

## Exploring the Nexus of Holistic Education and College Readiness: Insights from K-12 Graduates in the Philippines

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**ABSTRACT** This qualitative study examined how holistic education is related to the college readiness of Filipino K-12 graduates. It was framed in the four pillars of education and structuration theory. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) explored fourteen (14) first-year college students, in a public university in the northern Philippines. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the participants' responses obtained from a semi-structured interview guide. The results showed that study participants had partially acquired the elements of holistic education and had perceived themselves as partially college-ready. Such acquisition is influenced by the K-12 program's curricular features and the learner and teacher-related factors. The relationship of holistic education and college readiness becomes possible only when an orderly, stable, and harmonious interplay of structure and agency is in place, yielding to a seamless and integrated transition of the K-12 graduates from basic to tertiary education.

### INTRODUCTION

The educational milieu has been continually adapting to the changes as influenced by the globalizing world. The emphasis on integrating knowledge and skills, as well as theory and practice has been the primordial focus of recent curricular reforms in preparing learners to succeed for both college and future work (Reid 2008). This scenario has pushed schools worldwide to look into curricular and pedagogical changes shifting from traditional education to holistic education. It provides opportunities for learners to develop their skills and learning environment beyond the classroom (Miller et al. 2018). This philosophical frame supports the shift that human beings are tripartite beings who are endowed with reason, emotion, and the body (Riley-Taylor 2002). To realize the wholeness and full potential of learners, it is significant that education must focus on these three aspects of the human person.

Holistic education can be viewed using the four fundamental pillars of educational philosophy posited by Delors (2013), namely, (a) Learning

to know, (b) Learning to do, (c) Learning to be, and, (d) Learning to live together. These four pillars seek to develop the learners' full potentials as they discover themselves better, be of service to their community, and acquire universal shared values like social commitment and responsibility (Nava 2001; Schreiner 2005).

In the Philippines, the K-12 program was introduced under Republic Act Number 10533, which features holistic education as one of its goals. This recent educational reform promises to produce holistic graduates. Its primary focus is to promote an inclusive development of the full potential of the individual learner. The K-12 curriculum intends for early childhood development, create relevant curriculum and total development of Filipino (Psychological Association of the Philippines 2013).

Since one of the K-12 program curricular exits is to produce holistic graduates ready for higher education, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) issued a memorandum that emphasizes the importance of holistic education (CHED 2013). The order directs the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to focus on de-

veloping the acquisition of life skills and values. The same order mandates HEIs to facilitate learner-centered activities needed in developing holistic and well-rounded, responsible citizens. This curricular reform served as the driving force for the HEIs to shift from teacher-centered to outcomes-based education. The aim is to develop further lifelong learners having mastery of both theories and practice through the General Education Courses (GEC) in the first two years of tertiary education. Ideally, college-ready learners should have possessed holistic education from their K-12 education to hurdle the GEC. College ready students can be admitted to college and succeed in their programs without remediation (Conley 2007). Moreover, they should have both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects to ensure their success in tertiary education (Kommarraju and Rinella 2013).

Since the K-12 program has just produced its first batch of graduates, the Philippine legislature shows significant interest in examining its effectiveness to establish smooth basic-tertiary education transition in the country (Mendoza 2018; San Juan 2019). This move is in line with the alarming results of a few studies on the performance of K-12 learners. Filipino learners obtained 353 points and 357 points in Mathematics and Science. These scores are considered below average (Paris 2019). Moreover, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (2020) found out that some Filipino senior high school learners lack literacy and numeracy skills and English competencies; hence, some learners have difficulty conducting practical research. With these concerns, there is indeed a necessity to carefully examine the K-12 graduates to hurdle college life's academic rigors concerning a holistic approach to education (Mattern et al. 2014).

Given the foregoing gaps and in response to the dearth of studies in the Philippines exploring the nexus of holistic education and college readiness among K-12 graduates, this study examined first-year college students' experiences in one public HEI. This study hopes to provide insights into aligning the basic-tertiary education curriculum, refining the instructional delivery, and marrying the study participants' theories and practices to holistic education, leading to their college readiness.

## Objectives

Generally, the study examined how holistic education is related to the Filipino K-12 graduates' college readiness using the Four Pillars of Education and Structuration Theory as analytical frames. Specifically, this study aimed to: (a) determine the existence of holistic education among K-12 graduates; (b) examine how holistic education was developed among K-12 graduates; (c) determine the perceived college readiness of the K-12 graduates; and (d) investigate the nexus of holistic education and college readiness.

## Literature Review

### *The Concept of Holistic Education*

Holistic education began to take form as a movement and practice critiquing the educational system in the mid-1980s (Miller 2006). It contests the rationalistic paradigm and other paradigms contrary to the wholeness of human beings (Nielsen 2006; Lee et al. 2014). It challenges the fragmented, positivistic, fixed, and reductionist assumptions of education (Miller 2000; Schreiner, 2005) leading to alienation and suffering of people and the community (Karnieli 1998; Schreiner 2007). It also highlights the interconnectedness of being and the world and the essentiality of spirituality (Nakagawa 2000; Miller 2007).

Essentially, holistic education is a spiritual journey (Palmer 1998; Grossenbacher and Parkin 2006; Modell et al. 2009) wherein the head must always be united with the heart, a marriage of theory and practice). This view emphasizes the person's wholeness, the community, and the world (Morcom 2017). Thus, education should always entail authentic spirituality, which is non-coercive and tolerant of diversity. The knowledge learned leads to the healing of the brokenness and unity of the fragmented individual. This process yields a 'community of truth' wherein learners are free to express their innermost and sincerest beings (Miller et al. 2018).

### *The Four Pillars of Education*

One of the approaches to holistic education is the four pillars of education (Mahmoudi et al.

2012), UNESCO's vision of education in preparing learners to survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century environment (International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century 1996). These pillars are summarized as follows: (a) *Learning to know* refers to a body of knowledge, including a continuous search for knowledge and learning how to learn throughout one's life (Delors 2013). It is an inquiry which empowers the human faculties to wonder, thereby developing curiosity, intuitiveness, and creativity (Nava 2001; Schreiner 2005); (b) *Learning to do* is the application of what one has learned in which learners act with an initiative based on making rational choices for the welfare of the society, and take responsibility to one's action (Zhou and Sun 2001; Schreiner 2005); (c) *Learning to be* highlights the full flowering of human potentials. Individuals are seen as spiritual beings searching for purpose and meaning of their existence (Nava 2001). It highlights the search for realness and authenticity coming from the inward being, and (d) *Learning to live together* is concerned with the engagement and active participation of the learners with their fellow human beings and the world where they live (Delors 2013). It is also learning to live interdependently, responsibly, and harmoniously with other people and creatures of the planet (Nava 2001; Mahmoudi et al. 2012).

### ***The Philippine College Readiness Standards (CRS) and the New General Education Courses (GEC)***

The Philippine CRS features content and performance standards that remove the corrective character of foundation courses and enable HEIs to focus on the undergraduate curricula, emphasizing on national and global standards. In response to the CRS and significant changes in the basic education sector, CHED came up with a revised curriculum for general education focused on liberal, learner-centered, inter/cross-disciplinary, and context-based education (CHED 2013). This curriculum intends to develop holistic learners by highlighting the interplay of Filipino learners' knowledge of themselves, Philippine society, the environment, and the world. It is mainly composed of 36 units (24 units of core courses, nine units of electives, and three units

of mandatory course) that can be taught in Filipino or English (Geronimo 2014).

### ***Structuration Studies in Education***

Structuration theory highlights the interplay of the structure and agency, usually called the duality of structure for transforming social systems (Giddens and Pierson 1998). Structures are codified and signified rules that are repetitively produced through social processes. On the other hand, the agency is the exercise of actors' power to transform, change, or perpetuate the structure.

In the contemporary period, structuration theory became vital educational institutions' analysis, considering that schools' dynamics are the products of the interplay between structure and agency. Premised on this, Ashley (2010) suggested using structuration theory in doing educational research that paves the way to a new direction in the Sociology of Education. For instance, Ma (2010) argued the interrelationship between information professionals' work practices and social structures framed in structuration theory. On the one hand, Naidoo (2009) employed the structuration theory to determine the learners' 'exercise of agency through literacy improvement. Clearly, these studies show the significance of structuration theory in understanding dynamics in the educational milieu.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study employed qualitative design through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Using this methodology, the researchers act as facilitators to uncover the study participants' responses and elicit their narratives (Parker and Tritter 2006). Through this approach, the researchers unraveled the perceptions, values, and experiences of the study participants concerning their holistic education as they transition to college.

### **Study Participants**

Fourteen (14) first-year learners from one public HEI in the northern Philippines were pur-

positively chosen as study participants. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were as follow: The participant must (a) be a K-12 graduate; (b) be a first-year learner; (c) have taken both the College Admission Test (CAT) and the College Readiness Test (CRT) administered by the respondent-university, and; (d) be willing to participate in the study.

Fifty percent (50%) of the participants were females, while fifty percent (50%) were males. They both represent categories of extreme scores (high and low) in the CAT and CRT. They graduated from both public and private Senior High School (SHS) offering different strands, namely, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), General Academic Strand (GAS), Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM), and Home Economics (HE).

### Research Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was used in the FGD. Interview questions (in English) were constructively aligned with the objectives of the study. These questions elicited thick descriptions of the study participants' experiences regarding their holistic education and college readiness. Two (2) experts did content validation of the instrument, and refinement was made based on their comments and suggestions. Two (2) Filipino language experts translated the questions in Filipino. The instrument was then tried out to four (4) first-year college students who were not participants. This process ensured the suitability and clarity of the questions and determined the time allotment for the FGD. Three (3) difficult to understand, and two (2) vague questions were changed after a tryout.

### Data Gathering Procedure

Permission to conduct the FGD with the identified study participants was sought from the concerned university officials. There were two sessions of FGD in a well-situated room, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. These sessions were sufficient in reaching the data saturation of the study. In keeping with the ethical standards, the FGD facilitator briefly explained the study's purpose and obtained the

free and prior informed consent (FPIC) of the study participants. The FPIC form was read and signed by the participants after understanding the study objectives and the FGD process.

With the study participants' permission, an audio recorder and mobile phones were utilized to record the responses to ensure effective note-taking. The Filipino version of the interview guide was used in the two FGD sessions. The participants were encouraged to answer the questions in any language that they were most comfortable with. The FGD sessions lasted for an average of 1 hour and 30 minutes. The researchers personally transcribed FGD responses. After two weeks of transcribing the data, the participants were asked to validate the complete transcript to establish the data's 'confirmability.'

### Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was employed to make sense of the textual data obtained from the study participants vis-à-vis the research questions (Baxter and Jack 2008). The researchers used coding approaches to organize, interpret, and analyze the data. Open coding was used to identify and break down concepts and categories from the participants' responses. In determining the major themes that weaved the concepts and categories related to and different, axial coding was used. Specifically, thematic analysis was employed in analyzing the transcribed data. The researchers "thematized" the "unthematized" verbatim narratives to make significant meanings about the nexus of holistic education and college readiness. They also observed self-reflexivity during the process of data analysis by constantly introspecting on the codes and themes. Personal biases were set aside, and study participants' responses were accorded with equal value to ensure objectivity (Dodgson 2019; Barrett 2020).

## RESULTS

### Existence of Holistic Education among K-12 Graduates

#### *Learning to Know*

Along learning to know, study participants generally experienced knowledge enrichment.

The K-12 program has made them more rational in understanding the realities around them, which they obtained, particularly during their immersion classes. As pointed out by a participant [A.B.],

*I believe I have become rational. I learned to think more deeply especially when I interacted with my customers during immersion classes*

Still, along learning to know, almost all of the study participants have narrated that they learned to be more creative and critical thinkers. The numerous classroom presentations helped them work on ideas imaginatively and think “outside the box.” One of them summarized this concept in the following words:

*Just like what the rest mentioned, all of our classroom activities were performance-based and outcomes-based. We needed to show our creativity to our teachers and classmates.* [B.B.]

With the different tracks and strands offered in the curriculum, a participant shared that the subjects were more specific and helped him to specialize in certain fields. He narrated that,

*I was never focused before. Since the subjects are specific, I was able to specialize in the area that I liked and consequently gained knowledge* [A.E.]

Collectively, study participants appreciated the significance of performance and outcomes-based approach of the curriculum. They expressed that this approach has been essential to acquire experiential learning and broaden understanding of social realities. Two (2) study participants highlighted this insight in the following statements:

*Thanks to K-12 program. It gave me knowledge and experiences which will help me in the future. My experiences in immersion classes and other performance-based activities helped me to learn more* [A.A]

*My Philosophy subject helped me to gain a wider perspective regarding the realities of life and my Culture and Politics subject made me more critical* [B.F]

### **Learning to Do**

The development of the pillar ‘Learning to do’ has been evident in acquiring relevant skills among the participants. They admitted that the

curriculum has, in part, provided them with various skills that are not only applicable in the classroom but also in real-life contexts. One study participant was very eager to disclose how he learned to make bread and pastries. He said:

*Since my SHS track was technical-vocational-livelihood (TVL), I was exposed to making bread and other pastries. I love baking bread, especially during family occasions* [A.C.]

The research subjects and other performance-based activities were essential in translating the participants’ knowledge into concrete empirical output. They noted that this subject and undertaking taught them to be systematic in doing things and thinking in a multidisciplinary way. They learned problem-solving skills by following procedures and integrating various lenses. With these, they were able to produce research output and products. As vividly expressed by a participant [B.F.]:

*I took TVL as a track, and in our entrepreneurship subject, we were taught how to be multidisciplinary in approach and problem-solvers. We applied concepts from different fields to become successful in crafting business plans and other marketing strategies.*

### **Learning to Be**

The development of an individual’s full potential with emphasis on knowing oneself, authenticity, and development of values was identified to have been honed among the participants. They narrated how they were able to know themselves better through the process of self-discovery. Philosophy, humanities, and personality development subjects have been instrumental in discovering themselves, especially their strengths and weaknesses. This experience made them define their choices and explore a possible career path they need to pursue. As pointed out by a participant [A.D.]:

*I came to know my strengths and weaknesses, and the career path that I need to take through our subjects on philosophy, humanities, and personality and development.*

Learning the values of being patient and people-oriented became indispensable in becoming better and more humane individuals. The participants confirmed that these values have been developed through immersion classes and

performance-based activities of the curriculum. A participant recounted:

*I was taught some core values like patience and being people-oriented that made me a better person [A.F]*

Notably, none of the participants narrated their spirituality, which is an essential component of the pillar, learning to be. They could not delve deeper into the higher purpose and meaning of life and the concept of transcendence and spirituality.

### ***Learning to Live Together***

*Learning to live together* is evident in the study participants' harmonious relationship with their classmates, teachers, school administrators, and industry supervisors. The concepts learned in the social sciences, philosophy, and humanities subjects helped them interact, cooperate, understand, and appreciate differences. These were intensified when they underwent immersion subjects where they were exposed to diverse groups of people. One of the participants mentioned:

*I learned to interact with different personalities. During my immersion, I learned how to deal with professionals and people from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds [B.A.]*

Interestingly, few study participants affirmed their deep sense of community and social responsibility through the K-12 program. In their outreach programs, they became more connected and engaged in addressing the needs of their communities. They realized their sense of accountability when they experienced giving relief goods and clothes in hospitals and indigenous communities.

### **Means of Developing Holistic Education among K-12 Graduates**

The diverse tracks and strands paved the way for the learners to specialize according to interests and aptitudes. Taking such specializations enabled them to acquire and apply the knowledge they love learning, become conscious of their potentials, and collaborate with others to pursue academic success. One participant summarized this experience in the following words:

*I took STEM because I was very interested in Science. The experiments and lessons we had from this subject ignited my passion for performing scientific undertakings. In the future, I want to become a doctor in order to apply everything that I learned in school and later to be of service to my community [B.A.]*

In a way, the curriculum's research-orientedness paved the way for the learners to understand realities scientifically. Following the empirical process allowed them to look into the phenomenon's causal relationship and think more rationally, coherently, and critically. A participant [B.D] mentioned,

*Since Grades 9 to 12, we conducted and wrote research papers. Performing these activities helped us to be observant and integrate concepts and theories we learned from various subjects. We also had output in robotics that were defended during the Science fair.*

The curriculum being industry-driven somehow allowed the learners to marry theory and practice in their specialization field. The immersion courses opened their eyes to the realities of life in their future careers and wider society. The learners exposed to different workplaces were able to experience real-life situations in industries and effectively interact with various people coming from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

By some means, the teacher attributes are influential in paving the way for the learners' holistic education. Specialized teachers were effective transmitters of the essential knowledge, skills, and attitude that hone the learners' capacity to know, apply knowledge, discover themselves, and collaborate with classmates and other people. Those capacitated to teach the K-12 subjects had mastery in facilitating the learning process and applying concepts to real-life contexts. Meanwhile, teachers who focused on instructional tasks showed a more significant influence in contributing to the learners' holistic development. They covered more topics, deepened the discussions, and developed the required competencies of the subjects.

The learners' attributes of being independent, highly motivated, and goal-oriented were factors that most participants possessed for their holistic formation. The study participants capable of showing independent learning can dis-

cover knowledge through their initiative. They, too, become resourceful in finding relevant materials to enhance their learning. The study participants' motivation also served as a critical factor in learning to know, do, be, and live together. Through their determination and goal-orientedness, they show persistence in accomplishing their academic tasks and in meeting the standards set by the new curriculum. As revealed by a participant [B.F.],

*During senior high school, I needed to do a lot of assignments, research papers, and artistic presentations. I needed to study well and learn to independently work because I want to achieve my goal, which is to proceed to college.*

The study participants made a common claim that their readiness in college was heavily dependent on their tracks and strands in SHS. Those who perceived themselves to be college-ready were those whose tracks in SHS were congruent with their enrolled programs in college. For instance, one participant remarked,

*My track was in Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), so I enrolled in Teacher Education and specialized in Social Science. My track was beneficial because many of the concepts I am learning today are just a continuation of what I already encountered in the senior high school [A.A].*

On the other hand, the participants whose tracks in SHS were not aligned with the college programs experienced difficulties in accomplishing their course requirements and academic loads. They recognized that their academic problems spring from the mismatch of their tracks and programs. One of the participants whose track was GAS but was enrolled in the Accountancy program shared her dilemma on passing her courses because of the inadequate knowledge of business mathematics and management.

The participants viewed their college readiness partly as an offshoot of the outcomes-based education approach of the K-12 program. This pedagogical orientation has fostered the preparation of the K-12 graduates to understand relevant concepts, acquire specific competencies, and be imbued with necessary values that are helpful in college life. [B.B.] avowed,

*I realized that college life is output-driven. However, because I was trained in senior high school to do research and perform activities requiring critical thinking and independent learning, it is easy to cope with my course-work in college.*

Moreover, the participants who viewed themselves as college-ready were claimed to have high motivation, independence, and attitude towards life-long learning. For them, these attributes have meaningfully contributed to their academic readiness in college. Since college requires many readings and requirements, the participants also considered time-management and prioritizing activities as essential characteristics to confidently adjust with the new academic climate.

Along this vein, the perceived college readiness of the K-12 graduates has been associated with some teacher-related factors. As disclosed by some of the participants, their lack of college readiness was due to some teachers' failure to cover the scope and required competencies of the lessons. The participants ascribed this scenario to the teachers' attendance to co-curricular and extra-curricular activities such as training, seminars, coaching, journalism, science fair, and the like. Consequently, the teachers lacked the required time for classroom instruction. As a participant revealed,

*Many things were not taught during our senior high school. Some of our teachers were not always in class since they had many seminars to attend to [B.D.]*

Finally, the participants identified educational resources, facilities, and equipment to be related to their college readiness. The scarcity and absence of these things limit their knowledge acquisition, especially in Science subjects, where they were required to conduct intensive experiments and produce investigatory projects. Books were also absent for use across strands and tracks. While these experiences hampered the learners' preparedness for college, they collectively revealed that they understand their schools' misgivings since K-12 is a new program that is newly implemented. All they needed to do was adjust and make use of whatever resources available to finish the subjects.

### **Nexus of Holistic Education and College Readiness**

In the lens of structuration, the relationship of holistic education and college readiness ex-

perceived by the participants is possible only when the structure (school-related factors) and the agency (learner-related factors) are functional and harmonious. In this case, functional structures such as curriculum, policies, laws, norms, school administrators, teachers, instructional materials, equipment, and facilities usher and develop college-ready learners. As this structure is essential, the participants considered it to have both enabling and constraining power over them. As one participant [B.C.] pointed out,

*I believe I am college-ready because I was developed as a well-rounded individual considering the kind of environment, resources, and the people I had to deal with during my basic education days.*

On the other hand, the participants' account points that as primary agents in the learning process, they act as main actors in their holistic development. Learners capable of independent learning with high motivation and goal-orientation can exercise their power in meeting the new educational standards. These traits are necessary for overcoming some school's dysfunctional structures, thus allowing them to become college-ready. The actors become powerful agents in perpetuating or overcoming the imposed structure leading to their benefits.

The existing gaps in the nexus of holistic education and college readiness can be explained by the participants' adjustments brought by implementing the K-12 program. As a new program, it has produced a new structure that re-ordered the life of the learners. Most of the participants acknowledged that they struggled in adapting to the new curriculum, pedagogy, and resources, which directly affected their learning process and readiness of learners to tertiary education. This experience made them claim that the struggles, coupled with the new rules and additional resources needed in the successful implementation of the K-12 program, have led to the partial attainment of their holistic education and college readiness.

## DISCUSSION

Undeniably, the elements of holistic education framed in the four pillars of learning (International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century 1996) were partially acquired by

the study participants. These elements are similar to those highlighted by Zhou and Sun (2001), Nava (2001), and Schreiner (2005). These consist of enhancement of knowledge, development of creative and critical thinking, understanding of social realities, and realizing the learners' intricate relationship with the external world. To a certain degree, the study participants manifested specialized skills where they applied their knowledge in producing outputs as required by the outcomes-based orientation of the K-12 program (Mahmoudi et al. 2012). Moreover, their exposure to the K-12 program helped them, to some extent, in knowing themselves better, in understanding human diversity, and in obtaining core values (tolerance, respect, cooperation) essential to living in harmony with their classmates, teachers, and community members (Delors 2013; Zhou and Sun 2001).

Nonetheless, there was no mention of spirituality. This point runs counter to the holistic education paradigm that considers the significance of spiritual journey as asserted in extant literature (Nakagawa 2000; Nava 2001; Riley-Taylor 2002; Grossenbacher and Parkin 2006; Miller et al. 2018). The lack of spiritual formation based on the participants' experience only means that this aspect needs deliberate attention to be given by the K-12 program implementers. This concern necessitates a holistic approach that contests the fragmentation in the teaching-learning process (Mattern et al. 2014; Canilao 2017).

Moreover, the participants' claim of partial college readiness could be explained by the fact that K-12 program implementation in the Philippines has not yet been perfected. All program stakeholders experience a degree of adjustment and refinement of the mechanisms. Since the respondents constitute the second batch of the K-12 graduates, they were mere recipients of the adjustment process, which may have influenced, directly or indirectly, their college readiness. This assertion is consistent with Gatdula's (2018) observation that loopholes abound with the initial implementation of the K-12 program; hence, weaknesses are inevitable as everyone navigates in the new curriculum.

The enabling and constraining factors to the partial acquisition of holistic education and college readiness among the participants, such as the curriculum, teachers, learners, and school

facilities, could be appropriately elucidated by looking into the educational structure's dynamics framed in Structuration Theory. Giddens (1984) asserts that the structures become enabling when they allow the human actor or agents to enhance their skills and other capabilities on achieving their potentialities. Conversely, the structures become constraining when limiting the actors' autonomy in purposively engaging healthy interaction in the academic institution.

Remarkably, the study affirms that human agency (learners) and school structure are indivisible constructs since the forces at work in schools are the products of the interplay between structure and agency (Giddens and Pierse 1998). These constructs' indivisibility matters in understanding the nexus between holistic education and college readiness, which are both produced through social action and interaction. In this case, the dysfunctional structure and agency create a gap in the nexus of holistic education and college readiness. On the other hand, orderly, stable, and harmonious structure and agency yield seamless and integrated K-12 graduates transition from basic to tertiary education.

Interestingly, the participants' insights create a discourse in understanding the critical factor that helps in the attainment of holistic education and college readiness. It has been unravelled that the learners' very autonomy paved the way for them to traverse the K-12 landscape linking their experience of holistic education to their college readiness. As active participants in the formation and transmission of knowledge (Freire 2005), the learners play a pivotal role in re-ordering the structure at their advantage. This finding confirms Naido's (2009) claim that learners as an agency have the power to overcome the constraints and challenges brought by the new educational reform. In this context, the agency redefines the structure by exercising its power to transform, change, and perpetuate it. In doing so, learners can secure their holistic education and college readiness.

### CONCLUSION

Holistic education, articulated in the four pillars of learning, is an integral component of college readiness. It has the function of helping the K-12 graduates, transition seamlessly and inte-

grally from basic to tertiary education. Its partial development presents challenges and difficulties among learners in pursuit of their academic endeavours in college. The curricular features of the K-12 program as outcomes-based, research-oriented, specialized, and industry-driven are the prime movers in the attainment of holistic education. However, it ushers less focus on spirituality leading to the partial acquisition of holistic education.

Since the learners' development is accounted for by the interplay of structure and agency, the challenge for the basic and tertiary education is to ensure integrated and seamless learning. Such can be achieved by establishing a contextualized, functional, harmonious, and congruent relationship of school and learner-related factors. Hence, failure to reinforce the nexus of holistic education and college readiness would increase the gaps, constraints, and tensions in the Philippine education system. Despite the constraints and challenges of the new educational reform, the learners play a crucial role in ensuring their holistic education and college readiness. By exercising their autonomy, they become powerful actors in the social process, to redefine, transform, or change the dysfunctional structures at their advantage, ensuring their survival in the new educational landscape.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings, the following are the recommendations. First, K-12 graduates should take college programs that are aligned with their tracks and strands pursued in senior high school. In so doing, they can have less academic difficulties in hurdling foundation courses in college. Second, admission policies among HEIs may consider tracks and strands' congruence in admitting students to the different program offerings. This move can ensure the students' seamless transition from basic to tertiary education. Third, the DepEd must further enhance teachers' competence in their field of expertise and be loaded according to their academic preparation and procure additional learning resources to further enhance the teaching-learning process. Lastly, the curricular features of the K-12 program as outcomes-based, research-oriented, specialized, and industry-driven

en must be strengthened with the inclusion of the development of spirituality and values.

### LIMITATIONS AND STUDY FORWARD

This exploratory study indeed poses limitations. First, the study participants only came from a public university. Second, the understanding of holistic education had been framed using the four pillars of education. Third, the analysis of the insights revolved around the use of structuration theory. Despite its limitations, the study is the first to document the nexus between college readiness and holistic education in the Philippine context. Nonetheless, there is a need to expand this in future studies considering other variables, mixed research design, study participants from private HEIs, and broader geographical scope.

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