



Policy Brief Series

Federalism and Education A Policy Brief

A country's system of governance plays an important role in its educational system. At present, the Philippines' unitary form of government dictates that major policy decisions, as well as program and policy formulations for all levels of education be centralized. There are central government agencies that maintain educational standards—the Department of Education (DepEd) for primary and secondary schools, and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for tertiary academic institutions. In terms of funding for basic education, local government units get their share of revenues from the national government aside from their local revenues and other external sources. However, in terms of funding public higher educational institutions (HEIs), the major source of funds is the national government.

The Duterte Administration, however, has laid out its initiative to change the system of governance from unitary to a federal one. Definitely, if this plan pushes through, this will have implications to the Philippine educational system. In order to picture out how this shift in government structure would affect the educational system, specifically the teacher education institutions (TEIs), we looked at the viewpoints of educational practitioners from various educational institutions in the Philippines on its possible consequences and how TEIs could likely respond.

Effects of Shifting from a Unitary to a Federal System

Positive Effects

- *Increased autonomy in the governance, management, and regulation of higher education* – each state could come up with laws that are more contextualized and appropriate for the needs of their own educational system
- *Efficiency and accountability in higher education* – each school would be answerable to their own jurisdiction
- *Localization and cultural preservation* – by providing more opportunities for local educational institutions to participate in policymaking and decision-making, as well as facilitating the preservation of culture and languages of the local communities

Negative Effects

- *Inequality in funding for building of infrastructure* – because some states have more resources than others
- *Differences in teacher standards and competencies* – some states might have lower standards compared to others, which could affect the performance of HEIs in licensure examinations and national standards of performance

Challenges to Teacher Education Institutions

- *Challenges in maintaining standards and quality of teacher education* – because some states might set higher standards than others; autonomy of states could also lead to variations in terms of curriculum and resources
- *Challenges in encouraging students to take up teacher education and encouraging teacher education students to go to where they are needed more* – since there will be some states where TEIs are better than others, it may be more difficult to recruit teacher education students in states where teacher education programs are less developed by where teachers are needed more
- *Challenges in terms of funding and managing resources* – since budget sources will be localized, some states could have more funds compared to others, leading to a greater disparity in the educational system across states
- *Challenges in governance* – the federal system needs to make sure that competencies of teachers would be maintained despite differing educational systems across various states

Vital Role of Teacher Education Institutions

- *Development of income generating projects* – especially in states where there is less funding so they will be able to secure the necessary resources
- *Strengthening research and instruction and developing TEIs and programs* – especially in states where teacher education is weak
- *Advocates of local culture and language* – by incorporating these in the curricular content and through integration of local communities and cultures in international contexts
- *Addressor of social economic needs* – the autonomy of the states would put TEIs in a better position to come up with specific programs that would address local needs

Teacher Education Institutions' Ways of Coping with Changes

- *Educating people about federalism* – its advantages and disadvantages, and how abuse of this new system of governance can be prevented
- *Strengthening of federal system and cooperation with states universities and colleges* - in order to facilitate both the government and educational institutions undergoing this transition
- *Developing a sense of competition and urgency* – TEIs must learn to stand on its own and expect less assistance and intervention from the national government or from TEIs in other states
- *Having a more efficient monitoring and evaluation system* – would be required given that federalism would entail less involvement of a national regulating/monitoring system, in order to maintain transparency and prevent the abuse of autonomy
- *Enhancement local cultures and languages* – to pave the way for multicultural education and bring better appreciation of the nation's diversity

Areas Teacher Education Institutions Should Strengthen

- *Standards and quality of TEIs* – professional development of teachers and effective school leadership and workforce must be applied in order to sustain the standards and quality of teacher education and for TEIs to achieve their goals
- *Career readiness and contextualization* – the localization of the educational system would place TEIs in a better position to strengthen their programs in order to prepare teachers to contribute in addressing the specific needs of the community
- *Educational leadership* – must be strengthened to compensate for decreased involvement of a national government in administering TEIs
- *Regulations and policies* – must also be improved so that it would cater to the local context and needs

Policy Implications and Recommendations

1. The federal system can grant subsidies or grants to low income state so that they can improve their schools. Grant applications could foster a sense of competition for the educational institutions, thus encouraging them to maintain high performance standards.
2. With the help of HEIs and TEIs, encourage states to preserve their local culture and language as well as promote these in the global realm to establish culturally and linguistically diverse states, which could be promoted as cultural tourism destinations.
3. Since the Philippines is a developing country, higher education must be left to the control of the federal government in order to align research and product innovations of HEIs/TEIs with national development goals.

Reference:

EPRDC. (2018). *Characterizing the possibilities of a federal system of education in the Philippines: Its implications to teacher education*. Manila: Philippine Normal University.