A Review of the Current Situation and Practices of Multigrade Schools in the Philippines

SUMMARY REPORT

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

4Ps	Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program
ADM	Alternative Delivery Mode
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BCD	Bureau of Curriculum Development
BEA	Bureau of Education Assessment
BERA	Basic Education Research Agenda
BLD	Bureau of Learning Delivery
BLR	Bureau of Learning Resources
BoW	Budget of Work
CAR	Cordillera Administrative Region
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CI	Curriculum and Instruction
CO	Central Office
COLA	Cost of Living Allowance
CoP	Community of Practice
COT	Classroom Observation Tool
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DBM	Department of Budget and Management
DCP	DepEd Computerization Program
DECS	Department of Education, Culture and Sports
DepEd	Department of Education
DI	Differentiated Instruction
DLL	Daily Lesson Log
DLP	Daily Lesson Plan
DM	DepEd Memorandum
DO	DepEd Order
EBEIS	Enhanced Basic Education Information System
ELLNA	Early Language, Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
EMISD	Educational Management Information System Division
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FY	Fiscal Year
GAA	General Appropriations Act
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEC	Information, Education, and Communication
IMG-LP	Integrated Multigrade Lesson Plan
IMPACT	Instructional Management by Parents, Community, and Teachers

IP	Indigenous People		**MT**	Mother Tongue
IPEd	Indigenous People Education		**MTS**	Mother Tongue Subject
KPI	Key Performance Indicator		**MTB-MLE**	Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education
KII	Key Informant Interview		**NAT**	National Achievement Test
LAC	Learning Action Cell		**NCR**	National Capital Region
LAPG	Language Assessment for Primary Grades		**NEAP**	National Educators Academy of the Philippines
LGU	Local Government Unit		**NGO**	Non-Governmental Organization
LP	Lesson Plan		**PAP**	Project Advisory Panel
LRDMS	Learning Resource and Development Management System		**PBB**	Performance-based Bonus
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation		**PD**	Programme Document
MG	Multigrade		**PDP**	Philippine Development Plan
MG-DLP	Multigrade Daily Lesson Plan		**PMS MES**	Philippine Multigrade Schools Monitoring and Evaluation System
MGT	Multigrade Teacher		**PPST**	Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers
MG-TLP	Multigrade Teach-Learn Package		**PRDD**	Policy Research and Development Division
MIMOSA	Modified In-School/Off-School Approach		**PS**	Planning Service
MLC	Minimum Learning Competencies		**PSDS**	Public Schools District Supervisors
MLC-MG	Minimum Learning Competencies-Multigrade		**PTA**	Parent-Teacher Association
MLM	Multi-Level Material		**RACHEL Pi**	Remote Area Community Hotspot for Education and Learning
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement		**RO**	Regional Office
MOOE	Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses		**RPMS**	Results-based Performance Management System
MPPE	Multigrade Program in Philippine Education			

SBM	School-Based Management		**TG**	Teacher's Guide
SiAB	School-in-a-Bag		**TIC**	Teacher-in-Charge
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals		**TPTE**	Technical Panel for Teacher Education
SDO	Schools Division Office		**TS-MPPE**	Technical Support to Multigrade Program in Philippine Education
SDS	Schools Division Superintendent			
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization		**UNESCO**	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
SEAMEO INNOTECH	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology		**UNICEF**	United Nations Children's Fund
			WinS	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools
SED	School Effectiveness Division			
SEF	Special Education Fund			
SGC	School Governance Council			
SGOD	School Governance Operation Division			
SHA	Special Hardship Allowance			
SIP	School Improvement Plan			
SMEA	School Monitoring, Evaluation and Adjustment			
SPEd	Special Education			
STAR	Situation, Task, Action, Result			
STRIVE	Strengthening Implementation of Basic Education in Selected Provinces in Visayas			
SY	School Year			
TEI	Teacher Education Institution			

> "
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> I think we need to (recognize) that there will always be school communities with Multigrade classes. Considering the geography of the country, there are so many islands and isolated communities that don't have enough teachers to support Monograde classes. Faced with situations like these, it should probably be right to admit that there will always be Multigraders left. Multigrade education has been DepEd's response to such situations since 19 years ago. Multigrade education was the (default) strategy then, and now, even more.
>
> — **FGD Participant**
>
> "

RIGHT: Students crossing the sea to attend school in another island on an early school day in Samar.

Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)

FOREWORD

The Multigrade Program in Philippine Education (MPPE) is one of the major strategies of the Department of Education (DepEd) in the realization of the Philippine Education for All (EFA) 2015 plan of action and in meeting the global commitment of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030 (Sustainable Development Goal or SDG No. 4). Launched in 1993, the MPPE eliminates educational disparities in the Philippine basic education system. Its main goal is to improve access to basic education and achieve quality learning outcomesfor learnersin remote and underserved communities wherein enrolments do not warrant the establishment of monograde classes because of the small number of enrollees.

The adoption of the multigrade schooling strategy is based on international research findings that such strategy is a cost-effective means of raising the bar of students' participation in school and in boosting their learning achievement. Since the implementation of the MPPE, thousands of teachers and learners have benefited by way of construction of schools, training and development of teachers, provision of customized teaching and learning materials, and administration of school feeding program. Indeed, multigrade schooling has brought education closer to children in educationally deprived communities. Through the MPPE, DepEd has sustained improvement in achieving its mandate of democratizing access to basic education and ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all school-age children.

Despite these significant improvements and DepEd's intensified effort to deliver quality, accessible, relevant, and liberating education to multigrade learners, a sustained access to basic education remains to be a challenge in many regions. The situation is compounded by the geographic isolation of many schools due to remoteness and underdevelopment of infrastructural facilities that have resulted in the slow delivery of educational services and assistance. Consequently, many schools in these areas are not only difficult to reach but also difficult to manage and supervise. This means that their isolation is not only geographical but also pedagogical in nature. At present, DepEd is implementing the *Last Mile Schools Program* as one of its major thrusts to reach out and close the gap between Geographically Isolated, Disadvantaged and Conflict-Affected (GIDCA) areas to their counterparts in urban centers, and provide these areas with unhampered and equal access to quality basic education.

The above scenario necessitated the creation of a project that would evaluate the effectiveness of the MPPE, thus, the creation of the "Technical Support to Multigrade Program in Philippine Education" (TS–MPPE) project signed in 2017. This project is a tripartite partnership involving the Department of Education, SEAMEO INNOTECH, and UNICEF. It aims to 1) review the implementation of the MPPE; 2) develop multigrade schools monitoring and evaluation system; and 3) capacitate multigrade education stakeholders on the effective implementation of the MPPE. The results of the program review are compiled in this report: *A Review of the Current Situation and Practices of Multigrade Schools in the Philippines.* It is expected that these results will provide an evidence-based collection of information about the current situation of multigrade education in the Philippines. These are crucial information for policy formulation to strengthen the program implementation practices and strategies as well as to address the issues and problems confronting multigrade education within the policy framework of the K to 12 Basic Education Program.

Our grateful recognition and commendation to SEAMEO INNOTECH and UNICEF for their selfless contribution and support in conducting the program review. This is a great manifestation of partnership with private education partners in delivering education reform initiatives and making a tangible difference in the lives of children in the multigrade schools.

Hon. Leonor Magtolis Briones
Secretary, Department of Education

FOREWORD

On behalf of UNICEF Philippines, I am pleased to share with you the summary report entitled 'A Review of the Current Situation and Practices of Multigrade Schools in the Philippines.' The review is a result of the partnership between Department of Education (DepEd), SEAMEO INNOTECH and UNICEF. This presents a comprehensive review of the Multigrade Program in Philippine Education and highlights recommendations for continuing reforms to improve student learning in disadvantaged communities.

UNICEF and the Government of the Philippines have been partners in protecting the rights of children since UNICEF's started working in the Philippines in 1948. In the seventy years history of our partnership in Education, we have been particularly trying to support hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups of children, many of them in Multigrade schools. The UNICEF and Government of Philippines 8th Country Program for Children (2019-2023) focuses on social, economic, and geographic inequities and disparities towards the achievement of Philippines Development Plan aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Currently, we are modeling innovations in the Provinces of Northern Samar and Samar, focused on strengthening contextualization, capacitating teachers, school leaders and supervisors, and engaging parents to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Multigrade schools. The insights from the review enabled the partnership to come up with more relevant and meaningful interventions that are aligned with policy and system reform support to DepEd Central Office.

The focus of UNICEF's Global Education Strategy 2019-2030 is to help partner governments to achieve quality and inclusive lifelong learning through enhanced use of data and evidence of good teaching-learning practices. We hope that this summary report will be a platform for continuing partnerships to improve the learning outcomes for hard-to-reach and disadvantaged children served by the Multigrade program.

We would like to express great appreciation to our partners and everyone in the Education system who contributed to this endeavor, from the DepEd policymakers to education supervisors, school heads, multigrade teachers, parents, pupils and the research team. We know that there is still much to be done and more challenges to face to achieve our goal of ensuring that every child learns in an inclusive, healthy and protective environment.

We look forward to continuing our strong partnerships with education stakeholders towards system reforms to ensure that the right to quality education is realized by every child.

Ms. Oyunsaihan Dendevnorov
Representative, UNICEF Philippines

PREFACE

Providing inclusive and equitable quality education for all remains a critical concern for the Philippines. Towards this end, Multigrade schools have been established to bring education closer to school-age children located in isolated, hard-to-reach, underserved, and sparsely populated communities. They can also serve to provide complete elementary education in such communities.

Rooted in SEAMEO INNOTECH's longstanding mandate of addressing educational barriers and learning gaps in Southeast Asia, the Center has been an active partner of the Department of Education (DepEd) in ensuring progress in the implementation of the Multigrade Program in Philippine Education (MPPE). The Center has reviewed the Multigrade program, first in 1996 through a brief appraisal commissioned by UNICEF, then in 2011 through a profiling study of Multigrade schools conducted by DepEd and analyzed/ processed by SEAMEO INNOTECH.

Again in 2017, SEAMEO INNOTECH responded to DepEd's request for MPPE evaluation by signing a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with DepEd and UNICEF to address common post-2015 educational development action agenda, identifying the Technical Support to Multigrade Program in Philippine Education (TS-MPPE) as the first project to be implemented under the tripartite cooperation.

TS-MPPE serendipitously provided an opportunity for the Center not just to keep up its tradition of providing technical assistance to DepEd's Multigrade Education Program, but to further scale up its planned Multigrade program evaluation into a more comprehensive three-phased project, namely: Phase 1- MPPE Program Review; Phase 2- Development of M&E System and Tools; and Phase 3- Capacity Building.

Considering the unprecedented scope of methodology and samples, this study seeks to be the first systematic and comprehensive national review of DepEd's Multigrade Education Program. It presents the overall status of MPPE implementation and the current situation and practices of Multigrade schools in the Philippines, encompassing nine policy components and eight programmatic areas.

Albeit confronting remaining challenges, in particular, improving quality of teaching and learning and accessibility to socially-excluded school-age children, this Review confirms MPPE's viability, practicability, and positive contributions as an unconventional learning delivery in addressing access barriers to inclusion and basic learning opportunities of all school-age children and improving student learning through innovation in education delivery, curricular resources, and school-based management.

As a result of this Program Review and in partnership with DepEd's Bureau of Learning Delivery (BLD), the Philippine Multigrade Schools Monitoring and Evaluation System (PMS-MES) was developed and a series of capacity building trainings for Multigrade Supervisors and DepEd roll outs on the use of PMS-MES were conducted.

As SEAMEO INNOTECH celebrates its 50th year of founding, we wish to reiterate the importance of the MPPE Review, which shows institutional and policy gains and more importantly, sustainability of program advancements. We re-affirm our strong commitment to addressing issues of educational access and quality through informed policies based on research as well as the importance of partnership and cooperation to ensure a brighter future for every Multigrade learner in the Philippines.

Dr. Ramon C. Bacani
Director, SEAMEO INNOTECH

BACKGROUND

Technical Support to Multigrade Program in Philippine Education (TS-MPPE)

In 2017, a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) among the Department of Education (DepEd), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH) was forged to address common post-2015 educational development action agenda and priorities underpinning Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on inclusive and equitable education for all to advance lifelong learning, in particular, access to quality learning opportunities of the most disadvantaged learners. The tripartite cooperation agreed on pursuing knowledge sharing as well as collaboration on educational programs for disadvantaged learning communities in the Philippines within the next six years.

LEFT: Teacher Reycel uses whole-class instructional strategy as a preliminary activity during a Multigrade class of Grades 3 and 4 pupils of Aguho Elementary School in Rizal.

Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)

Since 1993, the Multigrade Program in Philippine Education or MPPE has been DepEd's official response to the need to democratize access to, and improve, quality education in roughly 19 percent[1] of public elementary schools located in isolated, underserved, and sparsely populated areas. Inasmuch as DepEd's Multigrade program is deemed as one of the ongoing instructional delivery services that need to be evaluated, modified, and strengthened, UNICEF and SEAMEO INNOTECH identified key steps to support DepEd in advancing the implementation of MPPE as an initial collaborative area under the MoA. A programme document (PD) was developed to outline the activities and strategies to assist DepEd's Multigrade program through the project, titled *Technical Support to Multigrade Program in Philippine Education or TS-MPPE,* which was co-funded by UNICEF and SEAMEO INNOTECH with in-kind support from DepEd.

Under the guidance of a Project Advisory Panel (PAP), chaired by the Undersecretary of Curriculum and Instruction (CI) and composed of DepEd's Bureau of Learning Delivery (BLD); Bureau of Curriculum Development (BCD); Bureau of Learning Resources (BLR); Bureau of Educational Assessment (BEA); School Effectiveness Division (SED); Policy, Planning, and Research Division (PPRD); selected Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs); UNICEF; and SEAMEO INNOTECH, the TS-MPPE project team implemented the project from February 2017 to May 2019 in three phases. Phase 1 included the MPPE Review aimed at determining the overall effectiveness of MPPE as a modality of delivery of basic education; Phase 2 involved the Development of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) System and Tools to promote continuous improvement, quality assurance and effectiveness of the Multigrade program; and Phase 3 was about building the capabilities of Multigrade implementers in various governance levels on the use of the developed M&E system and tools.

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1   Recent data (SY 2017 to 2018) indicate that out of the 38,911 public elementary schools, 7,234 or 18.6% are multigrade in nature (DepEd EMISD).

⊕ WHERE ARE THE MULTIGRADE SCHOOLS?

In SY 2009-2010, approximately one-third of public elementary schools are estimated to be Multigrade in nature. Out of a total of 38,351 public elementary schools, there are 12,799 (33.37%) Multigrade schools. Data for SY 2014-2015 show approximately the same ratio; among 38,674 public elementary schools, one-third (12,282, 31.76%) are Multigrade schools.

Recent data (SY 2017-2018) indicate a decline in the ratio of Multigrade schools (N=7,234, 18.6%) to total public elementary schools (N=38,911). Most Multigrade schools (19.41%) can be found in Region VIII, followed by the Cordillera Autonomous Region (CAR) (9.51%), and Cagayan Valley, with 7.64% of Multigrade schools.

⊕ TYPES OF MULTIGRADE SCHOOLS

There are two typologies of Philippine Multigrade schools. The first typology is based on the *nature of classes*: (1) **pure**, i.e., all classes are combined classes; or (2) **mixed**, i.e., some classes are combined and some classes are single-grade classes. The second typology is based on the *availability* of grade levels offered in school: (1) **complete**, i.e., all grades/levels being offered (from Kindergarten to Grade 6); or (2) **incomplete**, i.e., one or more grades/ levels not being offered/available.

Around 47% of the surveyed schools are *mixed and complete*. Thirty-eight percent (38%) are pure and complete. Around 10% are considered *pure and incomplete*, while roughly 5% are *mixed and incomplete.* Less than a percent of surveyed schools are classified as either *Annex, Satellite, or Integrated.*
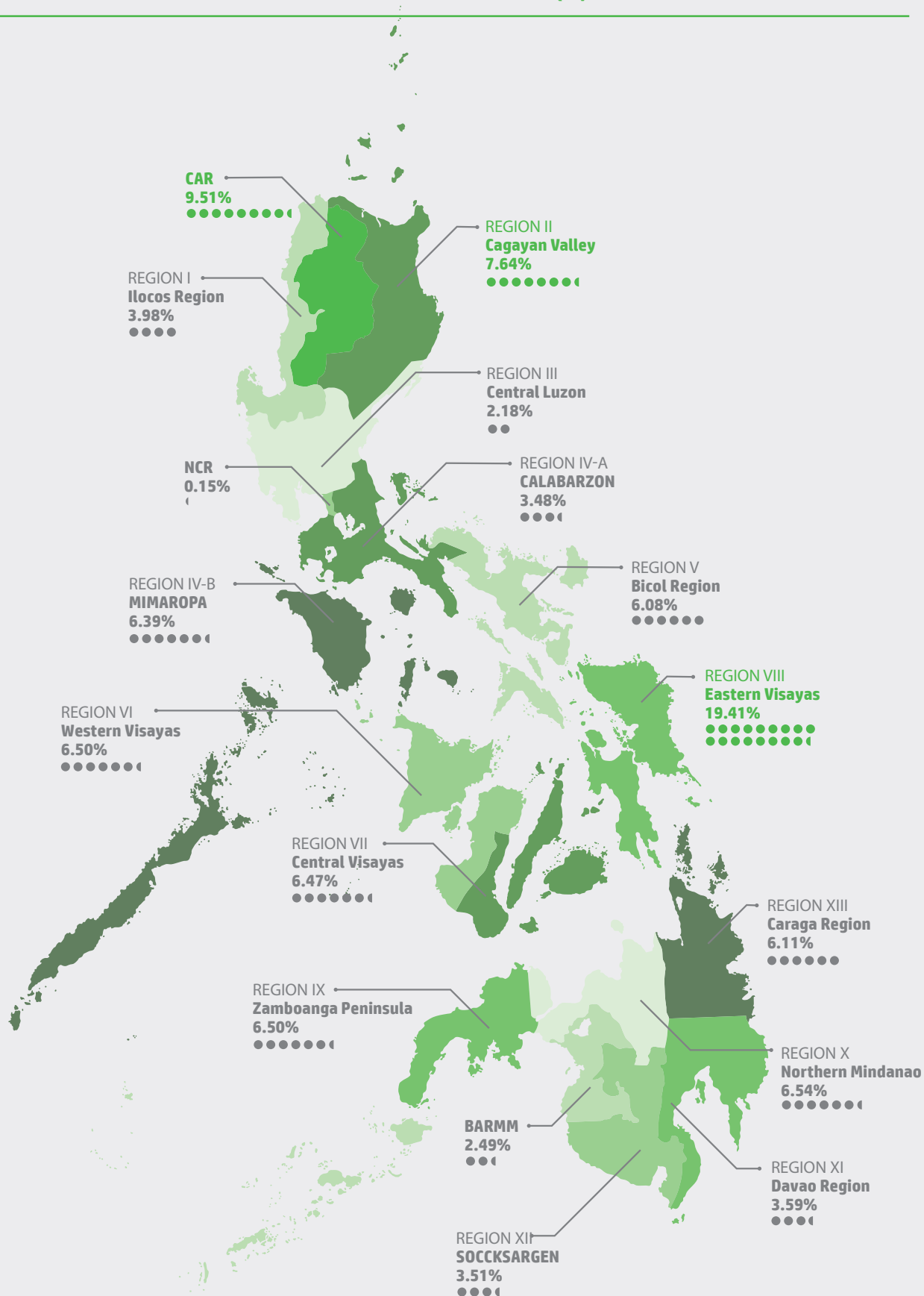
Multigrade Program Review

Under TS-MPPE's first phase, the program review presents the overall status of the MPPE and the current situation and practices of Multigrade schools in the Philippines. It was undertaken to accomplish four specific objectives: first, to assess the extent to which the Multigrade program was implemented in accordance with existing or pre-set standards and policies; second, to identify contributing and constraining factors in achieving the goals of MPPE; third, to describe the contribution of the Multigrade program to student learning and school quality, specifically with regard to pupil performance and key performance indicators; and fourth, to examine the role of the Multigrade program in improving access to quality education in disadvantaged school communities.

The program review process was anchored on the following four research questions:

1. How well has the MPPE been implemented against pre-set standards and guidelines?
2. What facilitating and constraining factors contribute in achieving the goals of MPPE?
3. To what extent has the MPPE contributed to student learning outcomes?
4. To what extent was MPPE able to improve access to quality education in disadvantaged communities?

Several earlier reviews and evaluation studies focusing on Multigrade education in the Philippines were conducted. Examining various components including curriculum and pedagogy, qualifications of Multigrade teachers, and learning environment, most previous studies concluded that MPPE is confronted with many continuing challenges, but given the support accorded for its proper implementation, the quality of learning in these Multigrade schools may even be equal to that of monograde schools. Bearing in mind these earlier research findings which formed a major part of the development of the study's design, this review deliberately did not utilize them as baseline data considering known limitations of their scope in terms of respondents and methodologies. This study seeks to be the first systematic and comprehensive National Review of MPPE, endeavoring to encompass all programmatic components and including representative Multigrade schools and implementers from all regions across the country.

DISTRIBUTION OF MULTIGRADE SCHOOLS IN THE PHILIPPINES (%)

CAR
9.51%

REGION II
Cagayan Valley
7.64%

REGION I
Ilocos Region
3.98%

REGION III
Central Luzon
2.18%

NCR
0.15%

REGION IV-A
CALABARZON
3.48%

REGION IV-B
MIMAROPA
6.39%

REGION V
Bicol Region
6.08%

REGION VIII
Eastern Visayas
19.41%

REGION VI
Western Visayas
6.50%

REGION VII
Central Visayas
6.47%

REGION XIII
Caraga Region
6.11%

REGION IX
Zamboanga Peninsula
6.50%

REGION X
Northern Mindanao
6.54%

BARMM
2.49%

REGION XI
Davao Region
3.59%

REGION XII
SOCCKSARGEN
3.51%

Source: Education Management Information Systems Division, DepEd (SY 2017-2018)

ABOVE: Pupils of a Multigrade class of Arawane Elementary
School in Daram, Samar working on a group activity.

Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)

Methodology

Design

The study applied *mixed* methods in collecting data. A combination of *Causal-Comparative, Survey* and *Qualitative* Methods of evaluation were employed to answer research questions pertaining to the status of DepEd's Multigrade program and the situation and practices of Multigrade schools in the Philippines.

First, data on test performance of students were retrieved from the DepEd database and subjected to statistical analysis to compare the mean performance scores of *Multigrade* and *monograde* schools in LAPG and NAT for SY 2014-2015.

A survey of *Multigrade schools* and *Schools Divisions with* Multigrade schools was conducted to get a general picture of *instructional and management practices, human and material resources*, and *challenges and problem areas* in these schools.

Finally, *consultative focus group discussions (FGDs)* with small groups of stakeholders, and *case studies* of selected Multigrade schools involving *site visits, classroom observations,* and *interviews,* were carried out in order to obtain more detailed qualitative description and personal narratives of experiences and processes of program participants, administrators, and partner organizations and institutions.

To analyze data, the research team also employed quantitative (descriptive, correlation, and causal-comparative) and qualitative (phenomenological and thematic) methods of analysis.

Data were collected from 4,852 out of the initial 7,273 identified Multigrade schools based on DepEd BEA's SY 2014-2015 LAPG database, and 127 Schools Divisions from an initial 160 Schools Division with Multigrade schools, using separate mailed **survey** instruments.

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLES

1 Survey

4,852 Multigrade schools

127 Schools Divisions

44 additional pairs of monograde and Multigrade schools

2 Qualitative

131 Multigrade implementers and stakeholders in consultative workshops

11 schools from 10 schools divisions selected for the case study

284 Multigrade implementers and stakeholders in FGDs and KIIs for the case study
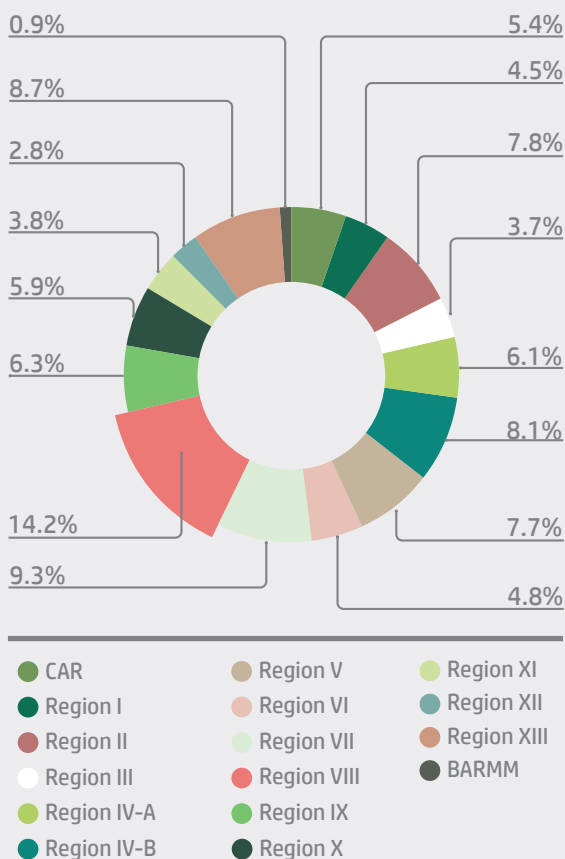
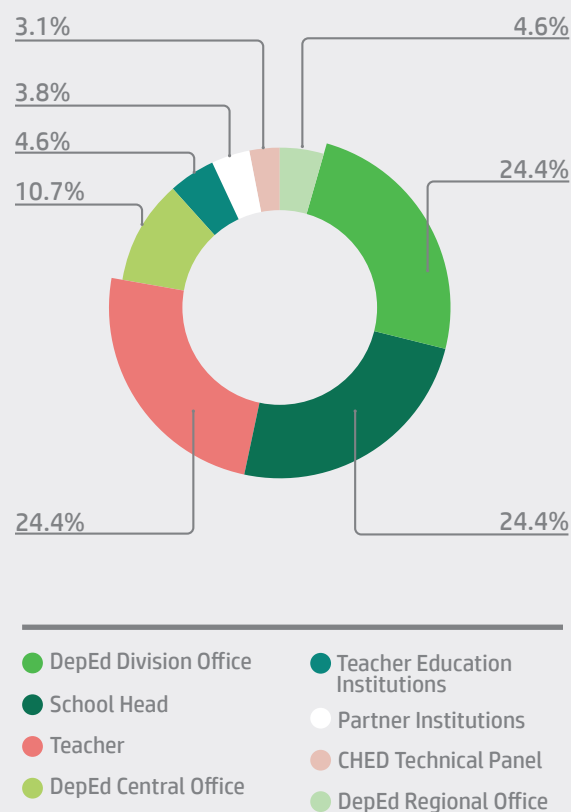**3 Causal Comparative**

NAT and LAPG SY 2014-2015

Key Performance Indicators

DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEYED MULTIGRADE SCHOOLS BY REGION (N=4,852)

0.9%
5.4%
4.5%
8.7%
7.8%
2.8%
3.8%
3.7%
5.9%
6.3%
6.1%
8.1%
14.2%
7.7%
9.3%
4.8%

- CAR
- Region I
- Region II
- Region III
- Region IV-A
- Region IV-B
- Region V
- Region VI
- Region VII
- Region VIII
- Region IX
- Region X
- Region XI
- Region XII
- Region XIII
- BARMM

DISTRIBUTION OF FGD PARTICIPANTS BY AFFILIATION (N=131)

3.1%
4.6%
3.8%
4.6%
24.4%
10.7%
24.4%
24.4%

- DepEd Division Office
- School Head
- Teacher
- DepEd Central Office
- Teacher Education Institutions
- Partner Institutions
- CHED Technical Panel
- DepEd Regional Office

Additionally, one hundred thirty-one (131) individuals representing various groups of Multigrade education implementers and stakeholders from three island-clusters (Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao) participated in either **focus group discussions** or **key informant interviews.** These include personnel from the DepEd Central, Regional, Division, and District Offices; Multigrade school heads and teachers; TEIs, development organizations working on Multigrade education, and members of the Technical Panel for Teacher Education of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

Two hundred eighty-four (284) individuals and 11 schools selected for **case study,** which represent 10 Schools Divisions across the country, were included in FGDs and classroom observations.

Lastly, to examine the contribution of the Multigrade education program on learners' performance, the following data were obtained: **School Year (SY) 2014-2015 National Achievement Test (NAT) scores of Grade 6 pupils** from 6,656 Multigrade schools and 33,666 monograde schools; **SY 2014-2015 LAPG scores** of pupils in English and Filipino from 29,571 monograde schools and 7,273 Multigrade schools; and **LAPG scores** of pupils in their Mother Tongue from 27,078 monograde schools and 5,088 Multigrade schools. Data on key performance indicators (KPIs) from a **second school survey** of 44 pairs of Multigrade and monograde schools in the same Schools Divisions were obtained and analyzed for SY 2014-2015; SY 2015-2016; SY 2016-2017.

Instruments

Major instruments and data sources in the study were **survey questionnaires** retrieved from Multigrade schools and Schools Divisions, transcripts of the series of **consultative workshops**, transcripts of **case study focus group discussions**, case study **classroom observations,** and review of various **records and documents** obtained from the Enhanced Basic Education Information System (eBEIS) of DepEd's BEA, and also from Multigrade schools.

Initial findings were presented to the members of the PAP, DepEd Central Office, and DepEd Multigrade implementers on various occasions such as during: (1) PAP meeting on 19 October 2018; (2) Meeting with DepEd Program Committee for Curriculum and Instruction on 21 January 2019; (3) DepEd and SEAMEO INNOTECH-organized National Trainings on MPPE M&E held on 22 to 26 October 2018 (Luzon cluster); 05 to 09 November 2019 (Visayas cluster); 26 to 30 November 2018 (Mindanao cluster); and (4) DepEd-organized National Roll-out of M&E system and tools on 14 to 18 January 2019 (Visayas and Mindanao clusters) and 21 to 25 January 2019 (Luzon cluster). Recommendations from the participants of the dissemination platforms were considered in the finalization of this report. This report was presented to the new DepEd Undersecretary for Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Diosdado San Antonio, on 27 June 2019. His comments and suggestions on the key recommendations of the study were included in this report.

BELOW: Aside from focus group discussions and key informant interviews, the research team also observed selected Multigrade schools to document good teaching and learning practices in Multigrade classrooms.

Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)

Findings and Conclusions

Overall MPPE implementation shows evidence of partial to adequate compliance of various program components with existing policies

Existing DepEd policies on Multigrade program guided the implementation of the nine components of the MPPE. The extent to which Multigrade schools complied with these policies was varied due to the nature of the environment and the experiences of field implementers. MPPE implementation was generally compliant with existing standards and policies and has shown positive results along nine components of the Multigrade program, notwithstanding the fact that there are still several challenges to overcome.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Compliance with existing policies

Adequate compliance: classroom organization, classroom programs, capacity building, and hiring of teachers and staff movement

Partial compliance: school plant, basic features of the classroom including WinS facilities, teacher incentives, teaching and learning resources, and fund allocation

Contributing factors to succesful implementation

Instructional delivery

Traditional and authentic assessment

Parental and community engagement

Teacher motivation and commitment

School leadership

The main areas in which there was **adequate compliance** are c*lassroom organization, class programs, capacity building, and hiring of teachers and staff movement.*

On the other hand, Multigrade schools have shown only **partial compliance** in the following areas, namely: *school plant, basic features of the classroom including WASH-in-School (WinS) facilities; teacher incentives; teaching and learning resources, including MTB-MLE resources; and fund allocation.*

Moreover, considering the variegated contexts and experiences of Multigrade schools, a "one-size-fits-all" kind of policy is deemed not feasible. Findings point to the need to develop more flexible policies that will allow Multigrade schools to contextualize these in accordance with the unique conditions and attributes of the communities where such schools operate.

Evidence of compliance with existing policies are detailed on the next page.
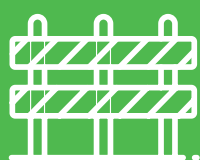
Constraints to achieving MPPE goals

○ Multiple roles of teachers

○ Inadequate instructional support from school heads and supervisors

○ Absence of a responsive monitoring and evaluation system to track student learning, assess curriculum coverage and teacher's content mastery and pedagogical practice

Contribution to academic performance

○ Grade 3 Multigrade pupils scored higher than monograde pupils in all components of the Language Assessment for Primary Grades for SY 2014-15 except listening comprehension in Filipino

○ Multigrade learners performed significantly better in some areas for the National Achievement Test SY 2014-15; but no significant difference in terms of total NAT mean scores
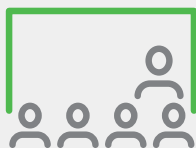
Improving access to quality education

○ Multigrade class size is relatively small compared to a regular monograde school

○ Curriculum materials specifically designed for Multigrade schools made teaching easier for Multigrade teachers

ADEQUATE COMPLIANCE

Classroom Organization

- ⊕ Typical Multigrade class size ranges from 9-35 pupils

- ⊕ Two-grade combination classes are the most common approach used; the combined Grades 3 and 4 classes are the most common grouping at 59.73 percent of all Multigrade classes

- ⊖ Combining Kindergarten with other grade levels contradicts the DepEd policy

Capacity Building

- ⊕ Almost all Multigrade teachers have received training on Multigrade instruction (88.05%)

- ⊕ About half of the surveyed schools received Multigrade training from the Schools Division

- ⊕ Differentiated instruction was the prioritized competency in most Multigrade training programs

- ⊕ The number of schools trained in Multigrade instruction increased from December 2010 (1.36%) to July 2017 (32.85%)

- ⊖ Only 40% of the school heads were provided with training to support their instructional leadership

- ⊖ There is inadequate training on contextualization of teaching and learning materials

Class Programs

- ⊕ The most popular program options were having a common timetable, peer tutoring, and subject integration

- ⊕ In most schools, Multigrade classes are composed of mixed ability groups and peer groups by age or grade level

- ⊖ Ensuring the adherence to the number of contact time prescribed by the K to 12 curriculum was reported as a challenge

Hiring and Staff Movement

- ⊕ More than half of the Multigrade teachers graduated with a bachelor's degree in education and some also earned a graduate degree in education

- ⊖ DepEd tended to deploy newly hired teachers to Multigrade schools and most of these teachers had few oppotunities to teach in their own hometowns

- ⊖ Inadequate preparation of Multigrade teachers, exclusion of Multigrade teaching in teacher induction programs, and fast turnover of Multigrade teachers are among the hiring and staffing challenges

PARTIAL COMPLIANCE

School Plant

+ 82% of schools were observed adhering to the three-classroom school building standard

− Only 30% of the Multigrade schools complied with the prescribed floor plan of the 3-classroom building

− Some Multigrade schools are old structures which are not design-compliant—particularly in the remote areas

Teacher Incentives

+ In most schools, teachers received chalk allowance, special hardship allowance, and uniform allowance

− A more systematic, uniform and efficient provision of Special Hardship Allowance and other incentives is needed as stipulated in DepEd policies

Fund Allocation

+ Most funds came as MOOE allotment and were received on time by more than half of the schools surveyed

− Document analysis indicated a decline in MPPE budget from FY 2016 to 2017

Basic Features of Multigrade Classroom, including Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools

+ Equipment were available and well utilized in roughly half of Multigrade schools

− Absence of WinS facilities in some schools contradicts the DepEd WinS policy

Teaching and Learning Resources

+ The most available and utilized teacher resources were Budget of Work, Teachers' Guide or Manual, Lesson Plans, and Minimum Learning Competencies for Multigrade schools

− Some of the resources were not available in all schools, and in cases they were available, copies were inadequate and/or content of the resources was not aligned with the requirements for Multigrade classrooms

− Only 60% of the respondents considered textbooks appropriate. Other resources were technology-based equipment and leveled reading materials from Basa Pilipinas

− MTB-MLE learning resources are only available in limited languages and Multigrade teachers should be trained on contextualization and language-bridging strategies

TOP: In Lopero Elementary School, a Coca-Cola Little Red School House in Jose Dalman, Zamboanga del Norte, teachers use diverse instructional strategies suitable to the K to 12 curriculum and based on pupils' needs. Examples of these strategies are Subject Grouping, Explicit Teaching, Model Teaching, IPEd integration, and Division-led Collaborative Learning.

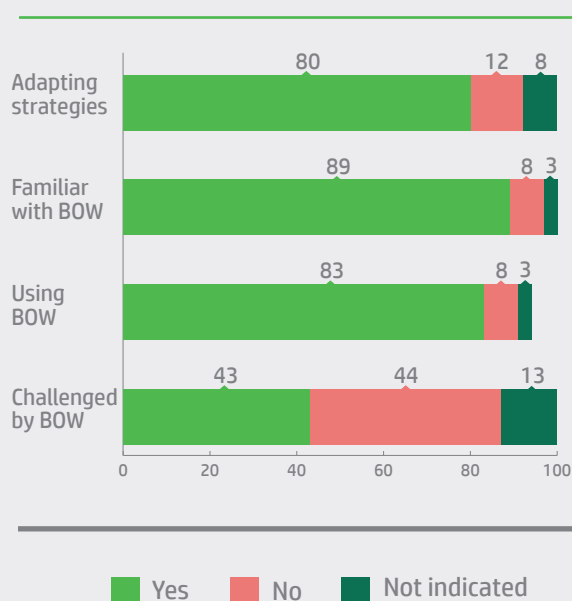*Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)*

Adoption of innovative Multigrade instructional strategies; authentic assessments; enabling school leadership; strong support from parents and communities; and commitment of Multigrade teachers were perceived to be the *contributing factors* to successful MPPE implementation:

■ *Instructional delivery* is deemed as a strength of MPPE implementation with the program having developed its own Budget of Work (BoW), a tool that is familiar to, and is used by, many teachers, despite the delays reported in the delivery of BoW at the time of the study. MPPE also subscribes to some innovative instructional strategies such as cooperative/group learning, homework, hands-on/learning by doing, lecture, demonstration/modelling, project-based learning, peer tutoring, simulation/role play, discovery/inquiry-based, journal writing, and self-directed learning. To further enhance teachers' pedagogical skills, Multigrade teachers participate in *Learning Action Cell* sessions which have become avenues for learning exchange, peer coaching, and showcasing of best practices in instructional delivery.
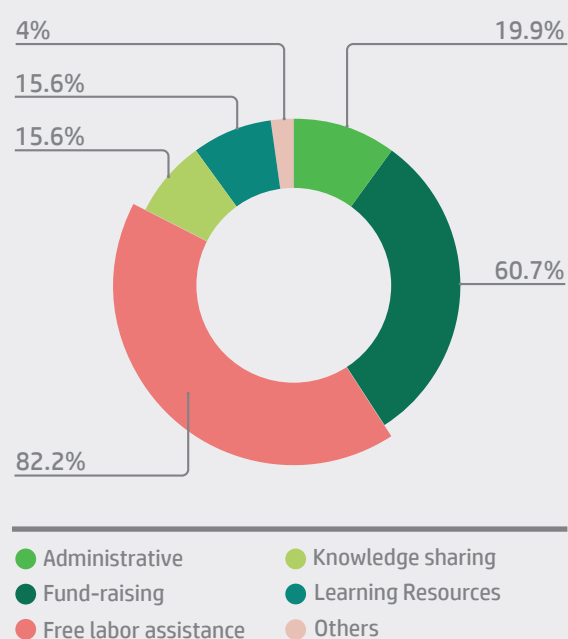
■ Most Multigrade schools used both traditional and *authentic assessment* methods to monitor and assess student learning since majority of schools apply portfolio assessment, performance assessment/demonstration, observation notes, anecdotal records, and observation list. Slightly more than ninety percent of school respondents divulged that their teachers also employed non-traditional assessment techniques.

■ *Parental and community engagement* is strong with parents and community members serving as anchors of Multigrade schools, offering support to fill learners' needs. In 80 percent of Multigrade schools, parents' support was felt in various ways. Parents offered free labor, assisted in fund raising, gave instructional and administrative assistance as teacher aides, and provided needed learning resources. Almost all schools have an organized Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). Aside from free labor, PTAs provided technical assistance, supplies and materials, finances, and moral support during school activities. Strong parental support was likewise evident through *bayanihan/ pintakasi/*

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES OF MULTIGRADE SCHOOL TEACHERS (%)

	Yes	No	Not indicated
Adapting strategies	80	12	8
Familiar with BOW	89	8	3
Using BOW	83	8	3
Challenged by BOW	43	44	13

KINDS OF PARENTAL SUPPORT (%)

4%
19.9%
15.6%
15.6%
60.7%
82.2%

● Administrative   ● Knowledge sharing
● Fund-raising   ● Learning Resources
● Free labor assistance   ● Others

dagyaw. Most of the Multigrade schools surveyed received community support. Such support came in the form of free labor, fund raising, learning resources, knowledge sharing or instructional assistance, and administrative assistance. Local Government Units (LGUs), i.e., municipality, city, or barangay, strengthened the Multigrade schools through their Special Education Fund (SEF).

BELOW: Mr. Vincent Tuayon, San Juan Elementary School's Teacher-in-Charge, sought ways to address the lack of learning space in their school. Through the help of the local government and community, the makeshift classrooms took shape. The teachers and the community witnessed how TIC Vincent folded his sleeves to paint the school walls and initiated the wire placement for the school's electrical supply. His deep sense of service and initiative certainly rubbed off on the teachers and the community such that the Dagyaw spirit was ignited.
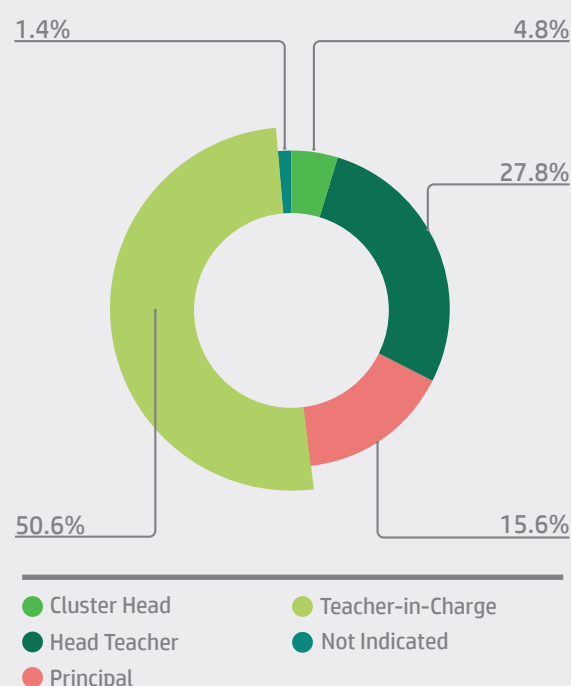
Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)

- Multigrade teachers who originated from the communities where the schools were located tended to have an *intrinsic motivation and commitment* to serve the learners in deprived communities as well as a *sense of responsibility and ownership*. This is in contrast to non-locals who would often decline the teaching assignment or ask to be transferred to a monograde or a nearby school.

- Finally, on *school leadership,* Multigrade implementers stressed the importance of having a strong, creative, capacitated, and empowered school head in directing MG schools toward: (1) sustaining conducive learning environment; (2) enhancing learning through targeted instructional leadership and supervision, and (3) developing valuable partnerships with local community and NGOs to deliver instruction that enable learners to perform well.

Achieving MPPE goals is constrained by teachers' issues concerning the multiplicity of roles they faced, inadequate instructional support from school heads and supervisors, and the absence of a responsive monitoring and evaluation system to track student learning, assess curriculum coverage, and evaluate teacher's content mastery and pedagogical practice.

■ While *School Governance Councils* exist in 85 percent of Multigrade schools, the irregular and infrequent meetings of these councils limit their influence on and support for the school improvement plan (SIP) and day-to-day operations of impoverished schools.

■ Most Multigrade schools have teachers-in-charge (TICs) who take on the role of the school head. This saddles TICs with multiple roles as teacher and administrator which clearly divide their time and effort. Thus, TICs cannot perform some school governance functions, such as instructional leadership and classroom observations.

■ *Instructional supervision* in Multigrade schools still subscribes to the conventional evaluative approach, using classroom observation tools similar to those used by monograde teachers as a means of teacher performance evaluation, rather than a more developmental approach focused on mentoring and coaching that also captures the unique features of a Multigrade setting.

■ The absence of a M&E system in which tools incorporate the special and unique features of Multigrade schools is a weakness that needs to be addressed by the regional and division offices so that appropriate and timely technical support can be provided to Multigrade teachers by school heads and school supervisors. Education specialists and managers are still adjusting to task allocations including the supervision of cluster schools per district, and monitoring and provision of technical assistance to Multigrade schools, especially due to organizational changes under the DepEd rationalization program.

DISTRIBUTION OF MULTIGRADE SCHOOLS BY DESIGNATION OF SCHOOL HEADS (%)

- Cluster Head — 1.4%
- Not Indicated — 4.8%
- Head Teacher — 27.8%
- Principal — 15.6%
- Teacher-in-Charge — 50.6%

→ Most Multigrade schools have teachers-in-charge who take on the role of the school head.

■ While multigrade schools and Schools Divisions reported that they have existing M&E system for MPPE, they were merely referring to either the generic or contextualized tools developed by Schools Divisions, but not an institutionalized MPPE M&E. There were reported uncertainties and varied practices regarding who should take the lead in conducting M&E and how often it should be conducted. Proper M&E was reportedly not executed due to limited training on M&E, lack of appropriate monitoring tools, geographic remoteness of schools, weather conditions and security issues, and little or no funding for M&E. Tools for monitoring and evaluating Multigrade schools need to take into consideration the unique features of Multigrade schools, such as the multiplicity of grade levels per class; differentiated instruction/ tasks; diversity of learners; shifting of classes; and classroom structural grouping.

MPPE contributes to student learning because academically speaking, Multigrade learners are performing at par with monograde learners and in some learning areas, even outperform the monograde learners based on the following accounts:

- A comparison of SY 2014 to 2015 results of Language Assessment for Primary Grades (LAPG) for all Grade 3 pupils from monograde and Multigrade schools showed that Multigrade pupils significantly scored higher than monograde pupils in all components of the LAPG test, i.e., in *English, Filipino and Mother Tongue,* with the exception of *listening comprehension in Filipino.*

- Comparing the mean scores of all Grade 6 students in the SY 2014 to 2015 National Achievement Test (NAT), the study revealed that there is no significant statistical difference between Multigrade and monograde schools in overall student academic achievement.

- There are, however, significant differences between the total NAT mean school scores of the two types of learners for certain subject areas. Multigrade learners performed significantly higher in Mathematics and Araling Panlipunan sub-tests. Meanwhile, their counterparts in monograde schools had significantly higher scores in English, Filipino, and Science.
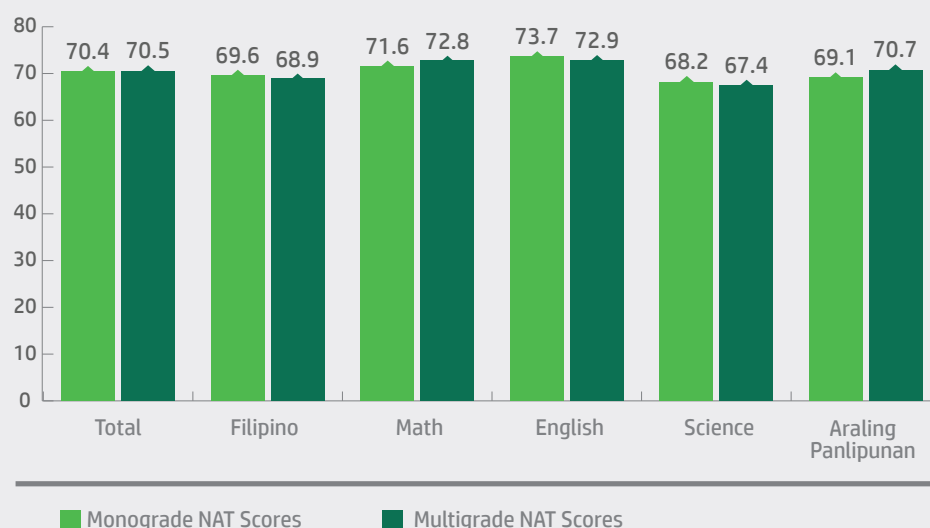
NATIONAL MEAN SCORES OF MONOGRADE AND MULTIGRADE ON LAPG (%)

- Monograde Mean
- Multigrade Mean
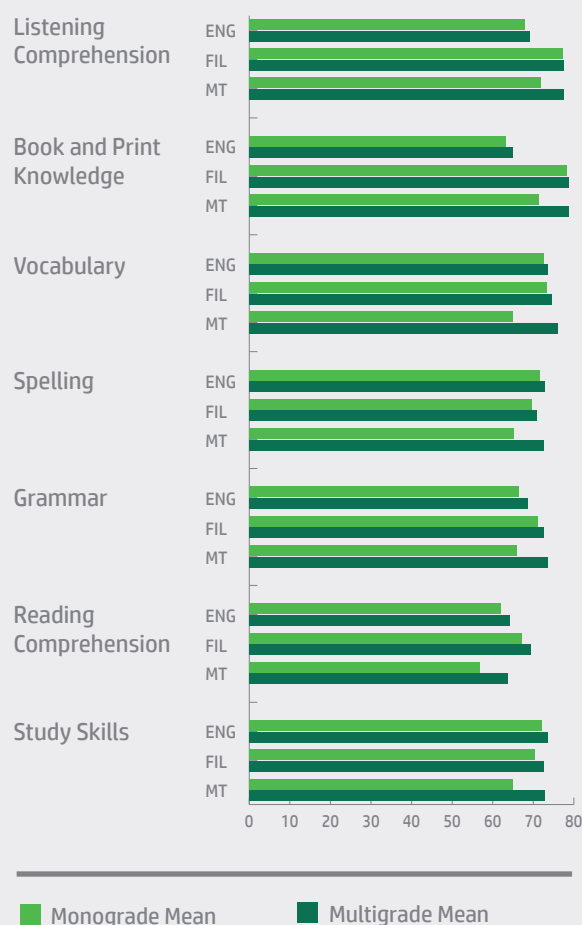
→ Multigrade pupils significantly scored higher than all monograde pupils in all components of the LAPG test, except listening and comprehension in Filipino.

NAT MEAN SCORES OF MONOGRADE AND MULTIGRADE SCHOOLS (%)

→ No significant difference between the Multigrade and Monograde schools in terms of total NAT mean scores.

	Total	Filipino	Math	English	Science	Araling Panlipunan
Monograde	70.4	69.6	71.6	73.7	68.2	69.1
Multigrade	70.5	68.9	72.8	72.9	67.4	70.7

- Monograde NAT Scores
- Multigrade NAT Scores

In terms of improving access to quality education, Multigrade education which offers innovation in *education* delivery and management, is a *practicable solution to* address barriers to *access* and *inclusion* and create basic *learning* opportunities for all school-age children.

The Multigrade school applies the *same K to 12 Curriculum* implemented in monograde schools to cater to learners in hard to reach and deprived communities who have limited education options. In rural areas where setting up regular monograde schools is neither practical nor feasible, Multigrade schools were built to respond to the universal call for more access to quality education for all—often out of the initiative of community members themselves.

Multigrade education is an unconventional but viable learning delivery to improve the quality of learning of pupils in elementary schools located in remote, isolated, low-resourced, underserved, and sparsely populated communities for the following reasons:

- Firstly, the Multigrade class size is relatively small compared to a regular monograde school, hence, contact time for teacher instruction and student learning is maximized. Moreover, task-on-time i.e., the amount of *time* students spend in attending to school-related *tasks,* is optimized because teachers employ differentiated instructional strategies in a classroom setting that combines two or more grade levels. Providing different but appropriate learning activities allows individual pupils to learn according to their developmental level, interest or learning pace. *Differentiated instruction* strategies allow teachers to empower and engage students by accommodating each of their different *learning* styles, providing multiple ways to learn and understand concepts using interest centers/learning corners/learning stations, for instance (i.e., self-contained section of the classroom in which students engage in independent and self-directed *learning* activities).

- Secondly, curriculum materials specifically designed for Multigrade schools, such as Budget of Work, Daily Lesson Plan, Daily Lesson Log, and Integrated Multigrade Lesson Plan, have made teaching two or more grade levels in one class period a lot easier for Multigrade teachers.

But while key performance data gathered in the MPPE Review, such as enrollment, completion, graduation rates, etc., showed that Multigrade program provides access to learners from marginalized communities, there is still much work to be done to: (1) strengthen the quality of teaching and learning to ensure student mastery of competencies; and (2) further improve its accessibility to school-age children who experience specific forms of social exclusion or marginalization (e.g., disabled children, indigenous learners, over-age, out-school-youth).

The identified areas of constraint in improving the quality of MPPE implementation should, however, be addressed through policy reforms contextualized at different governance levels, innovations in program delivery, systems improvement, and affirmative action on the part of key stakeholders. Strategic interventions need to be in place at various governance levels to increase the capacity (efficiency and effectiveness) of Multigrade schools to deliver better learning outcomes in support of Sustainable Development Goal 4: *inclusive and equitable education for all to advance lifelong learning.*

ABOVE: Focus group discussion with Multigrade implementers from the Department of Education.

Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2017)

Recommendations

Based on the evidence gathered from the comprehensive review of MPPE policies, program implementation, current practices and challenges, and validated by insights documented from surveys, interviews, desk reviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and consultative workshops, a set of recommendations is offered for the continuous improvement of the MPPE implementation.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ General

■ Policies for MPPE should be reviewed and updated in order to be responsive to changing realities and issues as found in this review. The policies should encompass all program components and should not only ensure consistency of action, but also allow flexibility for adjustment if necessary. This is in light of the nature and coverage of Multigrade schools and organizational changes in program implementation due to DepEd's rationalization program. The issuance of the completed draft guidelines for Multigrade program in the K to 12 basic education system, otherwise known as the Multigrade Omnibus Policy, is therefore recommended. Such policy is comprehensive enough to cover critical program components needing legal basis.

Moreover, inclusive stakeholder engagement in the formulation of policies and implementation process is recommended. It is important to involve not only DepEd officials, but also the Multigrade teachers and school heads, parents, school governing councils, and other members in the community for the policies to be context-specific, responsive, and effective.

■ In keeping with DepEd's mandate under Republic Act 9155 or the *Act Instituting a Framework of Governance for Basic Education, Establishing Authority and Accountability, Renaming the Department of Education, Culture, and Sport as the Department of Education,* Regional and Schools Division offices should exert more effort to contexualize policies to ensure that programs, projects, and services match the local needs of their respective communities.

Furthermore, school-based solutions to problems should be encouraged and a mechanism should be developed for sharing examples of good practices between and among Multigrade schools.

■ Embedded in the concept of implementation is the leadership ability of DepEd's Bureau of Learning Delivery to focus on the following tasks:

☐ formulate clear policies and outcomes that bring out effective changes to teachers' welfare and incentives, and career path development for teachers and school heads;

☐ strengthen the competence of DepEd-Bureau of Learning Delivery (BLD) staff for coalition work and policy review at the national and sub-national levels. The BLD Multigrade team needs to initiate policy formulation/amendments in collaboration with other DepEd Central Office Units outside the curriculum and instruction strand and the program committee;

☐ improve access to needed resources to support MPPE program implementation within and outside of DepEd. This includes appropriation of sufficient funds to carry out the implementation of the necessary inputs/ investments needed to address the program-related recommendations detailed in this review; and

☐ screen DepEd policies to identify any issues or challenges for implementation by Multigrade schools and issuance of DepEd guidelines to support contextualization of such policies.

➤ Specific

- ■ **Classroom Organization**

  - ☐ Kindergarten pupils have cognitive levels, psychomotor skills, and learning needs that are different from those of other grade levels. Instructional methods for this group of young learners consist mostly of play-based activities.

    - → For these reasons, combining Kindergarten and other grade levels should be avoided. The policy on *separating* Kindergarten classes from other grade levels should be strictly enforced. School heads need to ensure that Kindergarten pupils are in *separate classrooms.* If such an arrangement is not feasible, the school's decision should be anchored on the best interest of the Kindergarten children, upholding their right to quality education in a safe, secure, and child-friendly learning environment.

- ■ **School Plant**

  - ☐ There is a perceived lack of classrooms appropriate for Multigrade education. In some Multigrade schools, instruction is held in *makeshift* classrooms. Other schools are housed in buildings that do not follow the new building standards, i.e., three-room buildings and Multigrade classrooms with *7x9 square-meter* floor dimension for each room.

    - → Upgrading of facilities that have long been requested by many Multigrade school heads, teachers, parents and pupils should be planned, funded and executed within the shortest time possible.

BELOW: A multigrade class of Kindergarten and Grade 1 at Kubang Mandulan Primary School in Bongao, Tawi-Tawi has a total of 35 pupils.

Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)

☐ In areas where concrete materials cannot be transported due to distance or terrain, use of alternative local materials that are easily procured should be explored,provided the structural dimensions comply with DepEd's building standards.

→ The repair and maintenance of school facilities should be incorporated in the budget for each school.

→ Community support for the upkeep of physical facilities and other anticipated needs (from present to future) to ensure a conducive learning environment (i.e., learning materials and equipment) should be prudently identified and diligently sustained through the help of the school governing council.

☐ Programming and fund allocation for Multigrade facility requirements should consider the special/anticipated requirements of both teachers and pupils.

→ There should be sleeping/living quarters for those staying in far-flung/distant areas so they can save on travel time and costs and prevent road accidents when going to and from school.

☐ The Review found that there is a significant number of Multigrade schools without access to WASH-in-School facilities. Efforts should be expended to ensure that Multigrade schools comply with the DepEd child protection policy of keeping all schools child-friendly, safe and conducive to learning. Also, as embodied in DepEd Order 10, s.2016, *Policy and Guidelines for the Comprehensive Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in Schools Program (WASH),* Multigrade classrooms should first have functional toilets, and if possible, separate toilets for boys and girls. Second, a group handwashing and sanitation facilities should be provided if such are not yet present within the school grounds. Third, regular supply of safe and clean water for drinking and cleaning purposes should be available in order to properly implement the WinS program.

→ Multigrade schools should comply with the WASH-in-Schools standards and provide the appropriate facilities based on data collected from schools (e.g., during Brigada Eskwela) and standards set by policymakers.

→ School heads and teachers should promote good practices in personal hygiene management, school sanitation, and maintaining a clean and green environment within and outside school premises.

■ **Basic Features of Classrooms**

☐ Learning facilities appropriate for multigrade settings are considered key to effective Multigrade instructional delivery.

→ Provision or improvement of learning corners or areas; blackboards and display boards classroom furniture like tables, chairs, small benches, and desks; ventilation and lighting; and outdoor space is needed and long overdue for many Multigrade schools.

☐ The design of Multigrade classrooms should allow workable and open learning spaces conducive for diverse learners.

→ School desks, learning corners, and adequate learning spaces that allow children to collaborate and interact must be available in Multigrade schools.

→ Instead of armchairs, movable tables and chairs should be provided. The furniture can be easily organized for individual or small group discussion or moved and stacked at the back or on both sides of the classroom for large group activities and regrouping activities.

→ Safe and child-friendly school environment should be guaranteed for all pupils, especially children with disabilities, and overage and the indigenous pupils.

BOTTOM: Dao Primary School's (Siargao, Surigao del Norte) classrooms showcase bright-colored walls and a unique physical layout to encourage pupils to explore tasks or activities that interest them, such as reading big books or playing with educational flash cards.

Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)

☐ Teachers integrate the use of ICT in multigrade classes to improve learning despite the lack of materials. Continued implementation of the staggered DepEd Computerization Program (DCP) and development of public-private partnerships to bring ICT into the classrooms should include Multigrade schools. Currently, only a portion of multigrade schools has received these DCP packages.

→ Multigrade schools should be furnished with at least basic ICT equipment and software that facilitate teaching and learning.

→ For online distribution of digital Multigrade materials via DepEd's LRMDS portal to be viable, it should be accompanied by improvements in Internet connectivity, provision and/or replenishment of outdated ICT materials and gadgets. These include a laptop or tablet for every Multigrade teacher and students to use, one projector or LED-TV in each classroom, and one printer for each school.

→ Internet connectivity or alternative remote devices, such as the Remote Area Community Hotspots for Education and Learning (RACHEL Pi), should be supplied to integrate the use of technology in the teaching and learning process, expedite communication and reporting, and afford both teachers and pupils access to materials from the Internet.

→ ICT materials/equipment should be supported by the necessary capacity building measures for teachers, particularly on the optimal use of these technologies for classroom teaching.

→ Repair and maintenance of equipment should be provided to support ICT integration in Multigrade schools instead of having teachers use their limited personal funds.

→ In the case of off-grid schools, alternative sources of electric power to support ICT such as use of solar panels should be ascertained.

- **Class Programs**

  - *Flexibility* in class program options and grouping strategies is encouraged; however, the required number of *contact time* as prescribed for each learning area based on the approved Budget of Work for Multigrade should be *observed and maintained.*

- **Teacher Recognition, Incentives, and Career Pathing**

  - All Multigrade teachers are expected to receive the special hardship allowance as stated in DepEd memo 55, s.2018.

    → It is necessary to arrange a more reasonable, systematic, regular, and consistent disbursement of the *special hardship allowance* (SHA) for Multigrade teachers.

→ Schools Divisions need to monitor and ensure that all Multigrade teachers receive their SHA in a regular/monthly basis as prescribed in DepEd memos and DBM policies. Regularly providing this incentive to Multigrade teachers on time conveys the message that their services are valued and that the difficulties and risks they experience in the course of fulfilling their teaching duties are duly acknowledged/ recognized.

- There is a need to respond to the need for an equitable and objective basis for allocating the special hardship allowance.

  → A *hardship index* jointly developed by UNICEF and DepEd must be implemented to determine the appropriateness of the allowance. This allowance can prod and encourage more

ABOVE: Grade 6 pupils of Lopero Elementary School during a group activity on developing a semantic web for their Filipino class.

Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)

experienced, committed and qualified teachers to accept deployment in far-flung areas and face the challenges in a Multigrade setting.

→ The impression that financial incentives are all that teachers are looking for should be rectified. The allowance cannot completely compensate for the hardships that are often endured in Multigrade school settings, but it can partly assuage whatever inconvenience or difficulty goes with such an assignment.

☐ Teacher recognition is an encouragement (extrinsic motivation) for education personnel to continue serving in remote Multigrade schools. Without their services, Multigrade education cannot be carried out where they are most needed.

→ Recognition should be regularly accorded to Multigrade teachers and schools that perform well by the division, regional and/or central offices. They can use the Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS) which is aligned with the new Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST).

→ There is a need to identify and document best practices of model teachers on Multigrade instruction that can inspire more teachers to serve/teach in Multigrade schools. Such practices can guide the supervision and management of Multigrade program and can be replicated in different communities.

☐ Provision of incentives to qualified teachers set to be deployed to Multigrade schools is imperative. The incentive can be in the form of salary adjustment, i.e., elevating the salary of multigrade teachers one grade higher than their counterparts in the monograde school.

☐ There should be support for the career development of Multigrade teachers by: (1) strengthening DepEd's Human Resource Information System to put in place mechanisms to profile teachers based on designation, place of assignment, experience, and trainings attended; (2) designing, implementing, and tracking continuing professional development programs based on learning needs assessment to complement efforts to formulate career pathing policies responsive to multigrade school-community context; and (3) strengthening career pathways of Multigrade teachers by providing access to master teacher items within a Multigrade school.

■ **Teaching and Learning Resources**

☐ Curriculum *contextualization* should be implemented to capture local culture, realistic practices, and familiar experiences in the community.

→ Efforts should be devoted to the adaptation of teaching and learning materials in accordance with local culture and practices.

→ The curriculum contextualization process needs technical support from the Schools Division and Regional Offices through capacity building workshops on contextualization and other Multigrade instruction strategies.

☐ Survey results surfaced that although some of the learning resources to support MTB-MLE are present, these resources are only available in a limited number of languages, i.e., English, Filipino, Ilocano. This highlights the lack of learning resources to support the MTB-MLE and the need to develop materials in various mother tongue languages, both of which require resources and technical support.

→ More support towards production of *indigenous* teaching and learning materials should be provided by government as well as its private sector partners.

→ Government must support MTB-MLE through localization of materials for effective and more relevant teaching and learning.

→ Language bridging must also be supported through capacity building and provision of bridging learning materials

☐ Teachers' access to *levelled* instructional materials such as BASA Pilipinas reading materials should be expanded to support teaching of reading, numeracy, and other foundational skills.

☐ Teachers are the most qualified to prepare levelled instructional materials, having knowledge not only of the subject area/content but also of essential student characteristics that should be taken into consideration in such an endeavor.

→ Teachers' capacity to produce indigenous teaching and learning materials should be stimulated and advocated, especially if they are not from the school community.

→ While Multigrade teachers are more familiar with the local realities of their communities, they need to be capacitated on contextualization of learning materials within the MPPE framework of Multigrade instruction.

→ Teacher-made materials and other localized materials developed should be shared with or made available to other Multigrade schools, ideally through the DepEd learning resource portal,

BELOW: Teacher Angelina of Pullaan Elementary School asks her Grade 6 pupils in Mathematics to measure the diameter of an empty can, allowing them to connect the idea of a cylinder with an actual representation and to practice measuring a real-life object.

Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)
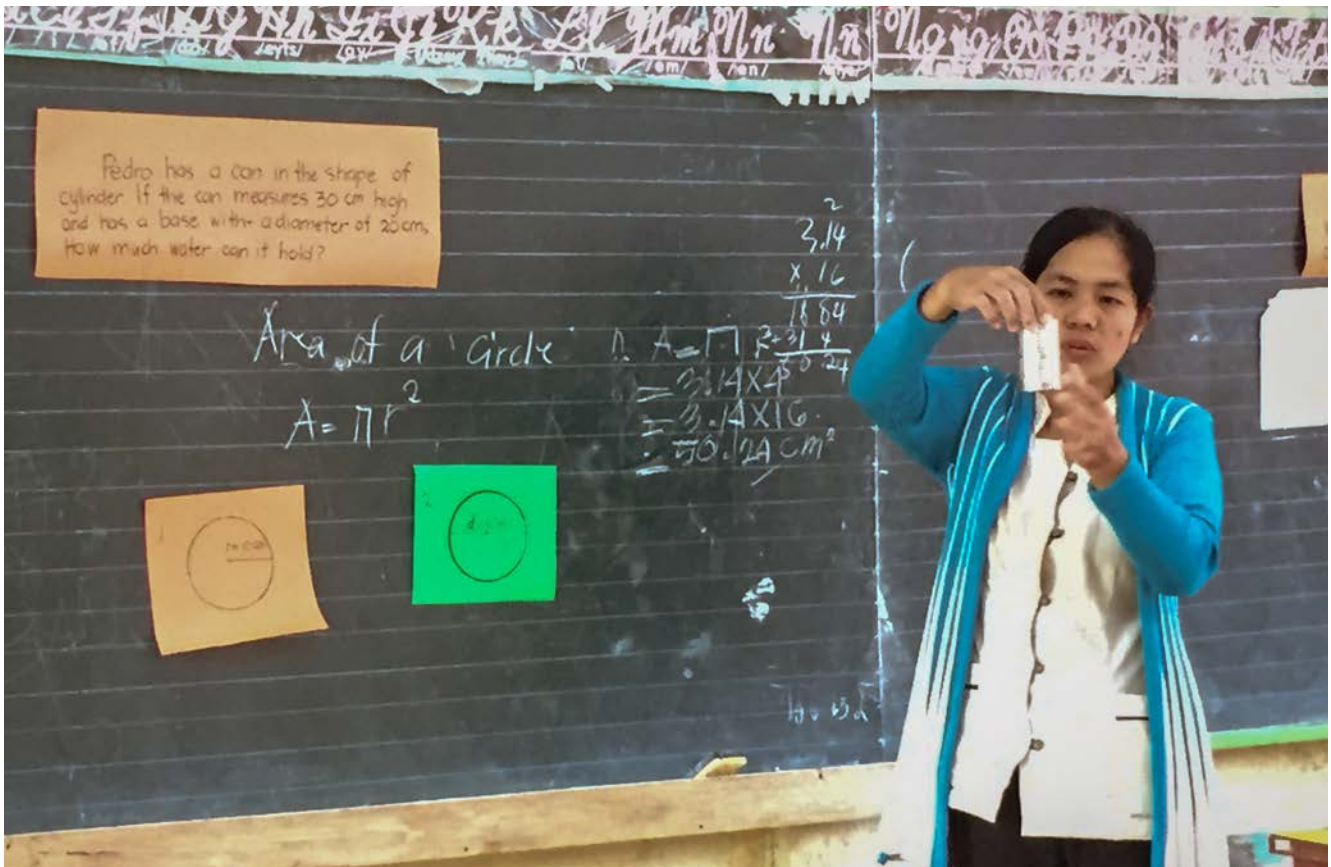
LRMDS, or other alternative knowledge sharing models at the local level (e.g., community learning centers/hubs).

☐ The following Multigrade resources were accessible to at least 50 percent of the schools: Minimum Learning Competencies, Budget of Work, Teachers' Guide/Manual, and Lesson Plans. These materials, such as the DLP lesson exemplars, are appreciated and well-used by Multigrade teachers.

→ DepEd-BLD should identify, update, procure or reproduce, and then distribute learning resources that *support* Multigrade instruction

to ensure 100 percent coverage of the curriculum in Multigrade schools. Some of these are manipulatives, self-instructional modules, self-directed learning kits (e.g., SRA), project-based learning resources, printed copies of the BoW, Daily Lesson Plans (DLPs), and Integrated Multigrade Lesson Plans.

☐ A thorough and critical review of the Multigrade Teach-Learn Package should be undertaken to identify content areas that may *not* be appropriate for Multigrade schools. Currently a review of Multigrade Teach-Learn package is being undertaken. Its subsequent approval is anticipated.

BELOW: Grades 3 and 4 pupils of Arawane Elementary School work on their group activity in Filipino, using activity sheets developed by Teacher Susan.

Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)

→ In terms of using other sources or materials not officially endorsed by DepEd, caution should be exercised, particularly in terms of the quality of such materials. In this regard, DepEd may seek assistance from Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in examining the quality and appropriateness of supplementary materials.

☐ Despite the reported availability and adequacy of some teaching materials, the report on their utilization is low. Thus, capacity building on the use of the teaching materials should be advanced.

☐ To enrich Multigrade teachers' pedagogical skills, the prescribed teaching-learning materials should be easily obtained when needed.

→ DepEd should upload the standard Multigrade materials on the Learning Resource Management and Development System (LRMDS). This portal has been organized so that teachers can easily get hold of DepEd learning materials whenever needed.

☐ Accessing resources from LRMDS remains a challenge given the lack of electricity and Internet connectivity in Multigrade school-communities.

→ The search for alternatives to package materials in offline platforms, such as the School-in-a-Bag of SMART and the Rachel Pi as described by some Multigrade teachers, is advocated. This will ensure accessibility of learning materials to all Multigrade teachers, particularly those who are assigned to places where Internet connection is poor, erratic, or non-existent.

☐ It is necessary to provide technical guidance on how Multigrade teachers may work

together to develop localized supplemental teaching and learning resources such as:

→ Alternative Delivery Mode (ADM) materials and strategies of IMPACT *(Instructional Management of Parents, Community and Teachers)* and MISOSA *(Modified In-school, Out-School Approach)* can be used by Multigrade teachers as supplemental materials and as a way to address the changing needs of the learners, such as in times of emergencies or when circumstances prevent children from attending classes, including children at risk of dropping out.

☐ Multigrade teachers should also be given access to other relevant materials initially designed for diverse learners such as Basa Pilipinas levelled reading materials, multi-media materials, SPEd, and IPEd instructional resources.

☐ There is a need to optimize the usefulness of web-based platforms in submitting official reports, knowledge-sharing, and communicating among Multigrade implementers at various governance levels.

→ In connection with this, use of web 2.0 internet-based applications and other technologies should be included in capacity-building programs on Media and Information Literacy.

☐ Centralized procurement and delivery of Multigrade materials to Schools Divisions pose a challenge to Multigrade schools given their remoteness. It has been reported that materials meant for remote schools have remained undistributed at the Schools Division due to geographic distance and isolation of the Multigrade schools.

→ A review of procurement methods is necessary to find the most efficient delivery of supplies and learning materials to Multigrade schools.

■ **Capacity Building**

☐ All teachers who are newly assigned to Multigrade schools need to have the following learning and development programs:

→ comprehensive induction training on Multigrade teaching should be conducted prior to deployment;

→ individual professional development plans anchored on training needs analysis and the required competencies and contents for Multigrade teaching should be the priority for any training activities implemented by the Schools Division; and

→ annual training relevant to the instructional needs of Multigrade teachers should be provided; a similar training for all school heads and supervisors on Multigrade supervision should also be given.

☐ Regular teacher trainings, teacher induction programs, and LAC sessions will create positive impact on Multigrade teachers if they are customized according to the *unique* features of Multigrade schools. One way of doing this is to include Multigrade pedagogy and practice sessions in regular trainings, programs, and LAC sessions.

→ For LAC sessions to be more attuned to the needs of Multigrade teachers, it is suggested that education authorities develop and impart LAC materials that address the issues and concerns in Multigrade instruction. Such LAC sessions should be conducted at the school level, not District level, to avoid disruption of classes since travelling to the District office might take days or long hours of teachers' absence in schools.

☐ Overall, capacity building of Multigrade teachers and school heads on appropriate pedagogy (particularly differentiated instruction) and contextualization of curriculum materials should be intensified.

☐ A discussion with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) may be explored to discuss various options to strengthen the teacher preparation on Multigrade instruction in the pre-service education curriculum.

→ In relation to this, stronger and more strategic partnerships with TEIs that go beyond summer trainings for Multigrade teachers should likewise be forged. Provision for pre-service teacher education courses that solely focus on Multigrade education, in addition to courses on *multilevel* education that are already incorporated in pre-service curricula of many TEIs, is one way of addressing the need for qualified Multigrade teachers.

→ In areas where there are a greater number of Multigrade schools, it is suggested that the TEI in that area should develop specific subjects on Multigrade teaching in addition to a three-unit elective course.

→ Moreover, including Multigrade schools, whenever feasible, in *practicum* courses will also prepare prospective teachers, not just for monograde classrooms, but also for Multigrade settings.

☐ Professional *learning networks* may be formed to facilitate knowledge exchange and help build a community of practice (COP) among Multigrade teachers, school heads, and Multigrade supervisors.

☐ Results of classroom observations should be taken as valuable inputs in identifying priority learning needs of Multigrade

teachers and designing responsive capacity building programs.

→ On the part of Multigrade teachers, they should be persuaded to engage in self-reflection on their pedagogical practice and areas for improvement. One way of doing this is to encourage teachers to write their thoughts and insights in a "professional" journal and undergo a coaching dialogue with Multigrade school heads/supervisors.

☐ Collegial mentoring and coaching of core trainers on Multigrade education are recommended. The Summer Training Program for Multigrade Teachers can be a good venue for this.

→ A corps of trainers possibly selected from Multigrade teachers (also known as "Multigrade scholars") who have been attending the summer training program should be developed in terms of contextualization, instructional delivery, M&E, and conduct of LACs on multigrade instruction and supervision.

→ They should also be enlisted as members of a speakers' bureau who can serve as resource persons in Schools Division trainings for Multigrade implementers.

→ Another area where capacity building for Multigrade teachers is most needed is in teaching IPEd and SPEd learners in their schools.

■ **Hiring and Staff Movement**

☐ The practice of appointing inexperienced and untrained teachers to Multigrade schools should be discouraged, given the challenges of Multigrade instruction. Instead, school authorities should seek applicants who have a *background* in Multigrade instruction either through field experience and/or training.

☐ Qualified Multigrade teachers who are from the communities where they teach have been portrayed in FGDs as being wholly dedicated to their profession, and intrinsically motivated by their desire to improve their own communities. They are also more likely to be familiar with the language of learners which will facilitate the roll-out of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy.

→ The implementation of the *Localization Law* in the appointment, deployment and staff movement of teachers in Multigrade schools, should be strengthened in view of the above information obtained during FGDs.

☐ The policy of assigning Master Teachers to Multigrade schools should be supported to open opportunities for career movement among Multigrade teachers particularly in disadvantaged school-communities.

■ **Funds Allocation**

☐ The general fund allocation for MPPE should be increased to address the significant reduction in the last three years and provide sufficient resources needed to implement activities/program improvement plans flowing from the recommendations of this review.

☐ An *increase* in budgetary allocation for Multigrade education in the national budget will go a long way toward improving not only the physical conditions of classrooms and school environment, but also the quality of instruction provided in these schools.

→ A review of Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) computation for Multigrade schools is necessary since the formula currently used may no longer be *aligned* with the unique contextual realities of Multigrade instruction.

☐ More *partnerships* with the private sector need to be forged and nurtured, to meet the physical and material requirements of Multigrade education given the insufficient national budget for DepEd.

→ Greater involvement by local government units (LGUs) and community members should be encouraged to channel their resources to relatively poor/financially challenged Multigrade schools.

☐ The development of a systematic and regular reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of annual physical and financial performance of Multigrade schools at all levels is also strongly suggested. This will ensure that limited funds are properly and prudently placed where they are needed the most.

■ **MPPE Program Management**

There is a need to strengthen the institutional absorptive capacity within DepEd by assigning technical staff who can partner with and/or assist Multigrade Focal Persons in implementing and monitoring the program at the national, regional and division levels of governance.

ABOVE: Teacher Susanah and the other Multigrade teachers of Guinadioangan Elementary School, Capoocan, Leyte used varied traditional and non-traditional assessment activities per grade level to enhance their pupils' content mastery. Some of the innovative learning assessment approaches considered as good practice of the school is the use of peer to peer feedback (for lower grade, the other grade level assesses) and use of rubrics for group presentation and exciting games using local materials for Grades 5 and 6.

Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ Instructional Delivery and Assessment Practices

■ Multigrade *practices* and *strategies,* such as subject grouping, differentiated instruction, self-directed instruction, peer learning, thematic-based instruction, programmed instruction, contract-based learning, and use of non-traditional assessment methods, should be strengthened through intensive capacity building, coaching, mentoring, and instructional supervision. Instructional resources such as the BoW need to clearly specify how to operationalize these strategies**.**

■ Teachers, schools, districts, and divisions should be encouraged, capacitated, and given resources to conduct action research on Multigrade practices that can be shared during LAC and other capacity building sessions so that others may benefit from action research findings and recommendations. LAC sessions may be devoted to discussions and trainings of Multigrade teachers on innovative practices and strategies, such as subject grouping and

differentiated instruction, and to acquiring the right concepts and practices in mother-tongue based multilingual teaching.

■ Knowledge sharing of action research should be fostered among Multigrade schools through formal and informal learning exchange mechanisms such as LAC sessions, trainings and seminars, and other learning opportunities. Studies on the positive effects of Multigrade instruction in student learning may be useful in encouraging their adoption in other Multigrade schools, and even in monograde schools if the perspective is to promote the use of differentiated instruction as a pedagogy of choice.

■ There is a need to enhance collaboration and convergence in the implementation of Multigrade program with other DepEd programs such as SPEd, Madrasah, and other alternative delivery modalities especially IPEd since most IPEd schools are Multigrade in nature (i.e., small class size, diverse learners and low-resourced).

■ Use of appropriate technologies to support Multigrade instruction, classroom management, and school administration should be encouraged. Technologies can facilitate communication, data entry and retrieval, as well as data analysis and progress reporting, which can provide real-time information for both MPPE implementers and decision-makers. Teachers' capacity to develop and use multilevel assessment strategies may be nurtured through teacher training, mentoring and coaching, and the advancement of exemplars.

■ It is necessary to review the language bridging strategies used by Multigrade teachers and the capacity building on its implementation. There is a need to address performance gaps through capacity building on language bridging program as well as by developing learning materials to support the bridging process. More specifically, their impact on combined classes, such as Grades 3 and 4, should be examined. The transition from mother tongue to Filipino is made in Grade 3, thus, it is necessary for teachers to be guided on the language of instruction particularly when one language is followed for Grade 3 and a different language for Grade 4.

➤ Instructional Supervision and Support

- There is a need to enhance the competence of school heads, PSDS, and other supervisors on Multigrade instructional *supervision, coaching and mentoring,* and *instructional leadership.* This may be achieved through formal trainings/seminars and informal/learning exchange sessions (e.g., LAC). Moreover, the operation of school cluster systems as mechanisms for instructional supervision and support should be strengthened.

BELOW: In a focus group discussion, the Bohol Schools Division shared that a Technical Working Group on Multigrade Program, composed of District Supervisors, School Principals, and Division Education Program Supervisor together with the Division's pool of multigrade trainers and writers in different learning areas, facilitated the crafting of contextualized Daily Lesson Logs (DLLs) and Daily Lesson Plans (DLPs). Such Division-led ingenuity preceded even the Central Office's efforts to develop the Multigrade Teach-Learn Package. This creative effort highlights Bohol Schools Division's dedication to improve multigrade teaching in 290 multigrade schools.

Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)

- Greater use of an evaluative to more developmental approaches to instructional supervision coupled with a coaching dialogue, performance feedbacking, and peer mentoring should be encouraged among school heads and supervisors. For example, a more development-oriented classroom observation tool should be uniquely designed for Multigrade schools.

- A more organized plan for instructional supervision and mentoring activities will turn these seemingly routine tasks into productive sessions between school heads and teachers. Teacher observations can be executed without making the teacher feel threatened; teachers can be made to accept and welcome supervision as favorable to them in that effective practices can be affirmed, and ineffective ones can be pointed out for improvement in the future.

Supervisory tools for assessing teaching methods during class observations in Multigrade settings should also be developed; those that are existing should be *improved* to reflect the unique features of a Multigrade

classroom. In addition, the impact of changes in instructional supervision protocols, such as the use of standard Classroom Observation Tool (COT) prescribed under the Results-based Performance Management System and Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (RPMS-PPST), needs to be addressed to avoid confusion among Multigrade school heads and teachers.

- The extent to which supervision influences the improvement of instruction and learning in Multigrade schools depend to a large extent on the quality of the supervisors.

  □ Enhancement of supervisory competence of those who perform this task should be one of the priorities in Multigrade education. The ability of school heads, Public Schools District Supervisors (PSDS), and other supervisors to execute Multigrade instructional supervision, coaching, mentoring, instructional leadership, and school-community partnership and networking should be honed through continuing professional development and actual on-the-job immersion.

  □ In addition, the operation of school cluster systems as mechanisms for instructional supervision and support should be put into effect and bolstered.

  □ Procedures on how to accomplish efficient and thorough classroom observation of Multigrade teachers according to school clusters should be clearly outlined so that all Multigrade teachers can be appropriately evaluated, and later guided, in carrying on with their strengths while improving on their weaknesses.

- It is important to promote *distributed leadership* or shared, collective and extended leadership at the school level with the school heads taking the initiative to mobilize leadership expertise at all levels in the school in order to generate more opportunities for change and to build the

capacity for improvement. One practical way forward is for school heads to create strong collaborative teams or professional learning communities among Multigrade teachers where instructional leadership is naturally and authentically distributed. The school head needs to create conditions where professional knowledge and skills are enhanced (e.g., learning action cell sessions), where effective leadership exists at all levels (e.g., planning to decision-making), and where the entire school is working interdependently in the collective pursuit of better learner outcomes.

➤ Program Monitoring and Evaluation

- An MPPE M&E system that is differentiated according to the DepEd's levels of governance with respective functions, decisions, and tools, per level, should be advanced. As in the case of instructional supervision and support, this component of Multigrade education needs similar revisions. For one, a more *organized* and *standardized* decision-based M&E system is needed to ensure thorough evaluation and *continuous* improvement of the DepEd Multigrade program.

  □ A suitable platform for discussing M&E findings and decisions using School-based Monitoring and Evaluation and Adjustment (SMEA) should be reviewed and further developed/ improved.

  □ Use and/or enhancement of existing M&E tools appropriate to the Multigrade context, for data collection or validation is recommended; where there is none, development of tools should be undertaken. These include as follows: (1) performance dashboard for Multigrade teachers; (2) learners' whereabouts map; (3) competencies covered; (4) Multigrade classroom observation tool; and (5) Multigrade teacher post tracking tool on learning.

■ Training on preparation for, and use of, standard M&E tools should be provided to all key persons who will serve as monitors. Creative ways of conducting M&E may also be documented.

■ The M&E roles, responsibilities, accountabilities, and appropriate tools and reports for each level of the DepEd organizational structure (national, regional, division, district, school) related to Multigrade program implementation should be clearly delineated.

■ The results of M&E activities should be used to inform future program planning and decision-making and to ensure that timely adjustments are done in the school improvement plan of Multigrade schools. In relation to this, the DepEd Basic Education Information System (BEIS) should be reviewed to ensure systematic tagging and disaggregation of data to clearly identify schools with Multigrade classes for planning, research, and development purposes.

■ The Education Management Information System Division (EMISD) and Planning Service should collaborate in addressing the issue on data management, specifically on effective and accurate reporting and identifying or tagging of schools according to type (pure or mixed Multigrade, or monograde).

■ There is a need to conduct regular mapping of in-school and out-of-school learners to identify schools that may use Multigrade instruction as a temporary measure for lack of teachers (e.g., teachers on study leave and maternity leave) and those that are likely to remain as Multigrade schools for a longer term. By tracking the whereabouts of school-age children that are not yet in school, proper interventions to bring them to school can be taken to increase the intake and participation rates of Multigrade schools.

■ Improvements in the present eBEIS should be able to identify the real scope and number of Multigrade implementing schools in the country, a basic input in laying out the future direction of the program. Such direction may lead to expansion to include establishment of integrated Multigrade schools or support for the conversion of Multigrade schools to monograde system by providing/deploying more teachers and using Multigrade system as a pedagogy of choice for larger class sizes.

■ It is important to promote the use of mobile technology (e.g., smart phones/tablets) to facilitate monitoring and evaluation activities at the school level from data gathering to analysis and utilization of data. In this way, data can be shared to all key stakeholders (i.e., Division/district supervisors, school heads, and teachers), in a more timely and efficient manner.

➤ **MPPE Performance Monitoring**

To facilitate the regular performance monitoring of MPPE, the following are recommended when national assessments for elementary level are conducted.

■ First, Multigrade schools should be proportionally represented in all national assessment samples.

■ Second, Multigrade schools should be tagged as such to facilitate comparative data analysis with monograde schools.

■ Third, such comparative analysis should be included as a regular part of Bureau of Educational Assessment (BEA) national assessment results reporting and should be shared with the schools and the Schools Division as well.

➤ **School Governance**

■ School Governance Councils (SGCs) should be strengthened and made fully operational in each Multigrade school. SGCs should meet at least *quarterly* to review school performance, to plan adjustments in SIP implementation, and to facilitate school-community partnerships. SGCs can even meet more often to enable them to provide more opportune guidance on issues and problems that may arise from day-to-day operations.

It is also recommended that an annual meeting

ABOVE: Selected DepEd officials from Central, Regional, District and Division Offices provide their inputs during the Validation Workshop on Philippine Multigrade Schools Monitoring and Evaluation System (PMS MES) held in July 2018.

Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)

of Governance Board or their representatives be scheduled. Such a meeting will serve as a venue for updates on, and evaluation of practices, problem areas, and solutions. Multigrade school heads/teachers and supervisors/monitors should be encouraged to engage in action research that will document their good practices and challenges they face in MPPE implementation.

■ Participation of students and other community stakeholders should be further encouraged in SGCs. The concerns of students, parents, and community members should find their way in discussions on improving Multigrade instruction.

School-community partnerships should be strengthened through diligent accountability and candid transparency in school governance with the leadership of the School Head.

The School Report Card (SRC) should be presented and explained to stakeholders as a way of formally acknowledging the different sources and uses of school funds. Stakeholders who should be made aware of these include the faculty and staff of the school, the parents (represented by the Parent-Teachers Conference or Association or PTC/A, the School Governance Council, partners in the community such as barangay officials, civil society organizations (CSOs), and alumni associations.

■ The school head's main responsibilities are to ensure that the Multigrade program is implemented according to DepEd policies and standards, and to monitor and support teachers in the performance of their duties. Teachers-in-

Charge normally have teaching loads in addition to their tasks as school coordinators which require them to submit reports and attend meetings. These dual roles divide the TICs' time, focus, and attention. The heavy workload can compromise the quality of deliverables, in both teaching and administrative tasks. Moreover, TICs under current policy guidelines cannot perform the monitoring functions of an instructional supervisor, therefore, in Multigrade schools headed by TICs, instructional supervision is not practiced.

☐ In view of this, the role and responsibilities of TICs need to be reviewed, particularly in terms of their capacity to serve as instructional leaders and fulfill their tasks of peer coaching and mentoring.

☐ It is recommended that Multigrade schools be headed either by a designated school head or cluster head, or master teacher but not a teacher-in-charge.

☐ There is a need to revisit the policy provisions on Multigrade Teacher-in-Charge position and corresponding support system to include just compensation, allowances, capacity building, and career pathing, among others. The current policies do not recognize the additional functions assumed by Multigrade teachers acting as school heads. For instance, the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) provided for TICs are equal to Multigrade teachers as per DBM Circular No. 53, s. 2005.

■ Furthermore, there is a need to customize and contextualize the indicators of school-based management (SBM) according to the unique features of Multigrade schools. The standards expected of regular monograde schools are not applicable to Multigrade schools.

☐ For this reason, it is recommended that a careful study and formulation of appropriate indicators that correspond to criteria for Multigrade schools be initiated.

➤ Co-curricular Activities

■ The types of co-curricular activities can be strengthened to promote indigenous knowledge, community engagement, soft skills development, e.g., leadership and communication skills of young people, empathy, self-confidence, self-respect, etc.

■ More community partnerships should be established to conduct community work and outreach programs to help support children's holistic growth and develop their leadership, communication, and other soft skills.

➤ Parental Support

■ Parents may not be aware of the various ways that they can demonstrate support for Multigrade schools. For this reason, *advocacy* efforts with parents to promote Multigrade education as a viable, credible, and quality form of basic education delivery should be enhanced.

☐ Information and education communication (IEC) materials about Multigrade education may be prepared and distributed to increase awareness of parents and key persons in the community on aspects of the school improvement plan where they can contribute.

☐ The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) should also be viewed as a mechanism by which parents can participate in the education of their children. Parental support and local expertise should be harnessed to support curriculum contextualization.

■ A two-way partnership between school and parents should also be strengthened, wherein the school can be a learning resource to the parents and community through adult education classes and skills training.

☐ The presence (and idle time) of Multigrade students' parents and/or guardians in the school community can be optimized by

organizing literacy and skills development trainings on entrepreneurship and parenting with community leaders.

☐ In time, it might be beneficial for all stakeholders if a parallel non-formal education programs on adult literacy is created, with the support of LGUs, PTCA, NGOs/INGOs and other community organizations.

➤ Community Support

■ The capacity of Multigrade school heads and teachers to promote two-way *school-community* partnerships should be heightened. Guided by a shared vision, building stronger ties between Multigrade schools and the communities bring forth mutual benefits to both parties. Multigrade schools will continue to provide formal education to the community's learners, and provide non-formal and informal education (e.g., adult literacy, livelihood skills training, disaster risk reduction management, waste management, health education, etc.) to adult members of the communities.

ABOVE: Katipunan Elementary School greatly values parental and community support which is an important factor in improving pupils' learning. The school has an open-door policy, welcoming community members who wish to air their concerns, to establish the foundation for developing strong school-home-community partnership.

Photo by SEAMEO INNOTECH (2018)

■ Similarly, participation of students in relevant community activities should be fostered. Not only do learners enrich the communities with their participation, but they themselves gain collaborative, communication and other skills as they relate to other members of their respective communities through their community-based learning activities.

■ There is a need to strongly promote Multigrade instruction among parents and other community stakeholders as a reliable and viable mode of delivery—not a mere band-aid solution but a high quality form of education delivery—through regular reporting of SIP accomplishments especially in improving student learning outcomes (e.g., NAT/LAPG results highlighted in the School Report Card).

➤ Access to Quality Education in Disadvantaged Communities

■ The coverage of Multigrade education should be *widened* to include other indigenous and remote places, with the help of LGUs in school-less barangays, particularly in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Local governments are the key to identifying which communities will benefit from the establishment of a Multigrade school.

■ Multigrade schools should pursue measures to address *access and equity* barriers and promote *inclusive* quality education in terms of learning pedagogy, learning resources, learning environment, learning assessment, and school policies and practices.

  ☐ These include making necessary adjustments to address the unique learning needs of girls and boys, learners with disabilities, indigenous learners, Muslim learners, and other learners with distinct needs.

  ☐ To facilitate the delivery of instruction, use of Alternative Delivery Mode (ADM) strategies should be explored as complementary materials and resources.

■ The feasibility of converting incomplete Multigrade schools (e.g., primary schools) to complete multigrade schools (e.g., complete grades 1 to 6 classes) must be examined. This is to allow Multigrade pupils to complete their elementary education in the same Multigrade school so that they will not need to transfer to another school.

➤ Learning from Multigrade Schools

- Comparison of the academic performance of Multigrade and monograde learners suggests that the program has much to contribute to the Philippine educational system. Regular schools, IPEd, SPEd, ADM programs, and Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) may draw lessons from Multigrade Programs in terms of Multigrade instructional teaching/pedagogical approaches, such as subject grouping, differentiated instruction, contextualization, self-directed instruction, peer learning, thematic-based instruction, programmed instruction, contract-based learning, and use of traditional and non-traditional assessment methods.

- Strategies that work for Multigrade pupils can and *should* also work for monograde learners, such as differentiated instruction, grouping strategies, and class program options, etc. Multigrade learning resources also provide insights on how primary grade level curriculum can be indigenized for more effective instruction and learning.

- National Achievement Test (NAT) results and other large-scale assessment and Early Language Literacy and Numeracy Assessment (ELLNA) for Multigrade schools should be widely disseminated and utilized in Multigrade strategic planning and programming.

➤ Creation of Multigrade Integrated Schools

- In remote areas, where lack of classrooms and teachers and other challenges persist, questions have been raised on whether Grade 6 pupils of Multigrade schools would be able to continue their basic education using Multigrade modalities. FGD participants and Multigrade stakeholders broached the idea of continuing Multigrade to the secondary level.

☐ Thus, it is recommended that the Department of Education explore the possibility of organizing, extending Multigrade teaching to high school and creating *Multigrade integrated schools.* Data from the eBEIS can be culled to guide the formulation of policy on the introduction of Multigrade education at the high school level.

☐ There should be a proof of concept or modeling to show the feasibility and modalities of integrated Multigrade schools before scaling up.

☐ There should be proper documentation and evaluation of existing/pilot integrated multigrade schools for benchmarking and replication of good practices by other Schools Division Offices.

☐ Also, lessons from ALS experience of multi-level learning at the secondary level should be taken into consideration in drawing guidelines for the said potential modelling, prior to implementation or scale-up.

- The varied and often rough topography of the Philippine archipelago is a challenge to the fulfilment of inclusive education for all. Many far-flung communities are still not so easily accessible and remain in relative isolation from already established public schools. In addition, the population of school-age children in these communities tend to be too small to justify the establishment of a complete school. For these reasons, the Multigrade program will continue to serve an almost "unreachable" group of young learners as one of the country's responses to the United Nation's call to support *SDG Goal 4,* i.e., *inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all,* and *the Philippine Development Plan: "AmBisyon Natin 2040."*

☐ In view of this, there is a need to strengthen the Multigrade program as a viable delivery system for the K to 12 curricula in schools in distant and remote areas where formidable challenges persist.

➤ Future Research

The MPPE review revealed that one of the good practices in Multigrade schools is the adoption of various instructional innovations such as peer learning to improve learning outcomes and quality of learning. Thus, this MPPE program review recommends that further research be conducted to examine the following areas/variables:

- **curriculum implementation tracking** to determine the critical areas/competency standards covered by Multigrade schools based on the Budget of Work (e.g, reading, writing, right values); identify the critical or most essential competencies that need to be covered per learning area; identify critical interventions to address the least learned competencies (e.g., foundation skills not developed at the early grades [Grade 2]);

- **evaluate the effectiveness of using peer learning as an instructional strategy;** and determine if peer learning is mutually beneficial to the learners engaged in a collaborative learning environment in terms of content knowledge acquisition and soft skills development which may include as follows:

  - ☐ self-directed learning skill (as foundation for life-long learning);

  - ☐ critical thinking and problem-solving skills;

  - ☐ communication, interpersonal, and teamwork skills; and

  - ☐ learning to learn (through self, peer assessment and critical reflection);

- **special research on language bridging strategies** to improve the delivery of Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) for Multigrade schools;

- **further comparative research on performance of Multigrade versus monograde students,** focusing particularly on the following: (1) differences in subject-specific performance; (2) grade level performance differences; (3) class size differences; (4) learning growth of pupils.

By applying the same K to 12 curriculum implemented in Monograde schools, the Multigrade program provides an unconventional but viable and practicable learning delivery that caters to learners in isolated, hard-to-reach, underserved, and small communities.

The MPPE Review concludes that the Multigrade Program in Philippine Education as a program strategy of the DepEd is moving and achieving good results, and the Multigrade teachers are to be congratulated for their determination and passion in serving disadvantaged learning communities amidst significant challenges.

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