

[Manila: Lessons learned on the city's strategy to achieve SDG4](#)

[Blog](#)

Microplanning of education

Cities are at the centre of designing and implementing effective strategies to ensure universal access to quality education in their territory.

How can cities plan and manage education to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), including SDG 11, sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 4 to ensure universal access to quality education? This blog post, the second in a series showcasing the IIEP-UNESCO research project '[Local challenges, global imperatives: Cities at the forefront to achieve Education 2030](#)', looks at the key role the City of Manila plays in educational planning and management.

The study was conducted by the [Centre for Neighbourhood Studies \(CeNS\)](#) in close collaboration with the City of Manila's authorities, and our research partners the University of Glasgow and the [Centre for Sustainable Healthy Learning Cities and Neighbourhoods \(SHLC\)](#). As with the study on [Kigali](#), we organised a dissemination webinar to share the main lessons learned from the fieldwork which was attended by more than 60 key education stakeholders including city authorities, councillors, local education and welfare officers, city planners, non-teaching and teaching personnel.

The webinar presented the opportunity for all stakeholders to discuss the main challenges and opportunities when designing, implementing and monitoring the city education strategy, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The presentations explored critical areas of education quality improvement as well as strategies to successfully achieve the city's future education objectives, including the following:

Manila's education responsibilities

Capital city of the Philippines, Manila is the second most populous city of the country after Quezon city, with a population of 1.8 million. Manila has been one of

the 20 most populous cities in the world based on population density for several years and [was ranked the twentieth most populous city in 2021](#). The choice of Manila for this research was motivated by the city having the highest number of educational facilities in the country and by recently demonstrated innovations in local educational infrastructure.

In the Philippines, the provision and financing of education services are devolved to Local Government Units (LGUs) in coordination with the deconcentrated units of the national Department of Education (DepEd). The city of Manila, as an LGU, is responsible for the provision of early childhood education through the Manila Department of Social Welfare. In contrast, the Regional Offices and School Division Offices (SDO), which represent the DepEd at local level, manage primary and secondary levels of education at the regional and city level, respectively, and coordinate with the city administration to provide infrastructure, learning and teaching resources, non-teaching staff, and subsidy programmes to students. Examples of this include providing students with access to tech devices and supporting their enrolment in tertiary and technical vocational education.

The SDO-Manila, together with the city Local School Board (LSB), are the main government authorities for basic education at the city level. The SDO manages Manila's schools and learning centres and sets standards at the local level to ensure quality in the delivery of the basic education service. The LSB, chaired by the city mayor and the head of the SDO, manages the Special Education Fund (SEF), which constitutes the city's supplementary financial support to cover maintenance and operations of the school system in terms of infrastructure, connectivity and health care (annual check-ups for teachers). The LSB is responsible for the preparation, allocation and disbursement of the SEF. It has a say on the use of the local budget for education, and the appointment of education officers.

Finally, the City of Manila works in close collaboration with SDO's officials for the recruitment of teaching and non-teaching professionals. This includes delivering training sessions to school staff and education officers.

The use of data and collaborative work: strengths of Manila's education strategy

The city's educational planners use a diversity of data sources and tools to formulate local education plans and strategies. Manila's Educational Management Information System, projections and performance indicators, as well as

consultations with the main school stakeholders, were essential when formulating School Improvement Plans and preparing learning continuity plans. The local education strategy is aligned with the city's development plan and adapts to crises and contingencies. This is an important strength as it facilitates administrative support, resource mobilisation and timely responses to unexpected changes.

Collaboration among stakeholders from the design of the strategy was shown to be essential. The SDO-Manila and schools have transparent relationships with community members and strong partnerships with non-governmental organisations. Engaging with parents, Parent-Teacher's Associations and their communities has been instrumental in implementing education initiatives and fostering local ownership, particularly when addressing the learning crisis.

If there is one thing I really admire (from) the city government is its openness for collaboration amongst the partners. [Even before the] pandemic, the DepEd and the city government really provided a platform for sharing of good practices and collaboration to synergize our resources (Civil Society Organisation representative)

Implementing Manila's education strategy in times of crises

The health crisis affected the local planning and management of education. The City of Manila allocated additional funds to education to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on learning. These funds supported the production of self-learning modules, textbooks, activity sheets, study guides, as well as connectivity and hardware to make distance learning more accessible to teachers and students.

The city has launched several reforms to support students' access to online learning. For instance, SDO-Manila developed key school level interventions in coordination with the DepEd within the framework of the [Basic Education - Learning Continuity Plan \(BE-LCP\)](#) which focused on removing the barriers to learning caused by the pandemic. The local response focused on aligning learning materials, adapting the curriculum, and deploying different education modalities to online teaching, whilst supporting parents and training teachers to adapt to these new teaching modalities. To tackle additional social and economic challenges as a result of the crisis, the city also restructured its feeding and nutrition programmes.

During the pandemic, (...), our enrollees have increased [maybe because] they found out that the city would provide technological tools. Those in private schools transferred to public schools in the city, not only to our school (Teaching staff representative)

The City of Manila is also extremely vulnerable to climate risks, natural disasters and weather events which affect the education system. This translates into temporary decreases in enrolment due to students relocating when their homes are threatened by flooding or fire. To anticipate these situations, the local authority prepares risks and disasters' management plans and strategies to mitigate the impact of climate change on education infrastructure.

Internalising the challenges to the city's strategy implementation

Specific attention is paid to the continuity of the local strategy but, as in other areas, this is hampered by the length of local political mandates. Local authorities govern for a short time, usually half the duration of the city's education plan which creates a misalignment between the school year and the city's budget and fiscal timeline. Consequently, some projects do not reach their full potential to adequately address the needs of students and teachers, or experience delays with the disbursement of resources.

In addition to these, despite having a national framework in place that cities can adopt to conduct their own Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) mechanisms, Manila has a fragmented monitoring and evaluation system that lacks clarity for the programmes being implemented. City personnel often redirect their inquiries to the SDO or to offices outside the city hall and, at this time, no programme evaluation has been undertaken under the mandate of local, regional or national agency. Evaluation has been limited to the management of the SEF, assessments through consultation meetings and focus only on education outputs rather than the achievement of goals and overall impact of the local strategy.

(...) There are several programs for improving the quality of basic education implemented in the city, however, these programs were not monitored properly. At times, no program evaluation is conducted.
(SDO representative)

Way forward

The insights generated by this webinar on the results of the research project [‘Local challenges, global imperatives: Cities at the forefront to achieve Education 2030’](#) constitute an asset to Manila’s city planners and stakeholders, as well as to city authorities and education managers in similar contexts, to continue learning about the local dynamics of education planning and management. Reflecting on local strategies, as well as the roles of the different actors involved, especially in times of crisis, contributes to enlightening future actions towards achieving SDG4 at the local level.

Acknowledgements

This project was conducted by Mario Delos Reyes and the team from the Centre for Neighbourhood Studies (CeNS) Philippines: Rosa Bella Quindoza, Mark Anthony Gamboa, Angelina Caluag, Irish Manlapas, Aira Ruth Caluag, Rhay Daniel Racoma, Samantha Roze Samin, and Kit Kat De Guzman, in collaboration with the City Government of Manila, School Division Office-Manila and its Focal Persons, Andrei Pacheco and Aaron Tolentino (SDO-Manila), Yulia Nesterova and Michael Osborne (University of Glasgow, School of Education), Candy Lugaz, Daniela Uribe Mateu, Elena Klein and Helen Weir (IIEP-UNESCO).

We are particularly grateful to our colleagues in the Philippines for the great efforts that they put into this work, which was funded through SHLC’s Capacity Development Acceleration Fund. SHLC has been funded within the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) grant ES/PO11020/1.

Bookmark this

[View PDF](#)