

Bridging learning loss and curriculum innovation: A critical analysis of CHEDRO III Memo No. 159, s. 2023

Samia, Cristina ✉

Holy Angel University, Philippines (csamia@hau.edu.ph; ioanacristine@gmail.com)

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Abstract

CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, series of 2023, which requires curriculum revision for Bachelor of Elementary and Secondary Education programs in response to pandemic-induced learning loss, is the subject of this policy analysis. The study looks at how the memorandum presents curriculum reform as a technical intervention as well as a moral necessity using documentary research and critical discourse analysis. Significant implementation challenges are revealed by the analysis, such as a lack of mechanisms for participation, a misalignment between national directives and institutional contexts, and limited structural support for Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs). Five main issues are identified by thematic analysis: (1) curriculum reform as a technical and ethical necessity; (2) the policy's emphasis on compliance and urgency; (3) the lack of implementation support systems; (4) institutional differences in how they respond to reform; and (5) conflicts between participatory governance and centralized control. The study highlights the significance of incorporating inclusive, digital, and adaptive pedagogies into teacher preparation programs, drawing on national and international education frameworks. The study makes practical suggestions to improve the relevance and viability of policy by referencing recent research and international policy viewpoints. Recasting reform narratives, enhancing interagency cooperation, incorporating 21st-century skills, encouraging stakeholder involvement, and putting in place fair monitoring systems are a few of these. According to the study's findings, a collaborative, context-sensitive approach based on equity, resilience, and professional trust is necessary for sustainable curriculum reform, which goes beyond compliance. This analysis highlights the pressing need for inclusive and responsive policy implementation in higher education and adds to the larger conversation on teacher education reform in the Philippines.

Keywords: teacher education reform, curriculum policy, learning loss, policy implementation, participatory governance

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1. Introduction

The Commission on Higher Education Regional Office III (CHEDRO III) has issued CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023, which requires the submission of revised curricula for the Bachelor of Elementary and Secondary Education programs. This directive addresses the significant learning disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which notably affected foundational competencies in reading, mathematics, and science among Filipino learners. The pandemic has revealed significant systemic weaknesses within teacher preparation programs, highlighting issues such as inadequate technological integration, a deficiency in inclusive pedagogical strategies, and reliance on outdated instructional models (Cruz, 2020; Bautista, 2021). CHEDRO III Memo No. 159, s. 2023 underscores the critical nature of this situation by mandating that Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) present revised curricula that address contemporary educational challenges. The policy seeks to synchronize teacher education with contemporary classroom expectations and international benchmarks for quality instruction. The resolution of this issue yields advantages for various stakeholders, including pre-service teachers in pursuit of pertinent training, basic education learners who rely on effective instruction, teacher education institutions dedicated to producing proficient graduates, regulatory bodies such as CHED focused on ensuring the impact of policies, and the wider community that depends on a well-prepared citizenry. The issues central to this policy encompass: - The ongoing disparity between existing teacher education curricula and the pedagogical skills necessary for hybrid and flexible learning contexts - The insufficient integration of digital pedagogies and differentiated instruction within pre-service training programs - The imperative to formalize curriculum innovation, especially at the regional level, in accordance with the mandates set forth by CHEDRO III.

The policy memorandum necessitates that TEIs synchronize their curricular frameworks with the evolving requirements of learners in the 21st century. This statement reflects the comprehensive reform initiatives outlined in the Philippine Teacher Education Roadmap (CHED, 2022), which advocates for innovative methodologies that prioritize learner-centered education, enhance digital skills, and implement adaptive assessment techniques. The proposed reforms are conceptualized not only as updates to the curriculum but as fundamental structural changes aimed at maintaining the relevance, equity, and resilience of teacher education in response to potential future disruptions. International organizations, including UNESCO (2021), have underscored the necessity for a transformative approach to education, advocating for a new social contract that emphasizes inclusion, collaboration, and sustainability. The memorandum functions within a multi-tiered policy framework that is localized in its execution while aiming for global objectives. In this context, CHEDRO III Memo No. 159 functions as a regulatory instrument and a moral obligation aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the nation's teacher education system.

In order to better prepare pre-service teachers for modern learning environments and to effectively mitigate the learning loss brought on by the pandemic, this study explores the possibility of redesigning teacher education programs in the Philippines. The CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023, which mandates that TEIs revise their curricula for Bachelor of Elementary and Secondary Education programs, is the main subject of this analysis. The key question at the heart of this policy analysis is: How can teacher education programs be methodically reorganized to reduce learning loss and prepare aspiring teachers for success? Sub-questions concerning the difficulties faced by TEIs, the interpretation of the CHED memorandum, the integration of inclusive and technology-driven pedagogical approaches, and the support networks required to enable significant reform are also examined in the analysis. This work significantly adds to the current national and international conversation about teacher preparation. It offers a rethinking of teacher education that prioritizes equity,

resilience, and an optimistic outlook by drawing on the knowledge of eminent academics and respectable institutions. This study contributes in a new way by critically examining CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, series of 2023, within the broader context of curriculum innovation and post-pandemic educational recovery in Philippine higher education. Research that directly links institutional learning recovery strategies with regional policy directives is conspicuously lacking, despite the fact that learning loss and curriculum reform are extensively discussed in the literature. This research aims to bridge that gap by presenting CHEDRO III Memo No. 159 as both a policy response and a framework for reevaluating curriculum design in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unlike previous research that primarily focuses on national policies or general recovery frameworks, this analysis looks at a specific regional memorandum and its effects on the higher education institutions in Central Luzon. The study bridges the gap between policy analysis and curriculum innovation discourse by offering a localized lens through which to view the regional operationalization of learning loss mitigation initiatives. By doing this, it contributes to the small but growing body of research that looks at the interactions between policy, learning recovery, and curriculum responsiveness in the Philippine context.

2. Literature Review

Exploring its potential for future-proofing through a comprehensive reframing that aligns with national mandates and global education trends. The research meticulously examined the legal frameworks underpinning curriculum reform, which encompasses Republic Acts 10533 and 7722, the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). Additionally, it investigated the challenges associated with implementation, potential avenues for innovation, and the contributions of teacher educators. The imperative to reform teacher education in the Philippines, especially in light of CHEDRO III Memo No. 159, s.2023, arises in the context of a global acknowledgment of the changing requirements placed on educators in the aftermath of the pandemic. A number of investigations illuminate the persistent challenges, newly arising opportunities, and the evolving frameworks of pre-service teacher preparation. The study culminated in a series of actionable policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the relevance and responsiveness of teacher preparation programs (Carvajal et al. 2025). The complex and frequently conflicting evolution of pre-service teachers' pupil control ideologies. These ideologies transition from humanistic perspectives to more custodial approaches as time progresses, significantly shaped by the influence of mentor teachers and the prevailing institutional culture. This finding underscores the necessity for deliberate curriculum reforms aimed at fostering reflective and context-sensitive practitioners, a priority similarly highlighted in the memo from CHEDRO III (Rideout, 2006). A significant reform effort in the Philippine educational system, the MATATAG Curriculum aims to address current issues and improve the standard of basic education. It highlights how crucial curriculum alignment, relevance, and continuous improvement are to guaranteeing responsiveness to students' needs. The MATATAG Curriculum positions Philippine education for increased competitiveness and sustainability by offering a clear framework for enhancing the efficacy of basic education. This aligns with international benchmarks and new global trends in education (Kilag et al., 2024)

Limitations of conventional teaching methods in fostering ethics literacy among learners who are native to the digital environment. The five-phase instructional model presented emphasizes a transition towards pedagogical innovations that address the socio-digital contexts of contemporary learners, reflecting a trend consistent with the reimagining of curricula in the post-pandemic landscape (Maidee, 2025). In the same vein, The phenomenon referred to as the "two-worlds pitfall," wherein pre-service teachers contend with divergent expectations arising from their academic training and the practical realities of the teaching profession. The findings indicate that the establishment of a coherent, student-focused teaching identity is contingent upon enabling teacher candidates to effectively utilize student thinking in a meaningful manner. This observation holds significant importance in relation to the objectives outlined in CHEDRO III Memo No. 159, particularly in enhancing the connection between theoretical frameworks and practical applications (Coker, 2024). The importance of research and innovation to Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is becoming more widely acknowledged. However, a lackluster research and innovation culture at many HEIs results in a low level

of academic output. It is an appealing goal to move from primarily teaching-oriented universities to research-driven and innovation-focused ones, but this shift depends heavily on the institution's strategic vision and is greatly influenced by both internal and external contextual factors (Lunag et al., 2023).

The correlation between elevated teaching motivation in pre-service teachers and enhanced tendencies toward lifelong learning. The correlation, while modest, suggests a clear implication for curriculum design: it is essential to nurture sustained motivation and adaptability through the implementation of supportive policies and the provision of relevant learning experiences (Kula, 2025). The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant disruption, the adverse effects of the shift to remote learning on peer collaboration and communication among pre-service teachers. The current disruptions necessitate a comprehensive reevaluation of teacher education programs to promote resilience and maintain continuity during periods of crisis (Kennedy & Gill, 2023). HEIs were forced to spearhead the transition to more adaptable and effective learning delivery methods as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic's severe disruption of the Philippine educational system, especially during the lockdown period. Improved Academic Performance (IAP), Increase the Use of Quality Data to Drive Instruction (IUQDDI), Increase Leadership Effectiveness (ILE), Increased Learning Time (ILT), Improve School Climate (ISC), and Increase Teacher Quality (ITQ) were the six Critical Success Factor (CSF) constructs that Philippine HEIs concentrated on in order to navigate this transition. The widespread adoption of technologically enhanced instructional innovations was closely correlated with these constructs, which were prominently displayed by respondents. According to the study, these innovations were thought to be widely used in HEIs. Additionally, there was a moderate to strong correlation found between organizational innovations and the CSFs. Specifically, IUQDDI, ILT, ISC, and IFCE were found to be important predictors of innovation, highlighting the critical role that data-driven instruction, longer learning periods, a supportive institutional environment, and faculty involvement play in promoting educational transformation in the context of higher education in the Philippines (Aliazas et al., 2021).

Education policymakers are encouraged to revisit and critically evaluate budget allocations dedicated to modular remote teaching. In addition, it is strongly recommended to enhance the quality assurance processes for instructional modules and worksheets, ensure the timely delivery and equitable distribution of learning materials, and provide adequate reference resources—particularly for multigrade teachers. These measures are essential to support more effective implementation of modular remote teaching and learning assessment, especially during pandemic-induced disruptions. Budgetary allotments for modular remote instruction are urged to be reviewed and critically assessed by education policymakers. Enhancing the quality assurance procedures for worksheets and instructional modules, making sure that learning materials are delivered on time and fairly, and offering sufficient reference materials—especially for teachers of multiple grades—are also highly advised. These steps are necessary to facilitate the more efficient use of modular remote teaching and learning assessment, particularly in the event of pandemic-related disruptions (Chan et al., 2021).

In the specific context of Northern Philippines, several practical challenges faced by pre-service teachers, which encompass insufficient facilities, erratic supervision, and a lack of adequate preparation. The research emphasizes the variability of these issues across different specializations and indicates that reforms should be tailored and contextually relevant (Napanoy et al., 2021). The extent to which pre-service teachers integrate 21st-century teaching practices into their pedagogical approaches. The presence of technological integration was noted; however, challenges including student resistance and inadequate classroom management continued to exist, suggesting a discrepancy between curricular expectations and the actual level of preparedness. This provides additional support for the focus of CHEDRO III Memo No. 159 on developing core competencies that are in accordance with the teaching realities of the 21st century (Mugot & Sumbalan, 2019).

Prior examination of practicum experiences in the Philippines, revealing discrepancies between BSEd and BA English programs that underscore inconsistent standards in pre-service training. Student-teachers encountered various challenges, including diminished confidence, constraints in resources, and difficulties in managing classrooms—issues that persist in the context of post-pandemic reforms and underscore the pressing

need for policy-driven standardization. Collectively, these investigations provide a persuasive argument for the rethinking of teacher education. The central objectives of CHEDRO III Memo No. 159 are emphasized: to standardize, modernize, and future-proof pre-service teacher training in the Philippines. This initiative aims to ensure that prospective educators possess resilience, reflectiveness, and the necessary skills to effectively navigate the complexities of contemporary educational environments (Ulla, 2016).

3. Methods

3.1 Policy Analysis Framework

This policy analysis employs Documentary Research and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate the framing and implications of CHEDRO III Memo No. 159, s. 2023. Documentary analysis allows for a critical examination of policies, viewing them as both administrative artifacts and as reflections of institutional and societal priorities (Bowen, 2009). This analysis considers the memo not merely as a regulatory directive but also as a discursive text that encapsulates wider narratives surrounding the reform of teacher education. Framework for critical discourse analysis proves to be especially beneficial for the purposes of this examination. This framework provides methodologies to analyze the ways in which language shapes specific realities and legitimizes policy mandates, particularly in the context of terms such as “learning loss,” “competence,” and “updated curriculum.” The terminology employed is not devoid of bias; it inherently incorporates underlying values and assumptions regarding the definitions of quality education and effective teaching practices (Fairclough, 2013). Critical discourse analysis elucidates the manner in which language influences the perceptions and behaviors of stakeholders, thereby subtly guiding institutional responses towards compliance and standardization. The methodological approaches employed are justified, as CHEDRO III Memo No. 159, s. 2023 transcends mere policy requirement; it serves as some document rich in meaning, urgency, and ideological significance. This study employs documentary analysis to examine the memo as a formal representation of institutional intent. This analysis reveals the discursive strategies employed to present teacher education reform as not only a technical solution but also a moral imperative. This dual lens facilitates a comprehensive analysis of the ways in which the memo impacts, limits, or enhances the capabilities of TEIs as they address policy mandates in the context of practical challenges. A fundamental technique in qualitative research, thematic analysis is especially useful in critical discourse analysis and documentary research. Thematic analysis facilitates the methodical analysis of texts in documentary research by enabling scholars to recognize, arrange, and interpret recurrent themes of meaning in institutional records, policy documents, or archival materials (Braun et al., 2019).

3.2 Analysis of the Policy

CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023 outlines a directive characterized by its urgency and ambition. The policy fundamentally aims to adjust teacher education curricula in light of the learning loss attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. The memo can be analyzed as a product of institutional response, representing a formal effort by CHED to establish control over a fragmented educational recovery process. This documentary study investigates the execution of Item No. 3 from CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023, which mandates the revision and enhancement of the teacher education curriculum to address the increasing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis revealed considerable deficiencies in teaching preparedness, student engagement, and curriculum relevance, prompting TEIs to reevaluate their approaches to training future educators. This policy directive emphasizes the necessity of preparing pre-service teachers not only with a strong command of their subject matter but also with the ability to address varied learning requirements, effectively integrate technology, and foster inclusive and adaptive teaching methodologies.

The language of the memo prominently features terms such as “updated curriculum,” “learning loss,” and “competence,” indicating a discourse that emphasizes accountability and efficiency. The CDA underscores the

manner in which this framing accentuates quantifiable shortcomings and technical solutions—such as modifications to the curriculum and alignment of pedagogical approaches—while assigning the responsibility for implementation directly to TEIs. The memo notably excludes essential considerations regarding implementation, including faculty workload, institutional capacity, and financial constraints, which could impede the efficacy of proposed reforms. Furthermore, the memorandum establishes a narrative characterized by a sense of urgency. The expressions “must be submitted” and “as a response to learning loss” reflect a directive tone that restricts opportunities for institutional discussion or flexibility. Characterization of policy documents, which often exhibit a propensity to convey clarity and control, despite the likelihood of uneven implementation (Bowen, 2009). The memo illustrates a significant alignment with national objectives, as outlined in the Philippine Teacher Education Roadmap (CHED, 2022), as well as with international frameworks, including UNESCO’s initiative for reimagining education. Nevertheless, this alignment continues to be implicit.

In practical settings, TEIs encounter significant difficulties in the interpretation and execution of the memo. Initial observations from regional institutions indicate a combination of innovative approaches and cautious responses. Some institutions are actively exploring flexible learning modalities and enhancing instructional design, whereas others face limitations due to insufficient resources, ambiguous guidance, or inadequate faculty training. The first step in thematic analysis in qualitative research is becoming acquainted with the data, which entails reading the content several times over to get a general grasp of it. The creation of initial codes, which involves methodically labeling data segments pertinent to the research questions, comes next. Finding themes is the next step, which involves grouping codes into possible themes and compiling all information pertinent to each theme. Themes are then examined and improved to make sure they appropriately represent the information and study objectives. The next step is to define and name the themes, which involves stating each theme's core idea and the narrative it tells. The last stage is creating the report, which entails combining the data extracts and the analytical narrative to provide a logical, convincing summary of the results (Braun et al., 2019).

4. Results

Examining CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, series of 2023, demonstrates the intricate interactions between institutional capabilities, national policy directives, and the changing conversation about educational reform. The study reveals three key conclusions that shed light on the memorandum's implications for curriculum reform in TEIs through the use of documentary research and critical discourse analysis. First, curriculum reform is framed as a technical and moral solution to the pervasive problem of learning loss, which has been made worse by recent changes in the way education is delivered. The memo emphasizes the significance of quantifiable learning outcomes and frames curriculum updates as a strategic intervention meant to restore and improve learner competencies. This stance aligns with Secretary Sonny Angara's claim that education reform is "a moral imperative," emphasizing the moral obligation associated with educational progress in his speech at the Teacher Education Council Symposium. Second, the analysis points out significant differences in how policies are being implemented, especially the lack of explicit support mechanisms for TEIs. The memorandum states that curriculum updates are required, but it doesn't go into detail about the operational frameworks or capacity-building programs that are required to make compliance possible. The Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Philippine Normal University (PNU), which aims to support teacher development, reflects Angara's comments, which highlight inter-agency collaboration and the necessity of educator reskilling. Third, the memorandum's wording primarily reflects a top-down, hierarchical approach, in which directives are issued without accompanying clauses allowing for collaborative policy design or participatory engagement. Angara's larger vision for education reform, which promotes inclusive stakeholder participation and dialogic processes, stands in stark contrast to this authoritative tone. All of these results point to the need for more inclusive, supportive, and dialogic mechanisms to be incorporated into CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023, even though it provides a critical policy response to today's educational issues.

Thematic Analysis - The approach, as applied to documentary research and CDA, guided the rigorous

application of thematic analysis that produced the study's themes. The process started with familiarizing oneself with the complete text of CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023, as well as pertinent public statements, including interagency agreements and speeches by Secretary Sonny Angara. The researcher was able to comprehend institutional contexts and the larger discursive landscape during this immersion stage. Following this, the researcher coded the memorandum and related documents in a methodical manner, identifying and labeling key phrases, rhetorical patterns, and recurrent policy concepts. Terms such as "learning loss," "competence," and "must be submitted" indicated dominant policy discourses. Based on conceptual similarities and the underlying presumptions they expressed, these codes were then compiled into preliminary themes. The deeper analytical layers of each theme were informed by the researcher's use of CDA to examine the power dynamics, rhetorical devices, and ideological framings present in the language.

Themes like "Curriculum Reform as an Ethical and Technical Imperative" and "Tension Between Centralized Control and Participatory Governance" were honed and examined to make sure they captured the inconsistencies and omissions in the policy text as well as data patterns. The next step was to identify and categorize the themes, which required evaluating each one's importance in relation to more general discussions of institutional capacity, governance, and educational reform. In order to provide a comprehensive critique of the memorandum's framing, implementation difficulties, and governance model, the themes were finally integrated into an analytical narrative that linked documentary content with policy implications. This thematic construction was both theory-informed (deductive) and data-driven (inductive), utilizing documentary analysis to highlight discrepancies between written policy and institutional realities and CDA to critique the top-down policy logic.

Theme 1: Curriculum Reform as an Ethical and Technical Imperative

Curriculum reform is framed in CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023, as a moral and ethical response to the disruptions in education brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than just as an administrative or bureaucratic necessity. By presenting learning loss as a pressing issue that necessitates both prompt and moral action, this framing elevates the urgency of educational recovery to a matter of professional and public responsibility. Terms like "competence," "updated curriculum," and "learning loss" are used in the memorandum to convey two points of emphasis: the ethical need to restore and improve the quality of teacher education and the requirement for technically sound, quantifiable results. In his speech at the Teacher Education Council Symposium, Secretary Sonny Angara described education reform as a "moral imperative," which is consistent with this duality. In addition to reaffirming the need for competency-driven and evidence-based curriculum revisions, his statement upholds the policy's ethical foundation. The policy's technical and moral discourses collectively show a calculated attempt to justify reform using both ethical arguments and accountability measures.

Theme 2: Policy Rhetoric and the Discourse of Urgency and Compliance

Using urgent and directive language, such as "must be submitted" and "as a response to learning loss," CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023 creates a narrative focused on efficiency, compliance, and institutional accountability. This rhetorical device is consistent with a larger performance management discourse that is commonly seen in top-down policy approaches, in which mandates are imposed by central authorities with little input from stakeholders. The memorandum's authoritative tone, as viewed through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), demonstrates the Commission on Higher Education's (CHED) intention to exert control over the direction and pace of curriculum reform among TEIs. Nevertheless, there is little room for institutional agency, cooperative planning, or the consideration of context-specific requirements under this top-down directive. The memo's hierarchical nature is further reinforced by the lack of procedures for dialogic feedback or participatory consultation, which may limit institutional innovation and responsiveness.

Theme 3: Lack of Operational and Structural Support for Implementation

The absence of well-defined procedures or support systems that would allow TEIs to successfully carry out

the required curriculum reforms is a crucial weakness in CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023. The memorandum sets high standards for curriculum revisions in response to learning loss, but it says nothing about crucial operational factors like institutional preparedness, faculty development, and funding. Significant difficulties arise from this lack of implementation guidelines, especially for institutions with inadequate infrastructure or scarce resources. The viability of the policy's recommendations is compromised by its failure to address problems with faculty workload, capacity building, and systemic support. On the other hand, although not included in the memorandum itself, Secretary Sonny Angara's public remarks highlight the value of interagency cooperation and teacher retraining. This difference raises questions regarding the sustainability and equity of the policy's results by highlighting a gap between its idealistic objectives and the actual institutional execution.

Theme 4: Misalignment Between Policy Directives and Institutional Realities

There is a clear conflict between the national policy goals stated in CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023, and the actual situation faced by local TEIs. Although the policy presents a common vision for curriculum reform in response to learning loss, different institutions' implementations of it show differing degrees of responsiveness, which are influenced by different levels of institutional capacity, resource availability, and interpretive clarity. Innovative approaches, like incorporating flexible learning modalities and improving instructional design, have been investigated by TEIs with more advanced infrastructures and support systems. On the other hand, a lack of clear operational guidelines, faculty preparation, and inadequate resources continue to impede many institutions. These differences highlight how difficult it can be to convert national policy into practical institutional practice, especially in a diverse higher education environment. As a result, the memorandum's efficacy depends on both its content and how well it takes into account the varying capacities of TEIs in different geographical areas.

Theme 5: Tension Between Centralized Control and Participatory Governance

CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023, prioritizes centralized directives over participatory engagement, reinforcing a top-down governance model in the implementation of curriculum reforms. Without offering procedures for stakeholder consultation, co-design, or feedback integration, the policy requires TEIs to comply. This centralized strategy contrasts with current educational reform discourses that highlight the importance of stakeholder empowerment, inclusive governance, and collaborative policymaking. Notably, in his public remarks, Secretary Sonny Angara promotes a more dialogic and participatory approach, stressing the value of stakeholder engagement and interagency cooperation in the reform process. This contrast highlights a contradiction in the larger policy narrative: national leadership calls for more inclusive and collaborative approaches, but the memorandum's wording reflects a command-driven framework. The coherence of the reform agenda and its ability to promote long-lasting, contextually grounded change in teacher education are called into question by this discrepancy.

5. Discussion

The analysis of CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, series of 2023, reveals the complex dynamics between national educational mandates and the capacity of TEIs to respond effectively to policy directives. Utilizing documentary research and critical discourse analysis, the study highlights how the memorandum frames curriculum reform as both an ethical obligation and a technical response to the learning loss exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the implementation of this directive is marked by notable challenges, including the absence of operational support, the rigidity of top-down governance structures, and the disconnect between national expectations and institutional realities.

Thematic analysis further uncovers five key themes that provide insight into these challenges: (1) the dual framing of curriculum reform as a moral and technical imperative; (2) the discourse of urgency and compliance embedded in the policy language; (3) the lack of structural mechanisms to support implementation; (4) the

misalignment between policy goals and institutional contexts; and (5) the tension between centralized control and the need for participatory governance. Together, these themes underscore the need for more inclusive, responsive, and capacity-sensitive approaches to policy formulation and execution in Philippine teacher education.

More than just updating curricula is required to future-proof teacher education in the Philippines; extensive systemic changes that include faculty development, cogent policy integration, and the promotion of creative teaching methods are also required. In order to promote a more adaptable, inclusive, and globally competitive educational system, a conceptual framework has been proposed that aims to connect legislative requirements, curriculum reform, and teacher educator empowerment (Carvajal et al., 2025). By encouraging behaviors like performativity, high-stakes tests, and the growing reliance on data-driven metrics, curriculum policy plays a critical role in fostering a culture of technical accountability. In the educational system, it simultaneously molds the identities and roles of teachers and students (Winter, 2017). A modern framework for tackling the intricate sustainability issues of the twenty-first century is Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Although environmental education has a long history in the Philippines and efforts have been made to match national policies with sustainability objectives, a number of barriers prevent ESD from being successfully incorporated into higher education.

Key problems include unclear pedagogical approaches, a lack of a cohesive national policy for ESD mainstreaming, and poor interagency coordination at the institutional, national, and international levels. The widespread implementation of ESD in higher education institutions is hampered by these issues. By utilizing current synergies, such as universities' mandate to promote ESD best practices, the adoption of inclusive and holistic educational strategies, and the expansion of ESD knowledge and capacity to local communities, it is imperative to close these policy and coordination gaps in order to improve implementation. ESD policy and practice may become more coherent and aligned as a result of these initiatives (Bautista, 2024). Stakeholder engagement, teacher professionalism, and summative assessment are three crucial elements that impact curriculum alignment and are all closely tied to the concept of trust. The study thoroughly examines and illuminates these dimensions to provide insights and conceptual frameworks (also called "tools for thought") that can direct and support future curriculum development initiatives (Twining et al., 2020). Socioeconomic disparities, inadequate infrastructure, low teacher preparation, and enduring barriers to equity and inclusivity are just a few of the serious issues facing the Philippine educational system. In order to successfully close current gaps, these problems highlight the urgent need for focused interventions, flexible policy changes, and cooperative partnerships. The advancement of a more equitable, inclusive, and globally competitive educational framework in the nation depends on such initiatives (Malbas et al., 2023).

In order to elicit latent emotions and desires among its subjects and mobilize support for the continuation of a techno-managerialist agenda, Vision Development examined a variety of ideological constructs, such as imagining bleak futures or evoking emotional and cognitive memories of past accomplishments. This method makes use of poststructuralist discourse theory and the concept of fantasy in policy studies to critically examine how affective rhetoric and desire influence future visions and to encourage contemplation of the wider ramifications of such policy narratives (Tervasmäki, 2023). Given the encouraging developments in regional cross-border cooperation in Southeast Asia, higher education institutions are being encouraged to set clear and pertinent research agendas in light of their vital role in boosting regional competitiveness and prominence. It is crucial for Teacher Education Institutions to match their research directions with their distinct institutional identities in order to avoid diluting regional goals. When combined with regionalization principles, this alignment plays a significant role in guiding and forming the region's changing higher education scene (Baylan, 2023).

A thorough theoretical framework for examining how policies are implemented in higher education can unify the institutional and instrumental components of legitimacy and control. In order to lower the risk of mission drift and encourage alignment with policy goals, this approach helps shape higher education policy by

identifying a number of legitimacy-driven policy strategies, including the strategic use of institutional reputation, national classification systems, and organizational archetypes (Misra & Stensaker, 2024). Significant shifts in governance have occurred when reform-minded actors have assumed leadership within a higher education institution (HEI) and initiated top-down changes, or when such actors have confronted exploitative institutional management by securing support from influential external stakeholders. These cases offer a degree of optimism for enhancing governance practices within Indonesian HEIs. However, they also suggest that overcoming entrenched predatory leadership is only the first step; ongoing challenges remain in negotiating the contours of governance reform, particularly due to the presence of competing reform agendas that carry divergent interpretations of academic quality, integrity, and their implementation (Rosser, 2022).

A number of tactical suggestions are put forth to improve the policy's applicability, viability, and overall impact in light of the findings and based on the textual analysis of CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023 as well as current trends in educational discourse. First, curriculum reform should be reframed by CHED as a moral and technical necessity. It would highlight the larger goal of serving the country's students beyond merely complying with regulations if policy language were in line with Secretary Sonny Angara's public declaration that reform is a "moral imperative." Second, the Commission ought to improve interagency cooperation by utilizing current alliances, like the Department of Education's and the Philippine Normal University's Memorandum of Agreement, to jointly create regional training courses and workshops on curriculum design with TEIs. Third, to ensure alignment with the changing demands of education in a global context, curriculum revisions must explicitly incorporate 21st-century competencies, such as digital literacy, critical thinking, inclusive pedagogy, and global citizenship. Fourth, by instituting stakeholder participation in curriculum development procedures, CHED should promote participatory governance. In order to promote a more inclusive and context-sensitive approach to reform, this can be accomplished through the establishment of advisory councils within TEIs, regional forums, and structured consultations. Finally, the Commission needs to set up equitable and flexible mechanisms for policy evaluation and monitoring. By taking into account the various capacities and situations of TEIs, assessment mechanisms should foster equity and capture challenges that exist on the ground rather than just concentrating on compliance. All of these suggestions support a more cooperative, adaptable, and proactive strategy for putting CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023 into effect.

In order to analyze CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023 and its wider implications for teacher education reform in the Philippines, this study is predicated on a number of important assumptions. It makes the assumption that institutional behavior is greatly influenced by national policy directives, especially in highly regulated fields like teacher education where conformity is frequently valued above contextual flexibility. Additionally, the analysis makes the assumption that curriculum policies are not objective tools but rather are a part of political and ideological frameworks that shape the status of educators and learners in the educational system. Furthermore, the study makes the assumption that structural support, stakeholder engagement, and a sense of shared ownership among institutions are necessary for the successful implementation of curriculum reform, in addition to directive policy language. It also argues that how reform is framed—as a managerial necessity, a technical solution, or a moral obligation—has a significant impact on how institutions accept and implement it. Last but not least, the study makes the assumption that improving governance and alignment in higher education necessitates navigating various and occasionally opposing perspectives of quality, integrity, and accountability throughout the reform process in addition to conquering internal resistance.

The study have a number of useful ramifications that are essential for enhancing the formulation and application of policies in Philippine higher education, especially with regard to TEIs. First, the way that curriculum reform is framed as both a technical and moral necessity emphasizes how crucial it is to combine ethical considerations with practical, understandable solutions. To promote true institutional commitment rather than just compliance, policy framings that make reference to professional responsibility and public service must be backed by operational mechanisms. This implies that CHED should purposefully blend value-driven narratives with specific implementation pathways in its future issuances. Second, CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, s. 2023's absence of operational and structural support mechanisms emphasizes the need for

capacity-building initiatives catered to the different requirements of TEIs. To put policy directives into action, institutions with limited funding need support systems like financial aid, implementation toolkits, and faculty development programs. Without these supportive circumstances, compliance becomes onerous and could result in superficial reforms rather than significant change. Third, the top-down approach of the memorandum emphasizes how important it is to formalize participatory governance in curriculum reform procedures. In order to promote shared ownership, contextual relevance, and institutional innovation, policies should provide for dialogic engagement with TEIs through regional forums, structured consultations, and advisory councils.

The study also highlights how critical it is to set up fair and responsive evaluation systems that go beyond compliance indicators. In order to focus on outcome-based indicators like learner competencies, instructional effectiveness, and localized innovations, assessment systems must take institutional diversity into consideration. To guarantee alignment with international trends and national development goals, curriculum revisions should also specifically incorporate 21st-century competencies like digital literacy, critical thinking, inclusive pedagogy, and global citizenship. Finally, the results highlight the necessity of improved interagency cooperation. Formal partnerships across educational sectors are crucial, as evidenced by the discrepancy between CHED's directive tone and the cooperative initiatives between DepEd and the Philippine Normal University. These collaborations can foster coherence, synergy, and the sharing of resources and expertise required for long-term change. When taken as a whole, these implications support curriculum reform strategies that are more inclusive, supportive, and context-sensitive rather than prescriptive policy models.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, the examination of CHEDRO III Memorandum No. 159, series of 2023, highlights the difficulties in coordinating national policy directives with the institutional capabilities and contextual realities of Philippine TEIs. The study uses critical discourse analysis and documentary research to show that, although the memorandum is presented as a necessary and timely response to learning loss, stressing both technical and ethical accountability, it is hampered by a lack of operational support, participatory mechanisms, and contextual sensitivity. The thematic analysis draws attention to important conflicts between the necessity of collaborative governance and centralized control, as well as between the viability of policy implementation and its ambition. These results are consistent with larger patterns in education policy, where the changing roles of educators and institutions interact with the effects of managerialism, datafication, and performance-based accountability. Future policy must be based on trust, inclusivity, and adaptive governance in order to guarantee the significant and long-lasting implementation of curriculum reform. Reform must be reframed as a shared moral and professional endeavor, grounded in dialogue, capacity building, and alignment with local realities and global competencies, rather than just as a regulatory requirement.

7. References

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