

## **Systems Analysis in Education: Reflecting on Qatari Educational System's Best Practices to Enrich Philippine Educational Standards**

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### **Abstract**

This research paper puts forward a discourse on the possibility of enriching the Philippine educational system by looking at Qatar's education sector. It extrapolates recommendations that will help Filipinos achieve fair access to education by strengthening nationalism for sustainable development and involving all stakeholders in educational reform. The qualitative research paper explores critical tenets of the aforementioned systems to draw out possible strengths and minimize limitations. Given a globalized education, educational reforms are never just an option but a necessity to help nationals and countries alike to meet the demands of this fast-paced and ever-changing world. The study argues that Philippine education can be at par with international standards if changes in the system may be seen, implemented, and sustained. Qatar's best practices may shed light on the Philippines' age-old educational problems and help the country address the demands and challenges of this contemporary era.

Keywords: Education System, Qatar, Philippines, K-12 program

### **1. Introduction**

"The strength of a nation greatly depends on the strength of its education system (Sergio, 2011, 70)." Education has a primordial effect on the individual's quality of life and positively impacts the country's overall status. Education

contributes to the person's well-being both on the personal and societal levels. In today's world, formal education is no longer conceived as a preparation for life, following the linear perspective of study, work, and retirement. On the contrary, it is now participatory, liberatory, and growth-inducing. It propels human development to new heights. "Education has been looked into as the means of alleviating poverty, decreasing criminalities, increasing economic benefits and ultimately uplifting the standard of living of the Filipino masses (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 65)."

"Education as a dynamic and time-tested social force has long been recognized as the mirror of historical changes (De Guzman, 2003, 39)." Economic, political, social, spiritual, and technological changes should always be considered in educational systems and pedagogies. Curricular reforms and policies should be based on and directed by these different elements of society. Failure of any school system to consider these forces may be haphazard to teaching and learning in general. A school system that does not heed the signs of the times and run contrary to the forces of nature is bound to fail.

"The Philippine Educational System is a clear example of a boat sailing in a body of changes and challenges (De Guzman, 2003, 39). It has passed through different stages and has been a witness to the various epochs of Philippine history. Its long years of exposure to colonial powers have created a myriad of educational notions and modalities. Until today, the impacts of the Spanish, American, and Japanese thinking on the Philippine educational system are still seen. Corruption and poverty, along with these foreign influences, comprise the issues and concerns that this system needs to address.

Therefore, there is a need to solve the present maladies that beset the Philippine education system. Despite the country's rich

resources, from its forests to vast bodies of water covering the archipelago, many Filipinos still cannot afford quality education. On the contrary, Qatar, being a relatively new country, has quickly evolved into a knowledge-based society and economy. “With that goal in mind, Qatar has diverted significant resources to construct a cutting-edge educational system. For example, the state has constructed Education City, which hosts satellite campuses of the American universities: Georgetown, Texas A & M, Carnegie Mellon, Cornell, and Northwestern (Alshawi, 2013, 47).” Presently, Qatar prepares its youth to participate in that knowledge-based society while attracting students from outside the country.

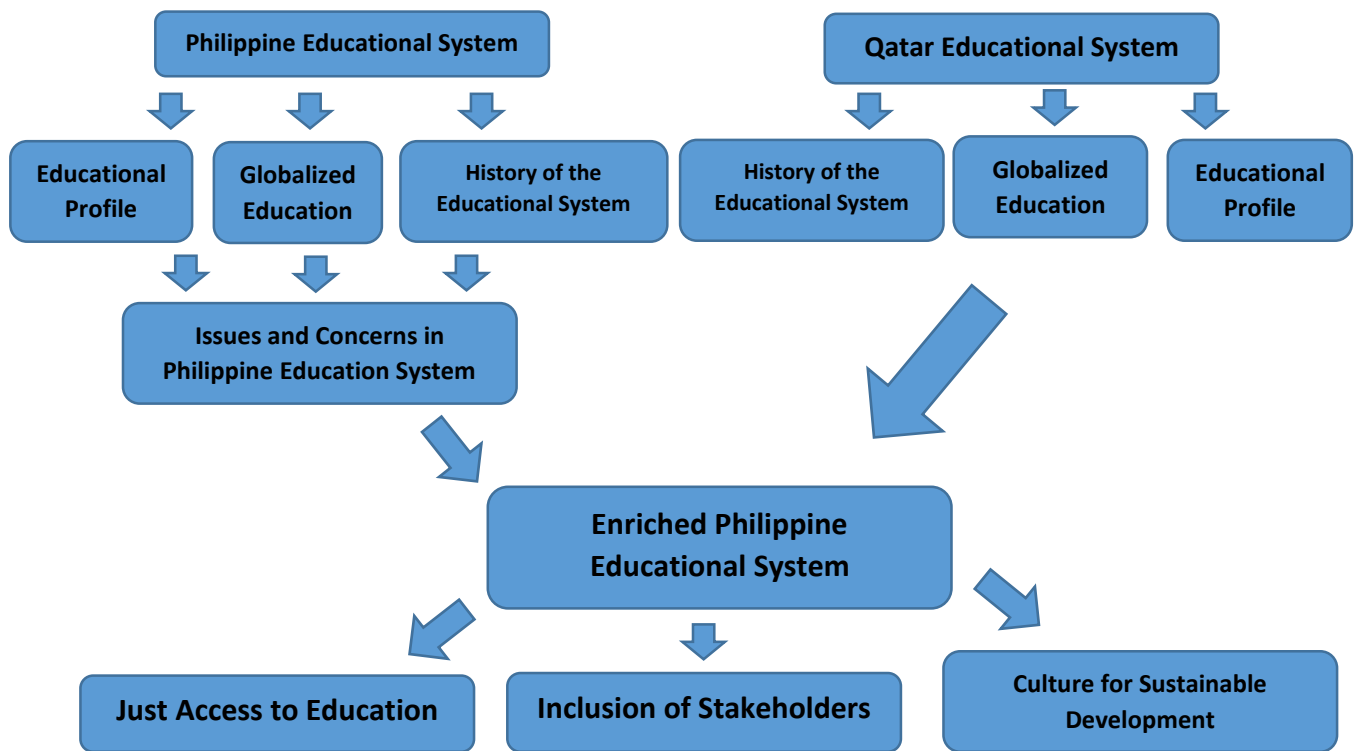
The Philippine education system can learn a thing or two by looking at how Qatari educational standards have evolved over the years. From a small nomadic country to one of the most progressive countries in the world, Qatar has embarked on a journey to make its youth globally competitive. As a result, new pedagogies and structures were introduced to better prepare Qatari nationals and residents for the world ahead. This is why it is crucial to reevaluate the Philippine educational system in light of how Qatari education has improved in just a short period.

The present study evaluates the characteristics of the Philippine and Qatari educational systems. This qualitative study employs literature analysis to explore and analyze the concepts and ideas incorporated in both systems. The study is not a mere comparison of both approaches but a critical analysis of how the latter can enrich the former. Through constructivism, recommendations were created for Philippine education to add to human flourishing and for Filipino students to be competitive in the global market.

This goes without saying that the Qatari educational system is not devoid of areas of

growth. However, the present research is interested in how a relatively small country can “launch a major education reform to establish it as a fully-developed nation (Karkouti, 2016, 182).” Before the discovery of oil, Qatar was a poor tribal nation where the main sources were pearl hunting, camel breeding, and fishing (Brewer et al., 2007; Rostron, 2009; Karkouti, 2016). Qatar’s progress and transformation were unprecedented, and in September 2011, “Qatar officially became the wealthiest nation in the world, as measured by per capita gross domestic product (Edwards, 2011; Karkouti, 2016). The country’s forward march has become unparalleled, from its tribal past to witnessing substantial development in economics, politics, and education.

The main objective of this research paper is to create recommendations to enrich the Philippine educational system. To do this, the following specific objectives are mentioned: (1) Explore the educational profiles of the Philippines and Qatar; (2) Review the history of both systems; (3) Analyze both systems through the lens of a globalized society; (4) Identify issues and concerns in the Philippine educational system; (5) Create recommendations for the enrichment of the Philippine educational system vis-à-vis the Qatari educational system. The study’s conceptual framework is found below:



**2. Contextualization**  
**2.1 Education Profile**  
**2.1.1 Philippine Demographics and Education Profile**

The Philippines is a country located in South-East Asia. It has over 7000 islands divided into three main regions; Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Its capital city is Manila. The country's official religion is Catholicism. Multiple languages and dialects are spoken all over the archipelago. The official language, however, is Filipino.

The Department of Education (DepEd) is the central government agency responsible for implementing basic education. DepEd supervises primary, secondary, and non-formal education. There are two other government agencies responsible for higher education and skills training. On the one hand, CHED (Commission on Higher Education) is responsible for college and postgraduate studies. TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority),

on the other hand, administers postsecondary and middle-level human resources training and development. The school year typically runs from

June to March. Some schools, nevertheless, have adopted the western academic year, which runs from August to May. School days usually last for five days, from Monday to Friday. Since the official religion is Catholicism, holidays connected to the aforementioned religion are observed. Other holidays are observed as well.

Philippine education is patterned after the American system, with English as the medium of instruction except for subjects taught in Filipino (Araling Panlipunan and Filipino). Philippine schools are classified into public (government-owned) and private (individually or corporately-owned). The general pattern of education follows four phases: pre-primary level, elementary, high school, and college. However, with the recent introduction of the K-12 program, there have

been two additional years in the basic education program.

Philippine education is geared towards pursuing a better quality of life for the Filipinos. It champions the idea that schooling brings inclusive growth through empowering the poor and the marginalized and simultaneously as a means towards sustainable development. Filipinos generally recognize education's vital role in upward social and economic mobility. It is so important a matter that most Filipinos see it as their entrance ticket to a life worthy of human beings. Therefore, parents usually work hard for their children to study and graduate. In a country such as the Philippines, one who finishes college is considered to have more employment opportunities than one who does not.

### **2.1.2 Qatar Demographics and Educational System Profile**

Qatar is a rich Arab gulf state with one of the world's largest gas reserves. It is a member of the Gulf Cooperating Council, including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, among others. "In 1971, Qatar gained its independence as a monarchy presiding over it an Emir who has full legislative and executive power (Al-Banal & Nasser, 2015, 678)." Its official religion is Islam. Hence, holidays connected to Islam are observed. "Qatari people speak Arabic, the country's official language, while foreign residents speak numerous other languages such as English, French, Urdu, and Persian (Karkouti, 2016, 182)" Unlike the Philippines, which is multiethnic and multilingual, Qatar has only one culture and one language.

"Qatar's natural resources (i.e., oil and natural gas) generate substantial revenues that enhance the country's economic development (Rostron, 2009)." Since it enjoys the massive gas reserves needed by the global market, this small country has provided its citizens with many social benefits, from free healthcare to allowances for widows and orphans and, most

importantly, free education for all. With the majority of labor dependent on migrant workers and the Qatari population only amounting to a few hundred thousand, the "current gross national income per capita in Qatar is approximately \$88,000 (Greenfield, 2012)."

Before the discovery of oil, there was no formal education in the country. No schools were operational at that time. "Education was mostly run by the Kuttab, known by the name 'traveling educators' who would travel from one village to another teaching language and the Quran. Education gained nationwide attention during the 1950s when schools were opened, and the Ministry of Education was established. "Since its formation, the Ministry of Education in Qatar played a dominant role in framing the educational policies and curriculum (Althani & Romanowski, 2013, 2)." In 2004, the Ministry of Education was metamorphosed into the Supreme Education Council.

The educational system in Qatar follows the British system. This adaptation is no surprise as the country has been under British rule. It has "three levels of general education including primary grades (grades 1-6), preparatory (7-9), and secondary (grades 10-12)." (Al-Banal & Nasser, 2015, 678). The school year runs from August to May. School days usually span from Sunday-Thursday. Moreover, government schools are segregated by gender due to culture and religion. For Qatari, one must study not because education alleviates poverty but because one has to help the country preserve its status and to acquire skills needed to participate in the nation's economic and social life.

"At all levels, public education is fully financed by the Qatari government. Education is provided at no cost to local students, including textbooks, uniforms, transportation, and other necessities (Karkouti, 2016, 183)." It could be surmised, therefore, that Qatar's vast oil reserves, total local population, and GDP are the primary

reasons this small nation-state has been at the helm of progress in the last few decades. Qatar’s progress now allowed it to exert its influence in the Middle East and worldwide. Given its riches and governance, it can implement reforms on a massive scale, education included.

## 2.2 History of the Systems

### 2.2.1 Philippine Education as a History of Struggle

“The economic situation during the pre-colonial times was the great contributor and a major factor in the system of education in the Philippines (Musa & Ziatdinov, 2012, 155).” Since economic provisions were simple, ancient Filipinos did not see the need to learn many things. There was no formal and systemic form of education in ancient Philippine society. Many people, however, could read and write Tagalog in its original script, *baybayin*. Parents and elders provided children with vocational training such as hunting, planting, and household chores. The educational system back then was informal and unstructured. Then foreign powers came, conquered the country, and Filipinos and education were forever changed.

Philippine education has liberation at its core. It “is a product of a long history of struggle (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 61).” The catalyst for its realization was the generation of colonial rule. Its awakening was a gradual process brought about by centuries of colonialism from the Spaniards to the Americans, to the Japanese, and even during times of national turmoil and revolution.

“National education in the Philippines has historically been influenced by the political and economic interests of colonial powers (Riep, 2015, 7).” “From the coming of Legazpi in 1570 to 1762, the natives were contented to be vassals of Spain (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 61).” The Spaniards prevailed in using Catholicism to make the Filipinos submissive and docile. The virtues of humility and passiveness were put on a pedestal as Filipinos blindly obeyed their foreign masters in hoping for paradise in the afterlife. The conquistadores did not see the need for the Filipinos to be educated since education is both liberatory and participatory in nature.

Education Profile	Philippine System	Qatari System
Official Religion	Catholicism	Islam
Medium of Instruction	English, Filipino, Mother Tongue	Arabic, English
Format	American	British
Academic Year	June-March (with a few exceptions)	August-May
School Day	Monday-Friday	Sunday-Thursday
Class Grouping	Homogenous & Heterogeneous	Homogenous (Gender-based)
Government Agencies Responsible for Education	Department of Education (DepEd) Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)	Ministry of Education transformed into Supreme Education Council
Purpose of Education	Upward Social Mobility	Acquisition of skills for global and local participation

Figure 1: Education Profile Comparative Table

Nevertheless, education is something that can never be contained. The second phase of Spanish colonization marked a revolution. It paved the way for social and critical queries, reflection, and a gradual acknowledgment that education is needed even in colonial societies. “The global changes during that time, like the opening of the Suez Canal, the French Revolution, and the opening of the Philippines to world trade and commerce, among others, provided the opportunity for the *illustrados* (the educated class during the Spanish period) to send their children to school, even in Europe (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 61-62).” Education is slowly gaining national attention, experiencing its renaissance.

Despite education gradually making its presence felt, “history tells us that education during the Spanish colonization was selective (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 62).” Only affluent Filipino families can send their children to school. It was more of a privilege than a fundamental human right. Hence, only a few chosen people can reap the benefits of education. “Only the *illustrados*, the likes of Jose Rizal, the Luna brothers, the Pardo de Taveras and others, availed of it, even with harsh treatment and discrimination from their Spanish contemporaries (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 62). Educational opportunities were so limited that they did more harm than good. Education, which should be for all, has established a great divide between those who know from those who do not know. Admittedly, it has created a gap between the *illustrados* and the masses and has widened it to massive proportions. Spaniards even designed the curriculum to “produce loyal colonial subjects under the direction of the Catholic Church Riep, 2017, 7).” Although these *illustrados* sought freedom and national reforms from Spain, it just could not happen as education became a barrier to Filipino unity.

Spanish policy neglected the natives and their burning desire for liberation through education. The *illustrados*, who were at the helm of leadership at that time, failed to unite Filipinos under the banner of freedom. The masses are now beginning to realize that peaceful means to achieve freedom are all to no avail. The arrest and execution of Rizal marked the end of the pen and the start of the sword. Nothing could ever appease Filipinos now except that much-desired independence. The revolution heralded the Spanish regime’s end and the American reign’s beginning.

While the Spaniards kept education in an ivory tower, the Americans gave it freely to the natives. Under the badge of religion, Spain was successful in turning the natives’ gaze toward the afterlife, and whatever pain and suffering they experience will be rewarded. The Americans, on the contrary, established schools all over the country. The natives were taught how to read and write. Education is now turning in a new direction under the Americans, sending the first wave of American teachers, the Thomasites. The “natives learned American geography, American history, lives of American heroes, sang the Star-Spangled Banner, and learned the English language. The Americans were successful in making the natives their little brown brothers (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 62).”

The Americans made education accessible to all regardless of status in life. The literacy rate has increased dramatically, making Filipinos appreciate the Americans more. The once ignorant people are now imbued with social mobility, civic consciousness, and political participation. “It is undeniable that the establishment of the public school system was beneficial to the Filipinos and the Philippines. Even if its impact cannot be quantified, it was assumed that higher literacy rate among the people contributed to the improvement of their standard of living, improvement in public health,

and employment opportunities that hasten economic growth (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 62-63).”

Despite the merits of the education introduced by the Americans, it has its share of disadvantages. Philippine education is a history of struggle precisely because it has struggled against colonial forces. During the Spanish period, the struggle was to make education available for all. The issue was accessibility, as only a handful of Filipinos were given the privilege to study. It could be argued, in addition, that Spanish rule lasted for decades since education was not freely provided, keeping the Filipinos’ love for their country at bay.

During the American colonization, however, a new struggle was born. The struggle is not anymore the clamor for accessibility since the Americans brought education to the different parts of the country. “American education was the water that gradually diminished the spark of burning Filipino nationalism (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 63).” The educational system that was formed served the Americans more than it helped the Filipinos. The Americans, under benevolent assimilation, seemingly guided the Filipinos. However, the fact remains that the latter are still under the former’s rule and that the latter are forced to weave their lives according to American regulations and culture.

While the Spaniards used religion as their tool for colonization, Americans used education. Education, liberatory in nature, is used as an instrument of submission and to pacify Filipino resistance to American colonial rule. The struggle, born from using education as a derogatory tool, is to remain Filipino despite strong colonial influences. “It gradually

<b>Historical Epoch</b>	<b>Educational Emphasis/Characteristics</b>
Pre-colonial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no standard and systemic form of education.</li> <li>• <i>Baybayin</i> was used to communicate.</li> </ul>
Spanish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religion controlled education.</li> <li>• Education was a luxury for the wealthy few.</li> <li>• The curriculum was designed to produce loyal subjects.</li> </ul>
American	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public schools were established.</li> <li>• English became the medium of instruction.</li> <li>• The literacy rate increased, but the sense of nationalism declined.</li> </ul>
Japanese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public schools were destroyed.</li> <li>• Japanese way of life and greater appreciation for what is Asian were taught (Asian-centered education).</li> </ul>
Contemporary Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Globalized education</li> <li>• Time to rebuild the image of the Filipinos as a group of people and as a country</li> </ul>

disoriented the Filipinos’ sense of national identity because it introduced them into an entirely new world (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 63).” They learned everything American, from the clothes they wear to the language they speak. They were alienated from their roots, colonial

mentality began to sink in, and American miseducation started. “They were a people possessing no nationalism in their hearts which will spur them to sacrifice for the welfare of the country (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 63).” Hence, the Filipinos’ loyalty toward their country was gravely jeopardized. American influence is too permeating and still has a hegemonic effect in today’s education. “Despite the Philippines having gained independence from the US in 1946, the national objectives of education have continued to reflect a neocolonial position of subservient dependency (Riep, 2015, 7).”

The Japanese came to the country just like a storm, and American forces in the country knelt in defeat. Despite being an American colony, the Filipinos fought with the Americans as a form of *‘utang na loob.’* This was a clear indication that American education succeeded in molding the minds and character of the Filipinos to appreciate and repay this gift from their big white brother (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 63).” The Japanese destroyed the public school system and used education for their purpose, just like the Americans. They began to build Japanese established schools, and there was a general breakdown of Filipino values.

The period after the war marked a time of rebuilding. There was a colossal rebuilding not only of infrastructures destroyed during the war but who the Filipinos are and the values they cherish. Philippine education was again a struggle. The struggle was to pick up the shattered image of Filipinos and their culture. There was also a clamor for education to be Filipino-centered so that Filipinos could again appreciate their culture’s beauty. There is a growing appeal for a democratic and relevant education, which is a right, not a privilege.

Figure 2: History of the Philippine Education System

## 2.2 Qatari Education as a History of Reform

Qatar is one of the smallest gulf countries, but its oil reserves, strategic location, and bold leadership have made it one of the most progressive countries in just a few decades. Most Qataris are Arabs, and virtually all Qataris are Muslim. “At the beginning of the 20th century, Qatar consisted of a small set of villages dependent on pearl diving, camel breeding, and fishing and was governed by Islamic principles and tribal custom (Brewer et al., 2006, 2).” It became a British protectorate but soon gained its autonomy to be an independent gulf country. It is worth noting that despite being under British rule, Islamic culture and Arabic practices never disappeared. Unlike the Filipinos, who had absorbed colonial rule to the core, religion and tradition govern all aspects of Qatari society. Rostron (2009) indicated that “Islam provides an all-encompassing framework of human existence, with every facet of life as an integral component which becomes significant and meaningful only through its Islamic interpretation (223).”

Qatar is under a monarchy. The rulers are drawn from the Al-Thani family with full legislative and executive powers. “Until the late 1990s, Qatar’s educational system was run along an intrinsic-nationalistic and cultural tradition of Arab schools (Banai & Nasser, 2015, 678).” Although the country has a well-developed system of public schools for boys and girls, the system relies so much on learning by-rote memorization, with little attention given to critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and learning by doing. “During that period, the Ministry essentially copied the Egyptian education system, and books from Egypt and other Arab countries were imported to educate the general population (Al-Fadala, 15).” As a result, educational aims were far-fetched from social realities. There was a “mismatch between traditional and modern education, an imbalance between local and foreign workers, and a gender



gap between men and women (Bahgat, 1999, 129).”

In 2001, Qatar’s educational system came under great examination. “The government was concerned that the current educational system and structure in Qatar were not producing high-quality outcomes as benchmarked by international standards (Romanowski, 2013, 109).” In particular, “secondary students’ lower scores in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for International Assessment (PISA), in addition to a system that was rigid, outdated, and resistant to reform, stood out as problems (Althani & Romanowski, 2013, 2).” Because of these reasons, the Qatari government has made it its mission to reforming the educational system.

Before developing a reform strategy, the weaknesses of the present system must be exposed. “The Father Emir, HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani commissioned the RAND Corporation to do a national assessment of the educational system in Qatar, and this was the first major step toward true reform (Al-Fadala, 15).” RAND, a nonprofit research organization, investigated and examined Qatar’s educational system provided by the Ministry of Education. The organization’s study was carried out from September 2001 to May 2002. The end result was a systemic educational reform known as education for a New Era (EFNE). “In order to guarantee a successful implementation of the educational reform, the Supreme Education Council (SEC) was established to ensure that schools and teachers are functioning according to international, rigorous and high standards (Althani & Romanowski, 2013, 2).”

Qatar’s educational reform sought to foster a new generation of students imbued with 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills such as critical thinking, skill enhancement, and collaboration. In addition, the systemic modification aimed to produce graduates ready to take on more critical positions

in public and private companies in an economy heavily dependent on foreigners. By establishing and maintaining a high quality of educational means and outcomes, Qatar has empowered the local citizens to take a proactive role in developing the economy and Qatari society.

Another major reform is the “establishment of the Education City (Brewer et al., 2006).” In a massive upgrade, Qatar invited several top universities to establish branches in the country. Therefore, citizens need not go abroad to receive top-notch tertiary education and international learning pedagogies. Moreover, technology integration and development of a knowledge-based society had become integral aspects of the country’s educational reform with the formation of the Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQatar). “In terms of K-12 and higher education, ictQatar launched the e-education initiative that supports teaching and learning and creates flexible learning environments through technology (Karkouti, 2016, 186).”

### **3. Globalization and its Systemic Impact**

#### **3.1 Philippine Education in a Globalized World**

Globalization of education has profoundly affected the Philippine education system in general. The ever-changing international milieu presents new challenges and growing demands that the present system insufficiently addresses. “Various indicators reveal that the quality of Philippine education continues to be in decline: poor performance in international comparative tests in science and math, unpreparedness of some, if not most, high school graduates to take on the rigors of academic life in college, and skills and competencies of graduates that inadequately match industry needs (Sergio, 2011, 71).” Thus,

a paradigm shift is necessary for the system to be globally-ready yet locally responsive.

The changes in the modern world encourage the Philippines to overhaul its educational system. Standing alone or in comparison with international standards, it is seriously threatened by deterioration. Programs must be aligned with international standards. Subjects taught must be universally valid yet locally bound. Qualifications of teachers, facilities, instructional materials, and pedagogies must be upgraded. Everything must be aligned with local and international norms.

Then-President Benigno Aquino III signed the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 into law, more commonly known as K-12. “Under the K-12 program, the length of basic education has been expanded (Okabe, 2013, 10).” With the law passed, students will now undergo kindergarten, six years of primary education, four years of junior high school, and two years of senior high school before heading into college. The two additional years aimed to prepare the Filipino for the world of work. “The extension of secondary education through age 17 will bring the Philippines into conformity with the other countries of Southeast Asia (Okabe, 2013, 10).”

Holistic human development is at the heart of this program. It envisions a graduate who has mastery over competencies and is recognized worldwide. It “desires to address some of the long-standing problems in basic education such as a congested curriculum, the ineptitude of a lot of graduates of the current basic education model and consequent lack of preparedness to take on the rigors of college life, the incapacity to work of high school graduates due to age as they are usually 16-year-old individuals who are still incapable of legally entering a contract, the mismatch between the curriculum and the skills that the industry needs, and the difficulty of seeking equivalency or accreditation abroad for

those graduates who intend to pursue studies elsewhere since most countries, especially in the Southeast Asian region, require 12 years of basic education (Sergio, 2011, 73).” Since the merits of the program far outweigh its disadvantages, the Philippine education system has finally put itself in the world map of education. There is no possible way to meet the demands of a globalized world than to embrace the K-12 program.

### **3.2 Qatari Education in a Globalized World**

Leaders of many countries believe that for a country to sustain its place in the global economy, an innovative and updated school system must be in place. The state of Qatar has embarked on a comprehensive effort to reform its educational system to meet the demands of global education. Although the country has a well-developed system of government-provided education for both boys and girls, few locals end up in positions that benefit the economy. “In 2001, the Emir of Qatar asked RAND, a US-based nonprofit research institution, to conduct an objective analysis of the existing education system. Based on this analysis, the RAND team and Qatari partners considered how the current organization of schooling dominated by the Ministry of Education was meeting the country’s needs and suggested systemic improvements (Brewer, et al., 2006, 1).” “This analysis found an educational system that will be familiar to many Arab region scholars: a rigid curriculum emphasizing rote learning, hierarchical institutions with unclear goals, lack of incentives or accountability, and misallocated resources (Brewer et.al, 2006, 1).”

RAND’s analysis paved the way for Qatar’s educational reform known as education for a New Era (EFNE), and the establishment of the Supreme Education Council. Brewer et al. (2006) summarize RAND’s analysis. He writes,

Our analysis identified a number of factors underlying poor system performance. Chief among these was the absence of an educational vision or goals for the nation. When the MoE was founded, the emphasis was on building a system that would provide free education to a largely illiterate population. Scant attention was given to quality. Decision-making was highly centralized: top-down control was applied to curriculum, resources, and all aspects of the system. One surprising finding of our study was that although Qatar is a wealthy nation, its resources were not flowing to the schools. The curriculum was incrementally updated on a rigid schedule, with each subject reviewed and revised at the one-grade level each year. Classrooms were overcrowded, with 40-50 students crammed side-by-side into spaces designed for fewer than half this number. Schools lacked modern equipment like computers and other instructional technologies (a few schools had one computer and one printer for the whole school), as well as basic supplies. Teacher salaries in Qatar were also comparatively low. (5-7).

Given these findings, the research team was tasked to develop a blueprint for a system reform in Qatar education. The aim is to create a system that will answer the demands of the global economy while also suited to the Qatari setting. EFNE is grounded in four principles: “1) autonomy for schools, 2) accountability through a comprehensive assessment system, 3) variety in schooling alternatives, and 4) choice for parents, teachers, and school operators. These principles represent a two-pronged approach to reform that requires establishing government-funded independent schools over a multi-year period and

the implementation of annual assessments to measure student learning and school performance (Supreme Education Council, 2011a).”

It is worthy to note that despite the Qatari educational system being relatively new compared to the Philippines, which dates back to its pre-colonial history, the former has been leaps and bounds regarding educational progress. “Qatar is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, but its economy is criticized for its high dependency on oil, gas, and the derivatives of these (Mohamed, et al., 2022, 5).” Therefore, it becomes imperative for Qatar to gradually move away from total reliance on these non-renewable energy resources to focus on human capital and development.

“The native Qatari population is reasonably well-educated, with most males educated up to the secondary level, though Qatari females are more inclined to pursue higher education. Under the umbrella of the Qatar Foundation (QF), the country has invested in numerous education, research, development, and innovation initiatives to support the knowledge economy (Mohamed, et al., 2022, 5-6).” In addition, schools, classrooms, educational infrastructures, and innovation hubs have been created alongside a variety of private schools following different curricula to accommodate varying expatriates.

While both the Philippines and Qatar are endowed with vast natural resources, Qatar has managed to translate oil revenues into educational reforms. “Expenditures assigned for education comprise another indicator of Qatar’s educational progress. Qatari leadership has assigned a larger share of the GDP to education (Mohamed, et al., 2022, 6).” With enough resources and good governance, Qatar’s quality of education has been on an upward climb. “In addition to education expenditure, student–teacher ratio represents another critical aspect of

developing a knowledge economy (Card & Krueger, 1992). “Current figures are very encouraging; the average number of students per teacher is 15 at the pre-primary level and drops to 9 at the secondary level, increasing the quality and duration of student-teacher engagement (Mohamed, et al., 2022, 7).”

#### **4. Issues and Concerns in Philippine Education**

The Philippine educational system faces multiple and diverse problems. Until today, changes in education did not match the high hopes of Filipinos. Philippine education remains a history of struggle, the struggle of the Filipinos for a more inclusive and relevant educational system that would contribute to national development. The problems are not only in the system itself but “also the wider nature of the education system starting with the lack of school facilities to low teacher salaries (Musa & Ziatdinov, 2012, 172).” Teaching and learning become more difficult because of these problems that should never have existed in the first place.

Philippine education is in jeopardy. Low salaries in the academe force teachers to work abroad. Lack of training, the mismatch between the teachers’ field of specialization and the subject they teach, and the lack of instructional materials and infrastructures all paint a picture of how poor the quality of (public) education in the Philippines is. The government is also sluggish in providing quality education to the provinces. Instead, it seems to focus more on schools in and near Metro Manila. “Thus, performance was poorest among students from Mindanao and somewhat better for those from the Visayan Regions, whereas the best performance was in the Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog regions (Musa & Ziatdinov, 2012, 173).”

In addition, the Philippines has been deprived of a potent form of national identity. “There was no attachment in the sense of

common lineage, shared ancestors, or national foes (Musa & Ziatdinov, 2012, 172). The colonial mentality embedded in the Philippine psyche made the Filipinos aliens in their land. This loss of national identity became the stepping stone toward migration. For the ordinary Filipino, working abroad is better than working and serving the motherland, commonly described as brain drain. This diaspora is a continuing trend where migration is viewed as the panacea to heal all economic woes.

Language, as a vehicle of culture, carries with it certain cultural presuppositions. English, as the Philippines’ medium of instruction, introduced a new language and a new way of life. Therefore, to think and speak English is to think and speak like an American. Filipino learned about American heroes, songs, and values. They are taught to dream the American dream, see the importance of dollars, and look forward to the snow experience.

Moreover, there is always the issue of how prepared the students are for the tertiary level. With all the multifarious problems that beset the Philippine educational system, the qualification of most students to reach college is in serious doubt. It is also “a sad reality that only seven out of ten pupils who enroll in Grade 1 finish the elementary curriculum, and from the seven who continue to secondary, only three are able to complete the curriculum. From these three, only one can complete the tertiary education (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 65).” Based on this scenario, how can students help in nation-building when they do not have the necessary skills and capacity? This increasing number of drop-outs is indeed alarming. Education that aims to fight poverty and as means for social mobility may be seen as an obstacle to realizing these goals.

There is also the issue of child labor. Children who are supposed to be in school work to help augment the family income. Moreover,

the “unemployment rate is rising every year as more students graduate from colleges and universities, who cannot be accommodated by the labor market. At the same time, underemployment is the game’s name since professionals are forced to accept employment far from their areas of specialization and training because they need to work and earn for their families (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 65).”

Another issue confronting the educational system is that the “curriculum is not responsive to the basic needs of the country (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 66).” In a globalized society such as the Philippines, English, and STEM subjects are being prioritized. Hence, more time is allotted to them. Subjects that contribute to the overall personality of the Filipino, such as Values Education, Civics, and MAPEH are often taken for granted. With this practice, how can young Filipinos develop their sense of national pride and imbibe good cultural values and practices when subjects that teach these are considered minor? “Worse, many pupils drop out of school before they reach the sixth grade because of poverty, thus increasing their chances of losing the incipient literacy acquired, and therefore, forfeit the privilege of developing patriotic and nationalistic attitudes (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 66). This indeed reflects the priority of the government in the education of young Filipinos.

Moreover, the issue of the globalization of education remains. Even with the full implementation of the K-12 program, still many schools and universities are not able to meet the standards set. As a result, many Filipinos graduate without employability skills and end up working menial jobs.

The educational system does not also receive much budget from the government. The “government only spends 12% of the national budget on education, far from the World Bank’s suggested cut of 20%. The country’s financing of

education is very far from the levels of other Asian countries such as Malaysia and Thailand (Musa & Ziatdinov, 2012, 173).” Poor budget allocation results in inadequate facilities, lesser textbooks, and a lack of training for teachers. Unless immediate and effective plans are implemented, the rate of decline of the Philippine Education system will continue.

Moreover, there is a need to continue upgrading and updating teachers for professional and personal development. “Even if the salary of the ordinary public school teacher had been standardized to be competitive, with the increasing economic crisis, it will still be not enough to afford them attendance to seminars, training, and enrollment in graduate education (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 68).” Government support is crucial in training the teachers to be competent in a globalized setting. “The government must invest in our teachers because it is through them that we train and develop the minds of our future leaders. As they say, show me your schools and I will tell you what society you will have (Durban & Catalan, 2012, 68).”

##### **5. Systems Analysis: Enriching Philippine Education through Qatar’s Education Sector’s Best Practices**

The word system refers to “a set of interrelated factors that are used together to produce an output (Kershaw & McKean, 1959, 2).” The purpose of comparing one’s system with another is not to show which is better. On the contrary, it is a way to exhaust both systems’ strengths, modify weaknesses, and transcend limitations. Indeed, one of the leading products of such analysis is to create principles for one system to be enriched by the other. The characteristics of Philippine and Qatari Education have been laid out. It is now necessary to bridge the gap in the Philippine education system, which will enrich it and answer not only the limitations, concerns, and issues that haunt it but also a means to make education thrive in this postmodern world.

To view the Philippine education system through the lens of the Qatari system is not pitting one system against another. In truth, the latter still needs to address specific gaps to reach the desired level of educational outcomes. It could be surmised that comparative analysis can be done between the Philippines and other benchmark countries such as Norway or Singapore. Nevertheless, the researchers deemed it more important to look at the two educational systems in the process of reformation and rebuilding and unravel the reasons that enabled a small nation to do so much in such a short time. The point of the study is that if the Philippines can replicate some of Qatar's best educational practices, unmatched growth and development can be achieved. It should also be noted that although Qatar's education sector can learn from the Philippine experience, this goes beyond the scope of the present research.

The Qatari education system is an inclusive and holistic education service that meets all students' needs and provides them with the highest quality of learning possible while promoting traditional Qatari and Islamic cultures and values. "The driving force behind this commitment is the desire to adequately prepare all students for the challenges and opportunities associated with adult life: the roles and responsibilities of good citizenship, lifelong learning, and the world of work (Supreme Education Council, 2009). At the same time, this Arab country realizes the merits of education as the best way for the country to compete and move forward in a globalized world.

In the same manner, the Philippine education system also has a holistic undertone. Qatar took bold steps to reform its educational system. It took daring steps toward introducing fundamental changes in the system to achieve its national goals. Qatar also used a scientific way to measure the effectiveness of the reform and the policy changes they made with the help of

RAND. At the same time, the Philippines is also moving towards the lines of the K-12 program. Albeit late, reforms are still being made. The main difference, however, is that Qatari students study to help the country sustain its strong economy, while most Filipinos study to rise above poverty. Education is seen here as the most tangible way to break the cycle of poverty. The following recommendations cited, which are based on Qatari education's best practices, can be used to enrich the Philippine educational system.

### **5.1 Fair Access to Education**

Education is the primordial means toward upward social mobility. For one to climb the social ladder, education is a must. It becomes a key that unlocks opportunities in life. It has been considered a leading global concern as it is crucial to ending the poverty cycle.

Education is not a luxury. It is a fundamental human right. As a right, everyone should have access to education. "But along with the need to increase the access to basic education, the Philippines also has to improve qualitatively or pedagogically what students learn (Okabe, 2013, 2)." The Philippine government, through its 1987 constitution, mandated that basic education should be free, mandatory, and accessible to all. In addition, the "Philippines has acknowledged the international framework for educational development under the concept of Education for all (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Okabe, 2013, 3)."

Government priorities are reflected in its annual budget. Since education is at the forefront of positive social change, it gets one of the highest budget allocations from the national budget. However, despite the Philippine government's effort for just access to education, still, issues and problems haunt the country's educational system. The point here is not about the budget given to education but how the funding is distributed and used.

Even if the merits of education have been recognized worldwide, many countries still fail to achieve a 100% literacy rate. In the Philippines per se, there are still many people who cannot afford a good and quality education, especially in the far-flung regions of the archipelago. “There is a widely held view that Luzon gets more than its fair share as opposed to Visayas and especially to Mindanao in terms of development policies (Balisacan & Fuwa, 2003).” Given such differences, it could be surmised that there may be injustice in the distribution of education among provinces and regions in the Philippines.

Educational benefits are distributed poorly in the Philippines, with educational spending mainly concentrated in Metro Manila and other large cities. This unequal distribution is alarming since this injustice represents an immense welfare loss for the country. To alleviate the poverty of the masses, one needs education to gain the skills and knowledge required for work. If only certain groups of people have access to education, then only they will be able to find a secure job. Those who lack the necessary skills and training will have little to no chance of breaking the chains of poverty. They will be more economically distressed than those who were able to study. How can one be at par with graduates from other countries if education is compromised by its lack of personnel, facilities, textbooks, and classrooms? One cannot expect quality education if the cost far exceeds what the families can afford.

The Philippine educational system can learn much from the Qatari system. For instance, since the country is rich, “the government provides free education and health care to all Qatari citizens (Brewer et al., 2006, 3).” This proposition does not mean that the Philippines is a poor country. On the contrary, it is rich in natural resources. However, there is an unjust distribution of the country’s wealth. The rich get more while the poor get virtually nothing. The

issue of access stems from the fact that in the Philippines, there is injustice in how social benefits such as education are distributed.

In addition, “family allowances for each child are granted to male heads of households employed in the public sector as part of the welfare system, and there are monthly allowances to widows, divorcees, orphans, and those with special needs (Brewer et al., 2006, 3-4).” Poverty, in this country, is not impendent to good and quality education. “Today, government-funded education is provided free to Qatari children and eligible expatriate children whose parents are employed by the government (Brewer et al., 2006, 3-4). The government subsidizes education and other basic needs. There is really no other thing to do but to study. All resources are provided. “Literacy rates in the country are high. Students attend school about 5 hours per day and are assigned to schools based primarily on geographic location (Brewer et al., 2006, 3-4). There is no issue of lesson overload, crowded classrooms, and poor facilities. Each Qatari classroom is conducive to learning despite the warm desert climate.

## **5.2 Philippine Education should be a Vehicle of Culture for Sustainable Development**

The periods after the war have been a time for reconstruction. The Philippine government, which is still recuperating from the effects of the war, became too dependent on foreign loans to finance government spending. “In turn, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (or Bretton Woods Institutions) became increasingly involved in public policy matters, including educational policy (Reip, 2015, 7).” Since then, the World Bank has “continued to impose curricular programs designed to train students according to the manpower requirements of transnational corporations (Remollino, 2007, 13).” For instance, there was an increased emphasis on

Science, English, and Math at the expense of Social Sciences and Humanities to produce globally-competent graduates. Hence, “an enduring neoliberal political project has resulted in the education system becoming a laboratory for World Bank and IMF prescriptions and impositions (Reip, 2015, 7-8).”

“Throughout periods of imperialism and neoliberalisation, national education in the Philippines has been structured and restructured in ways that benefit the profit-oriented political and economic interests of foreign and domestic elites (Reip, 2015, 8).” This should not be the case as sustainable development is achieved by producing globally-ready graduates and by education that engages the culture. “It has already been argued that any development that is not entrenched and weaved through the local people’s consciousness, traditions, and values is bound to fail (Zerrudo, 2008).” Therefore, in any conversation for sustainable development, it is crucial to consider and incorporate how people live and see reality. Development not rooted in people’s cherished beliefs, values, and practices will be short-sighted in terms of its relevance to their everyday lives, which are bound to a specific cultural milieu.

Sta. Maria (2001) mentions development as the “complex, comprehensive and multidimensional process which extends beyond mere economic growth, to incorporate all dimensions of life and all the energies of a community, all of those whose members are called upon to make a contribution and expect to share in the benefits (67).” It could be surmised, therefore, that development and culture go hand in hand. The former ensures that culture is propagated and sustained while the latter gives education its end goal. In continuing the value and meaning of cultural resources from the past, for use in the present, and to inspire future generations, a development that directly springs from the people’s consciousness is a must. At the

same time, cultural conservation happens when it is explicitly taught in the curriculum. One cannot expect people to conserve and develop something they are unaware of.

Ocampo and Delgado (2014) argued that “culture could only function as a conduit of sustainable development through proper education in order to raise awareness of its importance (201).” RA 10066, also known as The National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009, mandates the Department of Education, in coordination with the National Commission on Culture and the Arts’ (NCCA) Philippine Cultural Education Program (PCEP), to “formulate the cultural heritage education programs both for local and overseas Filipinos to be incorporated in the formal, alternative and informal education, with emphasis on the protection, conservation, and preservation of cultural heritage properties (Article X, Section 38).”

Under the K-12 program, the medium of instruction has changed dramatically. As language transmits culture, the Department of Education saw the need to use ‘mother tongue’ in teaching students from Grades 1-3. The previous curriculum provided bilingual education, but bilingual here referred to both English and Tagalog. However, this does not work well since the Philippines is home to various languages and dialects. Using bilingual education in an archipelagic setting does more harm than good. Therefore, the K-12 program expands the number of local languages used as the medium of instruction. Along with Tagalog and English, eleven other languages, such as Cebuano, Bikol, and Waray, will be used.

Several studies have shown that the Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) has an excellent pedagogical foundation and embodies the concept of learner-centered education (Monje et al., 2021). Pupils develop literacy appreciation, literacy, and



cognitive skills and master content material more easily when taught in a familiar language (Balacano, 2020). Conversely, there are structural, pedagogical, resource-availability, and ideological challenges to MTB-MLE that prevent it from being implemented successfully (Tupas, 2011; Lactec et al., 2014; Tupas, 2015).

It is worth noting that using the mother tongue does not equate to sustainable development. Although culture plays an essential role in any educational system, there is also a need to look into western systems. “Qatar is one of the most active importers of foreign education providers in the world, and this adoption or acquisition of educational methods has directly impacted classrooms at all levels (Althani & Romanowski, 2103, 2).” This small Arab country has welcomed practices and structures from the West. “The system that was selected by the Qatari government included internationally benchmarked curriculum standards, national testing based on those standards, independent government-funded schools, and parental choice of school using annual school report cards (Al-Fadala, 18).”

There is always the danger of losing national identity when education has a western form. This is what happened in the Philippines. However, it is a different story in Qatar. Education in the country has a two-pronged approach. It makes Qataris globally competitive yet fosters a love for their country. The government has done its best to accommodate western principles yet remain indigenous. Despite the influx of expatriates and foreigners to work or study, Qataris remained the same. From how they dress to their language, one can observe homogeneity. Education has been a driving factor that makes Qataris love their country more.

There is a need for a Filipino reorientation of their values for national development. This study is not a call to remove regional differences, dialects, and beliefs for

unity’s sake. The argument does not mean that Filipinos abandon their individualities for homogeneity. It is not to unite under one language but to establish guidelines for a renewed emphasis on nationalistic values. While STEM subjects are essential, it is also crucial for the curriculum to celebrate Filipino heritage, practices, and tradition.

### **5.3 Reforms Include All Stakeholders**

A true educational system reform must include all the stakeholders. A centralized government agency such as the Department of Education, tasked with creating pedagogical reforms, may monopolize change and lead to insensitivity to local settings. The main reason “that educational reforms never fully develop and endure is that reforms fail to understand the local school development (Romanowski et al., 2013, 110).” There is nothing wrong with a central governing body. However, there is a need to consider the stakeholders. They are crucially important for the success and viability of any educational reform. “Because principals, teachers, and parents play a crucial role in the implementation of the reform, it is important to explore their experiences and obtain from them their opinions about the reform and accompanying changes (Romanowski et al., 2013, 110). “If educational reform is about providing local answers to educational questions, then widespread participation among stakeholders is a requirement (Healey & DeStefano, 1997).”

One key stakeholder is the principal. The leader of the school plays a vital role in the implementation of the reform. They are at the center of these initiatives and shape “the school climate regarding how teachers, parents, and students perceive reform, which is vital for successful change (Romanowski et al., 2013, 111). Aside from the principal, reforms extensively rely on teachers. Teachers are agents of change and the people the students interact with daily. The best way to effect change is to

model it, and there are no better models of reforms than the teachers themselves.

Moreover, parents should not be taken for granted as well. “When reform is implemented, students are directly affected, and parents play a vital role in helping their children as they adapt to change (Romanowski et al., 2013, 112).” Family and communal involvement are critical aspects of comprehensive educational reform. When the community’s support is there, the reform will be sustained. When the support wanes, so does the reform.

The Philippine K-12 program implemented was met with mixed reactions. Some approved. Some did not. Although it underwent broad study before being implemented, the student’s readiness, the parents’ financial capabilities, and the availability of resources and school facilities were not given much attention. On the opposite, the fabrication of education for a New Era (EFNE) did not just fall from the sky. It was a product of extensive research where the stakeholders’ opinions and beliefs were considered. Qatar approached the RAND corporation to analyze the present education system, given the fact that the “nation’s school system was not producing high-quality outcomes in academic achievement, college attendance or success in the labor market (Nasser, 2017 2).” As a result, the Qatari government carefully planned education policies and programs to elevate the country’s quality of education and address the overall insufficiencies. A review of the provisions was done at all levels, and stakeholders’ participation was solicited.

## 6. Conclusion

The value of education is well-known and universally accepted. Educational policies play a crucial role in transforming the education landscape and paradigms. For any education policy to succeed, a clear vision must be

implemented and monitored by a coherent government agency. Policies and programs must address all the components of the system. Moreover, any educational system must heed the local setting but address global concerns and challenges as well.

Systems analysis in education discusses the qualitative and quantitative comparisons in educational systems. Comparisons of this type help administrators and stakeholders adopt better educational practices and pedagogies. The Philippine and Qatar educational systems have witnessed great upheavals in the past years. And it is precisely because of these numerous reforms that make both systems fare better than they were before. On the one hand, Qatar’s education system has improved dramatically over the years. It is a concrete testament to how one country prioritizes education for sustainable growth and development.

On the other hand, albeit the educational reforms being implemented in the Philippines, there are still concerns and issues that need to be solved. Problems in the Philippine educational system are so complex that further reflection and introspection are needed. Hence, it may be essential to look into other systems (particularly Qatar) to give the Filipino youth the education they truly deserve. By outlining Qatar’s best practices as points of reflection, it is hoped that this study can help the Philippines steer the educational wheel into the right direction: world-class, indigenous, relevant, and globalized.

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