

# A Comparative Study on Language Curriculum Models in the Philippines and Hong Kong

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**Abstract:-** Studies on language curriculum frameworks and the way they are implemented have been under the spotlight for decades which paved the way for debates on their effectiveness and implications to a nation's status on the global stage, particularly on the performance of the learners in international assessments like ILSA, PISA, TIMSS. Currently, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), an international study by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) released the results of the 2018 data collection of the said assessment on December 3, 2019. Hongkong got the 4-10-4 rank in Mathematics, Science and Reading, respectively while the Philippines ranked 77-78-78 in the same subjects, that is out of 79 participating countries. Concentrating on Reading Comprehension, which is undeniably on the shoulders of language teaching, Hong Kong posted better results than Philippines. In consonance with this, presently, Philippines' Department of Education (DepEd) is implementing the K-12 curriculum where the Language Arts and Multiliteracies (LAMC) scaffolds the language curriculum of the country. On the other hand, Hong Kong's Education Bureau (EDB) is implementing the Chinese Language Education Curriculum (CLEC) as their language framework. In connection, this study reviews the implementation of the aforementioned language curriculum to come up with a comparative analysis. Specifically, it focuses on curriculum aims in relation to language learning; curriculum framework comparison: LAMC and CLEC, implementation of the LAMC and CLEC, effectiveness of the frameworks including the challenges met in classroom application and the implications to international assessments. Furthermore, this study seeks to provide references for future related studies and help the teachers and related educational policymakers realize, recognize, evaluate the issues, and take effective measures to advance the language curriculum set-up in the country mainly to compete internationally and globally and rank higher or advanced in international student assessments. This study also underscores what should be investigated further to improve this particular discipline.

*Keywords:- Language Arts and Multiliteracies Curriculum, Chinese Language Education Curriculum, Curriculum Framework.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Essentially, curriculum has been the core for the triumph or collapse of an educational society. Curriculum is a blueprint of what, why, how and how well students should learn in an organized and intentional way (UNESCO IBE, 2022). By definition, curriculum implementation is defined as how educators practice, how they teach and evaluate students (Nevenglosky, 2018; Marques & Xavier, 2020). They argue that teachers play a vital role in curriculum implementation (Lochner, et.al.,2015). Effects of curriculum implementation will largely reflect in the achievements of the learners.

Policymakers, experts, practitioners and the society itself also play crucial roles in the implementation of such. What will be learned or taught in every level is determined in a systematic flow of competencies and tasks that both learners and teachers undergo. It is a collective endeavor of the government and the society who must share a common vision while taking into account the context and the content of the curriculum with regard to the culture and practices of a particular country. In addition, curriculum acts as a compass in order to navigate the learners and the target competencies towards achievement and realization (Apsari, 2018). As a significant factor, it incorporates knowledge and skills learners must know in that definite field. To fully attain these, it is essential to plan a curriculum that fits students perfectly (Muskin, 2015).

Meanwhile, language is a combination of symbols, people and culture. It involves people basically for the purpose of communication and interaction. How language is used as means of communication is through the symbols and sounds a person could articulate in order for his message to go across the minds of the listener. Moreover, culture has been language's partner since the latter makes up part of a nation's culture and belief. In addition, language helps us to share with others and identify ourselves (The Language Doctors, April 2021).

Like any other core subject, there is always a harmonious relationship between curriculum and language. However, language curriculum differs in the context of each nation. Here goes the notion, "one size fits all" but the flipped side of it which is, "not all size fits all". It means that there is no specific world standard language curriculum in the world that will cater all the language needs of the learners. It still

depends on the society and their culture where the language is sought to be used. However, there are nations which share the same curriculum yet receive different results with regard to international student assessments. Studies show that there are significant attributes on the implementation of curriculum to the achievements of the learners regardless of the subject being learned/taught.

In this article, there will be a comparative study on the implementation of language curriculum in two different countries independent from each other: The Hong Kong (China) and the Philippines. Hong Kong utilizes the Chinese Language Education Key Learning Areas. In addition, the Hong Kong government uses this language framework as an enabling tool to facilitate the learning of other knowledge disciplines. On the contrary, the Philippines has this K-12 scheme where young learners are gradually exposed to formal education through universal kindergarten. Education will then continue to primary grades or elementary grades up to senior high school. Such enhancement in the curriculum gives learners more time to gain mastery of learning.

Moreover, not all students in Hong Kong are native Chinese. There are these Non-Chinese Students (NCS) settling down in the country. However, as compared to their Chinese-speaking counterparts, they are the future ‘architects’ of their society. NCS students who study in local schools need to adjust to using Chinese in their communication and immerse themselves into the environment, eventually enabling them to immerse into the community, preparing them for establishing the future of Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, Philippines’ use of the English as Second Language (ESL) was supported by the 1987 Philippine Constitution under the provision of Article XIV, Section 7 and stipulated in the DepEd Order No. 74 issued in 2009 institutionalizing Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) nationwide and directed the use of the learners' language repertoire in developing learning outcomes from Kindergarten to grade three. Moreover, regional languages are supplementary official languages in the regions and shall serve as auxiliary media of instruction. The policy on bilingual education was applied until the education reform in 2013 which injected multilingual education in the country’s language curriculum. Although English is the second official language in the Philippines, vernaculars or the mother tongue should be utilized in teaching subjects in the Kindergarten up to third grade in elementary level.

**II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

*A. Curriculum aims in Language Learning*

In nations like the Philippines and Hong Kong, language plays a crucial role in many sectors including the government and the economy. Such nations prepare their learners with high standards of language proficiency headed toward globalization. According to IBE-UNESCO (2022), curriculum objectives must relate to educational aims and philosophy. They can be programmed and set the specific lessons or specific items of content. Aims are general statements that provide direction or intent to educational action (Wilson, 2014). Below is a table comparing the language curriculum aims of Hong Kong and the Philippines.

**Table 1. Comparison of language curriculum aims between Philippines and Hong Kong**

<b>Philippines (Language Arts and Multiliteracies Curriculum)</b>	<b>Hong Kong (Chinese Language Education Curriculum)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develops thinking and language through collaborative learning</li> <li>● Develops communicative competence and critical literacy</li> <li>● Draws on literature in order to develop learners’ sense of their literary heritage                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Draws on information texts and multimedia in order to develop academic vocabulary and strong content knowledge</li> <li>● Develops learners’ oral language and literacy through appropriately challenging learning</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Emphasizes writing arguments, explanatory/informative texts and narratives                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provides explicit skill instruction in reading and writing</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Builds on the language, experiences, knowledge and interests that learners bring to school</li> <li>● Nurtures learners’ sense of their common ground in using language/s for communication as present or future global citizens to prepare them to participate in school and in civic life; and</li> <li>● Assesses and reflects the learners’ ability to interpret and/or communicate in the target language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote students’ language proficiency, making them <i>bi-literate</i> (in Chinese and English) and <i>tri-lingual</i> (in Cantonese, Putonghua and English).</li> <li>● Prepare secondary school graduates to be proficient in writing English and Chinese                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop the ability to communicate confidently in Cantonese, English and Putonghua.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Appreciate the beauty between the lines/languages                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Nurture interest in language learning</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Develop higher order thinking skills and competence, as well as to nurture aesthetics sense and cultural competence so as to perfect their personality and achieve whole person development.</li> </ul>

**B. Curriculum Framework (CF) of the language curriculum**

Curriculum framework, is a structured scheme which explains the content to be acquired in specific levels and what the students should learn and be able to do. The context of curriculum is part of a results-based education or standards-based instruction design. It is a supportive structure which helps schools plan. Below are the language curriculum frameworks of the Philippines and Hong Kong.

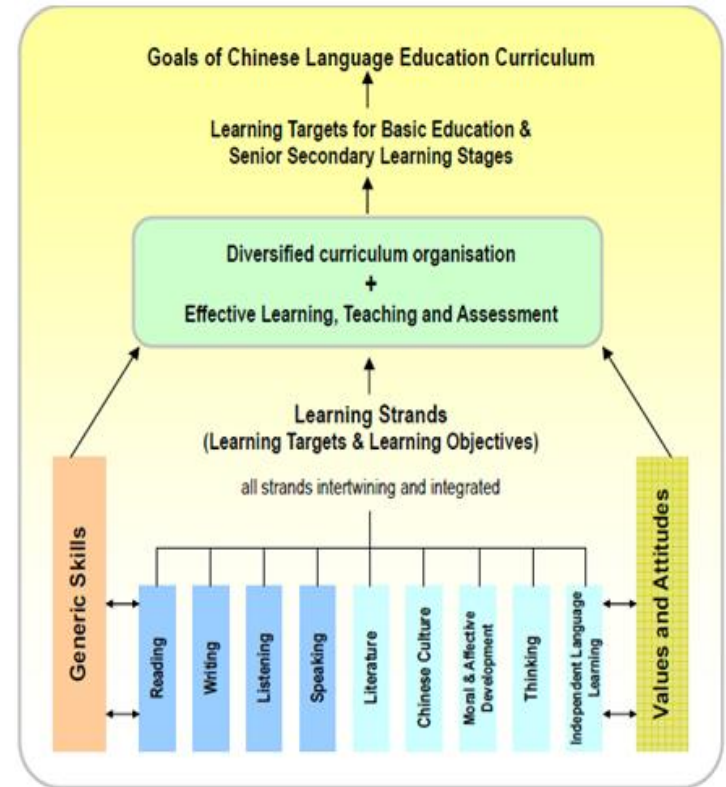


**Fig 1. Philippines’ Language Arts and Multiliteracies Curriculum Framework (LAMC)**

Anchored in the philosophy that languages are interrelated, interdependent, and requires meaning, learners learn through effective engagement with the language. Also, successful language learning involves the macro skills which are listening, speaking, reading, writing and viewing. Learners must learn how to recognize, accept, value and build based on their existing language levels. These various levels will then be enhanced through the spiral progression in learning the language and through the language.

Another crucial part of the framework is the assessment and feedback. They play essential roles in order to come up with effective language learning. Assessment involves the pre-, on and post- evaluation of the learners through different assessment instruments. These assessments serve as a gauge in measuring the level of understanding of the learners. However, evaluating the learners through assessment doesn’t stop here. After the assessment, feedback must be given to ensure that the learners know how far they have gone. Feedback gives both the learners and the teachers opportunity to evaluate themselves and create further development of learner-centered instruction. All of these contents of the

LAMC lead to a single goal; communicative competence and multiliteracies.



**Fig 2. Hong Kong’s Chinese Language Education Curriculum**

Founded in generic skills of communication namely listening, speaking, reading and writing and associated with values and attitudes (literature, Chinese culture, moral and affective development, thinking, independent language learning) make up the roots of the Chinese Language Education KLA framework. Moving up the frame, these generic skills and values/attitudes and learning strands (targets and objectives) point to curriculum where teaching, learning and assessment are placed. These mean that their curriculum organization is largely based on the target objectives, skills to be developed among learners and most importantly, the values and attitudes involved. The structure finally points to the goals of the framework.

Apparently, both language frameworks give high respect to the macro/generic skills as seen in the intertwining circles of the LAMC and the foundational root of the CLEC. These components serve as the foundation for understanding and creation of meaning. Also, they both give emphasis on teaching, learning and assessments. Besides, Hong Kong has this internal assessment which includes formative and summative assessments where teachers use to identify learners’ strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, the Philippines utilizes diagnostic tests to analyze learners’ levels of language proficiency.

### C. Implementation of the Language Curriculum

Filipino and English are the official languages in the Philippines. Language curriculum in the Philippines is continuously shifting. The realization of the K-12 curriculum in 2013 paved the way to multilingualism in classrooms. Current improvements in the Philippines have prompted its government to push for a new basic education curriculum. Along with these modifications is the implementation of the new language curriculum known as the Language Arts and Multiliteracies Curriculum (LAMC) (Barrot, 2018). However, the findings of Barrot's study revealed that the current curriculum needs to improve its specificity, internal coherence, and integration of some essential principles of 21st century learning and language teaching and learning (Barrot, 2018).

One trending issue among teachers in the Philippines is the implementation of the Mother Tongue-Based- Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). In a study conducted by Cruz (2015), the performance of the learners (Grade 1) in Pangasinan 1 Division have been 'average' particularly in areas that target the vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension. Moreover, the teachers make use of other languages or dialects such as Filipino or Ilocano as an accessory to learners' mother tongue Pangasinan. Appropriate and curriculum content-related trainings as well as provision of assessment tools are seen as serious obstacles in implementing the MTB-MLE.

MTB-MLE is implemented from kindergarten to grade 3 where the mother tongue of the learners is used as the medium of instruction. Since the Philippines has more than 180 dialects/vernaculars, different mother tongues such as MOI are being used. In the intermediate level, (Grades 4-6), the medium of instruction will depend on the subject being taught. For subjects like English, Mathematics and Science, English language is the MOI. For other subjects as Filipino, Araling Panlipunan (AP), Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (ESP) and Edukasyong Pantahanan at Pangkabuhayan (EPP), Filipino is the MOI. Unfortunately, based on teachers' experiences in actual classroom instruction, for the purpose of comprehension and topic grasping, mother tongue is the accessory MOI across all core subjects, whether it requires English or Filipino.

In addition, it is true that the Philippines has a national language curriculum, hence, guidelines are issued from the national level down to school levels. However, the actual carrying out is left to school-teachers. As an essential part of the LAMC design, contextualization is present. That is, it requires teachers to craft community-based instruction which are relevant to the local setting, situation or area of application where the learners live. It is making the curriculum relatable to the contexts of the learners. In relation to language teaching and learning, Filipino teachers realign the language elements into a significant and genuine context of the community rather than treated as separated pieces intended for classroom

practices or performances only. But sometimes, due to curriculum overcrowding where learners and teachers need to accomplish studies in all eight subject areas, the chances of contextualizing the curriculum is forfeited, mainly because of time constraints.

With regard to Philippine educational setting, experts in the field of reading and comprehension state that the status of the country in the latest PISA result, particularly in reading comprehension is due to the following causes: (1) students are exposed to narrative texts instead of expository texts in teaching reading comprehension; (2) students lack reading materials specially in far-flung areas, due to lack of internet connectivity for them to access digital texts. These children don't have access to more reading materials and what is readily available are books whose contents, mostly, are short stories; (3) students are not well-versed in cross-checking sources, not only in printed reading materials but especially in non-print like the information they see on the internet. In conclusion, teachers must undergo reading instruction strategy training. (Frederick Sotto Perez, president, Reading Association of the Philippines via abs-cbn news, posted December 5, 2019, 8:56 am)

Secondary level is split into two main stages, Junior High School and Senior High School. At JHS (Grades 7-10) levels, learners must accomplish four (4) years of basic education while SHS offers two (2) years of education totalling to six (6) years of basic education. English language is used as the MOI in subjects like English, Mathematics and Science while Filipino is the MOI for the remaining subjects. The SHS curriculum also encourages teachers and learners to take advantage of the target language especially when the MOI is English.

Urbano, et.al. (2021), found out that there are still struggling learners in SHS in terms of reading and writing. In reading, these include distinguishing patterns of idea development (comparison and contrast, cause-effect, general to particular etc.) in texts, evaluating the unity, composition, grammar and mechanics of a text, having inadequate lexicon and in recognizing ways on how to choose and organize data. For writing, learners lack topic-related background awareness, inadequate knowledge and practice in writing correct citations, faulty language structuring, shallow word bank and trouble in using various patterns of development on writing. They ended with a recommendation that clear instruction, application of text-based methodology and inclusion of genuine and shared tasks in teaching reading and writing in SHS in the Philippines.

On the other hand, Hong Kong has Chinese and English as their official languages. Most people in Hong Kong speak Cantonese, a Chinese dialect. The administration has embraced a biliterate (Chinese and English) and trilingual (Putonghua, Cantonese, and English) program for education in Hong Kong. There is no specified existing guidelines on

language of instruction. Most local primary schools use Cantonese as the medium of instruction. Schools has the leeway to choose Putonghua to teach other Chinese language subjects.

The finalized medium of instruction provisions was initiated in academic year 2010–2011 as schools adopted a student-centred approach to organize varied mediums of instruction arrangements. The objectives are to enhance the English language atmosphere within schools and to augment prospects for students to use and be exposed to English. The principles adopted by schools in creating the procedures are learners having the aptitude to absorb lessons in English, educators possessing the competence to teach through English, and schools with sufficient provisional measures at hand.

Demonstrating the specific administration of mother tongue teaching, a new direction was declared in 1997. According to the Guidance, schools demanding to use English as the medium of instruction must exhibit their success of three suggested criteria: student ability, teacher capability, and support measures. As a result, 112 public sector secondary schools were authorized to use English as their medium of instruction, while some 300 schools utilized Chinese as their medium of instruction.

At junior secondary levels, all schools may have the choice to adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction for all non-language subjects. Schools acquiring the “student ability” criterion may, with respect to their own settings and the needs of their learners, exercise professional discretion to use the most suitable medium of instruction measures.

However, schools not meeting the “student ability” criterion may, for each class, commit only up to 25 percent of the total lesson time (excluding the lesson time for the English language) to protracted learning activities in English, or dedicate all 25 percent or a smaller percentage to English teaching of up to two nonlanguage subjects (i.e., “allocation of time to subjects”). If schools use both arrangements of extended learning activities in English and “allocation of time to subjects,” the lesson time involved together must not exceed 25 percent of the total lesson time (excluding the lesson time for the English Language).

At the senior secondary level, schools should be better informed to judge professionally whether their students have the ability to learn through the English medium. It is also believed that the need to sit for public examinations at the end of senior secondary education would induce schools, parents, and students to make pragmatic and realistic choices of medium of instruction.

#### *D. Implications to international assessments*

With regard to the international assessments like the latest Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a worldwide study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), released the results of the 2018 data collection on December 3, 2019. Hongkong (China) got the 4-10-4 rank in Mathematics, Science and Reading, respectively while the Philippines ranked 77-78-78 in the same subjects, that is out of 79 participating countries.

**Table 2. Comparative PISA (2018) results in student performance in reading between Hong Kong and Philippines in relation to the OECD standards.**

Indicator	Hong Kong (China) Ranked 4 <sup>th</sup> in reading (PISA 2018)	OECD average	Philippines Ranked 78 <sup>th</sup> in reading (PISA 2018)
Student performance in reading (mean score)	524	487	340
Boy's performance in reading (mean score)	507	472	325
Girl's performance in reading (mean score)	542	502	352
Gender difference in reading performance, score-point difference (girls-boys)	35	30	27
Difference in reading performance between the 90 <sup>th</sup> and the 10 <sup>th</sup> percentiles (in score points)	255	260	205
Low performers in reading (percentage of students scoring below Level 2)	12.6	22.6	80.6
Top performers in reading (percentage of students scoring at Level 5 and 6)	14.8	8.7	0.1
Low-performing boys in reading (percentage of boys scoring below Level 2)	17.0	27.7	84.8
Top-performing boys in reading (percentage of boys scoring at Level 5 and 6)	11.8	7.1	0.0
Low-performing girls in reading (percentage of girls scoring below Level 2)	7.9	17.5	76.9
Top-performing girls in reading (percentage of girls scoring at Level 5 and 6)	18.0	10.5	0.1
Long-term trend in reading: Average rate of change in mean performance, per three-year period, over the period of participation in PISA (in score points)	2	-1	N/A
Short-term change in mean reading performance (2015-2018, in score points)	-2	-3	N/A

(<https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=PHL&treshold=5&topic=PI>)

Table 2 shows that the Philippines scored 340 in reading falling behind OECD average which is 487. Poor educational accomplishment in the Philippines is correlated with poor performance, compared to most other PISA-participating nations. However, Hong Kong scored 524 in reading above the OECD average which is 487.

**Table 3. Comparative summary of the student performance in reading literacy in relation to age, socio-economic status between Philippines and Hong Kong**

Philippines (LAMC)	Hong Kong (CLEC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>In reading literacy, the main topic of PISA 2018, 15-year-olds in the Philippines score 340 points compared to an average of 487 points in OECD countries.</b> perform better than with a difference of 27 points (OECD average: 30 points higher for girls).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>In reading literacy, the main topic of PISA 2018, 15-year-olds in Hong Kong (China) score 524 points compared to an average of 487 points in OECD countries.</b> Girls perform better than boys with a statistically significant difference of 35 points (OECD average: 30 points higher for girls).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Socio-economic status explains 18% of the variance in reading performance</b> in Philippines (OECD average: 12%).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Socio-economic status explains 5% of the variance in reading performance</b> in Hong Kong (China) (OECD average: 12%).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The average difference between advantaged and disadvantaged students in reading is 88 points,</b> compared to an average of 89 in OECD countries. However, <b>8% of disadvantaged students are academically resilient (OECD average: 11%).</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The average difference between advantaged and disadvantaged students in reading is 59 points,</b> compared to an average of 89 in OECD countries. However, <b>16% of disadvantaged students are academically resilient (OECD average: 11%).</b></li> </ul>

(<https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=PHL&treshold=5&topic=PI>)

15-year-old learners were the participants in the assessment and the table above shows that 15-year-old students in the Philippines scored lower than the students in Hong Kong under the same age. Also, the table reveals that socio-economic status has a larger impact in the reading performance of the learners in the Philippines compared to Hong Kong's.

### III. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Upon comparing the language curriculum frameworks of both countries, it is clear to infer that Philippines and Hong Kong have different types of language models being implemented in their educational settings. The Philippines uses the Language Arts Multiliteracies Curriculum where the centerfold of the design focuses on meaning-making. Meanwhile Hong Kong adopts the Chinese Language Education Curriculum, which is also intended for non-chinese speaking students, where common skills, morals and manners and vital learning areas are interlinked together towards achieving the goals of their curriculum.

The LAMC aims to develop the Filipino learners' thinking, language use, preservation of literary heritage, and communicative competence through collaborative learning, drawing on literature and multimedia. Also, a spiral progression is present to ensure mastery of the competencies in any grade level. On the other hand, CLEC intends to advocate language fluency, producing bi-literate and trilingual learners, prepare secondary school graduates to be proficient in both English and Chinese and develop and nurture higher order thinking skills and competence to hone their character and attain holistic development.

On implementation of frameworks, there have been found some issues in implementing the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in the Philippines. These issues are deemed to be addressed as early as possible according to the studies of the researchers included in this review. Besides, there is also the concern of grade level and age mismatch due to drop-outs or students leaving the school. This implies that there are also competencies which are not met along the school year. The issues on the use of medium of instruction in the Philippines is still under the hot spot, particularly among the primary grade levels, as to its implications and the way it should be implemented in the actual classroom setting. This also includes the training needed of teachers on how to execute the said model.

Hong Kong's CLEC also promotes mother tongue based instruction. The HK government gives no specifications as to what language of instruction to be adopted at the primary level. Most local primary schools utilize Cantonese as the medium of instruction. Schools may opt to use Putonghua to teach Chinese language subjects. The guidelines in instruction, which was introduced in the 2010–2011, allows schools to implement a student-centred approach in planning differentiated mediums of instruction. The criteria adopted by schools in devising the arrangements are learners ability, teachers capability, and schools sufficient support at hand.

With regard to international assessments, there is a call for educational revamp and must be planned and institutionalized if the country wants to improve its educational face value in the international scenario. The results of PISA have navigated the attention to address the need of quality education. The government and all educational sectors must support the department's project OEQ (Onward

Education Quality), the advocacy cry for a collective effort for quality basic education, and stabilize the four key pillars of the ongoing reforms which includes the curriculum review and update, learning environment improvement, upskilling of educators and stakeholders engagement.

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