grade 1; (6) Science and math proficiency; (7) Assistance to private schools as essential partners in basic education; (8) Medium of instruction rationalized; (9) Quality textbooks; and (10) Covenant with local governments to build more schools (Geronimo, 2016).

These policy reforms introduced and put in place critical changes necessary to further accelerate, broaden, deepen, and sustain the Department of Education's effort in improving the quality of basic education. With the implementation of K to 12 Curriculum, since 2012, the Philippine education is now in the midst of transition to a new global basic education curriculum. This K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program is one of the biggest education reforms that have been undertaken in the last 30 or so years (cf Jorgenson, 2006; Geronimo, 2016; and BMGF, 2017).<sup>4</sup>

Whenever there is a new education reform, the challenges on the part of the national government is so complex. Government agencies in charge of education look into the academic standards, dropout prevention; turn around low-performing schools and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education to ensure that high school graduates are ready to navigate to college, work, and life (cf Kennedy & Odell, 2014; NGA, 2017; and Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2019).

Likewise, this massive K to 12 education program entails retraining/retooling of teachers, production of IMs (Instructional Materials), allocation of additional budget, expansion and construction of buildings and other facilities, among others. Enough resources is a requirement to sustain the implementation of K to 12 education program. As articulated by Tanja Sargent (2011), and other scholars, that enthusiasm for the reforms seems to have been strongest in the earliest years of the reforms, but may have been waning in more recent years (Sargent, 2011; Orr & Cleveland-Innes, 2015; and Macha, Mackie & Magaziner, 2018).

According to the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, RA (Republic Act) 9155, the "school is the heart of the formal education system"; thus, the translation of

<sup>4</sup>See also, for example, "The K to 12 Basic Education Program". Available online at: <http://www.gov.ph/k-12/> [accessed in Manila, the Philippines: November 3, 2018].

all the programs, thrusts, and vision of the national government is happening in the school under the leadership of the school head or principal. RA 9155 is the legal basis of the SBM (School Based Management) as governance framework of DepEd (Department of Education) in managing the public schools. This mechanism of decentralized governance of the public schools means that the management is in the hands of the school head or the principal, who is accountable to both the external and internal stakeholders (Bautista, Bernardo & Ocampo, 2010; Abulencia, 2012; and Read & Atinc, 2017).<sup>5</sup>

The decision making of the school heads is now greater; thus, they should be properly equipped to do the task and responsibilities put in their shoulders. It is in this context that I would like to explore/understand how this K to 12 Program is unfolding at the level of school under the leadership of the school heads by exploring the lived experiences of the principals.

**Statement of the Problem.** This study intends to unfold the lived experiences of select public school principals in Manila, the Philippines, in the implementation of K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program. Specifically, response to the following questions was sought: (1) How may the lived experiences in implementing the K to 12 Program by principals be described and reflectively analyzed?; (2) What meanings and insights may be derived from the lived experiences of principals who implemented the K to 12 Program?; and (3) What are the implications of the study to the school principals, schools, and Department of Education?

**Significance of the Study.** The insights from this study may inform schools, education-related organizations, curriculum specialists/policy-makers, teachers, parents, and school

managers, so that education reform agenda will be relevant and meaningful in our society and community. As we all expect, any new program encounters a “bumpy journey”, because we all know that no matter how prepared the DepEd (Department of Education) is, perfect design is always impossible.

*For Curriculum Planners/Experts.* The inputs coming from the lived experiences of the principals may be instrumental to both policy makers and curriculum experts in effectively developing a model of education reform implementation by factoring in the big questions as well as the nuances of the K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program.

*For Teachers.* The results of this phenomenological research could provide broader and deeper understanding to the teachers as to how a new curricular program is experienced by school administrators. These new insights will be used by teachers in designing and planning the way they approach their classroom teaching considering that there are many issues and challenges in the implementation a reform program.

*For Students.* The results of the study may ventilate issues and opportunities with regard to the implementation of K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program from the point of view of the principals. Thus, both teachers and principals may effectively implement the K to 12 Program, which boils down to the benefit of the students.

*For Parents.* The parents may be enlightened as regards the issues that were brought up by the stakeholders, especially the principals. They could use the insights of this research in supporting the K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program or maybe to serve as critical participants in the course of implementation of the new curriculum.

<sup>5</sup>See also, for example, “RA 9155 or Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001”. Available online at: [http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2001/ra\\_9155\\_2001.html](http://www.lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2001/ra_9155_2001.html) [accessed in Manila, the Philippines: November 3, 2018].

*For Principals / School Managers.* For the principals as the front leaders of this national rolling out of K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School), they may use the insights in this research to improve their practices in their schools in connection to the effective implementation of the new curricular program. The lived experiences of the school heads may also serve as validator of the experiences of other schools from other places, e.g. rural schools.

*Education-Related-NGOs.* There are many stakeholders in education, especially with the implementation of the K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) education program. Various NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and corporate foundations are very critical as well as supportive to the K to 12 Program. The results of this study could serve as basis in their planning and formulating of programs and priorities in their respective organizations.

I hope that this research ventilate new issues in the rolling out of K to 12 education program. The transition is likened to many challenges; consequently, the leaders of the education sector will do some kind of “mid-course corrections” by acknowledging some mistakes and learning from them, so that we could overcome hurdles and roadblocks in the midst of school administration and leadership (*cf* Brooks, 2000; Abulencia, 2012; PIDS, 2012; DepEd, 2017b; and Read & Atinc, 2017).<sup>6</sup>

*Scope and Delimitations.* The co-researchers in this study were 6 (six) principals from 6 (six) public high schools in the Division of City School-Manila, the Philippines, which

are implementing the Senior High School (Grades 11 and 12): Grade 11 in 2016-2017 and Grade 12 in 2017-2018. Not all public schools offered Senior High School, due to various constraints like limited school facilities; as a result, some public high schools offered only up to Grade 10 (Junior High School).

This research focused on the lived experiences of the principals as they are in the center of implementing the major reform program of the government. This research did not evaluate or assess the implementation of the K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program; rather, it described the everyday experiences of the principals as they tackled the challenges as well as the joys of this new curriculum. The study did not also touch on the content of the curriculum, although the co-researchers were very vocal in articulating their views and opinions regarding the features and contents of the K to 12 Curriculum.

## METHODS

This research made use of phenomenological approach. I believe that there are many hidden patterns, structures, meanings, themes, and big ideas in all our education research projects, which will be unearthed with phenomenological research method. Doing or conducting phenomenological research is personally empowering, because I know that I am very much engaged and not detached in every research process. In this research, I adopted phenomenological approach to understand and explore the principals' lived experiences in the implementation of K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program in selected public schools in Manila, the Philippines (*cf* Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; Manen, 2011; Creswell, 2014; and Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015).

*Selection of Co-Researchers.* The co-researchers in this study were 6 (six) principals

<sup>6</sup>See also, for example, “The School as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning” in *The Wallace Foundation*, on January 2013. Available online also at: <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/The-School-Principal-as-Leader-Guiding-Schools-to-Better-Teaching-and-Learning-2nd-Ed.pdf> [accessed in Manila, the Philippines: November 3, 2018]; and “The Principal’s Responsibilities in Supporting Quality Instruction” in *Inclusive Schools Network*, on August 20, 2015. Available online also at: <http://inclusiveschools.org/the-principals-responsibilities-in-supporting-quality-instruction/> [accessed in Manila, the Philippines: November 3, 2018].

from 6 (six) public high schools in the City of Manila implementing the Senior High School (Grades 11 and 12). I focused on the lived experiences of principals in selected public schools in implementing the K to 12 Curriculum. I did not explore the processes, strategies, plans, and challenges of the private schools in this research, although it was my strong belief that there are many differences and variations in terms of how the curriculum is implemented in public and private sectors (cf Leithwood *et al.*, 2004; Creswell, 2014; and Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015).

To maintain confidentiality, I labelled the co-participants of the study as follows: Co-Researcher #1: Amihan; Co-Researcher #2: Bayani; Co-Researcher #3: Dakila; Co-Researcher # 4: Datu; Co-Researcher #5: Malaya; and Co-Researcher #6: Tala.

In selecting the principals as my co-researchers, the following were the criteria: (1) the principal should have at least 4-5 years of administrative or managerial experience as head of the school or principal; (2) an implementer of K to 12 for at least three years; and (3) the willingness of the principals to serve as co-researchers of this study.

Inspired by many scholars, I approached the principals, not as merely instruments to fulfil a research endeavor, but the people directly involved in this research as *kapwa* (fellow being); thus, the research process is *pakikipagkapwa-tao*, a process of treating others as oneself (Enriquez, 1978; Valbuena, 2009; Dilshad & Latif, 2013; Reyes, 2015; and Lagdameo-Santillan, 2018).

After identifying the participant schools in my research, I sought the permission of the Division of City Schools of Manila by writing a letter to the SDS (School Division Superintendent). The selection of schools as well as the principals was purposive (Mucina, 2011; Creswell, 2014; and Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015).

**Ways of Gathering Lived Experiences.** It is consisted of two things, namely: *Story-Telling* and *In-Depth Interview*. The description of each things is following here:

*Story-Telling.* The main approach to gather the lived experience in this research was story-telling coupled with in-depth interview.

I conducted individual interviews with the principals at their most convenient time and place. I knew that the principals were very busy leaders in the school; thus, they were the ones who set the meeting schedules through the assistance of their office secretary or by themselves. The interview lasted for about one hour or 1 ½ hours (cf Mucina, 2011; Dilshad & Latif, 2013; and Smeda, Dakich & Sharda, 2014).

*In-Depth Interview.* The in-depth interview was semi-structured or informal like an ordinary conversation, so that the co-researchers were at ease and they were more open and spontaneous with their responses. Although I prepared guide questions for the interview, I asked follow-up questions, especially if there were interesting and very much related responses of the co-researchers. Follow-up questions were also asked, when the response of the principals was not clear to me (cf Balls, 2009; Dilshad & Latif, 2013; and McLeod, 2014).

The thick and rich narratives collected from in-depth interviews were the basis of identifying the emerging themes, patterns, and connections between and among the management/leadership skills of the principals, struggles/challenges, DepEd (Department of Education) support mechanisms, and the resistances to the program being implemented (FAO, 1998; Mulford, 2003; Mucina, 2011; Creswell, 2014; and Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Thematic Reflections/Structural Themes.*

These reflections were drawn from the initial reflections by way of clustering the related and similar textual themes. Further, in the discussion, I mobilized the theories and approaches to shed light on the themes: (1) *Principalship as Professional Career Based on Merit*; (2) *K to 12 Implementation Necessitates Effective School Leadership Qualities*; (3) *Empowerment Affords the Principals with Democratic Space and Leeway in Decision Making for K to 12 Implementation*; (4) *K to 12 as Major Innovative Education Reform Package*; (5) *K to 12 as a Trigger for Economic Development*; (6) *Imperative of Political Dimension in the Effective*

*Implementation of Education Reform; (7) School Head as a Spokesperson for K to 12 Program; (8) Resistance to K to 12 Program as a Feedback for Improvement; (9) Stakeholders Participation for K to 12 Program Implementation; and (10) Support System for Principal.* The explanations for each theme are as following here:

Firstly, **Principalship as Professional Career Based on Merit.** The position of leadership in the public school is based on qualifications or merit. All of the co-researchers started their career in the public school as classroom teachers. Then, they were promoted to head teacher positions or master teacher positions prior to their appointment as principals. All the co-researchers rose from the ranks (Paulu, n.y.; Mulford, 2003; and Day & Sammons, 2017).<sup>7</sup>

One important qualification for appointment to principalship is to pass the NQESH (National Qualifying Examination for School Heads) or principalship test administered by NEAP (National Educators Academy of the Philippines). Datu, for example, was contented serving as department head of mathematics and he had no intention of aiming for higher position. But through the discovery of his strong leadership in the department, he was encouraged by his former principal to take the principal exam. He passed the exam and then, later, appointed to the position (Llego, 2015; and PN-RCTQ, 2018).<sup>8</sup>

Malaya's position as principal was a product of accident, because she had no plan to be a school leader too. She said as following here:

<sup>7</sup>See also, for example, In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #1: Amihan, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 1, 2018; In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #2: Bayani, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 5, 2018; In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #3: Dakila, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 9, 2018; In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher # 4: Datu, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 13, 2018; In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #5: Malaya, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 17, 2018; and In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #6: Tala, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 17, 2018.

<sup>8</sup>See also In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher # 4: Datu, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 13, 2018.

*Actually, there was no plan for me to be a principal. There was no intention, no plan or no dream. It was accidental to have this position. But, I am happy serving as school leader, because I am now able to help the government in achieving quality education. The promotion, probably it's the will of God, providential.<sup>9</sup>*

Dakila, further, said that his experiences were instrumental in making him as a good administrator, because he learned from the experiences of his superiors or other leaders. The principal is better prepared to manage a school change or curriculum implementation, if she/he is equip with the struggles along the way (Mulford, 2003; Kunkel-Pottbaum, 2013; and Day & Sammons, 2017).<sup>10</sup> Dakila said as following here:

*Then, in the same manner, I observed I got the best practices of my superiors, I also noticed their weaknesses "kaya ito yung naging puhunan ko para makarating ako dito". And so, when people already notice me "ay doon na nagstart yung nirecommend ako" for promotion. I believed that the best way to be an effective administrator or leader is to experience the struggles and thorns of the grounds before going up.<sup>11</sup>*

Another factor for promotion in the public school is the performance. A teacher or head teacher or principal will be promoted based on ranking generally based on merit or performance. The DepEd (Department of Education) Order 42, s.2007 (Revised Guidelines on Selection, Promotion, and Designation of School Heads) enumerates the criteria in ranking for applicants in principal position: Performance Rating; Experience; Outstanding Accomplishments; Education and Training; Potential; and Psychosocial Attributes and Personality Traits (Mulford, 2003; Jadhav & Patankar, 2013; DepEd, 2017a; and Read & Atinc, 2017).

Furthermore, DO (DepEd Order) 42, s.2007 sets the following leadership dimensions expected from each school head:

<sup>9</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #5: Malaya, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 17, 2018.

<sup>10</sup>See also, for comparison, "Activity 4.1: Understanding Curriculum Terms and Definitions". Available online at: <http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415965309/ch04/activity4-1.pdf> [accessed in Manila, the Philippines: November 3, 2018].

<sup>11</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #3: Dakila, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 9, 2018.

(1) *Educational Leadership* is the ability to craft and pursue a shared school vision and mission, as well as develop and implement curriculum policies, programs, and projects; (2) *People Leadership* is the ability to work and develop effective relationships with stakeholders and exert a positive influence upon people; and (3) *Strategic Leadership* is the ability to explore complex issues from a global perspective, manage an educational enterprise, and maximize the use of resources (cf O’Neill, 2010; West, 2012a and 2012b; DepEd, 2017a; and Read & Atinc, 2017).

At the same time, the school heads and supervisors are keen in observing the performance of the teachers for them to discover future school leaders from the pool of teachers that they are leading or supervising. Supervisors and principals are, in a way, talent hunters – they perform an important hidden role in the bureaucracy – by head hunting services (cf Goksoy, 2015; Rowland, 2015; and Anjah, 2017).

With K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program implementation, school leadership is a public service. The principal is put on top of the school to lead a magnitude of people with varying interests (students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders like alumni). Leadership is defined as *servantship*, which means that they are not in the position just to enjoy the privilege being a principal; rather, they are to address the problems of the school curriculum implementation, lead with vision, introduce needed change and innovation in the school, and perform their jobs efficiency and effectively. The principals are hands-on managers/leaders. They micro-manage the different activities in the school to ensure quality output and performance, both from the sides of students and teachers (cf Mulford, 2003; PIDS, 2012; Shonubi, 2012; Orr & Cleveland-Innes, 2015; and DepEd, 2017b).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup>See again, for example, “The Principal’s Responsibilities in Supporting Quality Instruction” in *Inclusive Schools Network*, on August 20, 2015. Available online also at: <http://inclusiveschools.org/the-principals-responsibilities-in-supporting-quality-instruction/> [accessed in Manila, the Philippines: November 3, 2018].

Secondly, *K to 12 Implementation Necessitates Effective School Leadership Qualities*. The co-researchers, as they shared their experiences in the K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program implementation, mentioned different leadership qualities that they have observed and practiced. The ability to build teamwork among the teachers is very crucial to achieve the goals of K to 12 Program. In this context, Tala said that as follows:

*Teamwork as a strategic advantage creates participatory and high involvement work setting; you are in the right direction towards productive work improvement. This is the hallmark of quality commitment from Deming’s TQM.*<sup>13</sup>

To rally support from stakeholders like the teachers, students, and parents, it is imperative on the part of the principal to be a team player and develop teamwork. The ORC (Organizational Research Centre) model emphasizes the involvement of various actors to get their support and avoid organizational friction that will bog down an innovative program (cf Makunja, 2016; Collings & Wood eds., 2009; and Hussain *et al.*, 2018).

A principal has to possess high EQ (Emotional Quotient) to be effective and she/he asserted the importance of EQ in her/his role as principal, as asserted by Daniel Goleman (2018) on “Primal Leadership”. He said, then, that:

*Understanding the powerful role of emotions in the workplace sets the best leaders apart from the rest—not just in tangibles, such as better business results and the retention of talent, but also in the all-important intangibles, such as higher morale, motivation, and commitment* (Goleman, 2018).

A principal, who is implementing a big project, must also be effective and efficient. With all the new challenges and problems related to K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School,

<sup>13</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #6: Tala, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 17, 2018.



and two years of Senior High School) Program, a principal must be open-minded, accessible, and patient (*cf* Paulu, n.y.; BMGF, 2017; and Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2018).

Given the limitation of resources in the school and the magnitude of the problems in relation to the K to 12 Program, the principal must be creative in addressing problems. Bayani said that:

*Our campus although it's not that big compared to other schools in Manila, "meron pa naman" enough space. "Ginagawan pa ng paraan", we have vertical expansion of our building. Just have creativity and resourcefulness, we could manage the program.*<sup>14</sup>

Principals, as locally accountable leaders in the school, must be forward looking or anticipatory. The need to set the plan or vision for the school in relation to the K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program is very important. Their plans should be based on existing policy or orders of the DepEd (Department of Education); but there is an elbow space for them to tweak their actions and decisions for the school. They are able to deploy their own personal judgement as to what will be the best for the school and their teachers (*cf* DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Goksoy, 2015; and Moller, 2018).

Malaya reflects that at the end of the day, she would always anticipate what will be the activities for the following day. She is always prepared for tomorrow, so that she will be able to maximize her time. She, then, said as following here:

*"Ano ang gagawin ko bukas? Intisip ko na agad ang gagawin ko bukas tulad ng mga" activity for the following day. "Siyempre ang" reflection "mo nagawa mo na ba lahat ng gagawin mo?"*<sup>15</sup>

Another quality of principals is being a risk taker. The principals must be able to exercise

the authority given them for the benefit of the school. The principal must be willing to embrace new challenges, even after serving in the school. There are many activities that a principal could do to help the school or in the implementation of the K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program. Principals are models or inspiration to teachers. The principal is likened to a mother in the school, who is the source of inspiration to her/his kids (*cf* Mulford, 2003; Jadhav & Patankar, 2013; and Moller, 2018). In this context, Tala affirmed that:

*Yes I believe that is motivating instructional change, teachers must be encouraged to try new methods and produce positive results. High quality performance can only be achieved through the support of the administration, staff development, and self-development.*<sup>16</sup>

The effective school leadership qualities of principals, as heads of the school, are the following: ability to rally teachers as one team or community (team-building) for a common purpose; ability to learn, develop, and demonstrate high levels of EQ (Emotional Quotient); being effective and efficient; being open minded, accessible, and patient; ability to explore alternative possibilities when problems arise (being creative and thinking out of the box); being visionary and forward looking; ability to take risks for the successful implementation of the K to 12 Curriculum; willingness to embrace new challenges and tasks that may arise in the program implementation; and being an inspiration and a model to all (*cf* Gruba *et al.*, n.y.; Mulford, 2003; Leithwood *et al.*, 2004 and 2006; Kobola, 2007; and Mason, 2018).

Thirdly, ***Empowerment Affords the Principals with Democratic Space and Leeway in Decision Making for K to 12 Implementation.*** The framework of governance in the public school in the Philippines is SBM (School-Based Management) based on RA (Republic Act) 9155. The WB (World Bank), in 2007,

<sup>14</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #2: Bayani, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 5, 2018.

<sup>15</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #5: Malaya, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 17, 2018.

<sup>16</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #6: Tala, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 17, 2018.

cited a comprehensive definition of SBM by referring to B.J. Caldwell (2005) that SBM is the decentralization of authority from the central government to the school level (*cf* Caldwell, 2005; WB 2007:2; Abulencia, 2012; and Onojerena, 2014). Accordingly, B. Malen, R.T. Ogawa & J. Kranz (1990), further, elaborated SBM:

*[...] as a formal alteration of governance structures, as a form of decentralization that identifies the individual school as the primary unit of improvement and relies on the redistribution of decision-making authority as the primary means through which improvement might be stimulated and sustained (Malen, Ogawa & Kranz, 1990:2).*

Under the framework of SBM (School-Based Management), the responsibility in terms of decision making in the operation of the school is transferred to the principals, teachers, parents, and other members of the community. But, the decisions and actions of the principal and other school level actors should still conform to the policies and programs as set or determined by the national government or central authority (Abulencia, 2012; Rowland, 2015; and Makunja, 2016).

SBM is Department of Education's thrust that decentralizes the decision-making from the Central Office and field offices to individual schools to enable them to better respond to their specific education needs (Abulencia, 2012; DepEd, 2015; and Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 2017). The DepEd (Department of Education) of the Philippines pointed out that one way to empower schools is through SBM grant. The SBM grant is the additional funds to public schools, which shall be used to augment the school fund on MOOE or Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (Abulencia, 2012; DepEd, 2015; and Ochada & Gempes, 2018).

The co-researchers, as school heads, are now exercising the power given to them by law. Dakila, for example, is keen about his authority that as the need of the situation demands, he will use his authority to issue memo in order to address the problems in relation to the implementation of the K-12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education,

four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program. Dakila clearly said that:

*"[...] may solusyon na", but of course you must be ready with the some alternatives, but "ako" when I say we will implement K to 12 "gagawa at gagawa ako ng paraan" to the point of making use of my authority to force teachers to handle Senior High School. I am ready to issue memorandum for the Senior High School to move forward.<sup>17</sup>*

Datu has learned a lot from his experiences as teacher and head teacher in terms of addressing problems in the school. He was happy that principals are empowered to take measures for the improvement of the school.<sup>18</sup>

Principals, who are empowered, are more capable to navigate the possibilities of effectively implementing the K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program than without it. Principal empowerment under any circumstance is no longer an augmentation but a necessity, so the school leaders could make full use of their position and roles to put a bigger dent of success in school program implementation (*cf* Paulu, n.y.; Binda, 1991; Caldwell, 2005; and Mazibuko, 2007).

Fourthly, ***K to 12 as Major Innovative Education Reform Package***. K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program was implemented in 2012. From that time on, there have been many changes in the Philippine educational system. The K to 12 Curriculum was benchmarked with other countries, developed in cognizance with the challenges and opportunities brought about by globalization. The forthcoming ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) Integration will demand more competent human capital to compete as

<sup>17</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #3: Dakila, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 9, 2018.

<sup>18</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher # 4: Datu, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 13, 2018.

well as to supply the demands of the rapidly growing economies of ASEAN. There is a need to be at par with the global basic education standards, so that every Filipino will be globally competitive in the global labor market. However, the bulk of the burden is carried by the principal in rolling out this education reform (cf Paulu, n.y.; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004; Kobola, 2007; and Aring, 2015).

The co-researchers, as school heads, were given the most difficult tasks and responsibility of implementing the K to 12 Program, because they are the leaders of the lowest echelon of our education system, the school level. Bayani, for example, highlighted his support for the K to 12 Curriculum and mentioned the lacking years of basic education in the country, as follows:

*When this K to 12 was being formulated or planned, actually, before hand, I like and support this curriculum, because as we all know it, the students graduating from our schools lack the necessary preparation for life.<sup>19</sup>*

Maria Rose S. Sergio (2012), and other scholars, highlighted the problems and prospects of K to 12 Basic Education Program in the Philippines. Adding two more years of secondary education will give the students the opportunity to pursue different tracks, like employment after graduation, higher education, or entrepreneurship (Sergio, 2012; Okabe, 2013; and Sadsad, 2014).

Dakila also shared his sentimental arguments in support of K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program. He said that he is ahead of his time because in the 1990s, he was already recommending that the basic education should be extended to a year or two, so that the Filipino graduates would be at par with their Asian counterparts. On practical note, Dakila said that not all high school graduates are able to enrol and pursue higher education, due to lack of resources or lack of motivation on the part of the

students. With K to 12 Program, the students or the youth are given the widest options as regards the steps or plans they have in mind. According to Dakila, graduates of K to 12 Program are already 18 years and could easily enter the world of work, if they opt not to go to college anymore (cf Sergio, 2012; Sadsad, 2014; and Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2019).<sup>20</sup>

Fifthly, *K to 12 as a Trigger for Economic Development*. The co-researchers were all supportive of the K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program and they strongly cited its economic or practical benefit (Sergio, 2012; ICEF Monitor, 2013; and *ibidem* with footnote 7). Consistent with the economic analysis of Gilbert T. Sadsad (2014), and other scholars, on K to 12 Program that adding two more years of basic education will translate into 2% growth of the GDP or Gross Domestic Product (Sergio, 2012; Sadsad, 2014; and Sarvi, Munger & Pillay, 2015). Masayoshi Okabe (2013), and other scholars, argued also that K to 12 Curriculum will benefit the economy and society from analysis with socio-economic perspective (cf Mitra, 2011; Okabe, 2013; and Sarvi, Munger & Pillay, 2015).

The co-researchers viewed K to 12 Program from its economic perspective. For Datu, a graduate of Grade 12 is employable, because she/he is already 18 years old. Datu, then, said in Tagalog language as following here:

*“Ganito lang ka-simple yan”, I do not [...] “kung ano nga ba ang matutunan ng bata”, economics eh [...] “pag graduate ng bata continuously, 18 siya sa ilalim ng K to 12. Ready na ang katawan niya magtrabaho. Tignan mo kapag graduate ng K-10”, 16 years old. “Tignan mo ilang percent ng graduate sa highschool ang napupunta sa college. Mga 30 percent lang. Nasaan yung 70%?”<sup>21</sup>*

If the young people are enrolled in SHS (Senior High School) program, they will graduate from secondary education with

<sup>20</sup>See also, for example, In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #3: Dakila, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 9, 2018.

<sup>21</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher # 4: Datu, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 13, 2018.

<sup>19</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #2: Bayani, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 5, 2018.

confidence, because of their experiences in the different tracks they have chosen; thus, they are already mature and have the self-confidence to apply for work (Carter, 2004; Sarvi, Munger & Pillay, 2015; and Orbeta, Jr. *et al.*, 2018).

Looking at other countries, Datu also pointed out that almost all countries around the world are implementing the 12 years basic education; therefore, the country should also adjust its curriculum to be globally competitive. Datu said again in the Tagalog language, as following here:

*“Kung tayo ay tama at that time ilan na lang ang bansa sa buong mundo na (hindi nag-implement ng K to 12), sila ang susunod sa atin pero sila ang pumunta doon [nagpatupad ng K to 12].”<sup>22</sup>*

Tala also appreciated the K to 12 Program curriculum, because it is innovative and based on constructivist theory of education. The students will be given the tasks or activities; and from there, they will learn new knowledge from their own experiences, but with the guidance of the teachers as facilitators of learning. Tala, then, cited the economic benefits of K to 12, when she said that:

*K to 12 as a curriculum will enhance the skill of the student mathematically, yung computation skills, scientific skills, but more on gearing them towards the world of work. In Grade 11 and 12, students are equipped to take on every opportunity in life he/she chooses – to find work, to engage in higher studies and start entrepreneurial endeavours.<sup>23</sup>*

K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program has a strong immersion component, where students are given the time to have their practicum or on-the-job training or community immersion, which will afford them the first hand experiences in the field or tracks that they have chosen. Tala said that her school and students engaged in hands-

on learning (*cf* Carter, 2004; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006; Sarvi, Munger & Pillay, 2015; and *ibidem* with footnote 16).

Further, Amihan cited her observation and interviews with other educators from other countries regarding curriculum that the Philippines, that it is the only country left with ten year basic education curriculum. We do not have other best option except to calibrate the curriculum.<sup>24</sup>

Through K to 12 Program, high school graduates will be equipped with basic relevant skills, knowledge, values, and aptitude to pursue higher education or enter the world of work. For students who will pursue tertiary education, they are adequately prepared to do the task and demand of university life; while K-12 graduates, who will opt to enter the labor market, will have the necessary skills to be employed in the industry or start their business ventures (Gruba *et al.*, n.y.; Geronimo, 2016; and NRC, 2017).

Sixthly, ***Imperative of Political Dimension in the Effective Implementation of Education Reform***. Based on this study, the political aspect/dimension of education, e.g. K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program implementation, is very crucial. The leadership of the former President Benigno Aquino was instrumental, because of its decisive stand in carrying out the implementation of the K to 12 Program, despite its rush preparation and limited resources. But, we should be wary of the possible interference of the political force to the autonomy of the education sector in directing its goals and objectives. This simply means that if the education program or project is laudable, it must be supported by the next administration in order to avoid wastage of national resources (Paulu, n.y.; Binda, 1991; Onojerena, 2014; and Geronimo, 2016).

Dakila, for example, expressed clearly the indispensability of political will in any program implementation by saying as follows:

<sup>22</sup>About the 12 Years Basic Education Program in other counties, especially in Southeast Asia, see Fredrik Sjolholm (2002); Arief S. Sadiman (2004); and *ibidem* with footnote 18.

<sup>23</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #6: Tala, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 17, 2018.

<sup>24</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #1: Amihan, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 1, 2018.

*The good thing about political will of the previous (Aquino) administration is that we are able to fast track the K to 12 implementation, but the consequence was that we're not 100% prepared. With the new (Duterte) administration, the only point is to study the K to 12 Program and support it. We need to improve the implementation of the program over time, and not to stop K to 12.*<sup>25</sup>

Seventhly, **School Head as a Spokesperson for K to 12 Program.** The principal's communication role is expected to contribute to reaching the organizational aims and objectives, not any more as controlling and authoritarian head (Paulu, n.y.; Arlestig, 2008; and Holmberg, 2014). The principal, as pedagogical leader, communicates the K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program to all its stakeholders. More than the curricular content, the focus of communication in this regard is to clearly explain to the parents, students, and teachers the economic benefits of the K to 12 Program for them to understand and support it (Kunkel-Pottbaum, 2013; Geronimo, 2015; and Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2019).

Bayani also ensured that his office is open to convey all matters related to K to 12 Program by stating as follows:

*My office is always open to all: the parents, students, and teachers. I feel the need to be accessible to teachers and students, because there are new emerging problems because of the new K to 12 Curriculum. As principal, I am patient and I explain every now and then that K to 12 to parents and students and to all. It's our task to market and convince other people about the K to 12.*<sup>26</sup>

The principal knows the in and out of the K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program being the frontline implementers. They are deeply in tune with what is happening in the ground;

thus, they have the wisdom and insights that are much needed in effective management of a reform program. Thus, empowerment is justified (Leithwood *et al.*, 2004 and 2006; Barlongo, 2015; and Alosaimi, 2016).

Eighthly, **Resistance to K to 12 Program as a Feedback for Improvement.** The resistance to K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program was inevitable being a new and massive restructuring of the basic education in the Philippines, affecting the higher education as well as the technical vocational education. Some sectors (select parents and teachers organizations) raised their doubts and refusal to the K to 12 Program. The major reasons uncovered in this study for the resistances are the limited knowledge and information about the new curriculum; lack of preparations and resources; and additional cost of education on the part of the parents (*cf* AE, 2001; Barlongo, 2015; and Sarvi, Munger & Pillay, 2015).

The principals have shown enough diligence and patience in handling the resistance by constant communication to parents, to media, and to students about the benefits of K to 12 Program for the students themselves and for the entire nation. A project or program that has no resistance is incomplete. The wholeness, the meaningfulness, relevance, and importance of K to 12 Program is partially defined by the people, who openly raised their issues and resistance to K to 12 Program. With all the issues and critiques of K to 12 Program, it will evolve and correct itself (Paulu, n.y.; Barlongo, 2015; Geronimo, 2015; and Sarvi, Munger & Pillay, 2015).

Ninthly, **Stakeholders Participation for K to 12 Program Implementation.** The principals were in unison that one of the key factors to successful curriculum implementation (K to 12 Program) is to encourage joint participation of all stakeholders: the teachers, alumni, parents, students, business sector, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), and local government. Each of the sectors has their unique and meaningful contribution in the attainment of the set goals and standards

<sup>25</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #3: Dakila, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 9, 2018.

<sup>26</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #2: Bayani, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 5, 2018.

of the K to 12 Program (*cf* Paulu, n.y.; CT, 2013; Barlongo, 2015; Jagannathan, 2017; and Kieu & Singer, 2017). Tala, for example, supported also this by saying as follows:

*It is a reality that the government always give limited resources to cover operations. There are still revenues that could be tapped. We have alumni, LGUs [Local Government Units], NGOs [Non-Governmental Organizations], other civic organizations. The present budgetary system provides certain flexibilities like realignment and augmentation. Well, we have to be good the parents, the GPTA [Governing Parent-Teacher Association] especially, because if they want project, the different subject area would like to come up to a project. That would entail the parents permit, and a lot of things, you need to seek the help of the GPTA and they are very supportive. They will craft the resolution, then sign it. We have a very very good relationship and also with the alumni. They donate a certain amount for us to use in our school.<sup>27</sup>*

Phillip J. Watt (2018), in looking at the other side of life, argues that “*we can start to consciously and intelligently work towards some sort of harmonization as we continue to co-create our personal and collective futures*” (Watt, 2018). So, K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program implementation is a process of co-creation, because all sectors are involved in its fruition. The principals, teachers, students, parents, and others are common owners of the DepEd (Department of Education) K to 12 Program in the Philippines (Binda, 1991; Barlongo, 2015; Geronimo, 2015; and Sarvi, Munger & Pillay, 2015).

Tenthly, ***Support System for Principal***. The principals can effectively carry on their functions and tasks, if there is support system for them. In this study, there are formal and regular support given to the principals through the Division Office like the delivery of their basic needs, such as budget, materials, technical support, and trainings. The principals have this systems-based thinking or perspective in the sense that as principals, they know that they have power and authority to implement the K to 12 (Kindergarten

and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program; but there is also a limitation (*cf* Leithwood *et al.*, 2004 and 2006; UNESCO & UNICEF, 2007; and Barlongo, 2015).

Thus, other agencies of the government must also act in consonance with the national goals for education (K to 12 Program). On the other hand, the principals were outspoken and direct in their assertion that their personal as well as the professional experiences that they have had (as teachers, as head teachers) were also instrumental in the discharge of their duties for K to 12 Program implementation (DuFour & Mattos, 2013; Barlongo, 2015; and Day & Sammons, 2017).

Another support system that the principals conspicuously floated is that they learned from one another on how to effectively manage and implement the K to 12 Program. They shared experiences, compared notes, observed best practices, and extended support among themselves. Since they are all similarly situated, they have strong ties and bonding that make them more resilient despite the big challenges of the program implementation (Paulu, n.y.; Barlongo, 2015; Geronimo, 2016; and *ibidem* with footnote 7).

According to Dennis Yarrington *et al.* (2017) of APPA (Australian Primary Principals Association), and other scholars, the person who has the ability and capacity to understand the challenges of one principal is another principal. Indeed, it is true that they get inspiration and energy from one another (*cf* Hargreaves, Halasz & Pont, 2007; Yarrington *et al.*, 2017; and Doyle & Locke, 2014).<sup>28</sup>

The principals, who rolled out the K to 12 Program at the school levels, have two major preparations, namely: material or physical and teacher training. The principals applied their creative genius in preparing their schools for the implementation in terms of repairing existing available resources; doing consistent follow up of the requested

<sup>27</sup>In-Depth Interview with Co-Researcher #6: Tala, a Respondent as Principal at the Public High School, in the City of Manila, Philippines, on October 17, 2018.

<sup>28</sup>See also, for example, “Tasmanian Principal to Lead the Australian Primary Principals Association from 2019”. Available online at: <https://associations.net.au/news/sector-news/2018/tasmanian-principal-to-lead-the-australian-primary-principals-association-from-2019.html> [accessed in Manila, the Philippines: March 11, 2019].

equipment; and proper allocation of scarce or limited resources. In terms of teacher training, the principals and teachers have undertaken training about K to 12 as a curriculum. Part of the preparations of the principals was a partnership with private organizations to help them in various capacities. Beyond the In-Service Training, the principals also personally prepared themselves by exploring other sources of information about K to 12 Curriculum, like reading different articles from internet and books (cf AE, 2001; NRC, 2017; Moller, 2018; and *ibidem* with footnote 7).

There is a positive aspiration for K to 12 Program among the principals, due to their invested energy, time, and expertise/talents; thus, they are expecting the continuing support for the program. They are positively looking forward for the first batch of graduates of K to 12, who will enter college by School Year 2018-2019 as the results or return of their investment (ROI). In their inner most hearts, there is a constant and fervent prayer that the K to 12 Program will be supported by the majority of the stakeholders (Leithwood *et al.*, 2004 and 2006; Holmberg, 2014; Sarvi, Munger & Pillay, 2015; Moller, 2018; and *ibidem* with footnote 7).

## CONCLUSION

After my thorough reflections, which were really iterative, I wrap up with the following major points:

The promotion of principal is *based on merit* and it is a professional career. The qualifications for principals are the leadership potential and skills; passing the qualifying examination; meritorious performance; and passion and commitment to the teaching profession.

*School leadership as a public service.*

Leadership is *servantship*, which means that those in position are to lead with vision, introduce innovation, and perform their jobs efficiency and effectively. The effective school leadership qualities of principals in relation to K to 12 (Kindergarten and 12 years of basic education: six years of primary education, four years of Junior High School, and two years of Senior High School) Program implementation are: ability to rally teachers

as one team or community for a common purpose; ability to learn and demonstrate high level of emotional quotient; being effective and efficient; being open minded, accessible, and patient; ability to explore alternative possibilities (being creative and thinking out of the box); being visionary and forward looking; ability to take risks; willingness to embrace new challenges that may arise; and being an inspiration and a model to all.

*Principal empowerment* has a crucial contribution to the implementation of K to 12 Program. K to 12 Program is considered as a macro, national, “economy of scale” education program, but the implementation at the local or school level is unscaled. This means that the principal is empowered to organize the stakeholders as one community or group to create a shared culture; connect with parents; have teachers networking with one another; and school leaders working together and learning from one another. These reflect a way beyond the control of the top-down model of K to 12 Program implementation.

The K to 12 implementation demands *multifaceted roles of principal*. These are motivator of change, delegator of tasks, supervisor of performance, nurturer of leaders, mentor of teachers, planner of school, decision maker, mover for the majority, exceptional listener, implementer of policy/ program, as micro-manager, harmonizer of discordant voices, and facilitator of the resolution of conflicts.

*K to 12 program as a response to the challenges of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) integration and globalization.* Through K to 12 Program, high school graduates will be equipped with basic relevant skills, knowledge, values, and aptitude to pursue higher education or enter the world of work. Political will is instrumental, because of its decisive stand in carrying out the implementation of the K to 12 Program, despite its rush preparation and limited resources.

The principal’s *communication role* is expected to contribute in reaching the organizational aims and objectives, not any more as controlling and authoritarian head.

The principal, as pedagogical leader, is the one who communicates the K to 12 Program to all its stakeholders. Although *resistance*, refusal and doubts to K to 12 Program were raised by some sectors, the principals have shown enough diligence and patience in handling the resistance by constantly communicating to parents, to media, and to students about the benefit of K to 12 Program.

Successful curriculum implementation encourages *joint participation of all stakeholders*. Each of the sectors has their unique and meaningful contribution in the attainment of the set goals and standards of the K to 12 Program.

The principals, who rolled out the K to 12 Program at the school levels, have two major *preparations*, namely: material or physical and teacher training. The principals encountered all the stressors within and without the schools, but the strong *passion to serve* and *passion to teach* outplay this dilemma. The principals have invested so much of their energy, time, and expertise/talents for K to 12 Program; thus, they are expecting the continuing support of the program.

In every research undertaking, we need to distil practical ideas that might be of great help in improving the ways we do things. These recommendations are not all encompassing to cover all the aspects of the K to 12 Program; rather, it centers on the lived experiences of the principals as they are real actors at the forefront of this major education reform. The recommendations are as following here:

Firstly, for *DepEd (Department of Education) Division Office*. It is important to “Support for Stronger Networking, Collaboration, and Dialogue among Principals”. K to 12 Program is not exempted from this kind of experience where resistances were raised by certain sectors of education. Budgetary constraints limited the performance of the curriculum implementers; delays in the delivery of equipment and facilities affected the quality of instruction; and human resources (teachers and school staff) were not properly prepared to implement the new program.

Although the principals were formally organized and well aware of the benefits of working together, learning from one another, partnerships and collaboration, DepEd should create a mechanism, an avenue and a support system for the principals and other school leaders to support each other. Funding assistance might be of great help for the principals in their organization.

It is important about “Provision for Training on Change Management”. There were resistances of varied degrees against K to 12 Program. It would be advantageous for principals if they are given knowledge and skills in managing conflicts, mediation, approaching resistances, and coordinating various demands of the stakeholders.

It is important to “Ensure on Time Delivery of Material and Infrastructure Support”. The principals will be unburdened if most of their needs, be it infrastructure or human resources, are readily available. It is an additional pressure on the part of the principal if they will be the one to look for resources for some of the needs of the school. Although, through networking and partnerships with the corporate world (corporate social responsibility), they are able to secure funding and other supports. The resourcefulness, creativity, and the gift of grace of the principals are employed to obtain the needed support for the K to 12 Program implementation.

It is important about “Imperative of Spokesperson”. There are times when a spokesperson is needed in the school especially that DepEd is implementing major change. At the level of the school, the role of being a spokesperson is performed by the principal. The principal, thus, should be an effective communicator or spokesperson of the school specifically and DepEd generally. There must be a training package for principal to prepare them for such major role in the school.

It is important about “Sustainability of the K to 12 Program”. There is a strong support of the principals to the K to 12 Program. They believe that the K to 12 Program will bring a major development in terms of quality of graduates that we will produce.



They are staunch believers that through the K to 12 Program, the Philippines will gain a competitive advantage in terms of the global labor market and other areas like education, innovation, and technology. A sustainability program should be created by the DepEd, so that we will be able to ensure that it is funded and supported by both the national and the local government. Lastly, DepEd should conduct an assessment or evaluation of the program in order to determine whether the stated goals are attained. K to 12 Program evaluation should be done using a holistic framework/evaluation model, so that all the aspects of this major program will be unearthed as basis of curriculum enhancement or revision.

It is important about “Institutionalizing Stress Management and Recreational Program”. Since we cannot limit the workloads of the principals in the schools, the co-researchers are explicitly saying that a program must be instituted for both teachers and principals to manage work-related stresses or to promote work-life balance. With many unexpected works assigned to the schools, the surprise activities, the deadlines that are always putting pressures to the schools, there must be balance, a coping mechanism through a program. Stress management and recreational program may include seminar-workshops, adequate provision for infrastructure, health and wellness activities, mindfulness and relaxation workshops, among others.

Secondly, *for School Principals*. They need to ensure that their teachers are really adherent to the changes brought by the new K to 12 Program. The principals must be open to take feedback from students and teachers during and after the implementation of the K to 12 Program. These feedback, suggestions, and comments are valuable inputs for curricular enhancement in the future, as such they should be submitted to national agencies of DepEd (Department of Education).

The principals should develop structures by creating ad-hoc committees/taskforces that will support teachers in their teaching; accomplish technical report for submission to DO (Division Office); organize necessary

programs; and carry-out routine activities in the school, among others. In this way, the school heads will be unburdened and at the same time, empowering the teachers as well as honing their leadership/managerial skills. The principals as group must conduct benchmarking activity within the Philippines or even abroad. In this way, they will be able to adapt and learn from the best practices of high performing schools in relation to K to 12 Program implementation. Principals should share their experiences, observations, and insights with regard to K to 12 Program implementation in a Division or Regional forum.

Thirdly, *for Teachers in Public Schools*. The teacher is the mediator between the curriculum and student. They know various needs of the students, educational institutions, industries, parents, and other stakeholders. They are main actors inside the classrooms in delivering the K to 12 Curriculum. Thus, their utmost support and commitment are much needed by DepEd (Department of Education) to make the K to 12 Curriculum successful.

Every summer, public school teachers undergo mass training to have the opportunities to expose themselves to new learning and teaching methods, which they eventually will impart to their students or apply in their teaching episodes. They must listen, participate, and focus on these In-SETs (In-Service Trainings), because DepEd is spending a lot for these trainings.

Recently, DepEd issued DO (DepEd Order) Number 42, s.2017, last August entitled “National Adoption and Implementation of the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST)”. The PPST is a clear indicator of DepEd’s recognition of the importance of professional standards in the continuing professional development and advancement of teachers based on the principle of lifelong learning.

Fourthly, *for the Students*. Our young people today are techno-savvy who are constantly bombarded with information from so many sources, especially the internet and social media. The students may organized themselves and create some advocacy groups in support of K to 12 Program.

They may create a blog, website, students organization with the aim of promoting the accomplishments of the school, benefits of K to 12 Program, and encourage other OSY (Out-of-School Youth) to pursue their education under the new curriculum.

Students must support the K to 12 Program, because they are the primary beneficiaries of this education program. But, still my stand is for them to have critical gaze about K to 12 Program implementation. They need to voice out their observations and analysis regarding this program of the government, not to obstruct its implementation; rather, they may try to provide constructive critique and offer alternative solutions and options for better, and effective implementation of the program.

Lastly, fifthly, *for the Parents*. The simple things that parents can do to help their students finish up to SHS (Senior High School) may be by monitoring the progress of their children and providing for the hidden cost of education (daily allowances, projects expenses), to name a few. Parents must also volunteer and participate actively in different school activities, like *Brigada Eskwela*, support health related program of DepEd (Department of Education) and DoH (Department of Health) for their children, among others.

Parents, together with the teachers, must strengthen the GPTA (Governing Parent-Teacher Association), so as to have meaningful and productive partnership for effective implementation of K to 12 Program. Parents must work with the school and support the K to 12 Program implementation; but still they need be critical and discerning of the program. They should play the role of productive equalizer and neutralizer.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>*Statement*: I confirm that this article has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration in whole or in part by another journals. This article is also not product of plagiarism. So, I have no conflicts of interest to declare it.

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