Addressing Teachers' Challenges during the Implementation of the K to 12 Curriculum: Towards Providing a Motivating Learning Environment for Children

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Abstract
The Philippine educational system is currently undergoing a significant transformation, transitioning from a 10-year education model to a 12-year system called the Enhanced Basic Education Curriculum, or K–12. This quantitative-descriptive study aimed to identify the challenges experienced by teachers in both public and private schools during the mid-implementation of the K–12 curriculum. Data were gathered through a validated researcher-made survey questionnaire. The study revealed that teachers are facing challenges related to training, strategies, and curriculum content. The findings have important implications and recommendations for policymakers, concerned government institutions, higher education institutions, and teachers, providing valuable insights for the successful implementation of this major education reform initiative in the country. Curriculum planners must take note that the curriculum must also be aligned to the needs of the young learners and have a motivating learning environment.
Keywords: teachers' challenges, k to 12 curriculum, motivating learning environment, children, strategies, curriculum content, training

Introduction
Education is of utmost importance in improving the well-being of literate individuals, as it empowers them to advocate for good health, attain paid employment opportunities, enhance productivity in various sectors, and participate actively in social and political spheres. It is widely recognized as a basic human right that should be available to all without discrimination. By acquiring knowledge and skills through education, individuals can excel in their professional pursuits, cultivate critical thinking abilities, and make informed choices. Additionally, education fosters personal growth, allowing individuals to develop and contribute positively to the economy and the overall welfare of society.

As the world becomes more interconnected due to globalization, the importance of top-notch education has grown significantly. In the Philippines, the implementation of the K to 12 basic education programs has been a crucial step towards preparing children with the essential skills and competencies needed in a rapidly changing world. However, compared to graduates from other countries, Filipino graduates still face a considerable performance gap that requires attention and action.

The adoption of the K to 12 curricula has marked a significant shift in educational paradigms, aimed at providing children with the necessary tools to thrive in an evolving world. This educational reform has introduced innovative learning approaches, expanded curricular content, and extended the duration of basic education. Nevertheless, implementing such a transformative initiative poses various challenges, especially for the teachers who are at the forefront of this educational revolution.

In 2012-2013, the Philippines underwent a significant educational reform, transitioning from the Basic Education Curriculum to the K to 12 Curriculum as established by the Republic Act 1033, also known as the Enhanced Basic Education 2013. The K to 12 Curriculum introduced various

innovations, including extending the schooling duration from the previous 10-year scheme (Grade 1 to 10) to 12 years. Among the subjects, Science experienced notable revisions (Montebon, 2014).

Prior to the implementation of the K-12 system, the Philippines was the last country in Asia and one of three nations to have a ten-year pre-university education program. The introduction of the K-12 program aimed to provide a high-quality education, enhance students' qualifications for international job opportunities, and develop employment-related skills. Emphasizing lifelong learning and improved job prospects, the program equipped students with essential skills. Moreover, it facilitated the recognition of Filipino learners and professionals in other countries due to their mastery of skills and core competencies that align with the global job market demands.

The K to 12 curricula, a significant educational transformation embraced by numerous countries worldwide, has the goal of improving the quality of education by providing a more comprehensive and age-appropriate learning journey for children. Emphasizing holistic development, critical thinking, and vital life skills, this curriculum aims to equip students to thrive in the demands of the 21st-century society. However, the successful implementation of this ambitious reform largely depends on the commitment and expertise of the teaching workforce.

In the context of 21st-century education, school administrators play a crucial role in fostering academic achievement within their institutions. They are responsible for organizing and planning various aspects, including staff, students, activities, and facilities. Balancing their leadership and management responsibilities is essential, particularly in evaluating and developing teachers to enhance student learning. Utilizing teacher evaluations and student achievement data, administrators can effectively improve teacher practices and ensure accountability and quality within the educational system. (Hall & Simeral, 2008).

This research study aims to investigate and address the obstacles faced by teachers during the execution of the K to 12 curricula, particularly in creating an inspiring learning environment for children. Understanding these challenges becomes crucial in identifying the necessary support and resources to empower teachers and enhance their effectiveness as educators. Additionally, the research findings hope to contribute to the ongoing endeavors aimed at elevating the quality of education and ultimately enriching the educational experiences of young students.

Related Literature and Studies
On the Implementation of the K to 12
The primary aim of introducing the K-12 Basic Education Program is to create a functional and efficient system that cultivates responsible and productive citizens equipped with vital knowledge and skills for learning and employment. This objective is in line with President Aquino's agenda, which sees quality education as a fundamental solution to poverty in the long run. The Department of Education (DepEd, 2010) envisions empowering every graduate of the Enhanced K-12 Basic Education Program through a curriculum built on strong principles and focused on achieving excellence (Mohammad, 2016).

However, the initial implementation of the K-12 curriculum has raised various social concerns. Burila (2012) highlighted community concerns regarding the readiness of the Philippine Government to undergo such a transition, given issues like poverty, availability of technology, teacher training, and the low salaries of educators. Lacanilao (2012) critiqued the K-12 program, presenting arguments from Filipino scientists and non-scientists who disagree with its implementation. They argue that it fails to address real problems in the Philippine education system, such as the high number of dropouts each year, and question the scientific basis for including the kinder level to enhance student learning. On the other hand, Masinag (2012) reported that the K-12 program gained acceptance from a majority of Filipinos, as shown in a survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations (SWS). Many believe

that the new curriculum will better prepare students for college education and their future careers, even though it requires additional time and money. After being implemented for about three academic years, some issues have arisen, such as the lack of teacher training to implement the new program.

Senator Antonio Trillanes has taken action to stop the implementation of the K-12 Program, referring to it as overly ambitious due to the persistent issues in the Philippine education system. Trillanes (2017) conducted country-wide inspections and found real problems, such as the availability of classrooms and the low wages of kindergarten teachers. He also foresees a potential issue with the number of college professors facing retrenchment due to the lack of enrollees for the 2016 school year. Despite claims by the Department of Education that there are no backlogs in the education system, Trillanes emphasized that such issues still persist.

Teachers's Challenges in the New Curriculum
In 2016, Combalicer conducted a study to investigate how Kindergarten, Elementary, and Secondary Teachers implemented the K+12 curriculum. The study aimed to uncover the challenges in its implementation and identify best practices to enhance the implementation of Senior High School. The findings showed that teachers lacked exposure to relevant seminars, training, and readings pertaining to their specialization and the K+12 curriculum. As a result, they faced difficulties in designing lessons and activities aligned with the newly introduced curriculum. The study emphasized the importance of teachers being acquainted with the latest teaching strategies to create engaging and enjoyable learning experiences. Additionally, it highlighted that many teachers did not utilize community resources effectively, which hindered the integration of real-world experiences into the learning process. The study suggested engaging students through excursions and field trips to improve learning authenticity and effectiveness.

Regarding the initial implementation of the K+12 Curriculum, the study identified the top ten challenges faced by teachers. These included the lack of available modules for various subject areas, limited access to books and references in school and community libraries, inadequate materials for projects and research work, insufficient support from resource persons for specific topics, a scarcity of seminars and workshops to enhance understanding of K+12, a shortage of technology-assisted instructional materials, limited access to computers and other IT equipment, meager community resources for student exposure, and a scarcity of textbooks for different subjects.

Acosta's research in 2016 identified five factors that influenced the implementation of the K-12 curriculum: teachers' qualifications and hiring requirements, course streamlining, surplus labor management, and alternative programs to assess the readiness of senior high school teachers and higher education institutions. These factors were intended to ensure stability and protect the well-being of faculty and other workers in the higher education field. Lacorte's study in 2011, as cited by Dizon et al. in 2019, presented a positive impression that teachers were well-prepared for the K to 12 program concerning teaching skills, strategies, and materials. However, readiness varied between private and public schools due to the distinct settings and conditions of the two groups.

According to a study conducted by Caup and Buda in 2017, teachers expressed the belief that the K to 12 program provided a balanced approach to learning and facilitated the mastery of competencies required in the job market. Graduates were also equipped with skills and competencies acknowledged as equivalent to a two-year college degree. Additionally, teachers agreed with the statement that the program was more cost-effective for parents.

Motivationg Learning Environment for Children
According to Sudjana (2011), as cited in Asvioa & Suharmonc (2017), 70% of students' achievement on campus is attributed to their own abilities, while the remaining 30% is influenced by the environment. Education plays a crucial role in enhancing individuals' knowledge and skills, pushing them to learn new things and behave in a positive manner. Learning is a process of mental growth and behavioral changes based on experiences and training. The learning activity is intricate, influenced by

numerous factors, both internal and external to the individual. Hattie (2009) emphasized the importance of motivation in improving students' academic achievements. Findings show that motivation significantly impacts learning achievement, with a score of 0.48 for d> 0.40, and environmental influences also play a significant role, with a score of d = 0.55. Based on these research findings, the study suggests further research on the influence of motivation (internal factors) and the environment (external factors) on learning achievement, as these two variables are of great importance.

Administrators play a key role in creating an environment that supports, encourages, acknowledges, and expects the adoption of best practices. Nevertheless, studies indicate that teachers have a greater influence on student achievement compared to any other aspect of schooling, and there is robust evidence showing a strong correlation between student achievement and teacher quality (Archer, 2002; Kaplan & Owings, 2003).

Rutter and Jacobson's research in 1986 delved into factors that directly impacted teacher engagement. These factors were classified into three categories: teacher, school, and organizational-level influences. While the study acknowledged the role of school and organizational variables in teacher professional engagement, the primary focus was on teacher-level variables that could potentially be linked to teacher engagement.

While previous research has focused on teacher leadership in relation to adopting educational innovations (Kim & Kim, 2013), the present researchers argue that teachers' sense of responsibility is a significant motivator for them to take ownership of the curriculum, their instructional methods, and their role as exemplary leaders. Assuming responsibility for their students' learning tends to increase teachers' effectiveness in teaching (Ross & Gray, 2006). Similarly, assuming the responsibility for evaluating and directing curriculum choices and instructional methods leads to increased self-reflection in teachers' teaching practices (Inel, McManus, Palmer, & Panarese, 2014). Furthermore, embracing a sense of responsibility, such as assuming leadership roles within the faculty (e.g., committee chair, level leader, or department chair), exposes teachers to diverse perspectives and challenges, requiring them to comprehend the various aspects, complexities, and benefits of implementing innovations (Guiney, 2001).

Research Objective
Determine the challenges encountered by teachers in public and private senior high schools in terms of the following:

a. teachers' training,
b. curriculum content,
c. and Strategies.

Methodology
The research design used in this study was quantitative-descriptive, which aimed to provide a description of a specific phenomenon (Johnson 2000). This design was chosen as it effectively helped identify and outline the challenges in teaching among the selected public and private senior high schools. It also described the extent of challenges they met when categorized according to teachers training, curriculum content, and strategies.Three (3) public and private senior high schools in the Division of Zamboanga City voluntarily participated in this study.The population of this study were teachers teaching selected public and private senior high schools in Zamboanga City.
The respondents for this study were selected using a total enumeration sampling technique, which means that all teachers in the selected schools were included as participants in the research. Total population sampling is a purposive sampling method where the entire population with specific characteristics is considered for examination. A researcher made a 4-point Likert-type questionnaire checklist, which consists of three parts. Part 1 solicited personal information from the respondents, such as age, sex, school, educational attainment, length of service, and specialization, to meet the

objectives. Part II was on the level of readiness of teachers to teach in the SHS Program. The level of readiness of teachers was measured in terms of their training, curriculum content, instructional materials, and strategies used. Each indicator has seven statements with four options, numbered and described: 4: highly ready, 3: ready, 2: less ready, and 1: not ready.

Results and Discussions
On the Challenges Encountered by Teachers in terms of Teachers' Training
Table 1. shows the five (5) statements on the challenges encountered by SHS teachers in terms of teachers' training were related between 3.10 to 3.28 for public and 2.98 to 3.11 for private. The public and private senior high school teachers generated the highest weighted mean of 3.28 and 3.11 respectively described as challenging in "training given reinforces new knowledge". It shows that senior high school teachers were challenged in terms of trainings given which reinforces new knowledge which will eventually be applied in their teaching.

Table 1. Challenges Encountered by Teachers in terms of Teachers' Training

Teachers' Training	Public		Private	
	Mean Response	Remarks	Mean Response	Remarks
1. Institutions provide sufficient training for teachers.	3.15	Challenging	2.96	Challenging
2. Trainings given are relevant and match the needs of the teachers.	3.10	Challenging	2.98	Challenging
3. Trainings given is selective and comprehensive.	3.20	Challenging	3.04	Challenging
4. Learning from the training is effective in real situation.	3.25	Challenging	3.06	Challenging
5. Trainings given generate and/or reinforce new knowledge.	3.28	Challenging	3.11	Challenging
Grand Mean	**3.20**	**Challenging**	**3.03**	**Challenging**

Legend: 1.00 – 1.50   Not Challenging (NC)
          1.51 – 2.50   Less Challenging (LC)
          2.51 – 3.50   Challenging (C)
          3.51 – 4.00   Highly Challenging (HC)

The public school teachers obtained the grand mean in the challenges encountered in terms of teachers' training at 3.20 and 3.03 for private described as challenging. It means that teachers were challenged in terms of the sufficiency and relevance of training provided and effectiveness in the real situation.

Teachers' training is in a way, serves as an input and an important tool in education to help inexperienced teachers as well as keep experienced teachers overcome challenges and be aware of innovative trends and practices and give them a chance to echo on and improve their teaching practices (Borko, 2004).

On the Challenges Encountered by Teachers in terms of Curriculum Contents
Table 2 shows that seven (7) of the statements on the challenges met by teachers in terms of curriculum contents were rated within the range of 3.15 to 41 for public and 3.14 to 3.30 for private.

Table 2. Challenges Encountered by Teachers in terms of Curriculum Contents

Curriculum Contents	Mean Response	Remarks	Mean Response	Remarks
1.Contents are above the mental ability of the students	3.36	Challenging	3.20	Challenging

2. Contents are crowded that cause students to stress.	3.15	Challenging	2.91	Challenging
3.Contents are consistent to the goals of the SHS program	3.41	Challenging	3.30	Challenging
4.Contents are adequate to achieve 21st Century skills	3.41	Challenging	3.28	Challenging
5. Contents are suitable to students of diverse mental ability	3.35	Challenging	3.14	Challenging
6.Contents are substantial and consistent in the teaching guide	3.32	Challenging	3.16	Challenging
Grand Mean	**3.33**	**Challenging**	**3.17**	**Challenging**

The public and private SHS teachers gave the highest weighted mean 3.41 and 3.30 respectively in "contents are consistent to the goals of SHS and are adequate to achieve 21st Century skills". It indicates that public senior high school teachers viewed curriculum contents of the senior high school as challenging. They were convinced that these curriculum contents need to match the goal of SHS and considered insufficient towards attaining 21st century skills.

The public and private senior high school teachers generated the grand mean on the challenges encountered in terms of contents at 3.33 and 3. 17 respectively are described challenging. This implies that teachers encountered challenges in implementing curriculum contents. Furthermore, they need to struggle to make the contents suitable, relevant and responsive to the developmental needs of the students. Moreover, teachers should unlock the difficulties of the students by unpacking on the learning competencies in the curriculum guide so that students will be able to understand the lesson.

The findings are supported by Dimmock (2000) "The curriculum plays a very important role in designing a good teaching and in overcoming challenges, for basically it is the spirit of what needs to be learned and the element on which teaching and learning is founded".

On the Challenges Encountered by Teachers in terms of Strategies
As shown in Table 3., seven (7) statements on the challenges met by teachers in in terms of strategies were rated within 3.07 to 3.39 for public and 2.92 to 3.25 for private.The public and private teachers obtained the highest weighted mean 3.39 and 3.25 respectively in "strategies recommended encourage higher order thinking skills". It means that teachers are challenged because the strategies being recommended for use are inappropriate in developing higher order thinking skills. It shows that teachers were challenged because the strategies recommended for use do not relate with students' interest and curiosity.

Table 3. Challenges Encountered by Teachers in terms of Strategies

Strategies	Mean Response	Remarks	Mean Response	Remarks
1. New teaching strategies recommended for use are not known to teachers	3.07	Challenging	2.92	Challenging
2. Strategies recommended for use are appropriate to achieve mastery.	3.21	Challenging	3.06	Challenging
3. Strategies recommended match with the learning styles and developmental needs of the students.	3.32	Challenging	3.12	Challenging
4. Strategies recommended match to students' interest and curiosity	3.32	Challenging	3.12	Challenging
5. Strategies recommended encourage higher order thinking	3.39	Challenging	3.25	Challenging

6. Strategies recommended do not promote greater involvement of students in classroom activities	3.32	Challenging	3.10	Challenging
Grand Mean	**3.27**	**Challenging**	**3.10**	**Challenging**

As further revealed, the grand mean for challenges met by SHS teachers teaching in terms of strategies is 3.27 and 3. 10 described as challenging. This means that the SHS teachers were having difficulty in the choosing the correct teaching strategy as recommended for the core subject they were teaching. This implies that most of the SHS teachers believed that the recommended teaching strategies for use in teaching the core subjects were not appropriate for the subjects they were teaching and found it difficult and challenging.

The finding is supported by Atrido (2019), He mentioned teaching strategies should be used carefully to surpass teaching challenges, make the lesson useful and improve the quality of learning in general.

Conclusions and Recommendation
Teaching has undergone changes over time, bringing along various challenges for educators. These challenges include classroom management, designing engaging lesson plans, time management, and catering to diverse learning styles, among others. The study's findings revealed that both public and private school teachers encounter difficulties in implementing the K-12 curriculum, particularly concerning training, curriculum content, and instructional strategies. This suggests that obstacles in curriculum implementation can arise from factors such as the curriculum itself, location, political and economic situations, teacher preparation, facilities, and other variables, adding complexity to the process.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended that teachers continuously improve their teaching strategies to enhance student learning, regardless of the curriculum being implemented. Emphasizing their professional development by pursuing further studies and actively participating in seminars and learning activities is essential to overcome these challenges effectively.

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