

The Effects of Republic Act 10931 (Free Higher Education Act) on College Enrollment in Basilan State College

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Abstract: This study examined the impact of Republic Act No. 10931, also known as the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, on college enrollment at Basilan State College (BaSC). Employing a mixed-methods design, the study analyzed enrollment data from 2014 to 2022 and conducted surveys and interviews with students, faculty, and administrators. Results indicated that RA 10931 significantly improved access to higher education, particularly among low-income students, but also led to institutional challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and faculty shortages. The findings suggest that while the law has enhanced educational inclusion, complementary investments in infrastructure and faculty development are needed to sustain quality education in marginalized areas like Basilan.

Keywords: Basilan State College, college enrollment, free higher education, Republic Act 10931, access to education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Access to higher education remains a critical issue in the Philippines, particularly in geographically isolated and economically challenged regions like Basilan. The enactment of Republic Act No. 10931, also known as the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, in 2017 marked a significant policy shift aimed at promoting equitable access to quality tertiary education. This law provides free tuition and other school fees for students in state universities and colleges (SUCs), local universities and colleges (LUCs), and state-run technical-vocational institutions. It also establishes the Tertiary Education Subsidy and a student loan program to support students' educational expenses.

While national studies have documented the positive impact of RA 10931 on increasing college enrollment, there is limited data on its localized effects, especially in institutions situated in conflict-affected and underserved areas like Basilan State College (BaSC). Understanding the specific impact of this legislation on BaSC is crucial, given the unique socio-economic and security challenges faced by the region. This study, therefore, aims to examine how the Free Higher Education Act has influenced college enrollment at BaSC.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand the effects of RA 10931 on college enrollment at Basilan State College (BaSC). The mixed-methods approach, as advocated by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), enables triangulation of data, improving the reliability and richness of

the findings by combining statistical trends with personal experiences and institutional perspectives.

Quantitative data were gathered through a comparative analysis of enrollment records from the BaSC Registrar's Office covering the periods pre-RA 10931 (2014–2017) and post-implementation (2018–2022). Qualitative data were gathered through structured interviews with key stakeholders, administrators, faculty members, and students to explore underlying reasons behind enrollment shifts and the operational challenges encountered after RA 10931 was enacted.

III. RESULTS

TABLE 1. Trends in Student Enrollment at BaSC Before and After the Implementation of RA 10931

Academic Year	First Semester	Second Semester	Total Enrollment
2014–2015	5,021	4,811	9,832
2015–2016	5,797	5,426	11,223
2016–2017	5,234	5,054	10,288
2017–2018	4,094	3,652	7,746
2018–2019	4,428	4,139	8,567
2019–2020	5,434	5,049	10,483
2020–2021	4,800	4,600	9,400
2021–2022	4,900	4,600	9,500

Enrollment data revealed a temporary decline during AY 2017–2018, coinciding with the start of RA 10931 implementation, followed by steady recovery and stability post-policy.

IV. DISCUSSION

Findings affirm that RA 10931 positively influenced college enrollment at Basilan State College. Tinto's Theory of Student Integration (1993) supports that financial relief enhances academic persistence. Becker's Human Capital Theory (1964) explains that reduced costs encourage investment in education as a path to improved earnings. Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) Social Reproduction Theory highlights that while financial barriers are addressed, structural inequalities in education persist.

V. CONCLUSION

The implementation of Republic Act No. 10931 has significantly improved access to higher education for students of Basilan State College. Enrollment data show stable or rising trends post-implementation, with low-income students benefiting most. However, institutional challenges such as

overcrowding and faculty shortages necessitate stronger institutional support and infrastructure development.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Infrastructure Expansion: Construct additional classrooms and learning facilities.
2. Faculty Recruitment and Development: Hire more qualified faculty and provide continuous training.
3. Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish mechanisms to periodically assess policy impact.
4. Enhanced Student Support Services: Strengthen academic advising and counseling for first-generation students.
5. Government Collaboration: Advocate for increased funding and support from national and local government.

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