

Research Paper

The General Education Curriculum in the Philippines: A Policy Analysis

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Article History

Received:
16.06.2022

Revised:
21.07.2022

Accepted:
10.08.2022

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Abstract: Due to the fast pace changes and impact of globalization and technological advancement, this is a significant challenge to the educational system. More importantly, the students, the faculty, the institution, the school administration, and the stakeholders have something to think over. Internationalizing the curriculum in the local context is a predicament that the government must address for students to be globally competitive and ready for the challenges of tomorrow. This particular paper analyzed the Philippine General Education Curriculum (GEC). The analysis of this paper resulted in two policy options which provided a comprehensive discussion regarding the ramifications of implementing the new general education curriculum in higher education institutions. Afterward, the paper also shared a SWOT and stakeholders' analysis to provide practical ideas and perspectives for school administrators to consider timely decision-making and school management. Finally, this paper offered some relevant recommendations for future references.

Keywords: General Education Curriculum, Globalization, Internationalization, Policy Analysis, SWOT Analysis.



1. Introduction

Globalization and technological advancements influenced educational systems around the world. To adapt to these changes, the Philippine government changed its policy. The government enacted the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, also known as Republic Act No. 10533. The law strengthened the Basic Education System, which increased the number of primary education years from ten to twelve. Another example is the publication of the Policy Standard to Improve Quality Assurance (QA) in Philippine Higher Education. This policy mandates outcomes-based and typology-based quality assurance for all higher education institutions in the country (CHED Memorandum Order No. 46. Series of 2012). Third, Executive Order No. 83 series of 2012 established the Philippine Qualifications Framework. The PQF is a competency-based and labor-market-driven "national policy that describes the levels of educational qualifications and establishes qualification outcomes" [1].

2. Literature Review

One consequence of the policy shift is the implementation of a revised General Education Curriculum (GEC) under CMO no. 20 [2], which will begin in Academic Year 2018-2019. According to the CMO, the new GEC explained continuing the ongoing paradigm shift in higher education. Furthermore, to pursue ongoing educational reforms such as an improved primary education curriculum from K to 12. Furthermore, the revised GEC aims to "expose undergraduates to various domains of knowledge and successful methods of comprehending social and natural realities, while developing intellectual competencies and civic capacities." [2]. Preparation is critical to the success of curriculum implementation [3].

CMO no. 20 [2] updated the 1996 CMO no. 59 series [4], which embodied the current general education curriculum. CMO no. 4 series of 1997 [5], CMO no. 59 [4] provided the required minimum number of units of 63 when combined with its addendum. This memorandum, known as GEC-A, is intended for tertiary humanities, Social Sciences, and communication courses (HUSOCOM). CMO no. 4 [5] mandated GEC-B, which required a minimum of 51 general education units for all other fields of study. They include all that did not fall under the previously mentioned fields of study or were non-HUSOCOM. The CHED granted the HEI discretion to use GEC-A or GEC-B for any course of study other than the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Communication based on this latter CMO.

In comparison, the new GEC reduced the GE units to 36, consisting of 24 core courses and nine elective courses. This paper presented two policy options. The first option is to keep the status quo or to continue implementing the current general education curriculum. The second option, on the other hand, advocates for implementing the revised curriculum.

Society expects Higher education institutions (HEIs) to do more than confer degrees on graduates in the twenty-first century. They expect the HEIs to produce quality graduates with the skills required by the industry, which is, after all, the end user of the HEIs' products. The new curriculum's main strength is its emphasis on outcomes, similar to the PQF's emphasis on setting standards for qualification outcomes. This idea may also address the issue of the prevalent academe-industry mismatch or the gap between industry needs and graduate skills, which the PQF aims to address. In comparison, the traditional curriculum places a "conventional emphasis on structure and content" [2], which many believe to be not aligned with the needs of the times.

Another advantage of the new curriculum is the reduced unit count caused by the cascading of other subjects in the senior high school curriculum. As stated in the CMO, this is more in line with the liberal nature of general education. This information also allows college students to concentrate on their professional curriculum. Third, students can choose a subject of interest with nine (9) elective units available.

According to this paper, implementing the revised general education curriculum benefits students in terms of employability, higher education institutions in producing competitive graduates, and industry in terms of the availability of skilled and qualified labor.

3. Methodology

This paper is a policy analysis of the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) General Education Curriculum and other national policies in conjunction with it. The policy documents analyzed were the different CHED Memorandum orders, mainly the CHED Memorandum No. 20, Series of 2013, also known as the "General Education Curriculum Understandings, Intellectual and Civil

Competencies." The paper also scrutinized other policy documents of the Commission on Higher Education before the said memorandum's implementation to provide a glimpse of its development over the past.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Overview of the New General Education Curriculum

"No nation rises above its educational level" [6]. As a result, any nation's development depends on the education provided to its citizens. The Commission on Higher Education defined quality as "the synchronization and uniformity of the educational process with the institution's vision, mission, and goals." [7]. Quality and quality assurance are essential, especially to students. This notion is due to the urgent need to move significant populations of Filipinos out of poverty. This idea may happen through educating quality leaders, thinkers, planners, researchers, technological innovators, entrepreneurs, and the much-needed workforce to launch the national economy," as stated in Section 4 of CMO no. 46 [7].

The educational reforms implemented in the country place a greater emphasis on quality assurance. These are motivated primarily by the need to meet global educational standards. CHED and accrediting bodies play a role in ensuring that higher education institutions meet quality standards.

The curriculum is one of the critical area's stakeholders evaluate to determine quality. Academic programs in higher education in the Philippines have two curriculum components: the General Education Curriculum and the Professional Education Curriculum or Curriculum for Specialized Education. The government requires the HEIs to implement outcomes-based curricula to transition to outcomes-based education. Slowly, both public and private HEIs in the country are adapting their curricula to this change.

The K-12 program, which has added two years to the primary education curriculum, this educational reform impacted HEIs. The reform cascaded General education subjects to the Senior High School level to meet the College Readiness Standards outlined in CEB Resolution No. 298-2011. In response to the implementation of the K2 Program, CHED issued CMO no. 20 [2], which mandated the implementation of a new General Education Curriculum beginning with the Academic Year 2018-2019.

According to CMO no. 20 [2], the new GEC aimed to "further the ongoing paradigm shift to learning competency-based standards in Philippine higher education." In addition, "in pursuit of the ongoing educational, has integrated GE courses of higher education programs in the senior high school." The new GE curriculum aims to "expose undergraduates to various domains of knowledge and methods of success in comprehending social and natural realities while developing intellectual competencies and civic capacities."

General Education is the portion of the curriculum that all students, regardless of major, must complete. Unlike specialized learning, general education focuses on "broad or wide-ranging understandings." According to CMO no. 20 [2], general education establishes the foundation for developing a highly qualified, humane, and principled person. It also gears up the Filipino for the expectations of 21st-century life and the necessary skills to foresee and conform to fast-shifting conditions. According to the University of Maryland's Plan for general Education, General Education is a point of stability in a changing institution [8]. General Education discusses the faculty's first fundamentals, the student's best competencies, and the university's fundamental precepts and aspirations. The general education curriculum remains until CMO no. 20 [2], which encompasses the current general education curriculum and its updated version, CMO no. 4 [5], modifies it. CMO No. 59 [4] established GEC-A, which required a minimum of 63 units for tertiary courses in Humanities, Social Sciences, and Communication, or HUSOCOM. CMO no. 4 [5] mandated GEC-B, which required a minimum of 51 general education units. This idea applies to all other fields of study that did not fall under the previously mentioned fields of study or were non-HUSOCOM. The Table 1 illustrates the distinctions between GEC A and GEC B.

According to CMO No. 4 [5], the HEI may use GEC-A or GEC-B for any course of study other than the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Communication.

The revised GEC's most notable feature is the reduction of GE units to 36 (from 63 in GEC-A or 51 in GEC-B), with 24 core courses and nine units of elective courses. The core courses, as listed in the Memorandum Order, include Understanding the Self/ *Pag-unawa sa Sarili*, Readings in Philippine History/ *Mga Babasahin Hinggil sa Kasaysayan ng Pilipinas*, and The Contemporary World/ *Ang*

Kasalukuyang Daigdig. Purposive Communication/ *Malayuning Komunikasyon*, Art Appreciation/ *Pagpapahalaga sa Sining*, Science, Technology, and Society/ *Agham, Teknolohiya at Lipunan*, and Ethics/ *Etika* are some of the topics covered. On the other hand, elective courses must cover at least two knowledge domains: arts and humanities, social sciences and philosophy, science, technology, and mathematics.

Table 1. Comparison of GEC A and GEC B

GEC A		GEC B	
Language and Literature (English 9 units, Filipino 9 units & Literature 6 units)	24 units	Humanities, Language & Literature	21 units
Mathematics and Natural Sciences (Mathematics 6 units, Natural Sciences 6 units & Science Elective 3 units)	15 units	Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Information Technology	15 units
Humanities and Social Sciences (Humanities 6 units, Social Sciences 12 units)	18 units	Social Science	12 units
Mandated Subjects (Rizal and Philippine History)	6 units	Rizal's Life and Works	3 units
Total Units	63 units		51 units

Source: CMO No. 59, series of 1996 & CMO no. 4, series of 1997.

The CMO explains why the curriculum changed. First, it refers to external conditions such as globalization and technological advancements. It also tackles the effects such as "increased complexity of life" and "massive explosion of knowledge," which requires "big picture thinking."

Furthermore, internal conditions identified in the CMO drive the need for revision. Other factors cited included the requirement of remedial math and communication courses in the current GEC. This notion is said to "detract from the liberal education character of the program," as well as changes in the country's educational system.

The government assigned the Technical Panel for General Education (TGPE) to review the "old" GEC and develop the revised GEC. Before the approval of CHED en banc in the proposed revised GEC in 2013, the TGPE conducted zonal consultations with CHED technical panels and committees, higher education institutions, and other stakeholders in 2012. Stakeholders raised several concerns during public consultations for stakeholders regarding the policy, including the Department of Education's readiness to cater to different streams in senior high schools for technical/vocational programs and degree programs for various disciplines, the preparedness of teachers for senior high school, and the impact of the reduction of courses to the general education faculty.

The change in the general education curriculum affects the country's higher education institutions and the entire higher education system. As a result, a discussion of policy options is very relevant. It can aid in addressing the issues raised by these changes.

4.2. Policy Options

The transition to this new curriculum has some consequences. However, starting with some of the current curriculum's implications is best.

Policy Option 1: Status Quo or Continued Implementation of CMO

The current general education curriculum falls far short of the ideal. Some valid concerns were raised in a position paper [9] on the current general education curriculum. The first practical implication of implementing two sets of general education curricula, particularly for the servicing departments, is the reduction of units and required subjects for non-HUSOCOM courses. The implementation has the effect of reducing the loading assignment of teachers assigned to service non-HUSOCOM courses proportionally.

The second issue noted was the execution of GEC-B by CHED Technical Panels for various non-HUSOCOM programs, as mentioned by Torres and Goingo [9]: there is a "general observance and appropriation of GEC-B minimum requirements and an inclination to go beyond the minimum

requirements, in effect, an attempt to approximate, if possible, the GEC-A requirements." This idea affects students because of the heavy semester class load and the additional financial burden. On the other hand, there were also effects to teachers because the additional subjects considered as part of the specialized curriculum. Thus, general education teachers cannot teach. In a related article, a higher education institution proposed a 45-unit general education curriculum framework for one academic year to prepare students for the new general education curriculum [10].

It is clear from the preceding that implementing GEC-A or GEC B has some consequences. Implementing GEC-A or its "approximation for non-HUSOCOM programs" is burdensome to students; however, implementing GEC-B reduced the faculty's teaching load.

According to Torres and Goingo [9], the third concern is the failure of general education subjects to meet the expected outcomes. The GEC intends to develop and strengthen these sets regarding knowledge, skills, competencies, values, and attitudes. This notion points to an academe-industry mismatch in which graduates lack the skills required by the industry, resulting in either unemployment or underemployment. For example, data from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for Technical Assistance to Improve Competitiveness in Tourism [11] revealed that the Department of Tourism and tourism providers are particularly concerned about relatively lower service standards, with employers complaining about the skills mismatch of many high school graduates entering the industry. This concept attributes to a poor general education curriculum, which serves as the foundation for college students.

Because of this observation, the paper [9] recommends a thorough review of the GEC. It explicitly suggests the creation of a Technical Panel for General Education Curriculum that would include experts in core subjects. These experts' mandate is to review and design a reinvigorated General Education Curriculum. Such reinvigorated GEC determines and prescribes a minimum list of requirements.

The fourth point of concern was the "general lack of readiness of high school graduates for serious and in-depth college-level work, as well as poor English and computational skills." A national figure instrumental in developing the current GEC admits that "much of what the GEC offers should be given more appropriately to the high school" [9]. This issue is despite the current curriculum's requirements for remedial math and communication courses.

There has been no revision to the general education curriculum since its implementation in 1996 and 1997. As a result, the abovementioned problems will persist when the government implements the current CMO.

Policy Option 2: Implementation of a New General Education Curriculum

Given the diverse environments in which people make policies, there is no one-size-fits-all model or framework applicable in all contexts. As a result, policies frequently fail to achieve their intended outcomes. This idea is because the authority forced them to fit in contexts different from those to which they were adapted or made to address situations that require different solutions. Before 2013, the Philippines was one of only three countries in the world (the others being Angola and Djibouti) and the last in Asia to have a 10-year basic education program. According to the Department of Education, a 12-year program is the best time for essential education learning. The new general education curriculum is a result of the enhanced primary education curriculum's adoption. Similarly, the program has beneficiaries, but some sectors will be severely impacted and dislodged [12].

The intentions of the new GEC are noble, as seen from the overview discussion of the new policy; however, its implementation is impossible. It is still uncertain whether it can achieve the outcomes, the authority sets. However, at this early stage, the policy can be evaluated using a SWOT and stakeholder analysis. The paper used these analyses to evaluate external and internal factors associated with the new GEC and its implementation.

4.3. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Strengths

CMO 20 [2] detailed some differences between the current and revised general education curricula. One is the presence of clearly articulated goals and outcomes, which avoided the "conventional emphasis on structure and content of the GE courses." Another is that the proposed GEC "highlights both competencies and content" because it is outcomes-oriented; where the new general education curriculum's primary strength lies. Due to the greater emphasis on the outcomes or achievement of the program learning objectives rather than the input or content and the process, it is possible to ensure

that students are well prepared for the specialized curriculum and thus that graduates meet program outcomes. This idea is consistent with one of the Philippine Qualifications Framework's objectives, which is to "support national and international worker mobility through increased recognition of the value and comparability of Philippine qualifications" [1].

Another advantage is that there are fewer units to tackle or that the organization is a learner curriculum. This idea is "more in keeping with the liberal nature of general education," according to CMO no. 20 [2]. Due to the limited number of general education subjects available, students can concentrate on professional or specialized subjects. Finally, as stated in the CMO, the nine units of elective courses provide an element of choice.

Weaknesses

The policy's weakness is its impact on higher education institutions and stakeholders. Institutions of higher learning with fewer general education units without a corresponding decrease in the years required to complete a specific program would imply more subject offerings to professional subjects. As a result, higher education institutions must hire faculty for the additional significant subjects. This concept would have ramifications such as. First, specialized teachers require a higher salary, which would mean additional expenses for the institutions. This idea could eventually result in tuition increases at private colleges and universities. According to a discussion paper, the new General Education Program was well intentioned but ill-prepared [13]. In addition, this can cause displacement of faculty members teaching general education subjects. This information is why CHED came up with the K to 12 Transition Program.

Members of the faculty. The effect of the new curriculum's decrease in general education units on teaching personnel is a decrease or even a lack of teaching load for part-time personnel and possible displacement for full-time personnel. According to a related article, faculty members' transition from college to senior high school resulted in a positive but significant adjustment to their new roles and responsibilities [14].

Students. As previously stated, a decrease in general education would increase in professional subjects, necessitating more specialized teachers. This concept can eventually lead to an increase in tuition.

Opportunities

Development opportunities. CHED has a K-12 Transition Program that provides development packages to faculty and staff whose workload diminished due to the K-12 transition, one of which is the new general education curriculum. These packages include graduate studies and professional advancement scholarships, development grants for faculty and staff, and institutional innovation grants.

Specialized and qualified graduates. As previously stated, with fewer general education subjects available, there is an opportunity to offer more professional subjects.

Job opportunities. This possibility would create job opportunities for teachers who specialize in professional subjects.

Threats

Filipino subject offerings. Stakeholders raised opposition to implementing the new curriculum focusing on the lack of Filipino subject offerings. A news article [15] discussed the case in which advocates petitioned the Supreme Court to stop the implementation of the revised GEC. According to the article, the Supreme Court issued a Temporary Restraining Order in a resolution on April 21, 2015. The order enjoined the respondents "from implementing and enforcing the provision of Commission on Higher Education Memorandum No. 20 [2] insofar as it excluded from the curriculum for college the course Filipino and Panitikan as core courses." Another news article [16] discussed the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) response to the Supreme Court resolution. The Commission ordered all public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) to keep 6 to 9 units of Filipino subjects in their general curriculum. A memorandum from CHED Commissioner Patricia Licuanan instructed all higher education institutions to continue implementing CMO no. 59 [4]. This CMO required nine Filipino Language and Literature units, and CMO no. 4 [5] required six units of Filipino for Humanities.

Specialized graduates. Graduates of Teacher Education hired in elementary and secondary schools are typically assigned to teach subjects outside their specialization. With a limited number of general

education units, graduates may not gain a thorough understanding of the various subjects that they will later teach. Implementing the revised general education curriculum may result in graduate "overspecialization."

4.4. Stakeholder Analysis

A stakeholder analysis of the second policy option will provide an "understanding of the future political implications of policy decisions." We define stakeholder analysis as "political feasibility analysis or a systematic evaluation of policy decisions' political implications" [17].

Table 2. Stakeholder Analysis on the Implementation of CHED Memorandum Order no. 20 series of 2013

Stakeholders	Motivations/ Values and Beliefs	Resources or Power	Possible Stand or Response on Issue
Commission on Higher Education (CHED)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality and assurance quality Authority to revise the education Implementation of revised GEC effective AY general Alignment of programs to the curriculum of the Philippine Qualifications Framework Addressing the academe industry mismatch Employability graduates of graduates 	Authority to revise the general education curriculum	Implementation of revised GEC effective AY2018-2019
Private Higher Education Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality and quality assurance Profit orientation for private HEIs Impact on faculty members, i.e., displacement Employability of graduates 	Discretion to increase professional education units as long as the minimum requirements of CHED are met	Some HEIs might not be prepared to implement the revised GEC
General Education Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease in teaching load Displacement 	None	Non-implementation of revised GEC
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of Education Employability Financial Burden 	None	Implementation of Revised GEC
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of Education Employability Financial Burden 	None	Implementation of Revised GEC
Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality graduates Alignment of industry needs with the skills of graduates 	Academe-industry linkage; inputs of the industry may be sought for curriculum review	Implementation of Revised GEC

Based on the information presented in Table 2 regarding the stakeholders' analysis. The study revealed five factors in considering the readiness of higher education institutions for implementing the new curriculum in mixed method research. Among them are eligibility, staffing guidelines, course streamlining, workforce surplus management, and alternative programs. Five themes corroborated readiness in the study's investigation. Among the themes the following: qualification, retooling teachers, realigning curriculum, reclassifying teachers, and redirecting professional development [18]. Based on the findings of a previous study, another article emphasized the impact of the new curriculum on how younger Filipinos will face the twenty-first century [19].

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Given the preceding, this paper strongly advises executing the new policy. According to the discussion, the revised general education curriculum's strengths outweigh its weaknesses. The new curriculum's main strength is its emphasis on outcomes, similar to the PQF's emphasis on setting standards for qualification outcomes. This idea may also address the issue of the current academe-industry mismatch, which the PQF seeks to address. In comparison, the traditional curriculum places a "conventional emphasis on structure and content" [2], which is thought to be out of step with current needs.

Another advantage of the new curriculum is the reduced number of units caused by the cascading of other subjects in the senior high school curriculum. According to the CMO, this advantage is more in keeping with the "liberal nature of general education." It also allows college students to focus on their professional curriculum. Third, with a leeway of nine (9) elective units, students are given the option to choose a subject of their interest.

One weakness of the policy is its impact on HEIs. It requires more professional subjects to be offered in place of general education subjects to complete the four or five-year program. This notion entails hiring faculty to handle professional subjects who are more paid than general education faculty. Learning and instructional materials like textbooks, modules, and workbooks will be an additional concern. This concept could result in tuition increases for private HEIs or additional costs for public HEIs. From another angle, investment in HEIs is possible that may have a positive impact on graduate employability. On the other hand, CHED is already addressing the possibility of faculty displacement through K-12 transition programs.

As a result, this paper contends that the second policy. Implementing the revised GEC during the Academic Year 2018-2019 is thought to be more beneficial to students in terms of employability. For HEIs, producing competitive graduates, and to the industry in terms of the availability of skilled and qualified workforce.

Following implementation, the HEIs must evaluate the policy to see if it can achieve the objectives and outcomes it needs to address. Furthermore, an assessment would identify potential problems and gaps that necessitate intervention.

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