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From Standards to Gaps: A Policy-Analytical Examination of Vertical and Horizontal Curriculum Misalignment in the Philippine Educational Qualification System

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Abstract

The Philippines maintains formally elaborated curriculum frameworks, qualification standards, and regulatory systems across basic education, higher education, technical-vocational education and training, professional licensure, and employment. Yet the coexistence of these instruments has not produced a coherent national learning progression. This paper argues that the persistent misalignment between Philippine educational qualifications and competency expectations constitutes a governance architecture problem rather than a curriculum content deficiency — one produced by fragmented inter-agency coordination among the Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, and Professional Regulation Commission, whose mandates are legally distinct but insufficiently articulated at the transitions among sectors. Employing a critical integrative policy review combined with comparative curriculum mapping, the paper applies a Philippine Curriculum-to-Competency Alignment Framework organized around five critical interface points — from basic education to higher education, from general to professional curriculum, from higher education to technical-vocational education and training, from degree to licensure, and from qualification to employment — to three illustrative professional program cases: BS Accountancy, BS Criminology, and Teacher Education. Documentary analysis across these interfaces reveals cumulative and mutually reinforcing misalignment conditions, including unverified prerequisite assumptions at the basic-to-higher education transition, inadequately verified non-duplication between senior high school and collegiate general education, absent cross-sector competency recognition mechanisms, licensure examination dynamics that incentivize review-oriented over competency-developmental instruction, and systematic supplementary credentialing demands that expose employer mistrust of degree outcome verification. Institutional capacity differentials across the public-private higher education divide further amplify these conditions by producing substantially different implemented curricula under identical minimum standards. The paper concludes that resolving systemic misalignment requires coordinated inter-agency governance mechanisms — including a formal curriculum articulation body, competency progression maps across interface points, and operationalized cross-sector credit recognition instruments — rather than isolated curriculum revision within any single sector. Recommendations are directed at DepEd, CHED, TESDA, PRC, higher education institutions, and the research community.

Keywords: *curriculum alignment; qualification framework governance; educational governance fragmentation; intended-implemented-attained curriculum; credential stacking; education-to-employment transition; Philippine higher education policy*

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1. Introduction

The Philippine educational system is among the most extensively reformed in Southeast Asia. Over the past four decades, successive administrations have introduced sweeping curricular restructuring — from the Basic Education Curriculum of 2002 and the Revised Basic Education Curriculum shortly thereafter, to the landmark K–12 transition formalized under Republic Act No. 10533 in 2013, and most recently the MATATAG Curriculum, which seeks to decongest and reorient the K–10 program toward foundational competency development. At the higher education level, the Commission on Higher Education has periodically revised General Education policies, issued updated program standards and policies, and promoted outcomes-based education across all higher education institutions. The

Technical Education and Skills Development Authority maintains a national system of competency standards and certification through its Training Regulations, while the Professional Regulation Commission administers licensure examinations governing entry into regulated professions. The Philippine Qualifications Framework, institutionalized under Republic Act No. 10968 and further strengthened by Republic Act No. 12313 in 2025, formally codifies relationships among learning outcomes, qualification levels, and recognition pathways across educational sectors and modalities.

Viewed in isolation, each of these instruments represents a coherent policy response to a recognized educational or labor-market challenge. Viewed in systemic relationship, however, they present a more complicated picture. The question that motivates this paper is not whether the Philippines possesses formal educational standards (Edralin & Pastrana, 2023) — it demonstrably does — but whether those standards constitute a genuinely articulated, cumulative, and verifiable national learning progression. The evidence suggests that they do not, and that this gap between the formal existence of standards and the actual coherence of the system through which learners move represents one of the most consequential and least resolved problems in Philippine educational governance.

The nature of the problem requires precision. Philippine educational governance is structurally distributed across multiple agencies whose mandates are legally distinct and whose curriculum and qualification instruments were developed with varying degrees of inter-agency coordination (Paqueo et al., 2024). The Department of Education governs basic education (Acodile-Viado, 2020). The Commission on Higher Education regulates higher education institutions and sets minimum program standards (Acodile-Viado, 2020). The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority governs technical-vocational education and training (Acodile-Viado, 2020). The Professional Regulation Commission controls licensure for regulated professions (Binayao & Dales, 2020). Employers, both public and private, impose their own hiring criteria and competency requirements. Each of these systems may contain internally valid standards; yet the transitions among them — from basic education to higher education, from general to professional curriculum, from higher education to technical-vocational certification, from degree to licensure, and from qualification to employment — remain insufficiently articulated, inconsistently verified, and unequally implemented across institutional types and regions.

The consequences of this fragmentation are not merely administrative. They manifest in documented patterns of curricular redundancy, where competencies introduced at one educational level are re-taught with minimal progression at the next; competency gaps, where learners advance formally without demonstrating the prerequisite mastery assumed by the subsequent level; supplementary credentialing demands, where graduates of four- or five-year degree programs are required by employers to obtain additional short-course certificates to demonstrate occupational competencies that their degree programs were notionally designed to develop; and unequal implementation, where national minimum curriculum standards produce substantially differentiated educational experiences across institutions with vastly different resources, faculty qualifications, instructional materials, and organizational capacity. The Philippines' consistently low performance in international assessments — including a PISA 2022 mathematics mean score that placed Filipino 15-year-olds among the lowest-performing participants, with only a small percentage reaching the baseline Level 2 proficiency threshold (Acido & Caballes, 2024) — should be understood not as evidence of a single curriculum failure but as a systemic signal that the progression from learning standards to classroom delivery to assessable competence is unreliable across significant portions of the educational system.

This paper argues that the persistent weakness of Philippine educational outcomes is substantially attributable to the absence of a transparent, cumulative, and verifiable curriculum-to-competency architecture connecting the distinct sectors of the system. Although each sector maintains formal standards, the five critical transitions — from basic to higher education, from general to professional curriculum, from higher education to TVET, from degree to licensure, and from qualification to employment — remain insufficiently sequenced, recognized, and governed as a unified progression. The result is a system characterized not by curriculum absence but by curriculum and qualification fragmentation: a condition in which learners may formally satisfy the requirements of each stage without progressing through a coherent developmental trajectory.

The paper pursues this argument through five interrelated research objectives. First, it examines how learning outcomes are — and are not — articulated across the five critical transitions in the Philippine educational system. Second, it identifies patterns of curricular redundancy, competency discontinuity, and sequencing failure across these transitions, using BS Accountancy, BS Criminology, and Teacher Education as illustrative program cases. Third, it analyzes how governance fragmentation among DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and PRC contributes to misalignment between curriculum design, qualification standards, and employment expectations. Fourth, it evaluates the extent to

which current degree programs provide or credibly certify the competencies expected at the point of professional licensure and employment entry. Fifth, it proposes a Philippine Curriculum-to-Competency Alignment Framework as an analytical instrument and recommends policy and governance reforms directed at inter-agency coordination, credit recognition, and systemic articulation.

The analytical approach adopted is a critical integrative policy review combined with comparative curriculum mapping. The paper draws on publicly available policy documents, curriculum frameworks, qualification standards, and regulatory instruments issued by the relevant agencies, examined through a structured interface analysis across the five transitions identified above. This approach is appropriate to a paper whose central claim is systemic and governance-oriented: that misalignment is not a localized or program-specific failure but a structural condition produced by fragmented governance and insufficiently coordinated curriculum design across the Philippine educational qualification system.

The significance of these questions for educational leadership and institutional management is direct. Educational leaders — from institutional heads and curriculum committees to agency directors and national policymakers — are responsible for the coherence of the systems they govern. When that coherence is absent, the burdens are borne disproportionately by learners, by institutions operating under unequal capacity conditions, and by a labor market that must compensate for the verification failures of a fragmented qualification architecture. Understanding the structural sources of misalignment is therefore a prerequisite for the kind of coordinated, evidence-informed leadership response that the Philippine educational system currently requires.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Vertical and Horizontal Curriculum Alignment: Theoretical and Policy Foundations

Curriculum alignment is commonly understood through two complementary dimensions of systemic coherence. Vertical alignment concerns the developmental sequencing of knowledge, skills, and dispositions across educational levels so that each stage builds upon demonstrated prior learning and prepares students for the demands of the next. Horizontal alignment concerns the consistency of standards, instruction, and assessment among programs or institutions operating at the same level. A national educational system requires both: progression without horizontal consistency produces unequal pathways, while consistency without progression produces repetition rather than cumulative learning.

Evidence supporting vertical alignment is moderately strong across several educational contexts. Philippine secondary mathematics research indicates that deliberate articulation across grade levels promotes connected learning and mastery, whereas weak articulation fragments instruction and constrains knowledge transfer (Taghap & Toraja, 2025). Medical curriculum mapping likewise shows that identifying sequencing gaps and instructional redundancies can improve program integration and address competency discontinuities (Mahzari et al., 2023). In Philippine junior high school science, document analysis of spiral progression found that weak sequencing preserved redundancies and progression gaps that impeded deeper understanding (Sanchez & Dagondon, 2025). A cautious parallel appears in monetary policy education, where awareness differed substantially across senior high school, undergraduate, and graduate cohorts and across academic fields, indicating that movement through educational levels does not by itself guarantee uniform competency development (Espelita et al., 2025). Taken together, these studies suggest that vertical alignment is not merely an ordering of topics but a verified prerequisite structure that supports scaffolding, transfer, and cumulative mastery.

The evidence for horizontal alignment is more indirect but remains consequential. Higher education curricula exhibiting strong constructive alignment can establish coherence among outcomes, performance indicators, assessments, and program standards within an institution (Abejuela et al., 2022). International consensus initiatives in undergraduate medical education similarly seek consistency in intended competencies across programs (Hoppmann et al., 2022). Yet common disciplinary foundations do not automatically produce equivalent learning emphases: comparative analysis of biology program outcomes shows persistent differences among institution types in the competencies and skills prioritized (Clark & Hsu, 2023). Curriculum analytics can make such disparities visible by identifying inconsistencies between assessment practices and intended outcomes within and across programs, although direct evidence connecting cross-institutional alignment to equivalent student attainment remains less developed than the evidence for vertical sequencing (Barthakur et al., 2024).

The distinction between formal alignment standards and achieved alignment conditions is therefore central to this paper. A system cannot be considered substantively articulated when competencies at one level are only presumed, rather than verified, to prepare learners for the next, or when institutions operating under identical minimum standards implement materially different curricula. Vertical and horizontal alignment must consequently be examined together as governance conditions that determine whether formal curriculum documents function as an integrated learning progression or merely as adjacent regulatory instruments.

2.2 The Intended, Implemented, and Attained Curriculum: Governance and Institutional Capacity Implications

A second foundational distinction separates the intended, implemented, and attained curriculum. The intended curriculum consists of the outcomes and content prescribed by policy and regulatory authorities; the implemented curriculum is what institutions and teachers actually organize and deliver; and the attained curriculum is what learners ultimately understand and can demonstrate. This tripartite framework prevents policy analysis from treating the publication of standards as equivalent to their realization in instruction or learning.

Empirical research consistently shows that the same national curriculum can generate markedly different implementation conditions when schools vary in resources, staffing, leadership, and organizational capacity. In Uganda, socioeconomic disparities enabled higher-resource schools to respond more effectively to competency-based curriculum requirements than lower-resource institutions (Barasa et al., 2025). In China, a common national English curriculum yielded different pedagogical practices across urban and rural schools, with student-centered approaches more visible where leadership, community support, and resources were stronger (Tang, 2025). Philippine teachers implementing the MATATAG Curriculum likewise reported uneven exposure to curriculum overload, administrative constraints, and shortages of instructional materials across public and private settings (Demate et al., 2025). Direct Philippine evidence from allied medicine programs further illustrates the interpretive gap between policy adoption and educational experience: teachers assessed outcomes-based education as fully implemented, whereas students assessed it as only partially implemented (Quinto, 2020).

Comparable implementation gaps appear across developing and middle-income systems. In Zambia, curriculum intent weakened during enactment because economic conditions, staffing quality, facilities, and time management mediated implementation (Changwe & Mwanza, 2022). Ethiopian secondary science education similarly exhibited a rhetoric-reality gap associated with insufficient resources, stakeholder participation, and institutional support (Worku, 2025). A cross-context review concludes that effective implementation depends on policy-practice coherence, sustained professional development, and reasonably consistent access to enabling resources (Alvarado & Galigao, 2024). The distinction between nominal and substantive adoption is also visible in educational technology: digital platforms may be widely used while AI-adaptive systems remain comparatively limited by access, cost, training, privacy, and governance constraints (Rao et al., 2025).

Resource constraints also shape the distance between the implemented and attained curriculum. In underfunded systems, accountability pressures may narrow teaching toward textbook completion and examination preparation rather than differentiated, competency-building instruction (Scott & Husain, 2021). Teacher professional development is a recurrent bottleneck: programs in low- and middle-income countries are often short, weakly sustained, and inconsistent in their effects on classroom practice (Hennessy et al., 2022). Thus, even a well-designed national framework may produce unequal attainment when the professional and organizational capacity required for implementation is distributed unevenly.

For the Philippine context, the analytical implication is clear. Competency gaps and unequal graduate preparation cannot be explained by policy documents alone; they must be interpreted through the institutional conditions that mediate implementation. Governance arrangements, resource inequalities, faculty capability, leadership quality, and organizational support influence whether national standards are translated into comparable learning experiences. The intended-implemented-attained distinction therefore provides the conceptual bridge between formal curriculum alignment and the institutional capacity differentials examined in this paper.

2.3 National Qualifications Frameworks, Policy Borrowing, and Contextual Translation in Asian Educational Systems

National qualifications frameworks have become a central policy instrument across the Asia-Pacific region. They seek to make learning outcomes legible across sectors, support credit transfer and learner mobility, and align educational qualifications with occupational expectations. The Philippine Qualifications Framework, institutionalized

through Republic Act No. 10968 and strengthened through Republic Act No. 12313 in 2025, belongs to a wider regional movement that includes the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework and national systems in Indonesia and other member states. The literature nevertheless distinguishes between the formal articulation of recognition principles and their operational realization.

Studies of qualifications frameworks in developing Asian economies indicate that these instruments more reliably improve the vocabulary and transparency of competencies than actual cross-sector mobility or employer recognition (Noda, 2023; Molla, 2025). In the Philippines, reforms associated with TVET and the qualifications framework have clarified competency standards and supported employment outcomes among TESDA graduates, but weak implementation and coordination continue to limit their reach (Edralin & Pastrana, 2023). Indonesia presents a similar pattern: the national framework improves curriculum-outcome clarity in principle, while uneven faculty readiness and fragmented evaluation constrain consistent implementation (Samsuri et al., 2025; Lubis et al., 2023). Bangladesh likewise demonstrates how inter-agency coordination weaknesses can reduce the effectiveness of a formally comprehensive technical and vocational qualifications framework (Molla, 2025).

Regional harmonization introduces an additional layer of complexity. The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework is intended to improve comparability, skills recognition, and labor mobility, yet differences in national recognition procedures, institutional awareness, and implementation capacity continue to restrict these goals (Surono & Ariyanto, 2024). Nursing education across ASEAN similarly shows that common aspirations toward mobility remain constrained by fragmented regulatory systems and the absence of shared assessment standards (Efendy & Aggari, 2025). These findings suggest that reference frameworks can organize correspondence among systems without necessarily producing automatic equivalence or portable recognition.

The literature on policy borrowing and contextual translation explains why internationally influenced frameworks perform differently across governance environments. Dental programs sharing global competency objectives continue to diverge because local priorities, culture, and resources shape curricular realization (Sahin & Ural, 2025). By contrast, implementation of a competency framework in the United Arab Emirates improved curriculum alignment, faculty participation, and assessment reliability when supported by coordinated change management (Kar et al., 2025). Where shared assessment instruments, employer participation, and inter-agency coordination remain weak, imported or regionally referenced frameworks may modernize competency language without establishing substantive recognition across sectors (Fang & Xu, 2025; Varadarajan et al., 2023).

For the Philippines, the policy problem is therefore not the absence or formal inadequacy of the qualifications framework. It is the governance architecture through which framework commitments are converted into credit recognition, competency equivalence, assessment, and institutional practice. The PQF can provide an organizing structure, but coherent articulation among DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and PRC depends on operational instruments and sustained coordination that the framework alone cannot supply.

2.4 General Education versus Professional Specialization: Debates on Curriculum Balance in Baccalaureate Programs

The place of general education within professionally oriented baccalaureate programs remains a persistent debate in higher education. Philosophically, the debate concerns whether university education should principally cultivate broad intellectual and civic capacities or prioritize occupational specialization. Operationally, it concerns how limited instructional time and unit allocations should be distributed among breadth requirements, statutory components, and disciplinary depth.

Supporters of a substantial general education component argue that professional competence is incomplete without ethical judgment, civic awareness, historical understanding, communication, cultural literacy, and cross-disciplinary reasoning (Detweiler, 2021). From this perspective, general education does not compete with professional preparation; it supplies the interpretive and reflective capacities that distinguish educated professionals from narrowly trained technicians. Evidence that liberal arts students can develop competitive employability outcomes, particularly in communication, adaptability, and critical reasoning, reinforces this position (Kovacevic et al., 2023).

The opposing concern, particularly prominent in outcomes-based education, is not that breadth lacks value but that general education may fail to produce a distinct collegiate level of competence when it duplicates senior secondary content. Under such conditions, programs may allocate substantial time to breadth without demonstrable progression, thereby limiting opportunities for deeper specialization. The empirical literature does not provide a universal answer

as to whether reducing general education units improves professional competency; effects remain context-specific, program-dependent, and difficult to separate from differences in pedagogy, institutional capacity, and assessment (Kovacevic et al., 2024; Seemiller & Rosch, 2023).

In the Philippines, CHED Memorandum Order No. 20, series of 2013, reduced the General Education Curriculum from 63 to 36 units because foundational competencies were expected to be developed through the expanded senior high school program. The policy logic was explicitly progressive and non-duplicative: collegiate general education should begin from a higher competency baseline rather than repeat basic education. Whether that baseline is consistently attained across tracks and institutions, however, remains unresolved. Document-based mapping of management education also shows that broad institutional adoption of e-learning can coexist with selective and fragmented integration of cross-cutting outcomes such as the Sustainable Development Goals, underscoring the value of curriculum audits in verifying whether intended priorities are actually embedded in program design (Atento, 2025).

The issue becomes more consequential when the 36-unit General Education Curriculum is considered together with Physical Education, the National Service Training Program, and other statutory or institutional requirements. Many professionally titled degrees consequently carry a substantial non-specialist load (Brint et al., 2009). The relevant question is not whether these components serve legitimate purposes, but whether they form a coherent, progressive, and non-duplicative contribution to program outcomes. Evidence from entrepreneurship education provides an adjacent institutional perspective: student skill development was positively associated with access to mentorship, training, resources, networks, and funding, suggesting that professional competence depends not only on curricular allocation but also on the ecosystem supporting its implementation (Delmonte & Mendoza, 2026).

2.5 Credential Stacking, Supplementary Certification, and the Governance of Education-to-Employment Transitions

A growing literature examines why graduates who already hold baccalaureate or higher qualifications must obtain additional occupational certificates, competency assessments, or short-course credentials before employers regard them as ready for work. Described as credential stacking, supplementary certification, or remedial credentialing, this phenomenon reveals how formal qualifications interact with occupationally specific verification demands (Bailey & Belfield, 2017; Meyer et al., 2022).

Two forms of credential stacking must be distinguished. The first is legitimate specialization: an additional credential certifies a technical, regulatory, or occupational capability that reasonably falls outside the scope of a general degree. The second is post-degree remedial credentialing: a graduate is required to secure a lower-level or short-duration credential because the degree did not provide, assess, or credibly signal a competency that employers expect from graduates in that field. The first reflects differentiated professional development; the second points to weaknesses in curriculum design, assessment, qualification signaling, or cross-sector recognition.

Governance fragmentation contributes to the second form. When degree outcomes, TVET standards, licensure requirements, and employer criteria operate as parallel systems without systematic cross-recognition, graduates may be required to demonstrate overlapping capabilities repeatedly (Mutebi & Ferej, 2023; Hassan et al., 2024). Degree-to-employment alignment is stronger where educational institutions, professional bodies, and employers maintain active partnerships and map competencies directly to occupational expectations (Kesten et al., 2023; Underdahl et al., 2023). Where those relationships are weak, graduates report employability gaps and employers identify inadequate preparation, increasing the demand for supplementary verification (Jerusalem, 2026; Alvero et al., 2026).

Micro-credentials and competency-based certificates have expanded partly because employers regard conventional degrees as insufficiently specific, current, or verifiable (McGreal et al., 2022; Fang & Xu, 2025). When supported by validated assessment, traceable outcomes, and recognized standards, stacked credentials can represent genuine progression. In their absence, they may instead signal mistrust in the evidentiary value of degree outcomes (Varadarajan et al., 2023; Aziz & Surono, 2024). Comparable pressures are visible in health workforce preparation, where language proficiency, long-term care capability, digital documentation, and destination-specific regulatory readiness operate as competency bottlenecks between formal training and professional deployment (Atento et al., 2025).

The Philippine cases considered in this paper make this distinction especially important. Employer requirements for TESDA certificates, safety credentials, software proficiency, and other short courses may reflect legitimate

specialization, but their systematic attachment to degrees in business, criminology, and education may also indicate that formal qualifications do not consistently verify employment-relevant competence. Accounting practice offers a current illustration of how occupational requirements can evolve faster than curriculum standards: practitioners increasingly identify AI literacy, analytics, cybersecurity awareness, verification capability, and governance competence as necessary complements to traditional accounting judgment (Bendal et al., 2026). The policy issue is therefore not the existence of additional credentials itself, but whether they extend prior learning or compensate for unresolved failures of alignment and verification.

2.6 Synthesis of Literature

The five bodies of literature reviewed above converge on a common proposition: educational coherence cannot be inferred from the existence of curriculum standards, qualification descriptors, or regulatory instruments. Alignment depends on whether those instruments are sequenced across levels, implemented under reasonably comparable conditions, translated into recognized competencies, and trusted by the institutions and employers that receive graduates. Across the literature, divergence between prescribed standards and experienced outcomes is associated with governance fragmentation, institutional capacity differences, weak recognition mechanisms, and insufficient coordination at sectoral boundaries.

Several patterns are particularly salient. First, vertical alignment supports learning progression and reduces redundancy, but it is difficult to sustain when successive educational levels are governed independently; the learning-progression literature similarly emphasizes the need for evidence-based sequencing rather than assumed development (Corcoran et al., 2009). Second, the intended-implemented-attained framework shows that identical standards can yield unequal learning opportunities when resources and professional capacity differ. Third, qualifications frameworks often clarify competency language without delivering operational mobility or recognition. Fourth, debates over general education ultimately turn on whether breadth requirements produce demonstrable progression rather than duplication. Fifth, credential stacking can function either as legitimate specialization or as evidence that degree outcomes are not sufficiently trusted or verified.

These patterns support a systems-level interpretation of Philippine curriculum misalignment. A contemporary review of health professions education similarly concludes that leadership pressures, faculty capacity, licensure cultures, clinical placement constraints, curriculum execution, and student outcomes form an interconnected system in which single-domain interventions are unlikely to produce durable improvement (Bermido et al., 2025). Accordingly, the central problem is not a simple shortage of curriculum content. It is an architectural failure to connect standards, implementation capacity, assessment, recognition, and employment expectations across the full curriculum-to-competency chain.

2.7 Gaps in the Literature

Despite the breadth and analytical sophistication of the five thematic areas reviewed, several significant gaps remain. First, comparative studies that systematically examine all five transitions in the Philippine educational qualification system within a single integrated analytical framework are notably absent. Second, the intended-implemented-attained curriculum framework has not been systematically applied to the higher education and TVET levels or to the interfaces between them in the Philippine context. Third, the inter-agency dimension of Philippine qualification fragmentation has not been examined as an integrated governance problem in the academic literature. Fourth, the Philippine phenomenon of degree holders systematically acquiring supplementary credentials has not been analyzed within the post-degree remedial credentialing framework that the international literature suggests. Fifth, whether the transition from 63 to 36 general education units under CMO 20 (Taberdo, 2017) has produced a genuinely non-duplicative relationship with senior high school attainment has not been examined through curriculum mapping methods.

2.8 Contribution of the Present Paper

This paper contributes to the existing literature in three analytically distinct respects. First, it proposes and applies a Philippine Curriculum-to-Competency Alignment Framework organized around five critical interface points as an integrated instrument for examining systemic misalignment across the full educational qualification chain. Second, it applies this framework to three illustrative professional program cases — BS Accountancy, BS Criminology, and Teacher Education — that collectively provide analytically grounded and program-specific evidence for governance and curriculum design claims. Third, it advances the educational leadership and governance dimensions of the

alignment problem by framing systemic misalignment not as a technical curriculum deficiency but as a consequence of fragmented inter-agency governance — locating responsibility and reform imperatives at the level of educational system design and inter-agency coordination.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This paper employs a critical integrative policy review combined with comparative curriculum mapping as its primary research design. This design is appropriate to the paper's central analytical objective: to examine the structural conditions of curriculum-to-competency misalignment across the Philippine educational qualification system through systematic documentary analysis rather than through primary data collection. The critical integrative policy review component synthesizes and critically examines existing policy frameworks, curriculum documents, qualification standards, and regulatory instruments across multiple governing agencies and educational sectors. The comparative curriculum mapping component applies a structured analytical matrix — the Philippine Curriculum-to-Competency Alignment Framework — to three illustrative professional program cases, enabling systematic examination of alignment conditions across five critical interface points in the qualification chain.

This design is categorized as a structured non-empirical curriculum analysis: non-empirical in the sense that it does not generate or analyze primary quantitative or qualitative data from human subjects, but structured and analytically rigorous in its use of a defined framework, explicit source selection criteria, and systematic interface-by-interface examination. The design is particularly appropriate for papers whose central claims are systemic and governance-oriented, where the purpose is to identify structural conditions and analytical patterns rather than to measure individual or institutional outcomes.

3.2 Documentary Sources and Inclusion Logic

The documentary corpus examined in this paper consists of publicly available policy instruments, curriculum frameworks, qualification standards, and regulatory documents issued by the relevant Philippine educational governance agencies. Sources were identified and selected on the basis that they must be official documents issued by a recognized Philippine educational or regulatory authority; they must bear directly on curriculum design, qualification standards, competency frameworks, or licensure requirements within the scope of the five analytical interfaces; and they must be sufficiently current to reflect the post-K–12 educational governance architecture.

The documentary corpus includes: the K–12 Basic Education Curriculum framework and implementing rules under Republic Act No. 10533; MATATAG Curriculum documents; CHED Memorandum Order No. 20, series of 2013; relevant CHED program standards and policies for BS Accountancy, BS Criminology, and Teacher Education programs; TESDA Training Regulations and National Competency Standards; the Philippine Qualifications Framework as established under Republic Act No. 10968 and amended by Republic Act No. 12313; selected PRC licensure examination syllabi for the Certified Public Accountant, Criminologist, and Licensure Examination for Teachers; and publicly available institutional curriculum documents from representative higher education institutions where accessible. The selection of three program cases was made on the basis of sectoral representativeness and the analytical visibility of alignment issues across all five interface points.

3.3 Analytical Framework and Mapping Matrix

The primary analytical instrument applied in this paper is the Philippine Curriculum-to-Competency Alignment Framework, organized around five critical interface points:

Interface 1: Basic Education to Higher Education examines whether senior high school curriculum outcomes genuinely serve as prerequisites for collegiate-level study, or whether substantial content repetition occurs — particularly in relation to general education subjects whose unit allocation was reduced under CMO 20 on the assumption that K–12 completion alters the incoming competency baseline.

Interface 2: General Education to Professional Education examines whether general education and mandated non-specialist components within baccalaureate programs provide competencies that are distinct from and progressive relative to senior high school attainment, and whether the balance between general and professional curriculum allocations supports adequate disciplinary depth.

Interface 3: Higher Education to TVET examines whether academic competencies recognized through degree completion are acknowledged within the TESDA qualification system, and whether the PQF's cross-sector articulation provisions are operationally realized or formally nominal.

Interface 4: Degree to Licensure examines whether professional curriculum components are demonstrably aligned with PRC licensure examination competency domains, and whether the structure of professional courses supports deep professional preparation or is substantially shaped by examination review considerations.

Interface 5: Qualification to Employment examines whether possession of the relevant degree and licensure credential reliably certifies the competencies expected by employers at the point of employment entry, or whether systematic supplementary credentialing demands indicate that degree outcomes are insufficiently specific or verified.

3.4 Limitations

Several limitations of this design require explicit acknowledgment. First, the analysis is documentary in nature and cannot directly measure the attained curriculum dimension. Claims about attainment gaps are inferential, derived from documentary evidence of misalignment between prescribed standards at successive stages. Second, the selection of three program cases cannot support claims about all Philippine baccalaureate programs; findings are presented as analytically illustrative of systemic patterns. Third, access to institutional curriculum documents varies considerably, and publicly available documents may not fully represent the implemented curriculum. Fourth, the paper does not examine student or employer perceptions, which would require primary data collection beyond the present design. Fifth, documentary analysis reflects formal policy provisions rather than implementation fidelity.

4. Analytical Findings

4.1 Interface 1: Basic Education to Higher Education — Presumed Prerequisites and Documented Repetition

The K–12 reform under Republic Act No. 10533 was premised, in significant part, on the expectation that the addition of two years of senior high school would fundamentally alter the competency baseline of students entering higher education. The reduction of the General Education Curriculum from 63 to 36 units under CHED Memorandum Order No. 20, series of 2013, was explicitly justified on this basis: senior high school graduates were expected to arrive at higher education having already attained foundational competencies in communication, mathematics, science, social studies, and humanities. The critical question at this interface is not whether the policy rationale was coherent — it was — but whether the articulation it presupposes has been realized in documentary and operational terms.

The documentary evidence at this interface reveals a structural tension that has not been formally resolved. Senior high school curriculum frameworks prescribe competencies across academic, technical-vocational, and arts and design tracks whose correspondence to the competency assumptions embedded in the revised collegiate General Education Curriculum has not been systematically verified through a formal national articulation mechanism. CHED CMO 20 presupposes that senior high school completion produces a defined and consistent competency baseline, but no cross-agency instrument formally maps senior high school exit competencies against collegiate general education entry assumptions to verify that the presumed prerequisite relationship holds across tracks, institutions, and regions.

This gap is particularly significant given the documented evidence that national curriculum standards are not implemented comparably across institutions with unequal resources. Senior high school implementation has proceeded unevenly across public and private institutions and across tracks (Cogal, 2019) — meaning that the competency baseline arriving at higher education is not uniform even among students who formally satisfy K–12 completion requirements. In this context, the reduction of general education units on the assumption of a uniform senior high school competency baseline introduces a structural vulnerability: where the prerequisite is not reliably attained, the non-duplicative relationship that CMO 20 presupposes cannot be operationally guaranteed.

For the three program cases, this interface produces observable patterns of presumed overlap. Teacher Education programs retain general education components whose content domains substantially correspond to senior high school core subject areas, raising the analytical question of whether these components provide genuine collegiate-level progression or function as implicit remediation for presumed attainment that has not been consistently verified. Similar patterns are analytically inferable in BS Accountancy, where business mathematics and communication components at the collegiate general education level correspond to senior high school competency domains without a documented

prerequisite mapping establishing that entry-level collegiate instruction genuinely advances beyond attained secondary competencies.

4.2 Interface 2: General Education to Professional Education — Breadth Requirements and Disciplinary Depth

The second interface concerns the internal architecture of baccalaureate programs: specifically, the distribution of instructional time and unit credits between general, mandated non-specialist components and professional or disciplinary specialization. When the 36-unit General Education Curriculum is considered together with Physical Education requirements, National Service Training Program units, and related statutory and institutional mandates, many Philippine baccalaureate programs carry a non-specialist unit load that represents a substantial proportion of total program requirements (Taberdo, 2017). The analytical question is whether this distribution supports adequate professional curriculum depth, appropriate sequencing of professional competencies, and genuine collegiate-level differentiation from senior high school attainment.

Documentary examination of CHED program standards for the three selected cases reveals differentiated patterns. BS Accountancy programs carry a substantial professional and accounting specialization load that occupies the majority of program units beyond the mandated general components (Largoza & Fernandez, 2025). The concern at this interface for accountancy is less about the ratio of general to professional units and more about whether the sequencing and prerequisite structure of professional subjects reflects a coherent vertical progression or a parallel accumulation of professional topics without systematic prerequisite verification.

BS Criminology presents a more acute tension at this interface. CHED program standards prescribe a program encompassing criminal justice, law enforcement, criminalistics, correctional administration, and related subjects alongside the mandated general and statutory components (Testa, 2025). The breadth of disciplinary coverage within the professional component, combined with the statutory non-specialist load, raises documentary questions about whether sufficient instructional time remains for any professional domain to be developed with the depth that PRC Criminologist licensure examination syllabi and Philippine National Police recruitment standards expect.

Teacher Education programs present a particularly complex internal architecture. Professional education components encompass curriculum development, educational psychology, assessment, field study, and teaching internship alongside subject specialization for secondary education graduates (Balagtas et al., 2008). The mandated general education components, statutory requirements, and professional education foundation courses together occupy a significant portion of total program units before subject specialization courses are introduced — raising documentary questions about the sequencing of subject-specific pedagogical preparation relative to the point at which student teachers encounter actual classroom contexts.

4.3 Interface 3: Higher Education to TVET — Cross-Sector Recognition and Credential Overlap

The third interface concerns the relationship between baccalaureate degree outcomes and TESDA competency standards — specifically, whether competencies developed through degree completion are recognized within the TESDA qualification system, and whether TESDA competency certifications contribute to recognized credit within the higher education sector. Documentary examination of the PQF level descriptors and the qualification systems governed by CHED and TESDA reveals a structural condition in which formal framework provisions and operational practice diverge. The PQF assigns qualification levels to both higher education and TVET qualifications, providing a theoretical basis for cross-sector recognition (Asian Development Bank, 2021). However, no systematic national credit recognition mechanism formally translates TESDA National Certificates into higher education credits, or baccalaureate degree competencies into recognized TESDA qualification equivalences, in a manner that is consistently operationalized.

For the three program cases, this interface produces the most analytically significant evidence of governance-level misalignment. A BS Criminology graduate, whose degree program formally encompasses law enforcement operations, criminalistics laboratory work, and correctional administration, is not thereby recognized as holding equivalent competencies to a TESDA National Certificate in Security Services or related occupational certification — despite the evident content overlap. Similarly, a Teacher Education graduate whose program includes technology integration components does not thereby acquire recognized equivalence to TESDA competency certifications in ICT-related National Certificate domains. The formal separation of CHED and TESDA qualification pathways, without operational cross-recognition instruments, means that learners cannot accumulate qualifications across sectors in a

transparent, credit-bearing progression — a condition directly contrary to the stated objectives of the Philippine Qualifications Framework.

4.4 Interface 4: Degree to Licensure — Curriculum Alignment and Examination Dominance

The fourth interface concerns the relationship between professional curriculum design and PRC licensure examination requirements. Documentary examination of PRC licensure examination syllabi for the Certified Public Accountant, Criminologist, and Licensure Examination for Teachers reveals patterns of both formal alignment and structural tension. For BS Accountancy, the CPA licensure examination subjects correspond to recognized subject areas in CHED program standards. The structural tension lies not in the absence of correspondence but in the governance dynamic that correspondence produces: where licensure examination syllabi effectively define the professional curriculum, programs risk organizing instruction around examination coverage rather than around the sequential development of deep professional competency.

For BS Criminology, the alignment between CHED program standards and PRC Criminologist licensure examination domains is documentarily present but structurally complicated by the breadth of both the program and the examination. The Criminologist licensure examination encompasses criminal jurisprudence, law enforcement administration, criminalistics, correctional administration, and juvenile delinquency and vice control (Pueblo et al., 2024) — a scope that requires broad coverage from programs already constrained by the structural tensions identified at Interface 2. The documentary evidence suggests that the combination of program breadth requirements and licensure examination breadth creates a structural pressure toward shallow coverage across multiple domains rather than deep competency development.

For Teacher Education, the Licensure Examination for Teachers tests professional education competencies and content knowledge in the subject specialization area (Amanonce & Maramag, 2020). The alignment between LET domains and CHED program standards is formally present. The structural tension concerns the timing and sequencing of subject specialization development: programs whose unit allocation sequences general and professional education components in ways that defer subject specialization to later years may produce graduates whose subject knowledge depth at the point of licensure examination is constrained by late and insufficient specialization exposure.

4.5 Interface 5: Qualification to Employment — Credential Verification and Supplementary Certification

The fifth interface concerns the relationship between formal qualification possession and employment-readiness recognition. For all three program cases, documentary evidence of systematic supplementary credentialing demands provides the most externally visible signal of misalignment between the qualification system and employer expectations.

For BS Criminology graduates seeking entry into the Philippine National Police, degree completion and Criminologist licensure satisfy formal entry eligibility conditions but operational competency requirements constitute a parallel evaluation architecture that does not formally credit the competency development presumed to have occurred within the degree and licensure system (Dapitan et al., 2023; Guiruela, 2025). Graduates entering private security, investigation, or related fields frequently encounter employer requirements for TESDA competency certifications in domains that their criminology programs nominally address, suggesting that employer confidence in degree outcome verification is insufficient to substitute for separate occupational competency certification (Ayeo-eo, 2023; Jimmy & Ayeo-eo, 2024).

For BS Accountancy graduates, the CPA licensure credential carries strong employer recognition in the accounting and auditing sector, representing the most functionally coherent degree-to-licensure-to-employment pathway among the three program cases (Cammayo & Gonzales, 2023; Cascino et al., 2020). However, employer requirements for software proficiency certifications, data analytics credentials, and related technical competencies represent an emerging supplementary credentialing demand reflecting the gap between qualification system update cycles and labor-market competency evolution (Castillo et al., 2021; Salleh et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2022).

For Teacher Education graduates, the most significant supplementary credentialing dynamic concerns technology integration and special education competencies (Avancena et al., 2025; Lugo & Reyes, 2024). Employers — including DepEd itself — increasingly require evidence of competency in digital pedagogy, inclusive education, and mother tongue-based multilingual education, competencies whose coverage within standard Teacher Education program curricula varies considerably across institutions (Semilla et al., 2023; Tezano et al., 2026). The resulting

pattern is one in which LET passage formally certifies professional readiness while operational deployment reveals competency gaps addressed through in-service training and supplementary certification — a post-qualification remediation pattern representing a systemic rather than individual preparation failure (Manigbas et al., 2024; Rivera et al., 2025; Segumpan et al., 2025).

4.6 Cross-Interface Governance Patterns

Examined across all five interfaces and three program cases, the documentary evidence reveals three cross-cutting governance patterns. First, formal framework provisions consistently exceed operational realization: the PQF, CMO policies, and program standards prescribe articulation relationships that available inter-agency mechanisms cannot reliably operationalize. Second, governance fragmentation among DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and PRC produces qualification systems whose boundary conditions are formally defined but whose interface relationships are left to institutional discretion, market adjustment, or learner burden — resulting in credential stacking that compensates at the individual level for what governance coordination has not achieved at the system level. Third, institutional capacity differentials mean that the implemented curriculum varies considerably across institutions governed by identical CHED minimum standards — amplifying employer demand for additional credentialing verification.

5. Discussion of Findings and Policy Implications

5.1 Reframing the Problem: From Curriculum Content to Governance Architecture

The analytical findings presented across the five interface points resist reduction to a curriculum content problem. The findings, taken in aggregate, point toward a governance architecture problem: the Philippine educational qualification system is structured in a manner that makes systemic misalignment a predictable structural outcome rather than an exceptional institutional failure.

Each of the four principal regulatory agencies operates within a legally defined mandate that is internally coherent but externally uncoordinated at the level of interface governance (Albert et al., 2023; Saguin & Ramesh, 2020). DepEd governs basic education curriculum without a formal inter-agency instrument mapping those standards against CHED collegiate entry assumptions. CHED sets minimum program standards without a systematic cross-referencing mechanism tied to TESDA competency frameworks or PRC licensure syllabi. TESDA maintains occupational competency standards without formal credit recognition pathways into higher education (Edralin & Pastrana, 2023). PRC defines licensure examination domains without a structured feedback loop compelling CHED program standards to evolve in parallel. Employers impose competency requirements without formal engagement in qualification standard-setting processes. The result is a system in which transitions among domains are governed primarily by assumption, historical practice, and institutional improvisation rather than by deliberate, documented, and monitored articulation mechanisms.

5.2 Implications for Educational Leadership and Institutional Management

The governance reframing of the alignment problem carries direct implications for educational leadership at multiple levels. At the institutional level, higher education leaders currently bear a disproportionate burden of curriculum articulation that inter-agency governance has not resolved. Curriculum decision-making under conditions of governance information gaps is necessarily imprecise, and the variance in implemented curricula that results is not primarily a reflection of academic freedom exercised wisely but of governance deficits filled unequally by institutions with unequal capacity.

For institutional leaders in lower-resource higher education institutions, this governance gap has compounding consequences. Without organizational capacity to conduct independent curriculum mapping, employer engagement, alumni tracking, or licensure performance analysis, these institutions are more likely to default to compliance with minimum standards and examination review preparation as their primary curriculum orientation. Educational leaders in these institutions are not failing in their responsibilities; they are operating within a governance architecture that does not provide them with the information, coordination mechanisms, or inter-agency support necessary for well-informed curriculum alignment decisions.

At the agency level, the findings imply that curriculum reform initiatives directed at any single component of the qualification chain will produce limited systemic impact as long as inter-agency coordination mechanisms governing the transitions among components remain underdeveloped. The MATATAG Curriculum's effort to

decongest and reorient K–10 competency development is, in isolation, a valuable reform; its systemic impact depends critically on whether CHED adjusts collegiate entry assumptions and program standards in documented correspondence with revised senior high school exit competencies — a coordination requirement that the present governance architecture does not formally mandate.

5.3 Policy Reform Priorities

The findings suggest three interconnected policy reform priorities. The first and most foundational is the establishment of formal inter-agency curriculum articulation mechanisms connecting DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and PRC within a structured and monitored governance framework. The Philippine Qualifications Framework provides the legislative basis for such coordination, and its strengthening under Republic Act No. 12313 expands the mandate for lifelong learning pathways and credit recognition. What remains absent is the operational inter-agency body charged with mapping interface relationships, identifying misalignments, proposing coordinated adjustments, and monitoring implementation across the qualification chain.

The second priority concerns the development of transparent competency progression maps connecting senior high school exit competencies to collegiate entry expectations, general education outcomes to professional curriculum prerequisites, degree program outcomes to licensure examination competency domains, and qualification outcomes to documented employer entry requirements. These maps must be sufficiently specific and publicly accessible to enable institutional curriculum decision-making to be informed by system-level competency architecture.

The third priority concerns the operationalization of credit recognition pathways across higher education and TVET sectors within the Philippine Qualifications Framework. The legislative provisions for credit transfer and qualification recognition remain substantially unrealized at the institutional level, partly because the assessment and verification instruments needed to establish competency equivalences across sector-specific qualification frameworks have not been developed.

5.4 Theoretical Significance and Comparative Relevance

Beyond its implications for Philippine educational policy, the present analysis contributes to the theoretical literature on curriculum alignment and qualification framework governance in developing educational systems. The Philippine Curriculum-to-Competency Alignment Framework demonstrates that multi-interface analysis reveals governance dimensions of misalignment that single-interface studies cannot detect. Specifically, it reveals that misalignment is cumulative: failures at Interface 1 compound through Interfaces 2 and 3, and their effects become most externally visible at Interfaces 4 and 5. A reform strategy directed at Interface 4 or 5 alone cannot resolve misalignment conditions whose structural origins lie in uncoordinated interface governance at Interfaces 1, 2, and 3. This cumulative misalignment dynamic is likely present in other developing educational systems in Asia and the Pacific that share the Philippine governance profile, making the analytical framework transferable as a research and policy instrument beyond the Philippine context.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

This paper set out to examine whether the formal coexistence of curriculum frameworks, qualification standards, and regulatory systems across Philippine basic education, higher education, TVET, professional licensure, and employment constitutes a coherent national learning progression. The documentary analysis conducted across five critical interface points, applied to BS Accountancy, BS Criminology, and Teacher Education as illustrative program cases, supports the following conclusions.

First, the Philippines possesses formally elaborated curriculum and qualification instruments at each level of the educational system, but these instruments do not constitute an articulated qualification architecture in any operationally meaningful sense. The five interface points are governed primarily by assumption, historical practice, and institutional improvisation rather than by documented, monitored, and inter-agency-coordinated articulation mechanisms.

Second, the misalignment conditions documented across the five interfaces are cumulative and mutually reinforcing. Unverified prerequisite assumptions at Interface 1 propagate as unresolved competency baseline problems

into Interface 2. Absence of cross-sector recognition mechanisms at Interface 3 is compounded by licensure examination dynamics at Interface 4. The resulting qualification credentials carry insufficient employer confidence, generating the supplementary credentialing demands documented at Interface 5.

Third, the primary governance explanation for systemic misalignment is the fragmented inter-agency architecture within which DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and PRC exercise legally distinct but insufficiently coordinated mandates. Systemic misalignment is a governance coordination failure as much as a curriculum design failure.

Fourth, institutional capacity differentials across the Philippine higher education sector mean that national minimum curriculum standards produce substantially different implemented curricula and, inferentially, different attained competency outcomes across institutions. This variation amplifies the imprecision of degree credentials as signals of competency attainment and intensifies employer demand for supplementary credentialing verification.

Fifth, the educational aims served by general education retain legitimate and irreducible value within baccalaureate programs. The analytical concern raised by this paper is not that these aims are unworthy, but that the current design of general and mandated non-specialist components has not been systematically verified to provide competencies that are genuinely progressive relative to senior high school attainment and compatible with adequate professional curriculum depth.

6.2 Recommendations

For inter-agency governance: DepEd, CHED, TESDA, and PRC should establish, or formally empower within an existing inter-agency mechanism, a Philippine Curriculum Articulation Council with the specific mandate to map interface relationships across the qualification chain, identify misalignment conditions, propose coordinated policy adjustments, and monitor implementation across sectors. This body should include representation from higher education institutions, TVET providers, professional associations, and employer organizations, and should operate with a defined review cycle and publicly available reporting.

For DepEd and CHED: A formal senior high school to higher education competency mapping exercise should be conducted and publicly documented, establishing the specific competency correspondences and non-duplicative progression relationships that CMO 20 presupposes but that no existing inter-agency instrument has verified. The results should inform CHED decisions about general education provisions, institutional guidance on collegiate entry assumptions, and senior high school curriculum revision priorities under the MATATAG framework.

For CHED and TESDA: The credit recognition provisions of the Philippine Qualifications Framework should be operationalized through the development of cross-sector competency equivalence instruments for at least a defined set of high-priority program and qualification combinations, enabling genuine cross-sector qualification accumulation rather than parallel credentialing.

For higher education institutions: Institutional curriculum committees should conduct documented interface audits — examining the correspondence between senior high school exit competencies and collegiate program entry assumptions, the sequential prerequisite structure of professional curriculum components, and the alignment between program outcomes and PRC licensure examination domains. Higher-capacity institutions should make their curriculum mapping methodologies and findings available as public goods to support lower-capacity institutions.

For future research: The present paper's documentary analysis should be complemented by empirical studies that directly measure the attained curriculum dimension of the alignment problem — including longitudinal competency assessments across educational transitions, systematic employer surveys on degree outcome verification confidence, and institutional case studies of curriculum implementation variation. Research applying the Philippine Curriculum-to-Competency Alignment Framework to additional program cases would expand the evidentiary basis for the systemic governance claims advanced in this paper.

The central challenge facing Philippine educational governance is not the absence of standards but the absence of a coherent, transparent, and verifiable architecture connecting those standards across the full curriculum-to-competency chain. Addressing that challenge requires coordinated governance leadership — across agencies, institutions, and sectors — of the kind that isolated curriculum revision, however well-designed, cannot substitute for and cannot achieve alone.

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