

# Education in the Philippines: the corporate takeover

## APEC Schools

Here are the 'features' of this fee-charging, for-profit schooling model:

For-profit, unregulated private education in the Global South constitutes one of the biggest threats to the right to education. In countries that struggle to provide quality public education for all, global corporate actors are profiting from an 'emergent market' by offering fee-charging, low quality education services to socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

In the Philippines, this trend is represented by the APEC Schools,

a joint venture of the multinational Pearson and the local business giant Ayala Corporation. Their for-profit schooling model is being sold to poor families, playing on their aspirations for a better life, on the promise that these schools appoint highly committed teachers and provide superior learning outcomes compared to public schools. In reality, APEC schools implement cost-cutting measures that harm students and their right to quality education.

Through an agreement with the Department of Education (DepEd), the **compliance of the APEC Schools** with standards enforced for all private schools in the Philippines will be based on a checklist APEC itself prepared. The indicators in this checklist, however, are **not as specific and measurable as the DepEd standards** are, for example, for requirements such as school site area and facilities including library holdings.

School standards

Tuition fees

The fees are not really 'affordable' for the most disadvantaged. At rates ranging from P19,000 to P32,500 per year depending on grade level and school location, **a family considered by the government to be non-poor will have to spend 17% to 30% of their annual incomes to send one child to school.** When APEC recently increased its tuition rates, it also implemented segregation as it now charges different rates for morning and afternoon shifts.

Because APEC has been authorised to simply lease and not own school buildings and to not adhere to the ideal school site size, at least **one out of every three of its school sites are in the upper levels of commercial buildings**, such as banks and auto repair shops. Safety and accessibility of the upper floors, especially to students with disabilities, are not guaranteed. Noise from other building occupants and from the street may also harm students' and teachers' concentration.

School sites

Classrooms and school grounds

Teachers have described **classrooms** in some of the APEC sites as **crammed, congested and poorly ventilated and insufficient for physical education, laboratory-oriented classes and extra-curricular activities.** With APEC being given the permission to also lease sports and arts facilities depending on use, students' access to these facilities is not ensured.

Given the limited space in some sites, there are **no laboratories and workshop for science and home economics classes, and the spaces for administrative and faculty offices are constrained and unsuitable for their intended purpose.** APEC also intends to share the lab equipment across a number of its school sites. An online, digital library replaces a physical library, but its usability is dependent on the adequacy of internet infrastructure.

Facilities

Teachers

In 2015, **up to 70% of APEC teachers are not licensed, and the school only requires a bachelor's degree in hiring teachers.** It is also not unusual for them to be asked to teach subjects not within their expertise. To handle their classes, teachers are provided ready-made lesson plans to use as scripts, thus preventing them from designing their lessons as deemed appropriate.

Education support personnel commonly present in other private schools, such as a librarian, guidance counselor and health professional, are **shared** among school sites. Thus, their availability to the students and teachers is also on-demand.

Other school services



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