

INTERNATIONAL AID AND EDUCATION REFORM AND THE PARADOX OF IMPLEMENTATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

From 2005 to 2011, AusAID and the Philippine government launched Strengthening the Implementation of Visayas Education (Project STRIVE) to improve access and quality of education in rural Philippines. Using data from all participating schools (N=308) one question is raised: How successful was the international partnership in implementing education reform? This three-part inquiry critiques STRIVE from policy implementation and international partnerships perspectives generating mixed results. First, STRIVE goals and accomplishments are expounded. Second, using non-parametric analyses, hypothesised relationships between reform inputs and project outcomes are tested. Finally, STRIVE 'successes' related to project relevance, effectiveness and sustainability are critiqued revealing implementation paradoxes.

Key words: access and quality, rural education, international partnerships

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) is the biggest bureaucracy in the nation (Abad, 2005). Its sheer size makes it unwieldy and complemented by an even bigger demand from a burgeoning population, DepEd becomes highly inefficient and ineffective (Chua, 1999; Reyes, 2009b). The clamour for reform particularly in devolving and decentralizing powers to those that could make the most impact have been made about highly centralized education systems that have proven to be ineffective in delivering their mandated services (Cuban, 1990; Tyack & Cuban, 1997). Alongside the need to decentralize is the equally important question about the readiness (or the lack of it) among stakeholders in education who have received devolved and decentralized powers. To this end, there is a growing body of literature both Philippine-based and international that points towards the promise of empowered stakeholders (Bautista, 2000, 2003; Reyes, 2015). Chua's journalistic expose, about the scandals surrounding textbooks and other learning materials, validated what had been described by textbook publishers, DepEd officials, parents and Non-Government Organization (NGO) watchdogs about resources and procurement procedures at the Department: inefficient, ineffective and exacerbated with irregularities and oftentimes blatantly corrupt (Chua, 1999, 2001, 2003; Reyes, 2009a). More studies about the allegations of corruption and faulty governance about DepEd followed, further confirming and validating the issues raised by Chua (Cariño, Iglesias, & Mendoza, 1998; Reyes, 2010), for example:

The persistence of issues for much of the 20th century and into the first decade of the 21st century highlight a distressing paradox – with its long tradition of critical assessments and reform-oriented planning, DepEd actually incubated, tested and proved the effectiveness of numerous reform initiatives, some of them ahead of the discourses of their time. Yet, at the start of every school-year, print and broadcast media project without fail, a perpetual education

crisis that the mainstreaming of successful reform initiatives could have addressed (Bautista, Bernardo, & Ocampo, 2008, p. 5).

One of the contemporary examples of 'successful' reforms has been the Strengthening Implementation of *Visayas* Education (Project STRIVE), a joint initiative of DepEd and the Australian Aid Agency (AusAID). This inquiry is designed to interrogate the issues of implementation that can be derived from the experience of STRIVE. Using available data on a population of all the participating schools and focusing on the levels of 'pilot implementation' of the STRIVE components several discussion and thinking points are raised. This inquiry is divided into three main sections. The initial part outlines the research premise which is an elaboration of the variances in the project outputs of STRIVE components in all the participating schools. The second section presents the succinct findings from cross-tabulations analyses of key dependent and independent variables in an effort to detect relationships between project inputs and outcomes. The third and final part presents a discussion and reflection of the findings with a critique of the success of STRIVE implemented reforms.

Reform in the Philippines

Scholars and practitioners involved in Philippine education have at their disposal a repository of critical studies that identify the most serious challenges facing reforms of Philippine education. The pioneering 1991 Education Commission (EDCOM) study, the equally influential 1999 Presidential Commission on Education Reform (PCER), and the landmark 2006 Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) have comprehensively identified the obstacles that have perennially plagued Philippine education – and have even suggested possible paths to transformation. Using findings from a reform initiative formed through a partnership between the Philippine government and AusAID, this inquiry focuses on implementation paradoxes that accompany education reform.

AusAID, the Paris Declaration and reform in the Philippines

International organisations undertaking development work in the Philippines including AusAID have categorically declared that their programmes are aligned with the Paris Declaration. Five key principles underpin this statement: (1) ownership, (2) alignment, (3) harmonization, (4) managing for results and (5) mutual accountability. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) argues that the Paris Declaration *is not merely a statement of good intentions but actually can make a difference* (OECD, 2006, p. 50). AusAID is a signatory to the Paris Declaration. In an independent evaluation of AusAID's Aid Effectiveness, it has been determined that *all programmes are implementing the principles of the Paris Declaration in some form* (AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness, 2010, p. 6).

Australia and the Philippines have had formal diplomatic relations since 1946 (Carter, Funnell, & Rogers, 2012). Official Development Assistance (ODA) from Australia to the Philippines commenced in 1983 with the establishment of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) designed to improve the attractiveness of Philippine agricultural products (Carter et al., 2012, p. 8). Starting in mid-2000, AusAID's ODA to the Philippines saw a significant increase in education aid. During that time, *education was the best performing sector of Australia's aid engagement in the Philippines* as evidenced by the success of education reform projects such as the Basic Education Assistance in Mindanao (BEAM) in coordination with the Philippine's DepEd (Carter et al., 2012, p. xii). Independent scholars have acknowledged the achievements that AusAID has experienced particularly in the area of policy focus and engagement in education reform:

Policy engagement occurs through the continued assistance of the Support to Philippine Basic Education Reform (SPHERE), engagement in the Philippine Development Forum (PDF), and through a 6-monthly BESRA Review, that is jointly undertaken by DepEd and education donors. AusAID contends that its projects contribute to the implementation and framework of BESRA, and that the SPHERE Trust Fund supports policy development, resources, for schools and classroom construction, and financing of activities for resource management and mobilization of BESRA. These aims are consistent with the Paris Declaration Alignment indicator of donors using strengthened country systems, particularly through reviews conducted through BESRA. This policy focus makes clear endeavours to meet the Alignment target of the Paris Declaration, and specifically through the indicator of aligning with partners' strategies (Cassity, 2010, p. 515)

However scholars and practitioners of international development assistance are more circumspect in declaring that education reforms – including those of AusAID – have indeed been successful. One of the phenomenon that dampens declarations of success is ‘projectisation’. AusAID’s efforts in the Philippines manifests this when a *pilot project to support national education reform* becomes the most outstanding feature of AusAID’s education program (Cassity, 2010, p. 510). Projectisation becomes problematic when *scaling up or sustaining reforms* wanes when external support dries up or *when the actors involved in the project no longer sustain the implementation* after the completion of the project (Malana, 2009, p. 5). In the Philippine case, a more serious criticism of Australian ODA appears when *despite AusAID’s policy discourse confirming its commitment to Paris and other processes* what happens instead is that *a large portion of its education program* funds scholarships hinting that the Australian higher education lobby has an undeniable influence in ODA use and the nation’s international education policy (Cassity, 2010, p. 511). For the year 2013/14 for example, education received the second highest allotment (21%) in Australia’s aid framework. A closer examination of the breakdown of this education assistance reveals that for 2013/14, close to AUS\$310 million of the AUS\$978 million (or 33%) of the education budget went into the Australia Awards programme (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2015). The Awards programme essentially consists of tertiary scholarships at Australian higher education institutions. It is worth noting that for the year 2014/15, education will be receiving the highest allocation (23%) in Australia’s aid framework (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2015). This inquiry argues that the success of the aid programme embodied in STRIVE, as seen from the lens of rural Philippines is complex and needs a more nuanced perspective.

STRENGTHENING IMPLEMENTATION OF VISAYAS EDUCATION (STRIVE)

STRIVE Stage 1 was an 18 month project between October 2005 and July 2007 costing about AUS\$3.9 million dollars (AusAID, 2006, p. 1). STRIVE was targeted to address the dire education needs of the predominantly rural provinces found in the Visayas region of the Philippines. Visayas – a collection of islands within the Philippines- which has a population of 11.3 million (National Statistics Office., 2010) contains roughly a tenth of the entire population of the country. These islands consist of three main regions: Central (Region VII), Western (Region VI) and Eastern (Region VIII) Visayas. Central Visayas has a total population of 6.4 million people and a population density of 345 people per square kilometer. Almost half of the population in Region VII live in urban areas. The incidence of poor families in Central Visayas is 24 per cent higher than the national average (De la Paz & Colson, 2008). Western Visayas, where 70 per cent of the population resides in rural areas, and Eastern Visayas, with 80 per cent of its population found in rural settings are two other regions whose poverty rates are considerably higher than the national average (Albert & Collado, 2004).

STRIVE attempted to improve basic education in these impoverished and predominantly rural regions. One of the indicators identified as evidence of improved education outcomes was the National Achievement Test (NAT). Interestingly, these three regions have contrasting performances in relation to the NAT. In 2009, out of a total of 205 School Divisions distributed nationwide, three school divisions from Region VIII were in the top five NAT performers. In the same year, two school divisions each from Region VI and Region VII were in the bottom 10 NAT performers (Department of Education., 2010)

The NAT is a ‘Philippine-made standardized test’ created to measure achievement levels, strengths and weaknesses of students in five subject areas (Benito, 2010, p. 6). These five areas are: (1) Science, (2) Mathematics, (3) English, (4) Filipino and (5) Geography-History-Civics (for elementary)¹ or Social Studies (for high school)² (Benito, 2010). The DepEd considers NAT as a timely device for assessing students’ learning:

The NAT, which is a system-based assessment, was specifically designed to gauge learning outcomes across target levels in identified periods of basic education. In particular, it spans from mid-assessment of elementary education which falls on the third grade, and then to a terminal exit assessment which falls on the sixth grade. The test results in NAT-Grade Six can likewise serve as measurement of incoming first year students’ readiness for high school. On the other hand, the NAT for Second Year high school serves as mid-assessment of the secondary level. (Benito, 2010, p. 12)

¹ This is referred to as *Heograpiya, Kasaysayan at Sibika* or HEKASI in the Philippines.

² This is referred to as *Araling Panlipunan* in the Philippines.

The STRIVE project was designed as a flexible and responsive mechanism to assist the DepEd in improving access to and the quality of basic education in the Visayas and in so doing improve education outcomes for the regions' young people. Stage 1 was implemented from October 2005 to July 2007 and focused on Bohol (Region VII) and Northern Samar (Region VIII) divisions. Activities were undertaken in two main components, the Leadership and Management Development and Programs for Out of School Children, Youth and their Families with a view to implementing two other components (Teacher Training and Teaching/Learning Materials Development) (Leonardo-Ong, 2005).

STRIVE Stage 2 was designed as a vanguard initiative which aimed to develop and test support systems for School-Based Management (SBM), Human Resources Development (HRD) specifically In-Service Education and Training (INSET) and the equitable provision of Learning Resource Materials (LRM). STRIVE Stage 2 was estimated to cost AUS\$15 million to Australia with the Republic of the Philippines matching this with a Ps 128 million peso counterpart funding (AUS\$3.6 million) (AusAID, 2006, p. 28). The initiative was intended to be the precursor to widespread implementation of the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) reforms by DepEd. STRIVE Stage 2 was envisioned to contribute to the improvement in the quality of and access to basic education in the Visayas. These goals would be achieved through the development, support and strengthening of education management and learning support systems for improved access to quality basic education. One of the intentions of DepEd was to learn from the experience of key support systems developed in the Visayas through STRIVE paving the way for these to be replicated in other regions of the country and thus serving as a platform to support BESRA implementation.

Starting Point: Variances in the Outputs of STRIVE Components in Schools

Table 1 provides a snapshot of the variances in the levels of 'pilot implementation' of STRIVE components in all the schools participating in STRIVE Phase 2.

Table 1. Table of Frequencies STRIVE Components in Schools

Count %	No action	Pilot implementation
Availability of Support Options for Basic Education (SOBE) Funds	85.1	14.9
Learning Resources	83.8	16.2
Training and Development	83.8	16.2
Plans for Professional Development	1.9	98.1
Quality Assurance	50.0	50.0
Project Management	91.9	8.1
Information System	82.5	17.5

Source: Information provided by STRIVE Project

Plans for Professional Development (Individual Professional Plans and School Improvement Plans) are overwhelmingly present in the schools (98%), followed by components pertaining to Quality Assurance (50%). It must be pointed out that all Philippine schools starting from 2006 have been mandated to complete School Improvement Plans (SIPs) as part of the BESRA initiative (Department of Education, 2012). Professional Development plans as well as initiatives to improve quality are integral parts of the SIPs, these components effectively antedate the STRIVE Programme. This could explain why these two components appear to be more advanced in terms of implementation. Availability of SOBE funds, Learning Resources, Training and Development and the start of Information Systems are in 'pilot implementation' mode in about 15 per cent of all the schools. Project Management has the lowest 'pilot implementation' exposure with eight per cent of all the schools. One can argue that the dispersal of 'pilot implementation' components of STRIVE in the schools can be argued as evidence of the fragmented nature of the level of effectiveness of the program

Intuitive Assumptions.

The overarching goal of STRIVE Phase 2 is to 'strengthen basic education in the Visayas'. One of the indicators used to ascertain improvements in basic education through the implementation of

STRIVE is the NAT performance of the specific regions. The goal is for the components of School-based Management, Training and Development, Learning Resources, Quality Assurance, Project Management, and Information Systems to be intervening factors in ensuring that basic education improves in the target areas. Therefore it may be posited that ‘holding everything constant’ the ideal scenario would be for all the different STRIVE components to be operational in the participating schools. Such an approach, complemented by the notion that STRIVE is seen as the implementing catalyst for the BESRA of DepEd could then be described – albeit in a simplistic fashion – as a *trickle-down approach* in education reform (Ginsberg & Wimpelberg, 1987, p. 346). There are two key facets to this approach: (1) BESRA as the *rational/prescription* element and (2) STRIVE as the *symbolic/ceremonial* element (Ginsberg & Wimpelberg, 1987, p. 358). The *trickle-down approach* posits that these two elements give rise to an ‘enabling environment’ where education reforms cascade down for eventual implementation.

ANALYSING THE IMPLEMENTATION PERFORMANCE OF STRIVE: CROSSTABULATIONS

A Short Note on the Analytical Approach

In order to undertake this analysis, a non-experimental correlational study (employing crosstabulations) will be pursued as the methodological approach of this inquiry. It can be argued that the ‘rational/prescription’ or the policy of different and multiple STRIVE Components piloted in schools determines whether specific sub-components of STRIVE reach the stage of ‘pilot implementation’. This ‘trickle-down’ education reform approach is tested in the subsequent sections of this paper with the use of contingency tables also referred to as cross-tabulations analysis based on the entire population of STRIVE participating schools (N=308) in Region VI, VII and VIII. In the subsequent cross-tabulations, the columns are treated as the independent variables and the row is seen as the dependent variable. The universal hypothesis tested in the cross-tabulations is that both variables are independent and have no relation with each other. Moreover, these subsequent analyses interrogate ‘measures of association’ – describing the strength of dependence between two variables. In cross-tabulations, one of the most powerful ways of interpreting measures of association is through the Proportional Reduction of Error (PRE): quantifying the extent to which the independent variable helps in predicting the dependent variable (Liebetrau, 1993). Essentially the analyses establish ‘correlation’ among variables and therefore no attempt is made to define causal relationships.

Analysis: STRIVE Components and Availability of SOBE Funds

Table 2: STRIVE Components and Availability of SOBE Funds

Count %		Number of STRIVE Components piloted in School						
Availability of SOBE Funds	No action	111	75	39	19	15	3	262
	Pilot implementation	0	20	16	6	2	2	46
Total		111	95	55	25	17	5	308

$\gamma = .54; p = .000$

Source: Information provided by STRIVE Project

The cross-tabulations produced statistically significant results (approx. sig. for Gamma γ is less than .05). An examination of the absolute value of Gamma γ (.54) means that there was a 54 per cent reduction in error in predicting the dependent variable when the independent variable was taken into account. In other words, the statistically significant relationship between the dependent and the independent variable is moderate. An interpretation of this could be that information about the number of STRIVE components piloted in schools greatly helps in improving the prediction of the outcomes of ‘Availability of SOBE funds’ (‘No action’ or ‘Pilot implementation’) by about 54 per cent.

Analysis: STRIVE Components and Training and Development

Table 3: STRIVE Components and Training and Development

Count %		Number of STRIVE Components piloted in School						
Training and Development	No action	111	93	46	8	0	0	258
	Pilot implementation	0	2	9	17	17	5	50
	Total	111	95	55	25	17	5	308

$\gamma = .97; p = .000$

Source: Information provided by STRIVE Project

The statistically significant value of Gamma (.97) means that there was a 97 per cent reduction in prediction error. One can argue that the relationship between the dependent and the independent variable is very strong and that information about the number of STRIVE components piloted in school greatly helps in improving the prediction of 'Training and Development' ('No action' or 'Pilot implementation') by about 97 per cent. More STRIVE components implemented correlates with the high incidence of Training and Development carried out in schools.

Analysis: STRIVE Components and Learning and Resources

Table 4: STRIVE Components and Learning and Resources

Count %		Number of STRIVE Components piloted in School						
Learning Resources	No action	111	94	46	7	0	0	258
	Pilot implementation	0	1	9	18	17	5	50
	Total	111	95	55	25	17	5	308

$\gamma = .98; p = .000$

Source: Information provided by STRIVE Project

The statistically significant value of Gamma (.98) signifies a 98 per cent reduction in prediction error of the dependent variable (Learning and Resources) taking into consideration the independent variable (Number of STRIVE Components piloted in schools) revealing a very strong relationship between the variables. Furthermore it can be postulated that the number of STRIVE components piloted in school greatly helps in improving the prediction of the 'learning and resources' ('No action' or 'Pilot implementation') by about 98 per cent.

Analysis: STRIVE Components and Project Management

Table 5: STRIVE Components and Project Management

Count %		Number of STRIVE Components piloted in School						
Project Management	No action	111	85	49	23	13	2	283
	Pilot implementation	0	10	6	2	4	3	25
	Total	111	95	55	25	17	5	308

$\gamma = .61; p = .000$

Source: Information provided by STRIVE Project

Gamma (.61) reveals a statistically significant 61 per cent reduction in predictive error of the dependent variable (Project Management) pointing out a moderate relationship between the variables. Furthermore it can be claimed that the number of STRIVE components piloted in school greatly helps in improving the prediction of 'project management' ('No action' or 'Pilot implementation') by about 61 per cent. More STRIVE components implemented translates to project management promulgated in schools at an average pace.

Analysis: STRIVE Components and Quality Assurance

Table 6: STRIVE Components and Quality Assurance

Count %		Number of STRIVE Components piloted in School						
Quality Assurance	No action	111	35	5	2	1	0	154
	Pilot implementation	0	60	50	23	16	5	154
	Total	111	95	55	25	17	5	308

$\gamma = .94; p = .000$

Source: Information provided by STRIVE Project

Gamma (.94) signifies a 94 per cent reduction in prediction error of the dependent variable (Quality Assurance) taking into consideration the independent variable (Number of STRIVE Components piloted in schools). It can be argued that the statistically significant relationship between the dependent and the independent variable is very strong; it can even be suggested that the number of STRIVE components piloted in school greatly helps in improving the prediction of the 'Quality Assurance' ('No action' or 'Pilot implementation') by about 94 per cent.

Analysis: STRIVE Components and Information System

Table 7: STRIVE Components and Information System

Count %		Number of STRIVE Components piloted in School						
Information System	No action	111	91	31	16	5	0	254
	Pilot implementation	0	4	24	9	12	5	54
	Total	111	95	55	25	17	5	308

$\gamma = .87; p = .000$

Source: Information provided by STRIVE Project

The statistically significant value of Gamma (.87) signifies an 87 per cent reduction in prediction error as well as a strong relationship between the dependent and the independent variables. It can even be suggested that the number of STRIVE components piloted in school greatly helps in improving the prediction of the 'Information System' ('No action' or 'Pilot implementation') by about 87 per cent.

Analysis: STRIVE Components and Plans for Professional Development

Table 8: STRIVE Components and Plans for Professional Development

Count %			Number of STRIVE Components piloted in School						
Plans for Professional Development	No action		0	1	4	1	0	0	6
	Pilot implementation		111	94	51	24	17	5	302
	Total		111	95	55	25	17	5	308

$\gamma = -.59; p = .000$

Source: Information provided by STRIVE Project

Cross-tabulations produced statistically significant results (approx. sig. for Gamma γ is less than .05). For this particular factor, the results produce a negative value of Gamma (-.59) signifying a moderate negative association as opposed to all the other preceding factors that have registered positive associations. According to this data, when the 'Number of strive components piloted in school' goes higher, 'Pilot implementation' for Plans for Professional Development is lower due to the negative association. This moderate negative interaction is useful in predicting the inverse relationship between 'Plans for Professional Development' ('No action' or 'Pilot implementation') in schools by about 59 per cent. As explained earlier in Table 1, Plans for Professional Development form part of the SIPs in all Philippine schools when it was introduced in the BESRA roll-out in 2006. This component antedates the implementation of the STRIVE reform initiative and could be one of the explanations for the negative interaction.

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION POINTS

The preceding preliminary cross-tabulations analyses provide insightful perspectives on how policy prescription represented as ‘Different STRIVE components piloted in schools’ determine whether specific sub-components reach ‘Pilot implementation’ stage. Using data from the population of STRIVE participating schools in rural contexts located in Regions VI, VII and VIII and the foregoing analyses which exclusively used ‘Measures of association’, it can be argued that the policy prescription of piloting multiple STRIVE components predict (i.e. ‘is correlated’) to a statistically significant level (i.e. ‘not to chance’) the actual ‘Pilot implementation’ of individual STRIVE sub-components.

The explanations up to this point may seem extremely tautological; what must be noted though is that the levels of ‘measures of association’ (i.e. represented by Gamma γ between the different variables produced interesting and varied results).

Table 9: Summary of Measures of Association

Factors (Dependent variable/s) * Independent variable – Number of STRIVE Components	Measures of Association % (represented by gamma γ)
Availability of SOBE Funds * No. of STRIVE Components	54
Learning Resources * No. of STRIVE Components	97
Training and Development * No. of STRIVE Components	98
Plans for Professional Development * No. of STRIVE Components	-59
Quality Assurance * No. of STRIVE Components	61
Project Management * No. of STRIVE Components	94
Information System * No. of STRIVE Components	87

Relevance

These findings support to some extent the issue of relevance of the STRIVE program. Using the current approach of making available the different components of STRIVE does have a positive impact on the eventual implementation of sub-components. Assuming that the STRIVE components have been identified as those that would address the education demands of the predominantly rural regions, one can argue that the programme’s attempts to address the key needs in the Visayas appears to be on-track.

Effectiveness

On School-based Management (SBM). Two of the STRIVE components could very well be identified as indicators of SBM, namely: (1) Availability of SOBE Funds – represented as the knowledge and skill of the school management to be able to tap into, source and generate funds and (2) Plans for Professional Development – that are included in the respective School Improvement Plans (SIPs) prepared by the STRIVE participating schools. Table 9 indicates that ‘Availability of SOBE Funds’ has a moderate association (54%) – but the lowest among all the other measures in relation with the independent variable: ‘Number of STRIVE Components Piloted in Schools’. Moreover, ‘Plans for Professional Development’ (-59%) has a moderate relationship but more importantly a negative association with the same independent variable – ‘Number of STRIVE Components Piloted in Schools’.

What the findings reveal is that ‘Availability of SOBE Funds’ is only moderately associated with the other STRIVE components. It could mean therefore that other objectives – not within the specific parameters of STRIVE -- are targeted by the school leaders when they pursue SOBE funds. The findings also reveal that the ‘Plans for Professional Development’ has a moderate but negative association with the other STRIVE components. In other words, presence of these ‘plans’ do not contribute in increasing the number of piloted STRIVE components in schools. Similar to the SOBE funds one can assume that these plans do not specifically target the objectives within the STRIVE parameters, moreover in the case of Plans for Professional Development, these have already been set in motion even before the implementation of STRIVE. These findings indicate that SBM within STRIVE merits a more careful analysis.

On Training and Development (T&D) and Learning Resources (LR). From the results in Table 9 one can glean that the T&D component (98%) registered the highest measure of association with the independent variable. This is closely followed by Learning Resources (97%). Both factors have very strong positive associations with the independent variable. According to the data, this means that an increase in the 'Number of STRIVE components' is accompanied by increases in T&D and LR pilot implementation. In other words the objective of promoting T&D and LR in schools is greatly supported by allowing an enabling environment where all the STRIVE components are pushed towards pilot implementation.

On Project Management (PM), Information Systems (IS) and Quality Assurance (QA). Results compiled in Table 9 indicate that Project Management (94%), Information Systems (87%) and Quality Assurance (61%) had strong to moderate positive associations with the independent variable. Similar to T&D and LR, these components of STRIVE are promoted to a great extent when a policy that enables these elements to be piloted is vigorously pursued.

Impact of STRIVE

A very difficult criterion to address in implementation reviews deals with the question on the impact of programmes. Evaluating impact becomes even more complex when projects under review are in a bridging phase where the outputs are very much interrelated to inputs and therefore concrete indicators of outcomes are usually elusive. Perhaps the most important question to ask about evaluating impact would be attributing success or failure due mainly to the implemented programme. In other words, counterfactual conditions or factors that could have an impact on implementation need to be properly accounted for in order to clearly establish the contribution attributed solely to specific programs (Ferraro, 2009). In order for this to happen careful planning and groundwork in terms of specific program goals, precise implementation phases and well-calibrated monitoring tools should have been established during the conception and early stage program execution. Another possible way is to review current outputs and conduct analyses using quasi-experimental approaches. The following tables attempt to do these analyses by hypothesizing a relationship between National Achievement Test (NAT) scores (an ordinal variable) and Region (a polytomous-ordered variable).

Table 10: Zero Order Table: National Achievement Test (NAT) Scores * Regions

		Count	Name of Region			Total
			% within Region	Region VI	Region VII	
Scores in the National Achievement Test (NAT)	Low	91	42	9	142	
		91.9%	54.5%	9.0%	51.4%	
	Average	8	33	52	93	
		8.1%	42.9%	52.0%	33.7%	
	High	0	2	39	41	
		0%	2.6%	39.0%	14.9%	
Total	99	77	100	276		
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

$\gamma = .90; p = .000$

Cross-tabulations produced statistically significant results (approx. sig. for Gamma γ is less than .05). An examination of the absolute value of Gamma (.90) signifies a 90 per cent reduction in prediction error of the dependent variable taking into consideration the independent variable. It can be argued that the statistically significant relationship between the dependent variable (NAT scores) and the independent variable (Region) is very strong. It can even be suggested that Region greatly helps in improving the prediction of the 'NAT Scores' ('Low'; 'Average', 'High') by about 90 per cent.

Table 10 highlights that the greatest proportion of NAT scores in the STRIVE target regions belong to the 'Low' category (64 and below) accounting for 51.4 per cent. NAT scores in the 'Average' category (65-79) constituted 33.7 per cent. This is completed by the NAT scores in the 'High' category (80 and above) which make up 14.9 per cent.

In terms of determining impact what would be more insightful would be to add STRIVE Components (as a controlling variable) to the existing variable Region and see how this addition makes an impact on the NAT scores. In order to arrive at a 'neater' table, the STRIVE Components variable was re-coded into three categories: Limited (1-2 STRIVE components piloted); Moderate (3-4 STRIVE components piloted) and WIDE (5-6 STRIVE Components piloted).

Performing cross-tabulations between NAT scores and Region plus the controlling variable STRIVE components produced statistically significant results where approx. sig. for Gamma γ is less than .05. Examining the absolute values of Gamma γ for Limited Pilot of STRIVE Components (.90) and Moderate Pilot of STRIVE Components (.90) signifies a 90 per cent reduction in prediction error of the dependent variable (NAT scores) taking into consideration the controlling effect of the additional variable (STRIVE). The more significant figures to pay attention to would be the differences in percentage scores from the zero-order table 10 and the three partial tables (Table 11).

Table 11: Partial Tables: (NAT) Scores * Regions * STRIVE Components

				Name of Region (%)			
				Region VI	Region VII	Region VIII	Total
Limited: STRIVE Components	1-2	Scores in the NAT	Low	90.6	55.2	9.5	51.9
			Average	9.4	43.1	54.0	35.1
			High	0	1.7	36.5	13.0
			Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Moderate STRIVE Components	3-4	Scores in the NAT	Low	92.3	61.5	6.1	47.2
			Average	7.7	30.8	51.5	31.9
			High	0	7.7	42.4	20.8
			Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Wide STRIVE Components	5-6	Scores in the NAT	Low	100.0	33.3	25.0	63.2
			Average	0	66.7	25.0	26.3
			High	0	0	50.0	10.5
			Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 11 indicates that Limited STRIVE pilot implementation in the target regions does not have an impact on the NAT scores distribution since the total column scores are almost identical to those found in the zero-order table 10. However, inspecting the partial table for Moderate STRIVE pilot implementation (particularly the epsilon ϵ or Percentage Point change) reveals a small impact. The partial scores improved with the controlling variable of Moderate STRIVE pilot implementation: 'Low' NAT scores decreased by 4.2 per cent; 'High' NAT scores increased by 5.9 percent. The 'Average' NAT scores decreased slightly by 1.8 per cent. An inspection of the partial table for Wide STRIVE pilot implementation reveals across the board deterioration in the epsilon ϵ scores: 'Low' NAT scores increased by 11.8 per cent, 'Average' NAT scores decreased by 7.4 per cent and 'High' NAT scores also decreased by 4.4 per cent.

In other words, Table 11 reveals that the impact of the program on NAT scores, vary according to the degree of pilot implementation of the STRIVE components. The data suggests that Limited STRIVE pilot implementation has almost no impact; Moderate STRIVE pilot implementation, has a marked positive impact on the outcome variable – NAT scores while for Wide STRIVE pilot implementation the impact seems to be negative.

An essential point that needs to be considered in interpreting these results is the life-cycle of STRIVE Phase 2. Bearing in mind, that STRIVE Phase 2 has reached a post-bridging period; the findings in table 11 would seem quite reasonable. Where the components of STRIVE are merely at the start-up phase, the impact is negligible. In situations where the STRIVE components have been rolled out; the figures indicate positive impact. And more importantly, where STRIVE components are at the verge of 'wider implementation', this critical transition point seems to be represented by negative impact on the outcome variable – deteriorating NAT scores. These key discussion points naturally beg the question of the sustainability of implementing such a project.

Sustainability of STRIVE as Education Reform and the implementation paradox

Tables 10 and 11 provide illumination in addressing the question of sustainability. Recognizing the epsilon ϵ or Percentage Point changes between the zero-order table and the partial tables reveal that 'Number of STRIVE Components piloted in schools' creates an interaction effect. This inquiry argues that an implementation paradox emerges upon closer examination of the experience of STRIVE. The progress that is expected of a more widespread implementation of STRIVE components follows an almost counterintuitive path. The data reveals that Moderate pilot implementation is a condition that strengthens the original relationship: Region determining NAT scores. Conversely, the data also indicates that Wide pilot implementation is a condition that weakens the original relationship. The analyses also points to the fact that Limited implementation is a condition that neither strengthens nor weakens the original relationship.

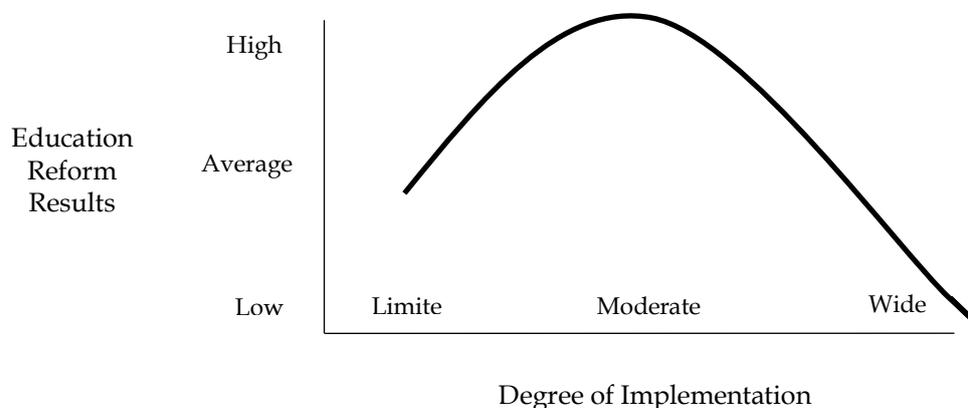


Figure 1: Implementation Paradox: Education Reform results vs Degree of Implementation

Recalling the principles of the Paris Declaration that prescribes an almost linear perspective of effectiveness: Ownership (developing countries set their own targets) – Alignment (donor countries align behind these targets) – Harmonisation (donor countries coordinate to simplify and avoid duplication) – Results (developing countries and donors shift focus to development results) and Mutual accountability (donors and partners are accountable for results) (OECD, 2006), the non-linear implementation trajectory of STRIVE does not fit this paradigm. The international development community which includes AusAID as signatories of the Paris Declaration have adopted Managing-for-development-results (MfDR) as an overarching means to assure improved development effectiveness (Armytage, 2011, p. 266). One of the biggest critiques against MfDR is that it is built on managerial logical frameworks of evaluation. Reflecting on the experience of STRIVE and using the benchmark of MfDR implied in the Paris Declaration, one recognises an implementation paradox and one may even conclude that such a project would be ineffective (i.e. increased inputs for implementation translate to negative outcomes) and thus not sustainable. One important argument that this inquiry raises is the need to recognise possible limitations of development models in attempts to address highly-contextualised issues found in developing countries with large rural populations such as the Philippines. Moreover, the empirical analyses conducted in this inquiry were based on quantitative results. Qualitative data in the form of the actual practices that various stakeholders of the STRIVE project such as AusAID staff and educators from the three diverse regions were not included in this inquiry. This inquiry acknowledges that it suffers from a lack of systemic documentation of the compromises, solutions and efforts exerted by various stakeholders in pushing the STRIVE project forward. This could be an area for further study that can be pursued by scholars and practitioners keen on interrogating the implementation of development aid and education reforms. In a way, this

article engages with an ongoing debate about the search for the so-called 'right' modes of implementation:

Despite the enormous energy devoted to generating the right policy models, however, there is surprisingly little attention paid to the relationship between these models and the practices and events that they are expected to generate or legitimize in particular contexts (Mosse, 2004, p. 640)

This inquiry set out to provide a comprehensive empirical review of the performance outputs of STRIVE. In so doing, a seeming implementation paradox where additional inputs generate negative results was unearthed. This article proposes a careful re-examination of implementation analysis of education reforms in highly-complex contexts such as the rural regions of the Visayas in the Philippines. This article also problematises a fundamental ethos of the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness that may be limited due to its adherence to MfDR - a managerial results-based paradigm built on logical frameworks of evaluation.

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