

Australia steps up support to improve teacher education in the Philippines

Published October 7, 2012 3:07pm

<https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/cbb/content/277230/australia-steps-up-support-to-improve-teacher-education-in-the-philippines/story/>

Australia continues to build its commitment to help improve the quality of education in the Philippines by strengthening the leadership and professional excellence of Filipino teachers.

The University of New England (UNE) and the Philippine Normal University (PNU) recently formalized a partnership to establish a Research Center for Teacher Quality at the PNU Campus in Taft Ave Manila, in time for World Teacher's Day on 5 October 2012. The Center is supported by the Australian Government as part of its broader assistance to the Philippines education sector.

The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) has committed Php235 million (A\$5.6 million) for the research center's initial three years of operation. The Center is envisioned to be the hub for research activities and policy recommendations on improving the quality of teaching in the country, particularly linking to the Philippine Government's Kindergarten to Year 12 (K to 12) Program. The Center's research activities will focus on the following:

- Pre-service teacher growth and development - includes teacher selection criteria; course offerings; test/assignment load; development of teacher training standards in the context of K - 12 requirements and the needs of a 21st century curriculum; the

effectiveness of the extended practicum model; and how information technology can help improve teacher learning.

- In-service teacher growth and professional learning - includes alignment of professional standards to the requirements of K-12.
- Teacher subject and academic renewal - includes improving teachers' professional and academic knowledge and improvements in teaching strategies and approaches as well as classroom assessment.

The University of New England has a solid track record of more than 70 years in teacher education in Australia. Its education research centre, the SiMERR National Research Centre, has undertaken significant projects in the field of pre-service and continuing service education. In particular, SiMERR has been involved in critical national projects involving teacher standards linked to teaching career stages and their implementation throughout Australia.

The Philippine Normal University, on the other hand, has been designated in 2008 by the Philippine Government as the National Center for Teacher Education under Republic Act 9647 and has a mandate to form a network of universities across the country that are concerned with teacher education. PNU has historically played a leadership role in the initial and continuing education of teachers in the country.

Department of Education Secretary Armin Luistro, FSC, Commission of Higher Education Chairperson Dr. Patricia Licuanan, and representatives from other government agencies, the academe and development partners, have been invited to be part of the governing board responsible for setting the research agenda and priorities. The Center will formally open by November. A second research center focused on curriculum and assessment will also be established before the year ends.

These centers are part of the Australian Government's commitment to working with the Philippines in improving the quality of and access to basic education. Australia provides around Php2 billion (A\$50 million annually) to train teachers, provide educational facilities including classrooms and day care centres, strengthen school-based management

practice, improve education planning and management systems, and provide teaching and learning materials. *Press release from the Australian Embassy*

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