

■ HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH AND POLICY REFORM PROGRAM

Rethinking Teacher Education Curricula in the Post-Pandemic Era

Insights from International Assessments and Practice



Allen A. Espinosa and Wilmor L. Pacay III

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Table of Contents

2 **Abstract**

3 **Introduction**

4 **Learning Crisis in International Context**

6 **Interpreting PISA and Systemic Challenges**

8 **Post-pandemic Teaching and Learning**

10 **Adjustments and Opportunities in Post-Pandemic
Teaching and Learning**

11 **The Teacher Education Curriculum Now**

14 **Policy Input for Potential Curricular Review**

16 **Conclusions**

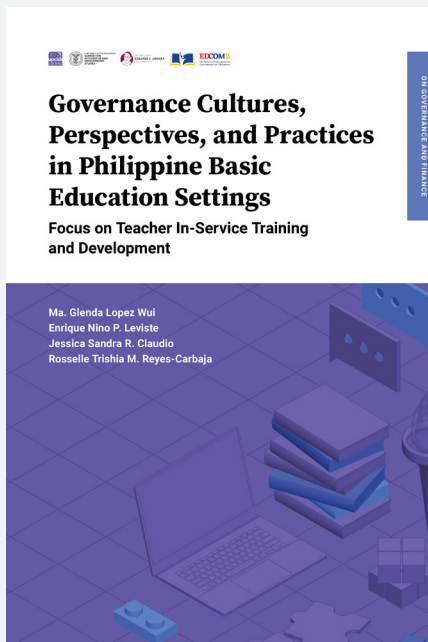
18 **References**

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RETHINKING TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULA IN THE POST-PANDEMIC ERA

Insights from International
Assessments and Practice

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ABSTRACT

The abrupt shift to remote and flexible learning during the COVID-19 pandemic exposed long-standing weaknesses in the Philippine education system, including inequities in access, institutional unpreparedness, and gaps in teacher competence. Despite the return to full face-to-face classes, there remains no comprehensive national study examining the pandemic's granular impact on teaching and learning outcomes. Consequently, policymakers and researchers have relied on international large-scale assessments (ILSAs) such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) to gauge student performance and learning loss. The results reveal persistent deficiencies in literacy, mathematics, and science that reflect deeper systemic problems spanning basic and higher education. This discussion paper argues that the learning crisis is inseparable from the condition of teacher education and professional development in the country. It highlights the interconnectedness of pre-service and in-service training, curriculum coherence, and teacher quality, situating these within ongoing reforms such as the Excellence in Teacher Education Act (Republic Act 11713) and the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II). Building on lessons from the pandemic and evidence from ILSA results, the paper offers policy inputs for a comprehensive curricular review that embeds technological adaptability, flexible learning, and resilience within teacher education programs. It also emphasizes the need for participatory approaches that engage teachers, higher education institutions, and reform bodies in co-designing a future-ready and context-responsive national teacher education curriculum. This paper is intended to inform policymakers, teacher education institutions, and education reform advocates engaged in the ongoing review of teacher education standards in the Philippines.

Keywords: teacher education, ILSA, PISA, post-pandemic learning, curriculum reform, pre-service and in-service training

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine education system has long faced persistent structural and quality issues that continue to undermine learning outcomes across basic and higher education. Despite constitutional guarantees and annual budgetary prioritization, government spending on education remains insufficient relative to the sector's needs. In 2019, investment in education was only about 2.8 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), far below UNESCO's recommended benchmark and the allocation levels of neighboring ASEAN countries (Albert et al., 2021). This underinvestment has directly affected the quality of learning environments, teacher preparation, and student performance nationwide.

Economic and social disparities have further deepened inequities in access to quality education. While expanding higher education has contributed to inclusive growth, it has not translated into genuine inclusivity in learning experiences, particularly for students from low-income families who continue to struggle with financial and technological barriers (Canlas, 2016). These challenges intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed deep systemic weaknesses in governance, inter-agency coordination, and institutional readiness. Schools at all levels were forced into abrupt remote learning modalities, revealing gaps in digital infrastructure, teacher digital competence, and learner support systems (UNICEF, 2022). As UNICEF reported, children in low- and middle-income countries, especially from poorer households, were among the hardest hit due to limited internet access and inadequate learning resources.

The pandemic's disruptions have left long-term scars on teaching and learning. The Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) now face the urgent task of addressing both learning loss and instructional resilience, ensuring that teachers—whether pre-service or in-service—are adequately equipped to navigate flexible and technology-supported modes of instruction. These institutions must also reassess the coherence between basic and higher education policies to ensure continuity in teacher preparation, curriculum implementation, and professional development.

In recent years, major education reforms have sought to address systemic gaps but have produced mixed results. The implementation of the K to 12 curriculum aimed to modernize Philippine basic education and align it with international standards, yet persistent issues in curriculum

congestion, teacher workload, and resource disparities have remained. The passage of Republic Act 11713, or the Excellence in Teacher Education Act, created opportunities for greater coordination among DepEd, CHED, and the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) through a strengthened Teacher Education Council. More recently, the convening of the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) has provided a platform for comprehensive review of these reforms and their outcomes, underscoring the need for data-driven and context-sensitive policy directions (Magsombol, 2023).

Within this broader reform landscape, there is a compelling need to rethink the design and delivery of teacher education programs in the Philippines. The present discussion paper seeks to stimulate dialogue on how national teacher education curricula can be restructured to respond to emerging post-pandemic realities and align with international benchmarks such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). By examining these assessments alongside policy developments and recent studies, the paper underscores the interconnectedness of educational outcomes, teacher preparation, and curriculum reform. It calls for an evidence-based, participatory review of the country's teacher education programs anchored on the experiences of teachers and responsive to the lessons learned during and after the pandemic.

LEARNING CRISIS IN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Recent international assessments have placed the Philippines in a troubling position in terms of educational performance and learning outcomes. According to the World Population Review (Bosano, 2023), the country ranked 111th out of nearly 200 participating countries in average intelligence quotient (IQ) scores, categorized as “below average.” While IQ scores are limited indicators of learning capacity, they reflect broader systemic challenges in education quality and effectiveness.

The findings correspond with the Philippines' performance in international large-scale assessments (ILSAs), notably the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2018) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 2019). In these assessments, Filipino learners ranked near the bottom in reading, mathematics, and science, revealing profound learning deficits and highlighting the cumulative impact of long-

standing inequities in access, teacher preparation, and instructional quality. Although certain science high schools and private institutions performed better, the national average reflects a learning crisis of systemic proportions (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, 2019).

Scholars and education policy researchers have attributed this underperformance to deficiencies in teacher education and classroom instruction. Espinosa and Gomez (2022) and Espinosa et al. (2023a) argued that pre-service teacher education in the Philippines must undergo comprehensive reform to strengthen future teachers' competencies in reading, scientific, and mathematical literacy across disciplines. These literacies, which form the foundation of ILSA assessments, should be embedded in teacher education curricula to ensure that teachers are equipped to cultivate these same skills in their students.

Recent policy discussions have begun to recognize these linkages. In the House of Representatives, legislative proposals aligned with the ongoing review of the DepEd K to 10 curriculum have emphasized the need for curricular decongestion in early grades. Representative Roman Romulo, chairperson of the House Committee on Basic Education and Culture, proposed streamlining Grades 1 to 3 subjects to focus on three core areas—Reading, Mathematics, and Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC)—to strengthen literacy and foundational skills (ABS-CBN News, 2022).

Classroom teachers have echoed similar concerns about the need for realistic, context-sensitive curricular policies. In a field interview, elementary school teacher Kristhean Navales remarked that “the Department of Education Central Office has to check for themselves how clogged the offering of content subjects is here in the field; so that they could, once and for all, cascade realistic curricular policies and programs that would address both the teachers and learners' actual problems” (Navales, 2023).

These findings and perspectives point to a consistent narrative: the learning crisis reflected in international assessments is not merely an issue of student performance but one deeply rooted in teacher education, curriculum design, and institutional support. As IBON Foundation (2021) observed, the government's delayed and fragmented responses to both pre-existing and pandemic-induced challenges have compounded the crisis, leaving teachers and learners to manage the consequences in classrooms with limited resources and support.

Addressing this crisis requires more than reactive policy adjustments. It demands a coherent strategy linking teacher preparation, curriculum reform, and system accountability, ensuring that both pre-service and in-service teachers are adequately supported to translate curricular goals into meaningful learning outcomes. This connection between teacher education and learner achievement provides the policy foundation for the succeeding sections of this discussion paper.

INTERPRETING PISA AND SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES

The results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and other international large-scale assessments have offered sobering insights into the state of Philippine education. The World Bank's 2021 analysis of PISA highlighted four critical areas requiring urgent attention: (1) the creation of safe and inclusive learning environments; (2) greater investment in early childhood education and foundational skills; (3) improved implementation of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy; and (4) increased education spending and equitable resource distribution. These findings reveal not only the immediate gaps in student learning but also systemic weaknesses in governance and accountability. The World Bank itself acknowledged that while hypotheses exist, the actual reasons behind the country's poor performance must still be "discovered, contextualized, and validated" (Orbeta and Paqueo, 2022, p. 10).

This observation underscores the limitations of current education initiatives, which remain fragmented and reactive. Despite the existence of multiple reform programs, the Philippines continues to face unresolved issues of quality, equity, and relevance in teaching and learning. Policymakers therefore need a comprehensive understanding of the structural causes of underperformance in order to craft targeted and sustainable interventions (Orbeta and Paqueo, 2022). The current ILSA results, moreover, do not yet reflect the learning losses caused by the two-year disruption during the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting that the true extent of the learning crisis may be even greater than the data reveal.

Among the key contributing factors identified by researchers are teacher qualifications, institutional accreditation, and program quality. Many higher education institutions (HEIs) offering teacher education programs have limited faculty with graduate or doctoral degrees, while program

accreditation rates remain low. According to the Commission on Higher Education's 2009–2018 data, only about half of HEI faculty hold graduate degrees, with roughly 20 percent possessing doctorates. Similarly, only about 30 percent of teacher education programs are accredited (Orbeta and Paqueo, 2022). These figures reflect not only capacity constraints but also limited institutional commitment to continuous quality improvement.

Bayudan-Dacuycuy et al. (2023a) further highlighted that only 182 HEIs, or roughly 7.61 percent of the total, have achieved the status of Centers of Development (COD) or Centers of Excellence (COE). These designations measure institutional performance across instruction, research, extension, linkages, and faculty qualifications, yet they represent a small portion of the country's teacher education landscape. The disparity between these high-performing institutions and the majority of HEIs underscores the uneven distribution of quality in teacher preparation.

Challenges in higher education are mirrored in basic education, where issues of access and equity persist despite major policy reforms. The Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act of 2017 (Republic Act No. 10931) was designed to promote inclusivity through programs such as free higher education, tertiary education subsidies, and student loans. However, data from Orbeta and Paqueo (2022) reveal that attendance in higher education remains heavily skewed toward wealthier households, with 49 percent of enrollees coming from the richest decile and only 17 percent from the poorest. The uneven reach of financing programs suggests that access reforms alone are insufficient without parallel investments in instructional quality and institutional capacity.

The Commission on Human Rights (2022) has also pointed to the broader consequences of these systemic issues. Its situational report on the K to 12 curriculum and pandemic disruptions identified a lack of soft skills and communication competencies among graduates, contributing to underemployment and job mismatch. Education advocacy groups, such as the Philippine Business for Education, have echoed these concerns, emphasizing that the persistent learning crisis reflects both the inadequacies of the curriculum and the need to modernize teacher education (Hernando-Malipot, 2023).

Taken together, these findings point to the need for a unified reform agenda that links evidence from international assessments with structural changes

in teacher education. The discussion must move beyond acknowledging learning loss toward examining how pre-service and in-service teacher preparation, curriculum standards, and institutional accreditation can collectively improve learning outcomes. The next section explores how lessons from pandemic-era teaching practices and flexible learning delivery can inform this realignment.

POST-PANDEMIC TEACHING AND LEARNING

The COVID-19 pandemic transformed education systems globally, compelling governments and institutions to reimagine how teaching and learning can continue amid prolonged disruptions. In the Philippines, the pandemic exposed deep inequalities in access, infrastructure, and teacher preparedness. At the height of the crisis, schools at all levels shifted abruptly to remote and flexible learning modes, with teachers and learners struggling to adapt to digital platforms and limited resources. These challenges underscored the critical need to strengthen teacher competence not only in pedagogy but also in technological adaptation and instructional innovation (Espinosa and Gomez, 2022).

A study conducted by Espinosa et al. (2024) reviewed the policies and practices of select teacher education institutions (TEIs) on practice teaching during the pandemic. It found that TEIs managed to sustain supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of pre-service teachers through online platforms, which were previously underutilized. While the transition was challenging, the experience demonstrated the feasibility of digital modes for mentoring and assessment, as well as their potential to complement traditional face-to-face modalities. This shift presents an opportunity for TEIs to integrate flexible learning tools and digital pedagogy into their curricula, preparing future teachers for multiple learning environments.

Espinosa et al. (2024) also noted that pre-service teachers needed stronger preparation in classroom management, communication, and differentiated instruction—skills essential for managing both physical and virtual classrooms. The emphasis on technological readiness must therefore be complemented by attention to these interpersonal and pedagogical competencies. In a related study, Espinosa et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of material, technical, and psychosocial support for pre-service teachers, particularly during field experiences conducted under crisis conditions. Such findings reinforce the idea that teacher education must

holistically address both professional and emotional dimensions of teaching, particularly in times of uncertainty.

The pandemic also prompted teacher education institutions to explore innovative models of practice teaching, including online mentorship and collaboration between higher education and basic education institutions. These initiatives demonstrate the potential for cross-sectoral partnerships to address practical constraints and share best practices. As Paetsch and Drechsel (2021) emphasized, providing pre-service teachers with adaptive opportunities to learn at university is critical to developing professional resilience and digital competence. In-service teachers likewise benefited from retooled training programs that enhanced their capacity to design flexible lessons and use digital platforms effectively.

Subsequent studies have confirmed that information and communications technology (ICT) competence plays a central role in sustaining learning continuity. Dayagbil et al. (2021) and Espinosa et al. (2023b) found that access to stable internet connectivity and digital tools significantly influenced the quality of instruction during remote learning. These findings were later reaffirmed when schools in the National Capital Region and other parts of the country temporarily reverted to remote modalities due to extreme heat in 2023, demonstrating that flexibility in teaching delivery is now an enduring necessity rather than a temporary adaptation (Sevillano, 2023).

The post-pandemic context has therefore introduced both challenges and opportunities for rethinking teacher education. In-service teachers continue to grapple with learning loss, mental health concerns, and limited institutional support, while adapting to curricular revisions and resource constraints. Yet these same conditions offer valuable insights into how teacher education curricula can evolve. Hatlevik and Hatlevik (2018, cited in Paetsch and Drechsel, 2021) argue that teachers must be prepared and willing to support students' learning through technology to ensure uninterrupted instruction, a principle that is now central to post-pandemic educational recovery.

Without deliberate intervention, the same weaknesses revealed during the pandemic—inequitable access, inadequate training, and lack of coherent policy alignment—will persist and eventually spill over into higher education. Strengthening teacher education curricula is thus essential not only for crisis resilience but also for long-term quality improvement. The next section examines the current state of the teacher education curriculum

and explores how recent policy reforms, such as the Excellence in Teacher Education Act and the ongoing EDCOM II review, can inform a national framework for curricular renewal.

ADJUSTMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN POST-PANDEMIC TEACHING AND LEARNING

The pandemic period forced educators and institutions to adapt to unprecedented conditions, prompting a re-evaluation of what truly matters in teaching and learning. Schools were compelled to modify delivery modes, recalibrate learning priorities, and focus on essential competencies that could be meaningfully achieved under constrained circumstances. Among the most important realizations from this period were the benefits of flexibility, the need for clear prioritization of learning outcomes, and the centrality of teacher adaptability in maintaining instructional continuity.

During the initial months of school closures, teachers across the country experimented with various strategies to ensure learning continuity. These included the use of modular instruction, asynchronous lessons, online platforms, recalibrated school calendars, and more intentional efforts to address learners' well-being through health breaks and psychosocial support. As observed by Dayagbil et al. (2021) and Espinosa et al. (2023b), information and communications technology (ICT) became an indispensable enabler of education delivery, bridging gaps between teachers and learners and ensuring that instruction could proceed despite physical distance. The role of ICT was further underscored when, in 2023, the Department of Education allowed schools to revert temporarily to remote learning during extreme heat conditions (Sevillano, 2023). This policy decision illustrates how flexible learning has now become an integral component of education continuity planning.

The post-pandemic teaching-learning environment, however, presents both challenges and opportunities for professional growth. On one hand, teachers must manage the enduring effects of learning loss, disengagement, and digital fatigue. On the other, they are now positioned to leverage new competencies developed during the crisis—technological fluency, differentiated instruction, and hybrid classroom management—to enrich their teaching practices. The experience of adjusting to online and blended modalities has proven that teachers are capable of innovation when supported with appropriate training and resources.

The lessons of the pandemic also reinforce the importance of continuous professional development and institutional readiness. Schools must not only train teachers in the technical aspects of digital instruction but also build systems that encourage collaboration, reflective practice, and context-based problem-solving. As Hatlevik and Hatlevik (2018, in Paetsch and Drechsel, 2021) emphasized, the sustainability of learning continuity depends on teachers' willingness and preparedness to integrate technology in pedagogically meaningful ways. For teacher education institutions, this entails embedding digital pedagogy, assessment literacy, and adaptive learning design into both pre-service and in-service training programs.

At a policy level, these experiences present opportunities for the systematic renewal of teacher education curricula. Flexible learning, once considered a temporary measure, should now be treated as a standard competency area. Curricula should also promote stronger linkages between pre-service preparation and in-service professional learning to ensure consistency in skills development. Integrating insights from pandemic teaching—such as adaptive lesson design, inclusive strategies for disadvantaged learners, and the use of low-cost digital tools—can help build a more resilient and equitable education system.

The capacity of teachers to respond to crises ultimately depends on how well they are prepared before entering the profession. Without deliberate intervention and curricular alignment, the systemic weaknesses exposed during the pandemic will persist and continue to affect the quality of instruction. The next section turns to the current state of the teacher education curriculum in the Philippines and examines how policy reforms and institutional initiatives can guide its transformation.

THE TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM NOW

The quality of teacher education in the Philippines can be understood through multiple dimensions, including its design, structure, and enactment in practice. As Hoban (2004), Wang et al. (2011), and Zeichner and Conklin (2008) argue, the effectiveness of teacher education lies not only in the curriculum's content but also in how it is interpreted, implemented, and continually refined. In the Philippine context, ongoing reforms reflect a growing recognition that teacher education must evolve in response to both local realities and global trends in teaching and learning (Generalao et al., 2022).

One of the most significant policy milestones in recent years has been the passage of Republic Act No. 11713, also known as the Excellence in Teacher Education Act. The law aims to strengthen the Teacher Education Council (TEC) and institutionalize a coordinated framework for improving teacher education quality across agencies. It explicitly mandates greater collaboration between the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC). Through this inter-agency cooperation, the TEC is envisioned to bridge the gap between pre-service and in-service teacher education, ensuring that teacher preparation is closely aligned with professional standards and classroom realities.

A key feature of the law is the transformation of the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP), which is tasked with delivering professional development programs for in-service teachers, master teachers, and DepEd personnel. Strengthening NEAP's capacity and linking its programs with higher education institutions can help build a coherent system of lifelong professional learning. This alignment is essential if the country is to produce teachers who are not only qualified but also adaptive, reflective, and responsive to evolving educational contexts.

The current teacher education curriculum is guided by CHED's Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs) for teacher education programs, which were implemented beginning in 2017. These PSGs provide a structured framework for pre-service teacher preparation, emphasizing the integration of theory, practice, and research. They also articulate outcomes-based education principles and contextual understanding of the teaching profession (Generalao et al., 2022a). However, these PSGs were designed and released prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore do not yet account for the pedagogical and technological challenges that emerged during and after the crisis. The absence of post-pandemic insights in these standards highlights the need for timely review and recalibration.

Generalao et al. (2022b) emphasize that policy frameworks must be translated into practice through capacity building and institutional support. This is particularly urgent given that more than 1,500 teacher education institutions (TEIs) operate across the country with varying levels of quality and resources. Without coherent implementation strategies, national standards risk remaining aspirational rather than transformative. The development of a shared monitoring and evaluation system—anchored on teaching

performance, student outcomes, and program responsiveness—could ensure greater consistency in how PSGs are realized across institutions.

Complementing these efforts, Tuga et al. (2023) have called for the formulation of a National Teacher Education Roadmap to chart long-term directions for teacher preparation, professional growth, and research development. This roadmap would serve as a strategic instrument for aligning policy, curriculum, and institutional practice, providing clear benchmarks for reform implementation. It would also operationalize the “assurance mechanism framework” that encompasses key elements in teacher education such as curriculum, pedagogical approaches, teacher qualifications, and continuous professional development (Tuga et al., 2023, p. 55).

Recent initiatives under the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) further reinforce the importance of this comprehensive review. EDCOM II has been tasked with conducting a national assessment of the education sector, including teacher quality, curriculum design, and institutional governance. Its findings are expected to guide legislative and administrative actions aimed at improving alignment among DepEd, CHED, and PRC. Integrating EDCOM II’s evidence base into the review of teacher education curricula can ensure that reforms are grounded in current realities and national priorities.

Ultimately, the condition of teacher education in the Philippines reflects the broader challenges of the education system. Issues that affect basic education—such as limited resources, uneven quality, and weak institutional coordination—also shape the preparation of future teachers. Likewise, the professional needs and constraints faced by in-service teachers provide important feedback for revising pre-service curricula. Addressing these interlinked concerns requires a systemic approach that promotes shared accountability and continuous improvement. Revisiting and realigning the teacher education curriculum, informed by both research and lived experience, is therefore crucial to advancing educational recovery and long-term quality improvement.

POLICY INPUT FOR POTENTIAL CURRICULAR REVIEW

Drawing from the findings of international large-scale assessments (ILSA), including PISA and TIMSS, as well as the persistent issues in both basic and higher education, this section presents policy notes intended to guide a comprehensive review of the teacher education curriculum in the Philippines. These recommendations build upon the insights from pre-service and in-service teaching experiences during the pandemic and aim to support a national framework for curriculum renewal that is evidence-based, participatory, and future-oriented.

1. Interpreting Assessment Data for Policy Reform

A granular and comprehensive interpretation of ILSA results should serve as a foundational step in curriculum review. Policymakers and researchers must analyze these data in relation to learners' socio-economic backgrounds, teacher competencies, and available teaching resources, particularly in reading, mathematics, and science. The results of these analyses should inform case studies and field study courses in pre-service teacher education, allowing teacher candidates to examine real-world implications of assessment data and identify instructional strategies aligned with ILSA competencies.

2. Integrating Pandemic Learning into Curriculum Development

The curriculum review should explicitly account for the impact of the two-year pandemic disruption on teaching and learning. This includes comparing pre-pandemic and post-pandemic experiences of both learners and teachers to understand shifts in learning engagement, resource access, and instructional methods. The insights gained from this comparison can help enrich CHED's Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs) by embedding lessons on flexibility, technology integration, and resilience within the curriculum.

3. Revising CHED PSGs through Collaborative Consultation

CHED's revision of the PSGs for teacher education programs should be participatory and inclusive. It should involve education reform groups, the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), higher education institutions, and independent teacher education experts. The review

should address specific areas such as (1) alignment with the latest PISA performance outcomes, (2) the structure and supervision of field study and off-campus practicum, and (3) the adjustments made by in-service teachers during the pandemic and post-pandemic periods. These experiences, when systematically integrated, can ensure that curricular reforms are responsive to contemporary teaching realities.

4. Sequencing Reforms Across Educational Levels

The revision of teacher education curricula should follow the completion of DepEd's ongoing K to 10 and K to 12 curricular reviews to ensure vertical and horizontal alignment between basic and higher education. This sequence will allow CHED and TEIs to design teacher preparation programs that reflect updated basic education learning standards, reducing the disconnect between what teachers are trained to teach and what they are expected to deliver in schools.

5. Involving Teachers as Co-Designers of Reform

Pre-service and in-service teachers who have demonstrated innovation and adaptability during the pandemic should have an active role in shaping curriculum revisions. Their anecdotal and experiential insights—on classroom management, flexible learning, and learner engagement—offer valuable evidence for designing programs that are practical and contextually relevant. Integrating their feedback through structured consultations, focus group discussions, and pilot programs can ensure that reforms are grounded in lived experience rather than purely theoretical frameworks.

6. Aligning Institutional and Legislative Initiatives

CHED and leading teacher education institutions should maintain active engagement with national education reform bodies, particularly the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II). Doing so ensures that the review of the teacher education curriculum is aligned with the broader policy agenda for educational recovery and workforce readiness. EDCOM II's nationwide consultations and data-gathering initiatives can also inform CHED's revisions, promoting coherence across education levels and agencies.

7. Strengthening Partnerships Across Sectors

Collaboration between public and private TEIs, local government units, and private school associations should be institutionalized to foster sharing of exemplary practices. Many private institutions have successfully implemented low-cost innovations in flexible learning and teacher training that can be adapted for use in public schools. Encouraging these partnerships can expand access to professional development opportunities and reduce disparities in teaching quality across regions.

These policy inputs aim to guide a holistic and inclusive process of curricular review that not only aligns teacher education with international benchmarks but also reflects the lived realities of Filipino teachers and learners. Embedding these recommendations within CHED's forthcoming revisions of teacher education PSGs will ensure that the country's teacher preparation programs are better equipped to meet the challenges of the post-pandemic era and the demands of a rapidly changing education landscape.

CONCLUSIONS

The disappointing performance of the Philippines in international large-scale assessments (ILSA) such as PISA and TIMSS, coupled with the World Population Review's "below average" categorization of Filipinos' IQ scores, reflects deep and systemic weaknesses in the education sector. These results are not simply indicators of student underachievement but manifestations of long-standing structural problems—unequal access to quality education, fragmented governance, and insufficient investment in teacher preparation. They highlight the urgent need to address the quality of teaching and learning through coherent, evidence-based reform of teacher education.

The current state of education is not solely the failure of teachers, students, or institutions. It reveals a broader failure of educational governance to anticipate and respond to crises, to ensure inclusivity, and to build resilience in times of disruption. The pandemic exposed the limitations of existing systems, showing how unprepared the education sector was for large-scale shifts in teaching modalities. Two school years of interrupted learning passed without a comprehensive, nationwide study to assess learning loss or its impact on both students and teachers. Without such data, curriculum revisions risk being detached from the realities of classrooms.

The absence of coordinated and sustained reform has led to fragmented initiatives and uneven improvements. While the Excellence in Teacher Education Act (Republic Act No. 11713) and the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) offer promising frameworks for system-wide reform, their effectiveness will depend on how well policies translate into action at the institutional level. Aligning CHED's curriculum standards with the lessons of the pandemic, the needs of basic education, and the competencies measured by ILSA is a critical step toward ensuring coherence across all stages of teacher preparation.

At the heart of these challenges lies the quality of teacher education. Pre-service and in-service teachers must be equipped not only with content and pedagogical knowledge but also with adaptive, reflective, and technological competencies that enable them to thrive in dynamic learning environments. Instructional innovation should not remain isolated in individual schools or temporary projects; it should be embedded in the very design of teacher education programs.

Reforming the teacher education curriculum is therefore central to addressing the broader learning crisis. By grounding curricular review in empirical evidence, teacher experience, and stakeholder participation, the Philippines can build a teacher education system that is responsive, equitable, and future-oriented. Such reform must be guided by a unified national roadmap, one that integrates assessment data, professional standards, and continuous professional development within an assurance framework that promotes accountability and excellence.

Ultimately, improving the quality of teacher education is not an isolated goal but a prerequisite for national development. Teachers are at the core of any effort to rebuild trust in the education system, recover from learning loss, and prepare future generations for the demands of a changing world. Investing in their preparation, support, and continuous growth is the most sustainable path toward transforming education in the post-pandemic era.

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