

**MOBILIZING SUPPORT OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF
BATAAN FOR K TO 12 BASIC EDUCATION: FOCUS ON THE
SPECIAL EDUCATION FUND (SEF)**

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The impact of the political context on education is of particular interest to this paper aiming to study the implications of governmental policies on academic performance and the quality of education. Undoubtedly, the successful development of young people and the nation as a whole largely depends on access to education and resources. Human capital should be viewed as a valuable asset that can contribute to the social and economic development of a country. At the same time, investment in education is required to ensure relevant support to education and provide equal treatment for all type of learners. In the same manner, this aims to explore the development and analyze the impact and effectiveness of the Special Education Fund as a critical governmental policy on education.

Since K to 12 was signed into law, Bro. Armin Luistro, who was at the helm of the Department of Education when the K to 12 was enacted into law by former president Benigno Aquino III. It has become a critical law in defining educational standards and at the same time, various challenges should be discussed with regard to the development and implementation of the policy. Furthermore, the impact of the policy and its compliance can be concluded that despite its structural limitations and challenges defined by the political context, the K to 12 Curriculum is an essential education policy marked by positive implications for funding for K-12 education, learning outcomes, and poverty issues.

The political context shapes society in numerous ways, particularly by impacting the barriers and opportunities for access to education, as well as learning outcomes. At

the same time, academic achievement is a major factor that contributes to the successful development of young people and society as a whole, namely, by improving human capital, productivity, and the living standards of the nation. As schooling has become an integral part of people's lives, improving education quality is essential to uplift the social and economic conditions of the country. With this fact in mind, one can observe that governmental policies and events are of particular importance to education reforms. Such a connection suggests the need for studying the progress in education quality and access with regard to a specific policy and its implications for the learning opportunities and outcomes of students.

The K to 12 curriculum determines the way to meet the policy standards and define academic requirements to improve students' performance. This guides schools, districts, division, region and central office on the basis of a fair approach aiming to provide equal learning opportunities. In particular, programs are implemented with the intention to assist struggling learners and address the challenges that many students face as a result of mobility problems, disability, poverty, learning difficulties, or language barrier.

In relation to K to 12, it can be considered an essential reform in implementing efficient and evidence-based strategies, interventions, and educational activities by central office down to school level. The rigorous standards and criteria for providing funding by DepEd encourage institutions to design and implement strategies aiming to improve access to education for all. At the same time, numerous challenges and potential risks arise for creating efficient approaches to education. Namely, the political context shapes the educational processes and defines the focus of policy. The K to 12 curriculum was developed as educational reform for eliminating poverty and assisting students who struggle with pursuing educational goals due to social, economic, and health-related circumstances. However, the initial lack of consensus prevented the program from fully achieving its potential and addressing the issue.

The governmental policy incorporated through the K to 12 can be referred to as a large-scale experiment, which emphasizes the inevitability of mistakes. The power of the political interventions in the education sector was viewed as an essential factor capable of improving the quality of education and services to learners. It was referred to as a critical strategy to combat poverty and aimed to improve the nation's living standards by addressing the academic and skills gaps and investing in human capital to enhance the country's development. It should be noted that despite certain structural limitations of the policy, such as not strong enough state capacity to implement ambitious laws, it has contributed to a number of positive changes in the educational system. In particular, educational finance and spending on K-12 education has increased. Furthermore, educational outcomes can be characterized as positive, especially with regard to students from low-income households. As to the impact on teachers, an increase in the teaching workforce can be observed; however, political pressure for certain district and schools still remain an acute issue to be addressed at various levels.

In response to the political issues and challenges brought about by the educational reform, Bataan being placed eighth among the cities and municipalities in the 2022 Ranking of Provinces from DTI sources based on the total of its ratings in the four pillars of economic dynamism, government efficiency, infrastructures, resilience, and innovation proved that the government has all the possible resources to support the implementation of the educational from in the entire province in support to the national goal of providing quality education. The overall ratings of the cities and municipalities that make up a province are weighted average based on population and income.

Furthermore, the quality of political intervention to education is very evident in the result of utilization of Special Education Fund (SEF) of Bataan. According to information on the Provincial Government of Bataan Website regarding the use of SEF funds for personal services, MOOE expenditures for things like electricity, security services, other services, subsidies to NGAs, land improvements, flood control systems,

supplies and materials, and technical and scientific equipment. SEF will be used in total of P 359,938,468.49 in March 2022, and P 542,134,574.84 in September, 2022.

In conclusion, the SEF can be seen as a crucial support fund for putting effective and research-based plans, interventions, and educational initiatives into practice by districts, schools, and divisions. The Provincial Government of Bataan is encouraged to develop and put into action plans aimed at enhancing access to education by the strict standards and criteria for awarding funds. At the same time, the political environment affects educational processes and establishes the direction of policy, implementation, and use as a means of eradicating poverty and supporting students who have difficulty pursuing their academic dreams because of social, economic, and health-related issues. Nevertheless, despite some institutional restrictions on SEF use, including as the DepEd's insufficient capacity to carry out ambitious programs and initiatives, it has helped bring about a number of significant reforms in the educational system.

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