

Clarence M. Batan's Research

Current research project

Preparing for the Future: Life Course and Intergenerational Analysis of Youth Transitions in the Philippines

Project Description

This project addresses the fundamental issue in the debates of young people's access to scarce resources, specifically in developing societies such as the Philippines. There is a long standing consensus among academics and policy makers across the world that the best way to prepare the youth for their future, is to provide them equal access to educational and occupational opportunity structures. However, despite the structural adjustment programs that forced many countries to adopt educational and economic policies, while improving the number of young people who have access to formal education, high literacy rates did not reduce the gap between the rich and the poor. Countries like the Philippines have well-developed educational systems and high literacy rates but have remained economically weak. Forms of social inequality continue to exist in these countries, which cast doubt on the widely accepted notion about the positive relationship of educational investment to economic development. Two puzzling outcomes of this mechanism are the rising level of unemployment among educated youth (United Nations ESCAP, 1997-2001) and the growing number of 'idle youth' (neither studying nor working) (Philippine Commission on Population, 2003). The position of young people in contemporary society is more precarious as a result of the changing global nature of the economic, social and political structures that affect the very process of their transitions into adulthood.

This study seeks to examine processes of youth transitions in the Philippines and assess their implications for the Filipino youth's capacity to fully participate in Philippine society. Specifically, it will analyze the implications of experiences in the family and in educational institutions, and assess their links to human capital skills and labour market outcomes of these young Filipinos. It will explore the features of the social processes of becoming an adult (e.g. socialization, value formation, religious practices, etc.) particularly in these two salient social spaces of youth transitions – the family and the educational system. This analysis will provide a sociological understanding of the extent and forms of social inequality in the lives of Filipino youth and their link to the primary sources of inequalities (e.g., social class of parents, gender, locality, etc.). It also seeks to explain the social mechanisms through which these inequalities emerged and are maintained. It will utilize life course and intergenerational approaches in youth transition studies.

Over the last three decades, the University of the Philippines Population Institute collected important data on Filipino youth through the Young Adults Fertility Survey (YAFS) research project. These cross-sectional surveys were conducted across three time-periods (1982, 1994, 2003), which are historically significant because major changes have occurred in Philippine politics and economy during this period. Although YAFS was not originally designed to study youth transitions specifically, its data sets provide a wide array of demographic characteristics, both in the individual and household levels, and offer adequate information on significant transitional events involved in becoming an adult. YAFS surveys offer extraordinarily rich data on life course event information (e.g., residential events, upbringing/home leaving, schooling, work, religion, family events, union formation, childbearing, etc.). This provides a unique opportunity to address the question on youth transition by employing multivariate analyses to determine the significant factors that affected the life course of young Filipinos in three time periods.

In order to compensate for the lack of contextual information on this issue, this project will also conduct two case studies in a rural area and an urban site, respectively. The choice of locality as a criterion for these case studies recognizes the implications of rural-urban variations in the lives of young Filipinos as evident in recent studies (e.g., Ericta, 2003; e.g., Philippine Commission on Population, 2003; Philippine Social Science Council, 2003; Raymundo & Cruz, 2004). In-depth interviews and focus group discussions with parents, teachers and young people will be carried out. This will be combined with field observation to fully understand the context of Filipino youth transition as an intergenerational process.

This research responds to the call of the United Nations to study the process of youth transition in developing countries, particularly those who are disadvantaged, marginalized and socially excluded. The findings of this project are envisioned to identify the structural factors that affect youth transitions in the Philippines; describe how these processes are negotiated; and communicate a viable youth policy framework that would prepare young Filipinos for work in the knowledge and skill-based society. Finally, this research will be analyzed in terms of its possible theoretical and empirical contributions to the study of contemporary youth in relation to similar studies conducted in developed societies.