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Best Practices of Secondary Level Alternative Delivery Modes (ADMs) in Southeast Asia



***A Case Study of the
Open High School Program
in the Philippines***

Best Practices of Secondary Level Alternative
Delivery Modes (ADMs) in Southeast Asia:
**A Case Study of the Open High School
Program in the Philippines**

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Commonwealth Ave., Diliman, Quezon City



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Foreword

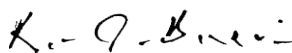
While enrolment in secondary schools has been increasing over the past decade, a significant number of young people are still not able to access quality and relevant secondary education. Some learners experience difficulty in transitioning

from primary to secondary level, and from secondary level to the labour market. In some parts of Southeast Asia, there is disparity in terms of completion of secondary education between rural and urban learners, and between working students and those studying full time. Learners from marginalized groups, including indigenous people, young people with special needs, and those from low socio-economic groups, also face challenges in accessing and completing secondary education.

There are many barriers that can push learners out of the formal school system, including geographical distance, poverty, conflict, natural disasters, etc. Alternative delivery modes (ADMs) offer solutions that may help learners outside of the regular school system acquire the needed basic education competencies and life skills. At the secondary level, these initiatives provide learners with the opportunity to complete their education at their own pace given the resources and the context they are in, thereby preparing them for work or further education. ADMs offer flexibility and relevance, and may be accessed at a lower cost than conventional schools.

In SEAMEO-member countries, numerous forms of alternative modalities have been and are being implemented. SEAMEO INNOTECH launched a research project to document successful secondary level alternative delivery models. The aim was to consolidate best practices, study more closely how the programs were executed given the varied contexts, and identify factors that contributed to their success. This project resulted in the documentation of four exemplary ADM programs, which shall be presented as a series of case studies. These include: i) the school-industry partnership of the Multiple Entry Exit System (MEES) of Indonesia; ii) access to secondary education of island learners in Vietnam; iii) flexible learning delivery modalities and learner-centered support system of the Open High School Program (OHSP) of the Philippines; and iv) project-based learning approach in support of a needs-based curriculum evident in the Home School Program of Thailand. Each case study discusses the various components of the program and highlights the unique and facilitative factors underlying the successful ADM initiative.

The series of case studies was made possible through the active collaboration with in-country researchers from Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, and the stakeholders who contributed their ideas, insights and experience. We hope the case studies will give a better understanding of ADMs as education solutions and widen perspectives on the benefits of employing such modalities for students in the secondary level.



Ramon C. Bacani

Center Director

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Makati High School

Sangley Point National High School

Bacolod City National High School

Bagbag National High School

Mabini Integrated School

Javier National High School

Jose Panganiban National High School

Camarines Norte National High School

Kabasalan National High School

Manicahan National High School

Don Pablo Lorenzo Memorial High School

Parang National High School

Amir Bara Lidasan National High School

Bangao National High School

Sinipsip National High School

Ferrol National High School

Odiongan National High School

Acronyms

ADM	Alternative Delivery Mode
AIP	Annual Improvement Plan
AWP	Annual Work Plans
BALS	Bureau of Alternative Learning System
BSE	Bureau of Secondary Education
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CD	Compact Disc
DepEd	Department of Education
DORP	Drop-out Reduction Program
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
EASE	Effective and Affordable Secondary Education
EFA	Education for All
FAPE	Fund for Assistance to Private Education
FLO	Flexible Learning Options
ILO	International Labor Organization
ILRT	Independent Learning Readiness Test
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRI	Informal Reading Inventory
LGU	Local Government Unit
MAPEH	Music, Arts, Physical Education, and Health

MOOE	Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses
NAT	National Achievement Test
NGO	Non-government Organization
OHSP	Open High School Program
OSY	Out-of-School Youth
PEPT	Philippine Educational Placement Test
PESO	Public Employment Service Office
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
RBEC	Revised Basic Education Curriculum
SARDOs	Students-at-risk of dropping out
SEAMEO INNOTECH	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology
SFP	School Feeding Program
SHS	Senior High School
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SIREP	SEAMEO INNOTECH Regional Education Program
TLE	Technology and Livelihood Education
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Background of the Study

Introduction

This case study on the Open High School Program (OHSP) of the Philippines, one of a series of country case studies on successful secondary level alternative delivery modes (ADMs) in Southeast Asia, is largely derived from the *Evaluation of the Open High School Program in the Philippines* conducted by SEAMEO INNOTECH in 2015. The evaluation study determined the current state of the OHSP in the context of operationalizing the new K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum of the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd). The study was funded by the Center under the SEAMEO INNOTECH Regional Education Program (SIREP).

Background of the Regional Study

In the past four decades, the demand for secondary education has expanded due to current global economic developments that necessitate higher educational qualifications and level of skills. Globalization, with its increased volume of global trade and finance, has changed the educational goals of nations. As such, companies around the world need more well-trained and productive employees that are competitive yet competent, able to make decisions, can accommodate change more rapidly, articulate, able to process information fast, and produce high quality outputs at lower costs.¹

1 Vivian Figueredo and Stephen Anzalone, *Alternative Models for Secondary Education in Developing Countries: Rationale and Realities* (Washington, D.C.: American Institutes for Research, January 2003).

Many developing countries, including those in Southeast Asia, have tried various means to address this demand, even as they continue to raise the educational attainment of their population. Some countries, however, struggle with the issue of increasing school dropout rates, which is fast becoming a serious social problem.

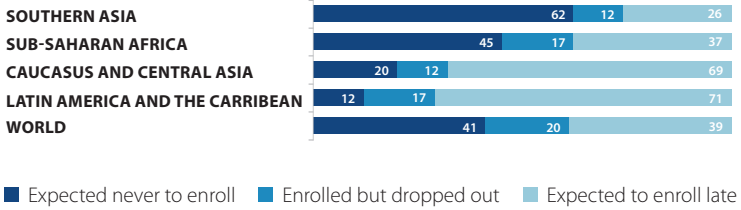
The increasing school dropout rate is not just a problem affecting SEAMEO-member countries. Countries beyond Southeast Asia such as Brazil, Mexico, and Africa experience the same problem. **(FIGURE 1)** In South Asia, 40 percent of children dropout after completing primary school; in Africa, over 30 percent do so. Some countries have initiated interventions to try to curb the number of school dropouts. For example, Brazil and Mexico offer free school meals to keep children in school, and more recently, have begun providing cereals and other basic food items for children to take home (the quantity is pegged to the number of days the children are in schools). For older children such as those in high school, potential dropouts are provided “wages for learning,” a scheme in which children are “paid to stay in schools in amounts approximating what they would earn as “start-up” workers with no skills² if they are not in school. The Philippines also implements a similar scheme, the CCT (cash conditional transfer) Program and the school feeding program (SFP), to encourage children of indigent families to attend school.

One of the proposed solutions to address increasing demand for quality secondary education as well as the problem of increasing dropout rate is the provision of alternative delivery modes for secondary education.

2 Juan T. Gatbonton, “Dropouts’ our immense and invisible failure,” *The Manila Times*, May 26, 2008.

FIGURE 1

Distribution of out-of-school children, by school exposure, worldwide and selected regions, 2014



Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics database

Among the features of ADM that help address school dropout and access barriers are the following:

- ▶ Qualification requirements for learners are not as restrictive as that of conventional schools.
- ▶ Flexibility is given to learners in terms of learning time, entry and exit, and period for accreditation/certification.
- ▶ Learning materials are made more relevant to the context of the learners and demand of industry, thus improving the learner's chances of getting employed, enhancing job performance, or helping them deal effectively with immediate social issues.
- ▶ Learning materials are made simpler and more manageable or "bite-sized" to guarantee a certain level of success on the part of the learners.

- ▶ Learners, in whatever circumstances they are, can still continue with their schooling and attain some certification which otherwise cannot be attained through conventional schooling.

Objectives

The overall objective of the SIREP-funded Secondary ADM Project is to document successful secondary level ADMs being implemented in SEAMEO-member countries. More specifically, the Project aims to:

- ▶ Describe the secondary ADM models being implemented in SEAMEO-member countries;
- ▶ Assess the successful ADMs in selected member countries; and
- ▶ Document best practices of different ADM models in SEAMEO-member countries.

In the case of the Philippine secondary ADM, the Open High School Program, data were drawn from a 2015 evaluation study conducted by SEAMEO INNOTECH in support of the DepEd K to 12 reform agenda. The results and findings from the evaluation study were repackaged in the form of a case study to highlight the different program components and practices of the implementing schools. The documentation included good practices and innovations carried out by participating schools in the course of implementing the OHSP. Findings on program challenges/weaknesses and areas for improvement, as well as comparison of academic performance of Open High School students with regular students are also briefly discussed.

Methodology of the Evaluation Study

The evaluation study was undertaken to (1) examine the viability of the OHSP as an alternative delivery mode (ADM) for secondary education; (2) determine the strengths and weaknesses of the OHSP as an ADM strategy; (3) appraise the comparability of OHS and regular high school students; and (4) pinpoint aspects of the OHSP that need to be developed or improved to ensure that it is in harmony with the new K to 12 curricular reforms. It used an adaptation of the Stufflebeam's CIPP (context, input, process, products) model as its evaluation framework, where program implementation and students' academic performance were examined.

Data were collected through surveys, case studies, and a comparison of grades of OHS and regular students. The sample, which covered the three island groups, was selected through multi-stage sampling, and involved a total of 155 schools and 345 students for the surveys, 17 schools for the case studies, and 1,578 students for the grade comparison. Descriptive and inferential statistics as well as content analysis were used by the researchers in analyzing and presenting the data.

The Open High School Program

Overview of the Philippine K to 12 Basic Education Program

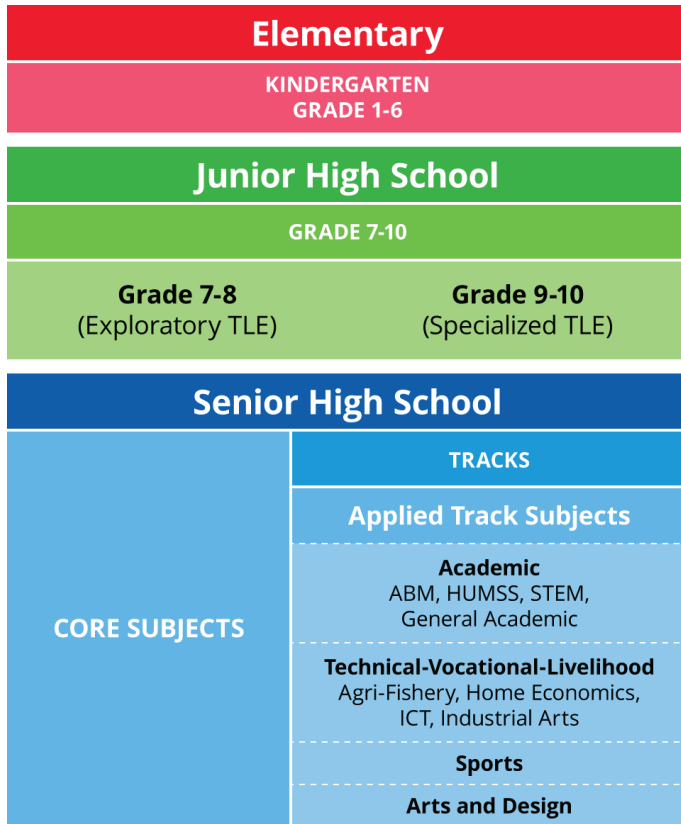
The Philippines recently implemented a comprehensive reform of its basic education program, embodied under the Enhanced Basic Education Act (Republic Act 10533) enacted in 2013. The law establishes the implementation of the K to 12 Program (**FIGURE 2**) covering kindergarten, six years of primary education, four years of junior high school, and two years of senior high school.

The new basic education program, which adds one year of universal kindergarten and two years of senior high school, aims “to provide sufficient time for mastery of concepts and skills, develop lifelong learners, and prepare graduates for tertiary education, middle-level skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship” (www.gov.ph/k-12).

Currently, the Open High School Program is applicable only to junior high school (Grades 7 to 10) since its design was anchored on the previous national curriculum (Revised Basic Education Curriculum). In spite of this, OHSP maintains its value and effectiveness under the K to 12 Enhanced Basic Education Curriculum as an alternative form of educational delivery for students who desire to complete secondary education. Implementers and students alike have, however, conveyed the necessity of aligning the curriculum content and modules to the new curriculum, including the Senior High School (SHS) Program. To date, a number of high schools have modelled the SHS program and are implementing the OHSP even for its Grade 11 students.

FIGURE 2

Philippine K to 12 Education System



Source: www.deped.gov.ph

Rationale for the OHSP Implementation

In September 2000, the Philippine Education for All (EFA) 2015 National Action Plan was crafted following the issuance of Memorandum Circular No. 141 (*Adopting the EFA: A Philippine Plan of Action 1991-2000*). The main goal of EFA 2015 is to ensure that every Filipino is equipped with the basic learning competencies to be functionally literate. To attain this goal, the educational reform calls for a more concerted approach between stakeholders in the education sector and other sectors of society.



Policies and programs covering both the formal and non-formal (alternative learning) systems were laid down in line with the EFA vision. One program which the Department of Education (DepEd) has initiated was the Open High School Program, a non-traditional learning program in the formal system. The OHSP is an alternative way of delivering secondary education. It is open to individuals who are unable to attend regular classes because of time constrictions, distance, physical disability, financial difficulties, and social and family constraints. Potential learners are the working students, street children, young mothers, and students who have experienced difficult and abusive circumstances.

The OHSP seeks to: (1) provide elementary graduates, high school dropouts, and successful examinees of the Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) a chance to complete secondary education; (2) prevent students who are at risk of leaving school or those already out of school; (3) maintain and/or increase participation rate

and reduce the number of high school dropouts; and (4) increase achievement rate in secondary schooling through quality distance education.

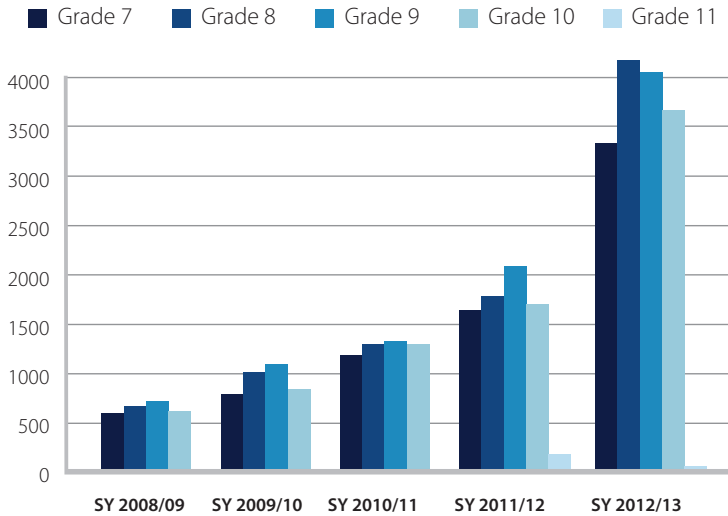
The program was designed to provide options for “independent, self-pacing and flexible study” so students-at-risk of dropping out and those outside the school system can still have access to secondary education. Most OHSP students are working students or child laborers, overaged or adults, teenage mothers, and indigent or very poor. Others live in conflict-affected areas, remote areas, or the streets; have chronic illnesses or disability; were displaced by calamities; have dropped out or are students-at-risk of dropping out (SARDOs); and are in other dire/difficult circumstances.



OHSP students from Batasan National High School participating in a program. (Photo credit: SEAMEO INNOTECH)

FIGURE 3

Open High School Program Enrolment



Source: Evaluation of the Open High School Program in the Philippines (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2015)

The number of OHSP enrollees has grown since its inception. The evaluation study data showed an increase (**FIGURE 3**) of enrollees in Grades 7 to 10 in 155 surveyed schools (SY 2008-2009) from 2,500 students to over 15,000. The figure includes students in Grade 11 under the SHS modelling program of DepEd (SY 2012-2013).

The number of graduates had likewise grown from SY 2008-2009 to SY 2012-13 in the 155 school surveyed—from about 500 in SY 2008-2009 to about 2,000 in SY 2012-2013.

Support Policies

In operationalizing the OHSP, policies and issuances, such as those pertaining to the curriculum, materials, student recognition, and others, were circulated from 2005 to 2012. These issuances include the following: DepEd Order No. 46, s. 2006 which contains guidelines for student recruitment, curriculum, materials, monitoring of student progress and assessment of learning; DepEd Order No. 19, s. 2011 which allows the OHSP teaching staff to avail of vacation credits since teaching in the OHSP is an add-on task; DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2012 which grants OHSP students a separate honors program; and DepEd Order No. 53, s. 2011 which aligns OHSP with alternative delivery modes of instruction in terms of funding and teacher training, and places OHSP among Flexible Learning Options (FLOs) or ADMs.

In July 2014, the Open High School System was established through the *Open High School System (OHSS) Act* or Republic Act 10665. The Act identifies OHSP as a form of intervention to improve access to education via an open learning modality. It mandates the DepEd to allocate funds for the program.

Implementation Strategies

The Open High School Program was pilot tested by DepEd in 1998 to address the incidence of dropouts as well as improve the retention and completion of students in secondary schools in 15 of the poorest provinces in the Philippines. After one decade, the program was mainstreamed together with the Dropout Reduction Program (DORP). In recent years, OHSP has also become an option to address overcrowded classrooms.



The OHSP school staff of Makati National High School (Photo credit: SEAMEO INNOTECH)

The OHSP program can be implemented by public or private secondary schools. Before a school implements this program, it is required to submit a Letter of Intent to the local DepEd office (division office) and be granted approval to run the program; has to provide learning facilities and equipment for the OHSP students; and coordinate with the community for access to facilities and for students' learning.

The OHSP is managed by a team that primarily consists of the school principal, OHSP coordinator, teacher-facilitators, school guidance counselor, local government officials, and representatives from various DepEd offices. They may be supported by the parents and/or guardians, and other key stakeholders in the community.

The school head oversees the implementation of the program; that is, providing administrative and technical support in policy formulation and implementation; linking with the local government units (LGUs); evaluating the performance of school implementers; reporting to the local DepEd office (division office); and even at times, performing coordination work (e.g., arranging schedules, providing modules, checking and keeping student records and monitoring classes). The OHSP coordinator, on the other hand, provides technical assistance to the teacher-facilitators, helps in decision-making, leads the advocacy and orientation programs, and documents OHSP activities, among other tasks. School OHSP coordinators allot six hours of their time every week for the program.

Guidance counsellors are tasked to enroll OHSP students, administer tests, track students, and keep student records on top of their primary duty of providing emotional support. Though quite rare in most schools, guidance counsellors extend four hours of their time for OHSP duties.

Teacher-facilitators are the main providers of instruction. They come from the regular classes and are assigned OHSP teaching load. Some schools, however, have full-time OHSP teachers. About nine teacher-facilitators spend five hours every week in OHSP. They work hard to support students, impart their knowledge of the subject matter, find effective ways of teaching, provide clear instructions, skillfully mentor students, and monitor students' progress. Their level of commitment to teaching is high.

Alongside the teachers and school heads are non-teaching staff who help in the program. One non-teaching staff works for about three hours weekly in OHSP. In addition, student organizations

and parent councils have helped out students needing financial assistance and raised funds to pay for the honoraria of OHSP coordinators and teachers.

To ensure the readiness of the school OHSP team and continuous enhancement of their capabilities, DepEd has been providing training on managing and implementing the OHSP, the ADM framework, blended learning, child-friendly school systems, distance learning, and other relevant areas. Other capacity building activities are meetings, orientation seminars, workshops, and annual or semi-annual school-based in-service training.

Most of these training programs are managed by the DepEd offices—division level, regional and national (former Bureau of Secondary Education)—while the others are conducted by the schools, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and the Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE).

Delivery Strategies

The OHSP is an open learning modality which combines a self-paced modular approach with face-to-face meetings. OHSP students report to school once or more times a week to discuss lessons face-to-face. This arrangement depends on the agreement with the OHSP teacher. Through these weekly meetings, teachers are able to monitor and validate the competencies acquired by the students.

The learners can choose to complete secondary education through the OHSP or be mainstreamed to the regular program. They are also allowed to finish high school within a period of six years.



A class meeting with OHSP learners (Photo credit: SEAMEO INNOTECH)

Before enrolling in OHSP, interested students need to take the Independent Learning Readiness Test (ILRT) and Informal Reading Inventory (IRI). The ILRT determines a student's capability for self-directed learning and is used as basis for the learning mode, while the IRI measures reading level. Upon acceptance into the program, the learner will design his/her own learning program using the Student Learning Plan.

The OHSP is delivered as follows:

1. The OHSP student goes to school based on a schedule that has been agreed upon by both the subject area teacher and learner as indicated in the learning plan. This may happen once or twice a week, depending on the availability of the student. Meetings may be held on weekends like in the case of working students. Subject areas such as physical education, music, computer, and science laboratory are scheduled on an individual basis since these require hands-on experiences.

2. OHSP students are oriented together with their parents/guardians about the program and learning contract. The learning contract provides an assurance that the student will complete his/her secondary education.
3. Class size is limited to a maximum of 20 students to ensure that the teacher gives sufficient attention to each student especially since each learner has his/her own learning program. Schools are also required to give students access to all available learning resources.
4. Results from the ILRT and IRI are used to group learners so that teachers can easily manage and supervise the learning of students with similar competency levels. Assessment tools may be administered by the OHSP committee members.
5. Face-to-face meetings with the students have to be more frequent early in the school year to ensure that students are doing well with the learning scheme (independent learning). These can be reduced once students have settled into their own pace of learning.

Curriculum and Learning Resources

The OHSP curriculum essentially follows the Revised Basic Education Curriculum (RBEC) for secondary schools, the same one being used in the regular school system. However, some modifications have been introduced to correspond to the unique characteristics and needs of the learners. Subject offerings include English, science, mathematics, social studies (*araling panlipunan*), values education (*edukasyon sa pagpapakatao*), Filipino, MAPEH (Music, Arts, Physical



Copies of modules used in OHSP (Photo credit: SEAMEO INNOTECH)

Education and Health), and TLE (Technology and Livelihood Education). The OHSP curriculum is yet to be aligned to the new K to 12 curriculum.

The basic learning materials in OHSP are self-instructional modules that were initially developed for a related program called Effective and Affordable Secondary Education (EASE). Teachers rely heavily on the learning materials as primary sources of student learning. These modules, which are aligned with national standards, contain differentiated activities according to the capacity of learners (i.e., the learner can begin with easy tasks and take on the more difficult ones at a later time).

OHSP students are provided access to EASE modules, in either print or CD format, for free. Each student is expected to study up to 144 modules since each subject area has 18 modules. The modules are easy to use and can be brought home for self-study.

In instances when module content is lacking in terms of teaching certain curricular competencies, OHSP learners are given other learning resources. Content from textbooks in the regular system is adopted according to the capacities of the OHSP learners. Modules for out-of-school youth (OSY) developed by the former DepEd Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS) can also be used for the OHSP.

Ensuring ready access to the large number of EASE modules is one of the challenges documented in the OHSP evaluation study and different schemes have been put in place to address this. These schemes include sharing of modules among fellow students using a lending-retrieval scheme for the modules, collection of printing fee (PhP 600 or USD 12) from students who can afford to pay, utilization of the DepEd ADM budget (PhP 40,000 up to PhP 100,000 or USD 800 to USD 2,000), mobilization of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and the local government for additional funds, and holding of fund-raising activities like the *Share-a-Peso*, *Save-a-SARDO*.³

Aside from the modules, other learning resources used in the OHSP are books and reading materials such as dictionaries, encyclopedia, CDs, comics, magazines, journals, newspapers, and old notes; resources from the internet; and school supplies such as notebooks, paper, computer, calculator, compass, ruler, scissors, carpentry materials, and science equipment.

Classrooms, school libraries, computer laboratories, guidance offices or community learning centers are utilized by the OHSP learners as venues for their class meetings. In some implementing schools, math

3 SEAMEO INNOTECH, *Evaluation of the Open High School Program in the Philippines* (Quezon City, Philippines: SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2015).

laboratories, science laboratories, computer laboratories, speech laboratories, cafeterias, gymnasiums, audio-visual rooms, guidance offices, school clinics, reading centers/laboratories, museums, and other learning resource centers are also made available for OHSP use.

Instructional Delivery

Instruction is primarily delivered through the EASE self-instructional modules which learners bring home to read on their own and at their own pace. Aside from home, students may also study in school or at the workplace. To complement this modular approach, schools utilize a variety of methods such as work-oriented approach, process-oriented methods, media-assisted learning, flexible or blended learning, group or cooperative learning, individualized instruction, and face-to-face or guided instruction. Another scheme is peer learning where regular high school students are tapped to assist OHSP students in difficult subjects.



Students preparing for their class in Makati National High School. (Photo credit: SEAMEO INNOTECH)

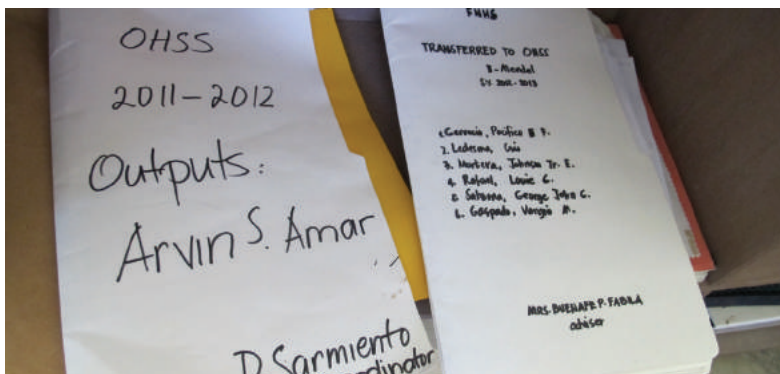
Teachers give tutorials to students who have difficulty understanding the modules or who do not have copies of the modules. In addition, schools provide OHSP students the same opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities, such as attend sports and arts programs, cultural activities, educational trips, bonding activities, and social events like the Junior-Senior Program. OHSP students also participate in practice and make-up tests and are allowed to sit-in on classes for regular students. OHSP students reported that opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities are one of the stimulating and rewarding OHSP activities.

Learner Assessment

Assessment of student performance is conducted using methods similar to those used in the regular high school program. These assessment methods include written and oral tests, portfolio assessment, and practical tests. Other measures are self-assessment activities contained in the modules and student-teacher interviews.

Students are evaluated by their subject area teachers and are promoted based on a mastery of at least 75 percent of the subject area competencies.

Similar to the regular school program, OHSP also implements retention and student recognition. A separate recognition for outstanding OHSP students in each year level is carried out. Likewise, awards in different subject areas are given to exceptional students. The evaluation study showed that there was no significant difference between the academic performance of students in the OHSP and students in the regular school system.



Portfolio outputs from an OHSP student in Ferrol National High School. (Photo credit: SEAMEO INNOTECH)

Quality Assurance Mechanism

To ensure the quality of the program and its implementation, monitoring and evaluation is conducted at different levels of the Philippine Department of Education. The local DepEd office (division office) is tasked to monitor the OHSP implementation and conduct a summative evaluation at the end of the school year with the DORP councils (school and division levels) and school head on the methodologies used, student performance and local government unit (LGU)/community support. On the other hand, the DepEd regional office tracks the results of the program. The national DepEd office also conducts its own annual monitoring.

At the school level, the school principals and designated OHSP coordinators are assigned to monitor the program. The OHSP Coordinator, together with the school DORP Council, evaluates the performance of the OHSP teacher-facilitators.

At the student level, teacher-facilitators and guidance counselors monitor student participation and progress as well as the lending and retrieval of modules. Progress is tracked through the usual learner assessment as well as the social media and the National Achievement Test (NAT) scores of OHSP students.

Schools conduct their own evaluation and track the program using learner's progress reports and testimonials as the main monitoring tools. Other forms of monitoring are "anecdotal journals and similar narrative reports, home visits, interviews or oral reports, personal consultation dialogues with learners, monthly meetings, surveys, teacher-facilitator reports, and undocumented reports from employers."

Elements of Success

The number of OHSP enrollees and graduates, participation in post-secondary education programs, and the decrease in the number of dropouts are good success indicators of the program. Based on the evaluation study, nine schools experienced a 70.09 percent increase in their OHSP enrolment on average within a period of ten years. They also reported a 90 to 100 percent graduation rate of their OHSP students. Seven of these schools confirmed that their graduates have taken up tertiary education while others secured local and overseas employment. On the other hand, 11 revealed a decrease in their dropout rate with three of these schools reporting a zero dropout rate.

The study also showed that the OHSP students and regular students performed at the same level in 35 percent of the comparisons of academic performance in five subject areas across 4 year levels. In

about 4 percent of these, the OHSP students performed better while in 61 percent of the comparisons, regular students performed higher.

The success of the OHSP program can be attributed to the following:

“
There is minimal disparity in the academic performance of OHSP students and regular students
”

1. **Teaching-learning process.** The modular approach to learning coupled with face-to-face meetings offered flexibility in terms of learning pace and time. Overaged learners, working students, teenage mothers or students in difficult circumstances were able to study in their homes, workplaces or even in school and work around their other duties or situation. Teachers also employed a number of teaching-learning strategies that are individualized and work-oriented.
2. **School leadership.** Administrators of schools with OHSP assumed a spectrum of roles—from leading the overall supervision of the program to performing more technical tasks such as coordination work and consultation. They facilitated the advocacy and continuity of the program, resource mobilization, and linkages with the local government, NGOs, and community, all of which were contributory to the success of the program.
3. **Instructional materials.** The modules were viewed as “appropriate and easy to use” as attested by teachers and students. The content of the modules was found sufficient and the sequence of the content and time allotment, very

satisfactory. In addition, the modules, together with other learning materials (e.g., DepEd Tech-Voc materials, workbooks/ textbooks, online and digitized resources), were sufficient in guiding the learning of the OHSP students. They were readable, relevant to real-world application, free of errors, and provided accurate information.

4. **Learning environment and facilities.** Schools provided learning spaces for the OHSP students. They allowed the use of classrooms from the regular program or allotted rooms (or buildings) exclusively for OHSP class meetings. Facilities in the school such as libraries, science and computer laboratories, speech laboratories, among others, were also made available to OHSP students.

5. **LGU support and community/parent involvement.** Schools received solid support from the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and local government for OHSP. LGUs and PTAs provided the honoraria/additional compensation of part-time teachers and OHSP coordinators, and engaged in program advocacy, skills training, materials reproduction, and provision of facilities and scholarship grants, etc. Non-government organizations (NGOs), private sector partners, alumni and private individuals also helped with the implementation of OHSP by offering financial and human resources.

6. **Teachers.** Teacher-facilitators typically spent five hours a week for OHSP work. They were accommodating, approachable, competent, patient, supportive, available for consultation, and “motherly,” acting as “second parents” to OHSP students. Based on students’ experiences, OHSP teachers were sensitive to the situation of the learners and would extend financial support

for materials, transportation and meals of indigent students. In addition, teachers would also give counselling and advice to the students, e.g., psycho-social support to learners who had traumatic experiences or went through crisis.

Innovative/Best Practices

There were several innovations that were initiated by OHSP-implementing schools to facilitate the implementation of the program. These were:

- ▶ emphasis on individualized learning plans (Makati High School) online OHSP for 22 Grade 7 and 51 Grade 8 students (Bacolod City National High School)
- ▶ livelihood support for OHSP students and their parents through the Public Employment Service Office (PESO) program (Kabasalan National High School)



OHSP students who availed of the Bahay Sagip Program in Kabasalan National High School. (Photo credit: SEAMEO INNOTECH)



Ferrol National High School in Romblon (Photo credit: SEAMEO INNOTECH)

- ▶ development of OHSP workbooks (Bangao National High School)
- ▶ development of modules in English and math by teacher-facilitators (Ferrol National High School)
- ▶ temporary lodging for OHSP students (Odiongan National High School and Kabasalan National High School)
- ▶ reading hub as OHSP classroom (Kabasalan National High School)
- ▶ remedial program called “Word to Teach the World” (Kabasalan National High School)

In terms of teaching techniques, Sangley Point National High School teachers employed a guided, individualized and media-assisted teaching based on the type of learner (i.e., guided or independent learner). Kabasalan National High School implemented a peer-learning program called “Reach for the Stars.” Parang National High School teachers also used individualized and flexible learning techniques.

Sustainability Mechanism

The OHSP has been implemented for more than a decade and various sustainability mechanisms have been employed and implemented by DepEd as well as the schools. These are as follows:

▶ Advocacy and Promotion

Schools actively disseminate information about the OHSP in their communities through distribution of flyers, hanging of streamers, and holding of orientation meetings with students, parents/guardians and local government officials during summer break/prior to enrollment.

Activities such as motorcades, barangay nights, local festivals and local radio programs are also employed as platforms to promote the program. The best advocacy and promotion resource, however, are the students themselves who are living proof of how OHSP can make a difference.

▶ Utilization of Monitoring and Evaluation Results

A monitoring and evaluation system has been adopted by the schools where results are used in assigning teaching loads, and requesting financial resources from the local government and NGOs. Schools have also incorporated the evaluation results in the School Improvement Plan (SIP), Annual Improvement Plan (AIP) or the Annual Work Plans (AWPs) as a way to improve the implementation of the OHSP.

Reporting on the progress of the program is also accomplished by the schools. Many schools submit reports to the DepEd offices every quarter.

► **Other Support**

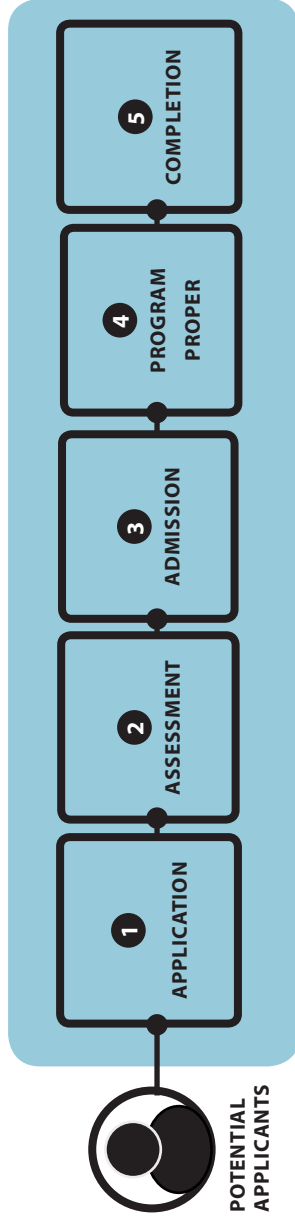
There are financial assistance programs for students, and parent seminars. Other forms of support include provision of free school supplies during school opening, free lodging within the school campus, and free meals for stay-in students.

Aside from school-based initiatives, several organizations, both local and foreign, have been supporting the OHSP programs. These include the local governments, NGOs and international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Labor Organization (ILO), and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). One example was the “Work-to-Earn” program of the local government where students perform odd jobs in school in exchange for allowance every week.

In addition, parents offer support in the form of financial assistance and moral support. Parents are mostly the source of inspiration of children in the OHSP. Students seek advice or counsel, assistance in their assignments, or supervision in their studies. Other sources of domestic support include siblings and guardians.

A flowchart on the implementation process is illustrated in **FIGURE 4.**

FIGURE 4
OHSP Process Flow (as of July 2008)



1

APPLICATION

- High school report card
- Elementary report card
- PEPT qualifying certificate

2

ASSESSMENT

- Independent Learning Readiness Test
- Informal Reading Inventory
- Interview with applicant and parent/guardian

3

ADMISSION

- Orientation with learner and parent/guardian
- Learning contract with learner and parent/guardian



POTENTIAL APPLICANTS

1

APPLICATION

2

ASSESSMENT

3

ADMISSION

4

PROGRAM PROPER

5

COMPLETION

4

PROGRAM PROPER

- Program schedules
 - Enrolment: June every year
 - Meetings: first semester –weekly; second semester – monthly
- Learning Resource Distribution
 - Module I of all subject areas released to learners at the same time
 - Module II released to learners upon attainment of at least 75% conceptual understanding of the lesson on a subject per subject basis
- Delivery System
 - Flexible, multi-channelled, learner-directed
 - Class meetings: performance monitoring, coaching, counselling
- Learner Assessment
 - Same as for the regular high school
 - Written, oral tests, performance tests with products
 - Promotion based on fulfilment of requirements and mastery of at least 75% of competencies in each subject
 - Acceleration by learning area and by year level upon fulfilment of requirements and mastery of at least 90% of competencies in each subject

5

COMPLETION

- Maximum of six years
- Graduate with high school diploma

Challenges and Issues

While there are numerous good and innovative practices in the OHSP, implementers had to contend with several challenges in delivering the program. Among those documented in the evaluation study, the areas that posed the biggest challenge and require the most improvement are as follows:

1. **Funding.** A major difficulty that schools had encountered was the lack of sustained financial support for the OHSP, especially during the early years of the implementation. Schools require adequate resources to reproduce the learning modules and testing materials. Many of the schools had to seek assistance from the private sector to fill the funding gap. At present, schools can access funds from the DepEd ADM budget for OHSP implementation.

Financial difficulties were felt not only by the schools but by many of the OHSP learners as well. Students were sometimes burdened with financial problems and had difficulty paying for photocopies of the modules and other learning materials, transportation, and the use of the internet to download modules. In addition, some students found it difficult to submit assignments and projects, take examinations, and even show up for the occasional classroom meetings because of limited funds.

2. **Curriculum and learning materials.** The content and type of learning materials are recognized as a contributing factor to the program's success. Yet, some implementing schools were found to have incomplete set of modules, particularly in English, as well

as modules for Grades 8 to 10. In addition, these materials are still anchored on the old RBEC curriculum since the modules were developed before the K to 12 education reform. There is now an urgent need to realign the modules to the new

curriculum. Given the two additional years in high school (Senior High School Program), the curriculum and corresponding subjects for these two grade levels also need to be planned and developed. Addressing other aspects of the program like procedures and delivery mechanisms in the operationalization of OHSP will also likely need to be modified to be consistent with the new K to 12 system.

Aside from updating the module content, the learning materials also need substantial improvement to further simplify the content and enhance the level of interactivity to enrich the independent learning experience of the students.

3. **Advocacy.** Some perceive the advocacy and promotion of the program to be inadequate. Lack of information about the program at times led to confusion of the learners and their parents. There is a need to strengthen linkages with stakeholders and develop dissemination strategies about the program.

“

The learning materials of the program should be realigned to the K-12 curriculum

”



An article in a school paper that describes the OHSS and provides contact details of the program coordinator. (Photo credit: SEAMEO INNOTECH)

4. **Capacity building.** Some teachers, school heads and OHSP coordinators lacked familiarity with recent policy issuances on the OHSP and some components of the OHSP delivery and implementation strategies and procedures. Thus, refresher activities or additional training programs may be necessary for field implementers to more efficiently implement the program. Topics identified as priority training needs in the evaluation study include relevant implementing guidelines, class management, blended learning delivery, assessment of learners, roles of teachers, importance of weekly meetings, use of modules and other materials, home visitations, among others. In addition, with the current adoption of the K to 12 curriculum, OHSP school implementers need to be oriented on this new curriculum and its implications for the OHSP.

5. **Monitoring and evaluation.** There are varied forms of implementation of the OHS program across the country. A uniform set of monitoring and evaluation tools has yet to be fully developed. At the same time, the planned monthly monitoring and evaluation activities were not always implemented. In the past five years, monitoring has been carried out mostly at the school level and rarely at the division level.

In view of these evaluation study findings, it is recommended that standard monitoring and evaluation tools be developed and an efficient mechanism to track graduates and learners (promoted or mainstreamed) be launched.

Open High School Program in Makati High School



A class meeting in Makati High School (Photo credit: SEAMEO INNOTECH)

Makati High School in Makati City is one of the pilot schools of the Open High School Program. It has been offering the OHSP since 2001 in response to the increasing incidence of dropouts and to give SARDOs, OSY, and working students the chance to finish high school. The school's implementation of OHSP is notable, having provided the students with full-time OHSP teacher-facilitators, two classrooms for class meetings, and implementation strategies, such as the use of student individualized plans and regular conduct of weekly meetings.

The school implements the program using the prescribed curriculum, learning resources, and instructional strategies, as described in the previous chapter. In SY 2012-13, Makati High School had 341 OHSP students (212 males, 129 females) with eight full-time teachers, one full-time coordinator, and one guidance counselor.

OHSP graduates from Makati High School have been increasing in number, relative to the number of enrollees from SY 2003-04 to SY 2011-12. About 77.04 to 100 percent of the enrollees graduated from the program. Many graduates proceeded to college while those who started off with odd jobs became permanently employed.

This section highlights the best practices and accomplishments of the school in implementing the OHSP from SY 2001-2002 to SY 2012-2013.

Curriculum and Delivery Strategies

In Makati High School, the curriculum was delivered through the use of the modules alongside the weekly formal classes. Although DepEd does not require regular weekly meetings, the school successfully implemented a regular weekly schedule where one day was allotted for a class meeting for a particular year level. Teachers used these meetings to monitor student progress and teacher-student consultations. Another initiative established by the school was the use of individualized learning plans for the OHSP learners. While not required by DepEd, Makati High School utilized these plans to help students adjust to the regular school environment.

The school also provided full-time teachers for OHSP load beginning 2009. These teachers were trained by the school and the local DepEd office (division office). The local government also funded a training on preparing and managing blended learning strategies for OHSP.

Instructional Strategies and Learning Facilities

Weekly meetings were held so students can “receive additional instruction, assignments and other class requirements; submit homework and other documents; consult or confer with teacher-facilitators regarding any difficulties with class requirements.” The school provided two classrooms for the use of OHSP students for their weekly meetings.

Modules on different subject areas were given to students for them to work on during the week. Students were also given experiments which they accomplish with the assistance of their teachers.



Photos of activities held in OHSP (Photo credit: SEAMEO INNOTECH)

Assessment

As prerequisites of the OHSP, entrants had to take the IRI and the ILRT, and were asked to submit their elementary report card. For returning high school dropouts, the high school report card, PEPT qualifying certificate, and birth certificate were required.

Teachers used similar assessment methods as those administered to students in regular classes, such as periodic examination, quizzes, accomplished modules and worksheets, projects, research papers, experiments, and assignments. Students were promoted based on compliance with requirements, but at their own learning pace. Like students in regular classes, OHSP students who failed to achieve the required mastery level had to repeat the same year level.

Support Systems

Support to the program was available from different groups, such as:

- ▶ Teachers who, aside from being educators, were perceived as “second parents,” with students consulting them on personal and family problems;
- ▶ The school head who provided substantial assistance to the OHSP students, especially in ensuring the availability of teaching and learning materials;
- ▶ Local government unit which provided the school with equipment, such as computers, television and educational videos, and sponsored division-wide teacher training programs; and

- ▶ Stakeholders like the parents/guardians of OHSP students and employers of working students who extended understanding and support given the nature of instructional delivery of the OHSP.

Advocacy

The school was proactive in their advocacy and promotion of the program. Activities such as student orientation and PTA meetings were used as platforms to introduce the OHSP. The school head also visited barangays (villages) to promote the program.



An article about OHSP featured in a national broadsheet. (Photo credit: SEAMEO INNOTECH)

Challenges and Issues

OHSP students did not have individual copies of the modules since DepEd did not distribute enough copies and did not provide funds to reproduce the materials. The school reported that the modules were also outdated given the recent K to 12 education reform by DepEd and require updating. The school also used some of its Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) from the regular program for OHSP operations since it was not able to access ADM funds.

Facilities to support blended learning such as a good internet connection were not available, hence options for using online or virtual teaching, while desired, could not be used.

Outcomes

Despite the challenges faced by Makati High School in implementing the OHSP, it was able to produce successful graduates with college diplomas and stable jobs. The school felt proud that there was a marked improvement in the lives of the students after completing their secondary education under the OHSP.

Conclusion

The Open High School Program relies on independent learning through the use of modules in delivering secondary education. It combines self-paced modular methods with face-to-face interaction, allowing learners to study at their own pace but reinforcing instruction and guidance through class meetings. It offers learners who are out of school and those at risk of dropping out more flexibility in terms of time and learning pace.

Since it is an alternative modality within the formal school system, OHSP follows the national curriculum used in the regular high school program, applies the same assessment methods, and mobilizes the teachers from the regular program. However, OHSP implementers have modified some elements to conform to the characteristics and needs of the learners. Individualized plans and teaching methods are emphasized under OHSP.

The extra hours dedicated by school administrators, teacher-facilitators, OHSP coordinators, and other members of the school OHSP team to OHSP work show their commitment to the program. Stakeholders such as the parents and local government have also been instrumental in the success of the program by providing moral support as well as program resources. The DepEd offices have also played an important role in providing policy guidance, capacity building, and implementing mechanisms in relation to the program.

Implementing schools have also developed innovations for better delivery of the OHSP and for keeping students who are constrained by financial difficulties or distance from school. They also supported

student learning through a variety of student-focused programs and teaching methods. These good practices can be adopted by other OHSP schools.

On the other hand, the OHSP still has areas that need improvement, such as financial support, curriculum and learning materials, advocacy, capacity building, and monitoring and evaluation system. A more pressing need is the alignment of the program with the K to 12 curriculum, particularly the new senior high school program.

Despite these limitations, the OHSP has proven to be an effective response to curtailing the increase in dropout rates, keeping the would-be school leavers, and decongesting overcrowded classrooms. As evidenced by the increase in OHSP enrollment, the number of its graduates, and the comparative performance of OHSP learners with their formal school counterparts, the OHSP is a promising model for delivering secondary education to OSY and learners at risk of dropping out.

The full report on the “**Evaluation of Open High School Program in the Philippines**” is available at www.seameo-innotech.org

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