



# ORGANIZATIONAL INNOVATIONS TO IMPROVE TEACHING, EDUCATION SYSTEMS, AND INTER-AGENCY NETWORKS:

Studying Teach for the Philippines' Educational Leadership Pathway

Based on a mixed methods study conducted in 2022 by [Jose Eos R. Trinidad](#) of the University of Chicago and [Mira Michelle Angeli de Guzman](#) of the Ateneo de Manila University with the assistance of [Anne Madeleine Ferraz](#) and [April Jewel Domingo](#)



## How do we transform an education system?

Different works of literature and experts have contrasting answers to this question. Competing priorities and myriad factors contribute to this challenge and make the desired transformation fraught with complexity. Some would argue that an increase in budget or investment is a key driver, while others would say it's the improvement in school facilities and learning materials or that it begins with improving teacher quality. In contrast, others believe a more radical approach to overhauling education models is the solution - revisiting the purpose of education and transforming our mindsets about it.



Very few argue, though, that transformation is necessary if we are to build a more just and equitable world. Governments and civil society organizations continue to develop and implement education initiatives in varying approaches and models that aim at improving the system.

Since 2012, Teach for the Philippines (TFP), a non-stock and non-profit organization, has been at the forefront of the work in education reform. Its approach towards this is to recruit and develop fresh graduates and young professionals who have a passion and inclination to serve the country by teaching in high-need public schools for two years through its Fellowship Program.

**These teachers undergo a rigorous leadership development program that equips them with the requisite pedagogical skills and enables them to reflect deeply on their experiences as educators.** Informed by these nuanced on-ground experiences and armed with a better understanding of the public education system, the eventual goal is to hone these education leaders to contribute to the improvement of the education system through TFP's Alumni

Ambassadors Program, a one-year post-Fellowship program that deploys them to different government agencies with a mandate of developing, implementing and improving education policies and programs.

Given this unique pathway for education advocates, **it is critical to understand how TFP teachers' experiences in the classroom influence their trajectories and contributions to improving overall teacher quality and systemic education reform,** either through education policy development or program implementation as Alumni and/or Alumni Ambassadors.

**This brief presents five (5) principles for improving teacher quality and the education system in the Philippines by developing and building a network of education leaders to spearhead reform in different capacities.** These principles are anchored on a study supported by the Asian Development Bank, which studied TFP's model of implementing its core leadership programs in improving teacher quality, education systems, and inter-agency networks.



In 2020, Teacher Fellows were deployed to Victorias, Negros Occidental to teach for two years and run TFP's Functional Literacy Program. As majority of their students did not have access to the internet, the Fellows conducted home visitations in barangays far from the center to ensure students continue learning.



Principle 1	Provide ample opportunities for a grounded and transformational experience
Principle 2	Continue holistic training and support
Principle 3	Create a network of education leaders in various offices, tracks, sectors
Principle 4	Focus on Specific Sites for Education Reform
Principle 5	Scale Impact of Relevant Education Initiatives

The insights that inform these principles were generated based on the experience and perceptions of TFP’s Alumni, Alumni Ambassadors, and the organization’s learnings from implementing its programs. Some of these principles also apply to institutions that develop teachers and education leaders, like the Department of Education. Below are some use cases of how Teach for the Philippines has practiced these principles and recommendations.

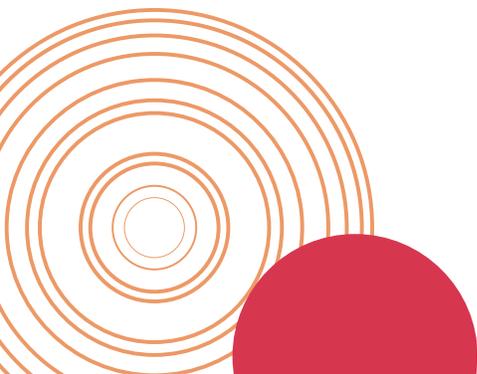
## Principle

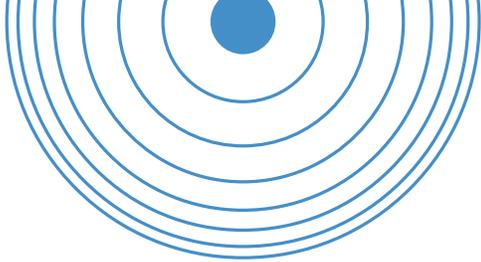
## Use Case Evidence and Recommendations

### Principle 1:

Provide ample opportunities for a grounded and transformational experience

- ✔ **TFP Teacher Fellows bring with them an initial inclination and passion for teaching, social justice, and nation-building, particularly as they spoke about their “why” in joining TFP.** Such an inclination sets the stage for Teacher Fellows to be more effective in their roles because the person’s characteristics and predispositions align with the organization’s vision, mission, and values. **Therefore, recruitment and selection for key motivations and competencies are critical for developing education leaders.**
- ✔ **TFP’s Fellowship program not only presents a teaching opportunity but a formative on-ground experience beyond the classroom.** Fellows share that community engagement, and personal development were skills they learned the most from the program. More than this, their experiences within the community deepened their “systems understanding” and resulted in changes in their mindsets and beliefs on education reform.





- ✔ **A transformational on-ground experience strengthens one's educational commitment.** Ninety-four (94%) percent of those who answered the survey agreed or strongly agreed that “the Fellowship encouraged them to continue their commitment to education reform.”

### Principle 2:

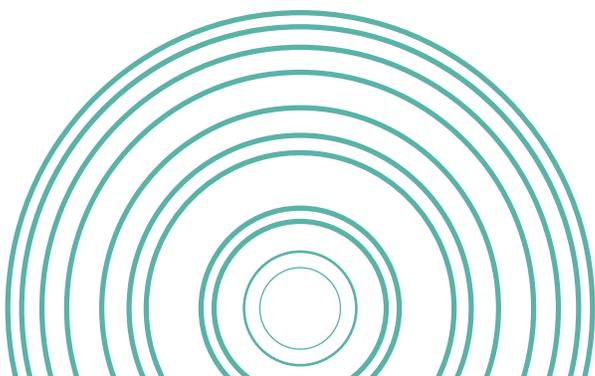
Continue holistic training and support

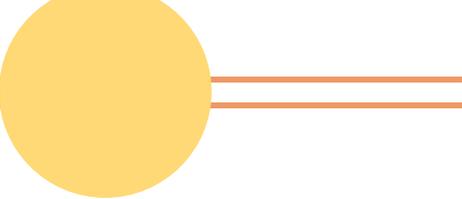
- ✔ **The pre-service training and the continuous coaching from TFP are seen to be helpful in improving teacher quality and strengthening education commitment of its teachers.** Apart from the direct inputs from the organization, teachers attributed the improvement in their mindset and skills to their on-the-ground experience of teaching in the classroom, implementing student programs, and running their own community program.
- ✔ **There is a need to better equip teachers early for post-Fellowship skills that would enable them to apply the things they learned from the Fellowship Program.** While the current programming indicates an immediate improvement in teachers' community and personal skills like, developing research, training, project implementation, and relationship-building are also important, especially to those pursuing a career in education policy development and program management.

### Principle 3:

Create a network of education leaders in various offices, tracks, sectors

- ✔ **Alumni who went into government work, particularly those who were Alumni Ambassadors at the education offices, were more likely to form sustained connections with other Alumni working in other education offices.** These Alumni Ambassadors were more embedded in using their professional networks and more likely to utilize them for different purposes.
- ✔ **The Ambassadors Program provides pathways to support those that want to pursue a career in education policy development and program management.** This study has also recognized the need to provide the following alternative professional development tracks to those who are keen on continuing commitments in education beyond developing policy and managing programs:
  - Government Bureaucratic and Policy Track
  - Program/Project Management for Development Work Track
  - Teaching Track
  - Career Exploration Track



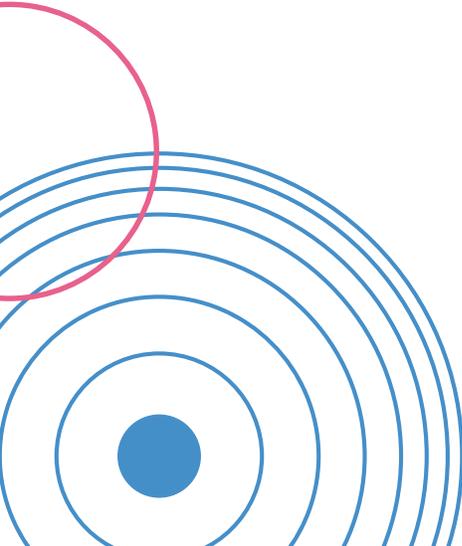
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- ✔ **An alternative track to teaching in the classroom to develop education leaders is a Fellowship Program for School Administrators.** While many Fellows have flourished in teaching in the classroom, some acknowledge that their skills lay elsewhere but still want to be part of this organization working towards educational change.



TFP Alumni from Cohorts 2014 to 2017 currently working at the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP).

#### **Principle 4:**

Focus on specific sites for education reform

- ✔ **TFP Alumni, Alumni Ambassadors in government, and non-Alumni Ambassadors in other sectors have significant contributions across the fields of research, project implementation, training, and program development.** Anecdotes on the impact they have created show that Alumni sustain their work in education reform in different approaches and varying capacities.
  - ✔ **Alumni greatly recognize the importance of education reform, but not everyone has similar definitions of what this means and what aspect to focus on.** Education reform spans several aspects and dimensions, including student access and holistic development, systems-level and policy changes, teacher professional development, and community engagement.
  - ✔ **Given the complexities of education reform, organizations should be able to determine focus areas that position them to take effective and purposeful roles in transforming the system.** TFP's network of education leaders in their Alumni can consider building more intentional sub-networks to create domain-specific solutions toward education reform.
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### Principle 5:

Scale impact of relevant education initiatives



**TFP's model towards education reform sets a foundation for wider-scale, sustainable impact.** The organization's core and community programs have created a significant impact thus far, but can be further validated and increased by looking into scaling different components and approaches, such as:

- Building evidence and sustaining the Fellows' community engagement projects
- Increasing scale in its effective training and coaching
- Replicating the Fellowship Program among other education stakeholders
- Expanding, mapping, and tracking the network of education leaders



Our Teacher Fellow assigned in Kapuso Village Integrated School in Tacloban, Leyte was one of many public school teachers who were part of the pilot run of F2F classes.

**While the work in education reform continues to be a daunting task, this should not stop organizations and institutions from starting somewhere.** However, any intervention that aims at tipping the scale of the education system should be built on a solid foundation of evidence and strategic direction.

For Teach for the Philippines, there is some evidence of the promising outcomes of its leadership development programs and remarkable potential for the network it has created to influence improvements in the system. There is still a lot of work to be done to further strengthen its efforts, refine its success indicators, focus its inputs on various aspects of education reform, and find more collaborators that share the same vision. **Ultimately, one organization cannot transform an education system alone. It requires a concerted effort across different actors across various levels.**