

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL REFORMS: WEIGHING THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES IN THE PHILIPPINES

by:

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The Department of Education (DepEd) recently announced its plans to gradually implement a redesigned senior high school (SHS) curriculum. This move aims to address gaps in the current system by enhancing student competencies, employability, and readiness for higher education. However, these developments in the education sector have sparked debates on whether these changes will strengthen the educational system or pose new challenges for students, educators, and stakeholders. Evidently, curriculum revisions are essential for alignment with global standards, but the government needs to practice caution in curriculum revisions as the students' futures and the very foundation of the educational system are at stake. Considering that, frequent policy changes may cause confusion, misunderstanding, and unintended consequences (Schleicher, 2019).

One of the key issues in revising the SHS curriculum is policy inconsistency. Frequent changes in curriculum structure create uncertainty, leaving schools struggling to keep up with new standards. Teachers often require additional training and resources to effectively implement the updated curriculum, which can be costly and time-consuming (DepEd, 2023). Furthermore, changes in subject offerings and competencies could not always be in line with the changing needs of industries and higher education institutions, which could result in gaps in employability and skill development (World Bank, 2022).

Another concern is the potential impact on students and their families. Changes in course offerings or graduation requirements may affect students' career pathways and progression. Parents may also bear the financial burden of additional materials or training

programs necessary to meet new curriculum standards. These changes have the potential to increase educational inequalities rather than enhance student results if they are not properly thought out (UNESCO, 2021).

On the downside, frequent curriculum changes pose risks to educational continuity. If policies shift too frequently, students and teachers may struggle to adapt, resulting in gaps in learning and inconsistent educational outcomes. Additionally, frequent modifications may lead to resource constraints, particularly for public schools with limited budgets for teacher training and updated learning materials (OECD, 2021).

Despite these concerns, curriculum revisions can bring significant advantages. A well-designed curriculum update can improve training in practical skills, making SHS graduates more equipped for higher education, the workforce, or entrepreneurship. Students may obtain important practical experience before graduation by incorporating work-based learning programs and industry-relevant subjects (Trilling & Fadel, 2015).

Additionally, reforms can address existing gaps in the education system, such as improving STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education, enhancing digital literacy, and promoting interdisciplinary learning. If properly designed and implemented, these updates could produce graduates who are more competitive in both local and global job markets (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Given these potential benefits and drawbacks, the government must take a balanced approach in revising the SHS curriculum. Any changes should be based on comprehensive research, data-driven decision-making, and thorough stakeholder engagement. Policymakers must ensure that revisions address the real needs of students, educators, and industries while maintaining stability in the education system. Instead of abrupt changes, a gradual and well-communicated implementation strategy should be adopted to allow schools, teachers, and students to adjust effectively.

Ultimately, while senior high school curriculum reforms are necessary, they must be implemented with care, foresight, and accountability. The government must strike a balance between innovation and stability, ensuring that education policies truly benefit students rather than create additional hurdles to their success.

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