When Reforms Don't Transform:
Reflections on institutional reforms in the
Department of Education

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Human
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By

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EDUCATION ISSUES: 'TIRESOME IN THEIR REPETITION'

In 1925, Yale professor George Counts observed key problems in Philippine basic education that resonate with current issues confronting the country today. Half of the children were outside the reach of schools. Pupil performance was generally low in subjects that relied on English, although achievement in math and science was at par with the average performance of American school children. The functional literacy of children in schools left much to be desired, constraining learning in later grades.

Counts attributed these problems to the content and language of teaching in a culturally diverse colony. Hewing to the view that the learning process is embedded in its context, which progressive thinkers like John Dewey advocated at the time, Counts bewailed the teaching of subjects in English in the absence of a lingua franca. This, he argued, redounded to a sacrifice of efficiency of instruction in the native tongue.

Apart from language, Counts described the Filipino children of the 1920s as handicapped by their reliance on experiences drawn from a civilization alien to them. Not only were they acquiring new ideas in a language not their own, they were also studying under a curriculum borrowed directly from the United States, using materials suited for American children. Exacerbating this situation was the centralized administration of education in the colony which mandated the uniform implementation of a Western curriculum throughout the archipelago. Considering the great diversity of climate, occupation and cultural tradition in the Philippines, Counts deemed this practice indefensible.

Finally, Counts focused on the teacher factor and the quality of instruction. As in the United States of the 1920s, lack of professional training of the more than 27,000 teachers at the time hampered Philippine education. Accordingly, instruction would be inferior to that of the United States until this problem was addressed.

From 1925 when Counts published his article as part of the 1925 Monroe Survey team up to the 1990s, various reviews of the state of education [Box 1] cited the same fundamental issues afflicting Philippine education—high drop out rates, low pupil performance, poor teacher quality (in a system where teachers are still central to the education process), a language of learning that is not attuned with scientific findings on cognition, irrelevant learning materials, excessive centralization, and inadequate financial resources. The persistence of these issues in the 1990s prompted leading educationists to facetiously say that the education landscape had not changed since colonial days.

SIGNIFICANT REFORM INITIATIVES, LIMITED TRANSFORMATIVE EFFECTS

Yet a closer look at developments in the last twenty years reveals significant changes in Philippine education. From the 1990s to the present, several important broad frameworks for education reform have been instituted— Education for All: The Philippine Plan of Action 1990-1999; the 1991 Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM); the 2000 Presidential Commission on Education Reform (PCER); the 2000 Education for All (EFA) Assessment; the ADB-WB initiated and funded Philippine Education Sector Study (PESS); the 2006 National Action Plan for Education for All 2015 (EFA 2015) and the 2006 Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA).

EDCOM, for instance, formulated a comprehensive reform agenda with far-reaching goals—to enable the attainment of functional literacy through universal basic education; the formation of necessary skills and knowledge for productive citizenship; and the development of high level professionals who will produce new knowledge, instruct the young, and provide leadership in various fields of a dynamic economy (EDCOM, 1991: 1-2). Like prior surveys, EDCOM decried the deteriorating quality of Philippine education, claiming that the country's elementary and high school graduates did not possess the average citizen's competencies to live responsible, productive and self-fulfilling lives. Graduates of colleges and technical/vocational schools, on the other hand, did not match the development needs of the economy while the country's graduate schools have failed to generate research-based knowledge that could spur the creation of new jobs and increase the value of production.

EDCOM attributed the state of Philippine education at the time to the country's low investment in education compared to Asian neighbors and the OECD countries and to the poor management of its huge bureaucracy. It specifically recommended 1) the prioritization of basic education to ensure the then Department of Education, Culture and Sports' (DECS) undivided attention to this sector; 2) the development of alternative learning modes especially for literacy acquisition; 3) the use of the mother tongue as language of learning from Grades 1 to 3, with Filipino gradually becoming the medium of instruction in basic education and English a subsidiary medium of instruction in later years; 4) the expansion and enrichment of technical/vocational education; 5) the strengthening of pre-service teacher education and provision of incentives to make the rewards of teaching commensurate to its importance as a career; 6) support for both public and private education; 7) the facilitation of planning, delivery, and education financing and training by industry, workers, teachers, parents and local governments; 8) greater access of poor children to all levels of education, 9) more cost-effective public college and university education with curricular programs that are relevant to the communities they serve; 10) the search for new sources of funds (including taxes) to finance basic education; and 11) the restructuring of the Department of Education (DepEd) to ensure clearer program focus, rational resource allocation and realistic planning.

EDCOM succeeded in the trifocalization of basic education, splitting the education function among three government agencies—the Department of Education (DepEd) for basic education, both formal and non-formal; the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for higher education; and the Technical Education and Skills Development Agency (TESDA) for non-degree or middle level skills development. Subsequent plans for Philippine education, namely PCER, EFA 2015, and BESRA built on EDCOM's analysis and framework.

Considering EDCOM's significance and high profile, one would have expected DECS (now DepEd) to embark on the systematic implementation of the recommendations for basic education. However, the opposite happened. Two DECS Secretaries, despite, or maybe precisely because of the extensive course-plotting of both Houses of Congress, rejected the EDCOM recommendations during the consultations and immediately after the release of the Report. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Annex of the 1998 Philippine Education Sector Study indicated positive action by the relevant agencies including DepEd on only 13 out of the 30 program recommendations related to basic education[i].

Although its recommendations for basic education were also not acted upon, the PCER report contributed significantly to the education reform process by reiterating EDCOM's specific call for school-based management. The draft policy instrument on the governance of the basic education sector in the PCER annex became the basis for R.A. 9155 (Basic Education Governance Act of 2001), a landmark law that legislated the transfer, at least in theory, of the governance of basic education to schools. R.A. 9155 also officially defined the scope and meaning of basic education based on the basic learning needs propounded earlier by EFA I. Hence, R.A. 9155 constituted the first official recognition of the Alternative Learning System as part and parcel of the delivery of basic education.

EDCOM and PCER provided the framework for over 12 major reform projects undertaken with DepEd involvement since the late 1980s. Together, these projects addressed both structural-functional imperatives (e.g. decentralization) and substantive learning concerns (e.g. curriculum, pedagogical approaches, and teaching standards). Some of them were the harbingers of a paradigm shift from education to learning; from the centrality of the teacher to that of the learner and the learning environment; and from uniform pedagogies and content to context-specific learning. In particular, BEAM, which gives premium to the development of higher-order thinking skills, was a major source of the new National Competency-Based Teacher Standards (NCBTS)[ii], Promulgated in 2006, the NCBTS aimed to transform classroom learning by enjoining teachers to focus on learning in diverse contexts. In truth, the NCBTS was the product of unprecedented agreement among stakeholders within the education community on the meaning of good teaching and competent teachers.

A review of completed projects and evaluations of ongoing projects reveals significant improvements in pupil performance among many other achievements. However, despite substantial gains, the issues of formal basic education continue to plague the nation. Aggravated by increasing population, drop-out rates remain significant and have persisted for more than four decades since the 1960s. About 28% to 34% of the population do not complete Grade 6 or reach Grade 6 but fail to graduate (HDN, 2000: 3). The rate of high school completion for children who enroll in Grade 1 is less than 50% (World Bank, 2004:3). In the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), admittedly the poorest region of the country in terms of human development, only 10% reached senior year.[iii]

Comparing the country's primary net enrolment and completion rates with those of other countries in the Asia Pacific region, the World Bank's Education data show that Laos and Cambodia had both higher primary net enrollment rates and completion rates than the Philippines in 2006 and 2007, respectively[iv]. In particular, only 72% of Filipino children completed their primary schooling compared to 75% of Laotian and 87% of Cambodian children. The contrast

with Philippine neighbors Indonesia and Malaysia is quite stark. The two countries that the Philippines once hoped would form the Malay sub-regional grouping MAPHILINDO with it in the 1960s, have much higher primary enrollment rates (96% and almost 100%, respectively) and completion rates (99% and 95%, respectively).

Apart from low net enrollment and completion rates, achievement in formal basic education has also remained pathetically low. Only 15.3% of elementary schools crossed the 75% level in the 2006 National Achievement Test (NAT) while 52.3% crossed the 60% level in the same year. The situation is even worse for high school. Available NAT figures[v] for high school students in 2005 show that less than 1% crossed the 75% level in SY 2005-06 while only 13% crossed the 60% level. The mean percentage score was a very low 45.8%[vi].

Compared to the performance of Filipino pupils in science and math during in the 1920s, which was about the same as that of American children, current day performance in these subjects is dismal. Only 25.3% schools crossed the minimum 75% Mastery level in math while a very low 8.4% did so in science in the 2006 NAT. This translates to students in only one out of four schools, on the average, achieving the required minimum competency for the next level of schooling. Moreover, students from about half of the schools could not even learn 60% of what ought to be learned in the two subjects (Bautista, 2007).

Interestingly, even the Philippine Science High School, the country's premier science high school, attained mathematics scores that were higher than the international mean in the 2003 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS) but at the level only of the average scores of Taiwan, Korea, Hongkong, and Singapore. In science, its performance was even more lackluster: it was lower than the international mean and only a point higher than the average science score of Botswana and a point lower than the score of Indonesia (TIMSS, 2003).

More bothersome than low scores are the results of the 2007 Region-Wide Assessment in Mathematics, Science, and English (RAMSE) that BEAM conducted on a sample of Grade 4 and Second-year students from Regions XI, XII and ARMM. The Grade Four pupils in the sample had difficulty answering the RAMSE test items[vii]. They did not only fail to meet the required minimum mastery level of 75%, most of them did not respond correctly to items requiring higher-order thinking skills. The sample high school sophomores[viii] fared just as poorly. They were unable to apply concepts and reasoning to real life situations, a competence expected of higher-order thinkers.

WHY REFORMS FAIL TO TRANSFORM:
CHAPTER AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION

The persistence of issues for much of the 20th century and into the first decade of the 21st century highlight a distressing paradox— with its long tradition of critical assessments and reform-oriented planning, DepEd actually incubated, tested and proved the effectiveness of numerous reform initiatives, some of them ahead of the discourses of their time. Yet, at the start of every school-year, print and broadcast media project without fail, a perpetual education crisis that the mainstreaming of successful reform initiatives could have addressed.

Why reforms have not transformed education on the ground or why DepEd has found it difficult to translate structural reforms and programmatic changes into large-scale, integrated and sustained outcomes is the focus of this chapter. It shares insights into the education reform process through the prism of two illustrative cases—one that shows DepEd's partial

implementation of the decentralized governance of basic education, and the other, its inadequate policy formulation in the area of learning and pedagogy.

The first case looks into the partial implementation of RA9155 through School-based Management in 21% of the country's schools divisions through the Australian-Aid funded BEAM project and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and World Bank (WB) supported Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP). The case demonstrates how a policy change (i.e. the decentralization of education and the corresponding revision of functions and responsibilities at various levels of the bureaucracy); policy continuity across different administrations; effective leadership at all levels; the willful implementation of plans that targeted disadvantaged schools; and the encouragement of innovations throughout schools in the divisions covered allowed a reform-oriented counterculture to begin taking root in DepEd without a change in division and school personnel. In addition, this case reflects changes in processes and procedures at the central and local offices for the duration of the projects.

The second case relays the story of the country's language policy and why, despite a surfeit of international and national research supporting the use of the mother tongue in the early years of schooling, DepEd has not revised its policy on the languages of learning and language acquisition. The story demonstrates the struggle within DepEd and between the Department and powerful segments in Philippine society of contending positions on a pedagogy-related policy with tremendous implications for learning, the preservation of local languages; and the survival of community cultures.

The two cases are used to illustrate the operation of factors that may have constrained DepEd from scaling up and sustaining reforms. These factors include the projectized nature of reform and the undeveloped institutional mechanisms for weaving lessons from disjointed projects into policy and program planning; bureaucratic concerns emanating from other government agencies; leadership and policy continuity, and barriers stemming from the Department's institutional culture.

Strengthening the capacity of the DepEd bureaucracy to manage education reform by addressing formal and informal institutional constraints is the objective of the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda. While BESRA maps the way forward, its implementation is vulnerable to the same factors that have limited the impact of previous reform efforts. The Chapter concludes with BESRA's potential for catalyzing institutional change and outlines recommendations to help DepEd succeed in translating another responsive, well-crafted, and comprehensive plan into reality.

While this chapter examines institutional factors that have constrained the transformative effects of education reform, it recognizes that some reforms would not necessarily translate into desired outcomes when the intervening variables are not within the control of DepEd. For instance, studies conducted by the World Bank and the National Nutrition Council have shown that no amount of academic improvement projects will improve learning achievement when brain development and physical growth are stunted by the child's unfavorable health and nutrition status.

THE CASE OF SCHOOL BASED MANAGEMENT (SBM):
DECENTRALIZED EDUCATION THAT WORKED!

The Monroe Survey's severest criticism of the Philippine education system in 1925 was on its excessive centralized control which, accordingly, resulted in the lack of initiative in various branches (Smith, 1945). Subsequent assessments of Philippine education, from the 1936 Commonwealth Survey to the 2000 Philippine Human Development Report, EFA 2015 and BESRA also critiqued the tendency of the excessively centralized bureaucracy to adopt a one-size-fits-all policy for culturally diverse contexts; its unresponsiveness to local needs; and vulnerability to corruption (Bernardo and Garcia 2006)**.**

Interestingly, basic education in the Philippines had not always been centralized. Adopting the US education model, the American colonial government initially required municipalities and provinces to finance primary and high schools, respectively (Apilado, 2008). For a brief period, this set up gave local primary schools autonomy to design their curriculum and educational materials. However, they lost this freedom to innovate and respond to local needs because towns and provinces were too poor in the early American colonial period to defray the costs of free and compulsory basic schooling. The insular government was thus compelled to assume funding for all three education levels. For practical and fiscal reasons, it imposed common standards, pedagogies and methods of administration, deviating considerably from the principles of the progressive education movement in the US at the time. Such centralized education management was to remain for the rest of the century. It began to give way only in 2001 under the weight of the world-wide decentralization movement of the 1980s and 1990s.

SBM in Discursive Context

Decentralization through site-management or School-Based Management (SBM) has been a major global education reform thrust since the 1980s. Australia adopted the strategy in 1976; Britain in 1988; the US in 1988; New Zealand in 1989; Mexico in 1992; Hong Kong in 1991; Thailand in1999; and the Philippines in 2001 (Gamage and Sooksomchitra 2004). By giving schools the autonomy to decide on administrative and substantive matters, SBM, like the movement towards participatory management in business that inspired it, aims to improve performance by making those closest to the delivery of services more accountable for the results of their operations (Hill and Bronan 1991). The philosophical underpinnings of SBM also resonate with discursive shifts from state-initiated modernization to participatory development, from traditional patronage politics to participatory democracy, and from structuralist theories of development (e.g. modernization theories, Marxist and neo-Marxist theories) to post-structuralist perspectives.

Common to the relatively new approaches to development (and management) are some premises about the process of social change and the people for whom development is advocated. These premises include understanding that the whole point of development is to enable people as subjects, to participate in the governance of their own lives by expanding their human capabilities; that key actors on the ground (i.e. teachers, school heads, parents, other stakeholders in the case of education) are human agents and ought to be trusted to make decisions affecting their lives; that, given human agency, the direction of change cannot be imposed from the outside; that development is open-ended since effective interventions open things up rather than close them down; and that the evaluation of projects and programs ought to take place against the background of the specific development process which has been intervened into (Kaplan, 1999).

The assessment in the literature of the impact of autonomy (SBM) on teaching and learning outcomes in the developed and developing world is mixed (Fullan and Watson 2000; Beck and Murphy, 1999; Gaziel, 1998; Gamage and Sooksomchitra 2004). In developed societies, SBM increased participation in decision making but did not seem to impact on teaching and learning when treated as a stand alone reform that focused primarily on a change in governance structure. However, it affected school performance positively when schools, in addition to obtaining autonomy, provided for local capacity-building, established rigorous external accountability through close relations between schools and communities, and stimulated access to innovations. The qualitative link of SBM to the formation of a professional learning community, greater focus on student work (or assessment literacy), changes in pedagogy, and improved student outcomes is apparent in the literature. However, quantitative analysis reveals that the impact of SBM, narrowly conceived as autonomy, on student achievement, while statistically significant, is less than that of other variables.

In developing societies with a colonial legacy of limited resources and top-down education, legislated decentralization has not necessarily lead to reform. The obstacles to the changes demanded by SBM are just too difficult to surmount. For one, SBM assumes the surrender of authority by officials at the central and regional offices who, for a long time, have enjoyed the power to decide on all education matters. Outside traditional power circles, SBM demands built up local capacity to confront both a complex hierarchical structure and a deeply entrenched culture of acquiescence in the face of authority.

Despite daunting challenges in developing societies, however, the literature provides some evidence of SBM's positive impact on teaching and learning when combined with capacity building of teachers and school heads, community participation, an atmosphere that encourages changes in pedagogy and systematic focus on continuous improvement (Fullan and Watson 2000).

The combination of SBM as a mechanism for decentralized governance in education with various strategies to improve schools and student achievement has come to characterize an education reform approach dubbed as comprehensive school reform (CSR). CSR assumes that school improvement efforts are complex and ought to systematically address every aspect of a school, i.e. "the curriculum, instruction, governance, scheduling, professional development, assessment, and parent and community involvement" (American Institute for Research on the CSRQC 2006). In the US, the CSR strategy aimed to address the education crisis of the 1990s that eventually spurred the 2001 Elementary and Secondary Act, more popularly known as the No Child Left Behind Act. CSR has since morphed into a full fledged federal program with different models to choose from. In terms of outcomes, a 2002 analysis of student achievement in 29 leading CSR models reported statistically significant overall effects that seem to be greater than other interventions designed to achieve similar effects (Borman, Hewes, Overman and Brown 2006). A more recent review of several CSR models reveals the promise of the approach, although among effective models, achievements varied greatly, depending on the quality of implementation.

Awareness of the CSR approach is low in countries like the Philippines. However, the deteriorated state of basic education has made it imperative for reform agents in the country, whether informed by existing research and discourses or not, to consider reform interventions that are more or less comprehensive rather than piecemeal, simultaneous rather than sequential, and on a scale that would make a dent on the situation. As operationalized, SBM in the Philippines has the potential of helping achieve these characteristics of education reform. It has evolved into a mechanism for decentralized governance in education (that includes community involvement in school planning) as well as a framework for integrating the structural dimensions of reform with

various inputs for achieving equitable access to quality education at the school level (including changes in perspectives on learning and pedagogy).

SBM Projectized: Overview of BEAM and TEEP

The 2001 Governance of Basic Education Act or RA 9155 served as policy cover for SBM. In the absence of a clear plan to implement the legislation, SBM was carried out *de facto* through two externally-funded projects—TEEP and BEAM [Box 2]. Covering 40 of the country's 188 divisions and affecting more than 12000 schools or about a third of Philippine public elementary schools[ix], the education and management outcomes of SBM in these divisions have been significant. These results suggest the possibility of reforming the DepEd bureaucracy given the existing staff of divisions, districts, and schools.

TEEP[x] commenced in 1998 and was completed in June 2006. Conceptualized in the context of the education crisis of the 1990s, TEEP consisted of three major components: civil works, education and development, and finance administration. Unlike BEAM which was supported by a grant, TEEP was carried out through a Philippine government loan agreement with the World Bank and JBIC[xi].

BEAM, on the other hand, is a 6.5 year DepEd project funded by a grant from AusAid. In the context of the Mindanao-wide poverty in education and the general state of unpeace in the area, BEAM aimed to improve the quality of and the access to basic education in Southern and Central Mindanao, specifically in Regions XI, XII and ARMM[xii]. Started in 2002, BEAM consists of four components—Human Resource Development; Materials Development; Access; and Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Apart from the type and source of funding, BEAM and TEEP differ in the level of articulation of their underlying philosophies of learning; the historical evolution and operationalization of SBM in the two projects; and the politics of their respective SBM implementation.

BEAM's underlying learning philosophy is constructivist. It assumes the active creation or construction by learners of their own knowledge through their actions on and interactions with the natural and social environment. From this perspective, the role of educators is to facilitate the development of cognitive processes by providing supportive learning environments and materials that facilitate the learner's discovery. This view departs radically from traditional social learning theories which assume that children learn new behaviors and attitudes largely through observation and experience in a given environment. Educators enlightened by this behaviorist assumption tend to structure the materials and the learning environment in the course of transmitting required bodies of knowledge.

BEAM asserts that higher order thinking skills are likely to develop in flexible and cooperative learning classroom environments rather than in environments characterized by a one-way transmission of knowledge to passive learners. From the viewpoint of BEAM'S proponents, students reared in such environments would end up thinking for themselves and solving problems more effectively. Its underlying philosophy of learning explains why BEAM poured a significant share of its resources into capacity-building at all levels—i.e., teacher educators, teachers, school heads, division and regional personnel—towards learner-centered management and teaching. The shift in learning paradigm that BEAM hopes to achieve entails a more methodical, well-thought, research based and fully documented capacity-building process. It also requires the development of appropriate (i.e., context sensitive) learning materials in support of effective learning.

In contrast to BEAM's philosophical coherence and consistency, TEEP was less mindful of its learning philosophy. Conceptualized by non-educationists, empirical research on the determinants of desirable student outcomes and the discursive thrust towards decentralization worldwide, rather than specific learning theories, guided its formulation. This partly explains why TEEP allocated a significant amount of resources for the procurement of inputs such as classrooms and textbooks. In fact, from 1998 to 2001, TEEP focused primarily on moving its civil works component with equity support from local government units (LGUs). The subsequent flow of resources to education and training is intimately linked with the evolution of SBM in TEEP after 2001. Since then, TEEP' practitioners engaged in the pragmatic search for and adaptation of classroom innovations that worked. The learning philosophy that emerged in the process if implementing TEEP was understandably more eclectic than BEAM. Although the TEEP teachers eventually drew from the constructivist learning theories that guided BEAM, they were not as conscious of the philosophical underpinnings of their practice as their counterparts in BEAM.

With a more eclectic learning philosophy, TEEP training was less methodical than BEAM in planning and implementing its reforms. It developed from concrete demands ranging from the need to supervise classroom construction and procure goods to the more substantive improvement of learning outcomes. The urgency of moving the project even without a full-blown and integrated capacity building plan made TEEP's training processes and procedures, which are largely school-based, more flexible. Reflecting their pragmatist orientation, TEEP practitioners depict their training as a process of 'rolling down'. 'Rolling down' entails adaptation to the terrain through which the training is to be rolled; starting from where the trainees are and not purely on what they ought to know or be; implementation of a training program even before its dimensions are fully defined and developed; direct engagement of the trainees in the practice of that for which they are being trained with handbooks to guide the process, or the idea of "learning on the run" "action learning" "learning by doing" "learning by dirtying one's hands".

SBM in the BEAM and TEEP Project Design[xiii]

SBM was built into the BEAM project design from the beginning. The Project's first stage (2002-2003), for instance, included training DepEd's senior managers and school heads in the management of learning-centred schools. However, SBM figured more significantly in Stage 2 (2004-2006) when BEAM focused more intently on improving teaching and learning as well as implementing strategies that hope to provide children opportunities to access quality education. By then the Project had supported the intense development of School Improvement Plans (SIPs) involving stakeholders; conducted a slew of capacity-building programs for teachers as well as schools, division, and regional officials and personnel; linked the learning facilitators to each other, and produced learning materials in support of the mode of classroom learning SBM is poised to facilitate. The formulation of SIPs guided by a student-centered, activity-based approach to teaching and learning, and the use of these plans in school management, constitute the operationalization of SBM in BEAM. In this regard, the 2008 External Evaluation Report on the Project concluded that the SIP process is now established in almost all BEAM schools and the majority of principals are using the SIP in the management of their schools (BEAM 2008a).

In contrast to the clear place of SBM in the BEAM design from project inception onwards, SBM developed iteratively in TEEP. It had not come to the full awareness of the project in 1998 although the design document included the category "support to decentralization". It took the 2001 Midterm Review Team to recommend the inclusion of the SBM component in TEEP. One of the members of the Review Team, who previously worked with EDCOM and drafted the SBM section of the Asian Development Bank's Technical Assistance (TA) on Decentralization of Basic Education Management (ADB TAD-BEM) in 1999, was eventually recruited into TEEP as

its SBM consultant[xiv] together with another member of the Review Team who served as Finance consultant. Thus, by 2001 TEEP did not have to reinvent the wheel in conceptualizing and implementing SBM. The Project experimented with the seminal ideas of EDCOM and ADB-TAD-BEM on a large scale—i.e., all schools in 23 divisions [or about 8600 schools].

The development of SBM in TEEP was phenomenal after 2003. Within three years from January 2003 to June 2006, the number of schools that adopted the principles and practices of SBM expanded exponentially from the original batch of 396 schools to all of the more than 8600 schools in the 23 TEEP divisions.

Like BEAM, the operationalization of SBM in TEEP included the formulation, together with parents, communities and other stakeholders, of 5-year School Improvement Plans and corresponding annual implementation plans; and 2) the integration of the procurement of inputs that included textbooks, and training. TEEP differs from BEAM, however, in its provision of physical inputs (classrooms) and more important, SBM cash grants to schools that the school heads managed. The granting of SBM funds proceeded in four phases with Elementary leader schools and their cluster of satellite schools receiving funds in the first year, deserving depressed and disadvantaged schools receiving funds in the second year, and the remaining schools in the third and fourth years. By Project completion in 2006, most of the school heads in the 23 divisions had gained experience in handling funds which, for some schools, eventually took the form of government's Maintenance and Other Operating Expenditures (MOOE).

SBM Outcomes: Remarkable Pupil Performance

Regardless of the differences between BEAM and TEEP, both projects had notable effects on pupil performance. Aware of the limitations of existing methods of student assessment such as inconsistencies in item difficulty, poor quality items (i.e., items lifted from books, give-away questions, grammatical lapses, gross inaccuracies) and periodical and wide-scale tests that measured knowledge but not higher-order cognitive skills, both BEAM and TEEP aspired to go beyond traditional quantitative pen-and-paper measures (e.g. multiple-choice tests), in assessing student performance. For purposes of evaluating the effects of their interventions, the two projects developed, with the assistance of Australian consultants, their own standardized student assessment tests based on the Basic Education Curriculum competencies—RAMSE[xv]for BEAM and the National Sample-Based Assessment (NSBA) for TEEP.

Considering BEAM's philosophy of learning and teaching and its emphasis on developing higher order thinking skills, the tests reveal the positive impact of the project's capacity-building, classroom interventions, and school management. Although the sample Grade 4 and second year high school students in Regions XI, XII and ARMM are still performing way below curriculum expectations, i.e. below a minimum mean percentage score of 75, the average scores of the sample learners increased significantly across subjects from 2004 to 2006, particularly for items reflecting higher-order thinking skills. The mean percentage scores for the anchor questions (or those asked in all the years) in the math and science items that go beyond factual knowledge—routine problem solving, reasoning, and the use of concepts in mathematics and conceptual understanding and reasoning/analysis in science—improved significantly (Figures 1 and 2). Similarly, more students in 2006 than in 2004 correctly answered the same questions that measure the capacity to interpret or reflect in English (Figure 3). These findings suggest that the greater emphasis on conceptual understanding (rather than rote learning) in BEAM's learning approach may have begun to pay off. The distribution of mean percentage scores of the sample pupils/students by type of question further suggests that the learners in BEAM are more able to

answer correctly questions that deviate from the usual multiple choice exams they had become accustomed to (Figures 4 and 5).

Apart from consistent positive assessments through the years, the RAMSE reports also disclose better performance when learners in the BEAM areas spend less than an hour in getting to school; when teachers sometimes shift to the vernacular in explaining concepts, teach the subjects they specialized in, participate in BEAM in-service training, consult with parents, use problem solving and investigative projects in science, constructing shapes in math, graphic organizing and journal writings in English, and other learning guides, manuals, or modules; when school administrators monitor and evaluate teachers effectively and efficiently; when schools have adequate facilities; and when its community provides sufficient financial and material support.

Like BEAM, TEEP pupils performed well in its sample-based assessment. However, unlike RAMSE, the NSBA is not test equated, i.e., it does not have anchor questions. Thus, the performance of TEEP pupils is not comparable across the years. For this reason, the universally-administered National Achievement Test (NAT) is a better gauge of the probable impact of TEEP and SBM.

The National Achievement Test, which was initially administered in 2002 after four years without any nation-wide examination, has several weaknesses: First, it was administered in the first three years by teachers in their own classes, resulting in an obvious moral hazard. Although this weakness was corrected so that starting NAT 2005 teachers from adjacent school districts proctored each other's students, the perception of "rampant" cheating in the administration of the examinations[xvi] remains. Second, the available NAT dataset does not disaggregate scores by thinking skills or type of questions. Therefore, improvements in NAT may not necessarily reflect the enhanced learning advocated by learner-centered educationists.

Despite its limitations, however, NAT is the only standardized assessment of student performance at the national level in the country today. As such, it is the only measure that enables comparisons with schools outside the divisions covered by TEEP/SBM. Since TEEP aimed to target poor divisions, it is compared with other divisions that are clustered on the basis of poverty levels. [See Box 3 for the definition of the comparator groups: the poor divisions—ARMM, Aklan+, Cagayan+, Iloilo+, and the non-poor divisions Pampanga+ and NCR.]

The TEEP divisions, which experienced SBM (including the management of school funds) and related inputs, performed remarkably well towards the end of the project in 2006 when compared to the other division clusters. A higher proportion of TEEP-SBM schools crossed the 75% NAT mean percentage score, DepEd's desired minimum competency level (Figure 6a). This finding is all the more significant when seen in light of the higher percentage of elementary schools from Aklan+, Cagayan+ and Pampanga+ crossing the 75% level in 2002 compared to TEEP and TEEP Elementary Leader Schools (ELS).

Whatever the subject, the same pattern can be gleaned from the percentage of schools crossing the 60% "near mastery" level (Figure 6b). In terms of improvement in percentile rank, both the leader and average TEEP schools improved their rankings more than the least poor Iloilo+, the non-poor Pampanga+, and NCR (Figure 7a). The same pattern applies for the mean percentage scores (MPS). The TEEP schools improved their MPS more significantly than the other division clusters. Although the figures from 2002 to 2004 are incomparable to the 2006 NAT because they were given to pupils in different grades, the improvement from 2005, which is comparable to 2006, is notable (Figure 7b).

Since TEEP was intended to address equity concerns, SBM and all other TEEP inputs contributed to marked improvements in the ranking of multi-grade and incomplete elementary schools, which constituted about 24% of the schools in the TEEP divisions. Compared to other division clusters, they were the only ones that registered a positive change in NAT percentile ranks from 2002 to 2006. Moreover, the gap between these schools and the monograde schools was smaller in the TEEP divisions than in the others (Figures 8a and 8b).

Among complete monograde schools, small TEEP schools headed by Teachers-in-Charge (TIC) were also the only ones that improved their NAT rankings from 2002 to 2005 a stark contrast to their counterparts in other division clusters which slid down the ranks of schools for the same period (Figure 9). The improvement in small monograde TIC-headed TEEP schools is notable considering that more than half of such schools in the poor division clusters were headed by Teachers-in-Charge. In fact, one out of seven TEEP schools was TIC-headed.

Interestingly, TEEP divisions sustained the pattern of improved NAT scores and percentile ranks across all subjects beyond the life of the project at the cost of P806 per pupil per year over 8.5 years[xvii]. What factors accounted for such marked and sustained school improvements?

The JBIC TEEP External Review Team's regression of the 2004 NAT scores with variables drawn from the 2003 Basic Information Education System (BEIS) dataset reveals that SBM, this time, narrowly conceived as a governance mechanism, figured significantly in the equation. Apparently, the symbolic value and empowerment connected with managing SBM funds, no matter how small, contributed to the better performance of schools with fully operational SBM, i.e., those in Batches 1 and 2 who managed funds earlier than the rest. About 62% of TEEP schools were in Batches 1 and 2. Indeed, the change in the average NAT scores and percentile rankings of those who managed funds earlier (Batches 1 and 2) and those who managed funds later (Batches 3 and 4) suggests that the former performed better than the latter. Since the change in percentile ranks of TEEP schools that managed funds later (Batches 3 and 4) was at about the same level as the least poor Iloilo+ and the non-poor Pampanga+ (Figures 10a and 10b), the early batches of SBM schools did better than the non-poor divisions.

Aside from school management, training and community support are the other significant SBM-related determinants of pupil performance in the TEEP divisions. Veering away from the usual DepEd practice of training only an elite core of trainers who were expected to echo what they learned to others, TEEP training, albeit less methodical than BEAM, was large scale, multi-level and multi-component. All division officials, school heads and teachers in the 23 schools division went through some formal training of which the school-based in-service training was the primary focus. However, much of the capacity-building in TEEP was informal. It came with the weekly or monthly school learning cells where teachers shared teaching experiences; the actual management of funds, the monitoring of new programs, and day-to-day implementation of SBM; actual supervision of classroom construction for school heads; and day-to-day management of decentralization issues for district and division officials.

SBM Outcomes:Significant Changes in Classroom and Management Cultures

Both BEAM and TEEP led to significant changes in some aspects of the institutional cultures of DepEd, at least for the duration of the projects. BEAM's primary goal is to make a difference in the education situation of Mindanao (and the country) through teacher pre- and in-service education (a focus unique to BEAM), capacity building of DepEd managers, materials development, and policy changes in higher education. In this regard, it has succeeded in changing the competency standards for teachers; advancing the development of student assessment;

championing the quality of Muslim education nationwide, and changing the philosophies and mindsets of those within its reach. More importantly, it has also directly or indirectly began to contribute to significant changes at the heart of education, i.e. in the culture of the classroom.

The 2008 BEAM Evaluation, for instance, noted that BEAM-trained teachers tended to understand some of the "big ideas" of BEAM better after three years of training and application. These "big ideas" refer to themes like higher order thinking skills (HOTS), multiple intelligences, gender-sensitivity, brain-friendly learning, and varied assessment practices. More BEAM-trained teachers were inclined to say that classrooms should be child-friendly, participative, and stimulating than non-BEAM trained teachers in the regions covered. As facilitators of learning rather than lecturers, more of the former saw their role as encouraging creativity, inquisitiveness, and group activities.

BEAM teachers have also begun to allow students to make choices for their own learning. They are encouraged to find information for themselves, make more critical judgments, build on their prior knowledge, and research on their own. BEAM's impact is most felt in the wide range of student assessment strategies in BEAM schools. The use of alternatives to paper and pencil tests has increased consistently over three years especially among the teachers who underwent BEAM in-service education.

Transforming public school classrooms into learning environments is a long-term agenda that requires a paradigm shift at different levels of the bureaucracy. This agenda entails the setting up of a capacity-building infrastructure for each level. With regards to the enabling conditions for effective classroom learning, BEAM has, thus far, been helping administrators develop a more or less coherent view and understanding of what constitutes quality education. A management training system utilizing appropriate learning systems is now in place for Regional, Divisional, District, and School managers.

For teachers, BEAM has set up an effective long term in-service teacher education (INSET) that provides them access to training and support at least every three years. BEAM has also nuanced the training of teachers handling Lumad and Muslim children to reflect the special needs of pupils from these groups. Moreover, BEAM has forged partnerships with Teacher Education Institutions and the National Education Association of the Philippines (NEAP) to assist in the delivery of teacher INSET and to provide credit award to courses for successful completion of INSET. Closer to the classroom, the curriculum and delivery of pre-service teacher education programs in the BEAM regions have been upgraded in line with the Revised Basic Education Curriculum.

The development of learning materials is integral to BEAM's education reform agenda. In this regard, BEAM has established materials development centers to ensure the production of culturally-sensitive learning materials including peace-education materials for the conflict areas in Mindanao.

Although TEEP through SBM has spurred classroom innovations, its contributions to the management culture of DepEd are just as significant. In the area of finance management, for instance, TEEP enabled the drilling down of funds from the central office to the divisions and finally, to schools. Almost all TEEP schools eventually managed SBM cash grants from project funds until 2004 and from the regular MOOE that divisions allocated to schools from 2005 up to the end of the project. Moreover, TEEP managed to drill down cash from the central office to the divisions much faster that usual, cutting the processing time of vouchers and actual checks by two weeks. In addition, the project's Finance unit conducted quarterly performance reviews of schools and divisions as well as spot audits. Strict implementation of activities was monitored, and

unutilized funds allocated to other schools or divisions with a good track record of fund absorption and liquidation. In extreme cases where the reasons for non-liquidating were unacceptable, salaries of school heads were withheld.

TEEP highlighted management principles that defined the work culture of the project staff and division superintendents from 2001 up to its completion. Management in TEEP was time-bound and target-based, as well as guided by codified processes and procedures. Outputs were circumscribed by targets with clearly set deadlines and corresponding manuals of operation. Results-oriented, TEEP also followed the corporate practice of conducting regular performance evaluation for both project staff and DepEd employees working with it.

One of the effective management innovations that led to good quality performance among division superintendents and project component leaders was the Work and Financial Plan (WFP). TEEP required each component (and division) to prepare an annual plan that specified targets, tasks and activities, budgets and deadlines. Starting in 2001, these plans were scrutinized for the accuracy of the data on which they were based, their "do-ability", and the adequacy of funding support. Once approved, the plans served as "guide" to action. Beyond instilling a culture of planning, the WFP made division superintendents and component heads accountable for accomplishments measured against targets in face-to-face assessments. Some superintendents would later relay that the WFP kept them on their toes. They made sure there were achievements to report in their meetings with peers. So effective was the culture of planning and assessment for ensuring results-oriented action that many superintendents introduced it at the division level. Divisions monitored the School Improvement Plans and tracked their implementation by bringing together clusters of district officials and school heads.

A discussion of institutional innovations in TEEP would not be complete without citing its bottom-up and empirically grounded school-level forecasting to guide the procurement of specialized goods (e.g. customized kits and furniture) which are checked by a duly constituted Division Procurement Inspectorate; the pre-bid conferences to ensure the dissemination of information to all concerned; the decentralized bidding under Division Bids and Awards Committees that DepEd created in the course of the project; the repair of reparable classrooms rather than the construction of new ones based on a mapping of all school edifices in the 23 divisions with priority given to depressed and disadvantaged schools; the significant reduction in the costs in textbook procurement by at least 46% through international bidding in collaboration with the Social Expenditure Management Project (SEMP); the grassroots checking of textbook deliveries which DepEd initiated; the development of 27 designs and specifications for classrooms depending on the terrain and type of natural hazards in the area; and the Principal-led School Building Program

The history and accomplishment of the Principal-led School Building Program (PLSBP) n TEEP is worth singling out. This program was probably the tipping point for SBM in the 23 TEEP divisions. In truth, it was an idea borne out of necessity. In mid-2001, TEEP was under threat of loan cancellation because of low loan availment rates in the first two and a half years of the project. To avoid the threat of loan cancellation, then Secretary Raul Roco resolved to make a go of TEEP. He appointed a highly respected and zealous Deputy Project Manager from among the DepEd organic staff to head the implementation of the restructured TEEP. He also constituted a consulting team with extensive private sector experience in large-scale and field-based nationwide projects. This team advised Roco to accelerate loan availment by speeding up the school building program. Roco subsequently announced an "unmovable" target of 1,000 classrooms in the first 6 months and another 1,000 in the succeeding 6 months. Considering that

TEEP had only 382 new classrooms and 506 repairs after two and a half years, these targets seemed overly ambitious.

To deliver 1,000 classrooms in 6 months, Roco boldly assigned the responsibility of overseeing the bidding and classroom construction within a 90-day cycle to principals. This move did not initially sit well with Congress and skeptical members of the education community who did not trust the capacity of principals to handle the technicalities of construction. It helped that Roco, being a former Senator with the gift of fiery speech, supposedly silenced his colleagues in Congress with the rhetorical question—"If you cannot trust the principals in this country, who else can you trust?" [xviii] And that was how principal-led classroom construction started in TEEP.

The PLSBP mode produced 1,000 classrooms (some brand-new and some repairs) within 6 months as targeted. Immediately, this meant 1,000 concrete manifestations of the promise of TEEP. Upon inspecting the demonstration units, LGU officials were more eager to come up with the required 10% equity. In 2006, some local officials were said to have won or lost elections on the basis of their constituencies' perception of the support to education as indicated by equity provision for new classrooms.

Within the school campuses, the new classrooms became the physical and symbolic catalysts of PTCA and community involvement. They provided reasons for increased PTCA attendance, and eventually, more parent participation in school activities and greater interest in their children's school work. In this sense, principal-led SBP set the stage for future stakeholder involvement especially in areas without a history of school-community partnership. On the part of the school heads, the success of the School Building Program boosted their morale and self-confidence. Until then they were only allowed to manage the school canteen income (typically P500-P1000 per month), when suddenly they were entrusted to manage P500000 worth of construction.

Clearly, the combination of SBM and other education reform components in both BEAM and TEEP produced outcomes that ought to be sustained, rolled down for adaptation to the educational terrains of other regions, and thus, scaled up to the rest of the nation.

Quo Vadis SBM?

Since the 1970s, reform-oriented education projects have made a dent in the areas where they were piloted. Project Instructional Management by Parents, Community and Teachers (IMPACT) is an eloquent case in point. Started in 1974 by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) with funding support from Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the project was designed as a practical intervention to address overcrowding in Philippine public schools, as well as the lack of teachers, textbooks and other learning materials, Project IMPACT[xix] can handle as many as 120 students per class. It is an open system for different kinds of students using three instructional modes that are usually complemented by other modes—programmed teaching, peer-group learning; and individualized study or self-instruction. A notable feature of Project IMPACT is its organization. Pupils are grouped into two levels: levels 1-3 are referred to as programmed teaching groups while levels 4-6 make up the peer learning groups. Groups in each grade level, in turn, are divided into smaller groups or 'families' composed of five to ten members[xx]. On the assumption that they would feel more responsible towards each other, family members, friends, and neighbors are made to constitute these 'families'.

Interestingly, students under Project Impact were rated using the same conventional standards applied to other schools. At a 50% reduction in education costs, evaluative studies show that

IMPACT students acquired higher levels of cognitive skills compared to those in regular schools. They also demonstrated social sensitivity, spontaneity, better communication skills, a greater sense of commitment and responsibility and overall leadership potential.[xxi] Because of its success, SEAMEO INNOTECH re-launched it in 2005 in five project sites as e-IMPACT since it now incorporates multi-media learning strategies. It is unfortunate that after more than three decades since it was first piloted and proven effective in improving learning, Project IMPACT's effective and low-cost innovation has not filtered into the prescribed solutions for the dismal performance of Pupils in the congested schools in Metro Manila and other urban centers.

Unlike PROJECT IMPACT, BEAM and TEEP covered a much bigger geographic area, all schools in about a fifth of the country's schools divisions. Their scale accounts for their more palpable impact on pupil performance. The institutionalization of SBM and features of both BEAM and TEEP in BESRA, DepEd's current policy framework for education reform, suggests that the lessons from the experiences of the two projects will not be lost. However, the country's poor track record in translating laws and policies into effective programs and projects raise concerns about the implementation of SBM in BESRA.

The Second World Bank and AusAid Joint Implementation Review's April 2008 Aide Memoir to the DepEd Secretary[xxii] suggests how far SBM in BESRA has moved since 2006 and the challenges to its implementation. The Aide Memoir acknowledged the overall commitment and involvement of DepEd managers, staff, and other oversight partners at the national and regional levels to BESRA noting that "the depth of engagement was still in the early stages". The Joint Review Mission further observed the limited awareness of BESRA, SBM, and the National Competency-Based Teacher Standards at the school level. Moreover, it noted the slow implementation of the DepEd guidelines regarding the direct release of the MOOE to select elementary and secondary schools, on the one hand, and release of the 2006 and 2007 SBM school grants, on the other.

Apart from its recommendation to drill down resources to schools as soon as possible, the Aide Memoir also proposed that the DepEd Technical Working Group for SBM, the virtual cadre of school-based reformists in DepEd, "finalize and disseminate guidelines for defining the functions of a school governing structure for guidance of the schools, divisions, and regions; and to define and articulate the operationalization of new roles and responsibilities of the Central Office, Regional Office, Division and District Offices and for school heads, consistent with the philosophy of SBM".

Even as the SBM TWG began to develop a clearer operationalization of the decentralization guidelines, an earlier move to amend the Governance of Basic Education Act (RA9155) has begun to prosper in Congress. In response to the lobby of district supervisors, this amendment hopes to restore their pre-SBM supervisory powers and prerogatives over school heads. The seeming lack of urgency among officials at the DepEd's central office to articulate their objection to the proposed amendment and the apparent differences in their interpretations of the spirit of SBM suggests the need to level off at the highest echelons of the bureaucracy.

Despite the slow implementation of SBM and the differing opinions within the bureaucracy on the role of regional directors, schools division superintendents and district supervisors, the rationale for decentralization as a basic education reform strategy is generally understood and accepted by the relevant publics. In contrast, substantive reforms affecting pedagogy and classroom learning have been more difficult to grasp. Indeed, such is the case with the policy on the language of instruction. Those who framed it conflated their desire for young Filipinos to communicate fluently in English (or Filipino) with making them learn in English (or Filipino). To

date, DepEd's bilingual policy has not been revised in line with scientific evidence for the use of the mother tongue/child's language in the early grades in formal education. What has kept the Department from updating this policy and aligning it with education practices in most parts of the world?

The Case of the Language Policy: Out of Sync with Research-based Evidence Worldwide

The unresolved medium of instruction issue in Philippine basic education is a recurring nightmare. Since the 1920s, it has provoked intense and extremely partisan debates. Despite consistent teacher reports on the difficulties of students in learning in English and Filipino, both languages being foreign to many children in the multilingual Philippine context, highly emotional and strong political pressures have been waged for either language for many decades now. In the face of such pressures, policy makers ended up crafting compromise solutions that have not satisfactorily resolved the issue.

The current national educational policy on language (or the medium of instruction)[xxiii] does not seem to be sensitive to the linguistic landscape of the Philippines and the role of language in literacy and learning. It is ostensibly unaware of the extant and voluminous research on language learning and language education, particularly of the strong evidence in support of systematic language programming towards improved learning outcomes for children. This section illustrates the disjoint between the prevailing linguistic conditions of the country and the findings of scientific research, on the one hand, and the education policy on language (or language of learning policy), on the other.

The prevailing thinking based on international and local research asserts that good language abilities will broker good learning since systems that are already in place in the child's cognitive make-up mediate the learning of a subject matter (Bialystok and Frohlich, 1978; Cummins, 2000; Mallozzi and Malloy, 2007). Moreover, studies assert that cognitive academic language proficiency must be reached before a language can be effectively used as a medium of learning and thus, of instruction (e.g. Cummins, 2000).

Given the socio-linguistic landscape of the Philippines, bilingualism should be in the middle of any discussion on the language issue in education. After all, Filipinos are, at the very least, bilingual. Bilingualism, a term used interchangeably with multilingualism, is the use of two or more languages in a society. Bilinguals have a unique linguistic configuration involving a merging of the phonologies, semantics, grammars and syntaxes of the languages used (Grosjean 1985). Their psychosocial ability to use two or more languages affects their language and literacy constructions.

Drawing from the findings of Philippine research, bilingual Filipino children are of two types:

- Those who start off as monolinguals and then navigate towards becoming multilingual. [Filipino children learn the first language at home (L1) and then acquire additional languages (L2 to Ln) in the social contexts in which they participate]; and
- Those without a first language, i.e., they are children immersed in communities and societies with two or more languages perpetually used in their home environments. Therefore, they are bilingual from birth (Ocampo, 2008a).

In both instances, Filipino children acquire their first language/s spontaneously in the process of interacting with their relevant and natural contexts. Once they start schooling, DepEd's bilingual policy prescribes learning and learning in the two target languages—Filipino and English. It can thus be said that Filipino children acquire about one to two languages spontaneously, and, as a result of the country's bilingual education policy, learn two more languages from school and media exposure (Ocampo, 2006). Indeed, many Filipino children living in Metro Manila spontaneously acquire either English or Filipino from their homes, communities, and the broadcast media. In their case, it makes sense for English, Filipino or both languages to be their medium of learning in the early years. However, most Filipino children do not have basic proficiencies in either language when they enter school. Using these languages for instruction in the early years may have impeded their effective learning both of the two languages and of the subject matter presumably taught in them (Ocampo, 1996; Aquino, 2007).

Figure 11 shows the percentage of schools with NAT mean percentage scores that surpassed 60% in Math, English, and Science. Considering that both Science and Math are taught in English, the lower score in English compared to the other two subjects suggests that it is not learned as well as either science or math.

Two inferences can be drawn from Figure 11. First, it is quite likely that English was not used consistently as the language for teaching Math and Science. Otherwise, performance in these two subjects might have been lower than in English. In other words, teachers were sensitive enough to use the language of the children to teach the two subjects or they themselves were not proficient in English to sustain teaching math and science in the language. The scores on BEAM's Regional Assessment of Math and Science bolster this observation. Students whose teachers shifted to the vernacular in explaining concepts had better scores on questions that measure higher order thinking skills. Second, **children are not developing enough English language competencies to sustain Math and Science learning, i.e., they have not reached cognitive academic language proficiency in the medium of instruction.**

Understanding the relationships between 1) bilingualism and biliteracy; 2) first and second language mastery, and 3) first and second language reading has direct bearing on the process of teaching children how to read. Because teacher education curricula do not explicitly include the development of second language ability and literacy, Filipino teachers, until recently, were trained to think that literacy develops in the same way in any language. This thinking ignores observed differences in literacy acquisition depending on the spelling system/orthographic system used to represent the language in print, and the literacy practices/events in which literacy is expected to develop (Katz and Frost 1992; Geva and Siegel 2000; Smythe, Everatt, Al-Menaye, He, Capellini, Gyarmathy, and Siegel, 2008). It also overlooks the finding that literacy skills develop more easily and efficiently when built on the child's prior knowledge of the language (Andoy 2006, Cummins 2000, Ocampo 1996).

The insights from such studies have not been integrated into the country's basic education program for language and literacy development. Up to now, the school curriculum does not build upon oral language ability in the first language (L1). Instead, it immediately teaches children to read in the two target languages of the curriculum (Figure 12). **This ignores the strength of first language literacy contributions to mastery of the target language/s and to literacy development in additional languages.** This is most especially true for the early years when such abilities are starting to form and grow.

The challenges that children might encounter due to the lack of oral language background in target languages create two or more layers of difficulty in literacy acquisition—first, students

have to learn two unfamiliar languages simultaneously; and second, they have to learn to read in two orthographies while learning to speak these two languages.

Another equally important language-related component of learning is motivation. Language use in the schools impacts on the affective side of learning. Not only is it cognitively harder to learn to read and write in an unfamiliar language, children who are made to read in a language they do not understand, often times, feel marginalized from classrooms that are supposed to liberate their minds.

When the language/s used are foreign and unfamiliar, children are not inducted smoothly into a school, its content and skill objectives. For the last 30 thirty years, the Philippines' highest drop out rate in the elementary level is reported to be at Grade 2[xxiv] (Figure 13). This suggests that difficulties in engaging with school activities and lessons may have been hampered by the inability of young children to cope with the language learning requirements exacted by the curriculum. In other words, children may have lost motivation to attend school because they could have experienced failure in reading and writing in Filipino and English.

For over 80 years, the recommendation to use the native (Monroe Survey, 1925), local (EDCOM, 1993), mother (PCER, 2000) or the child's (BESRA, 2006) language in schools (in the early years) as the medium of learning has been consistently disregarded. From the 1920s to the present, the political pressures exerted by different sectors and advocates in the name of national unification, global participation, regional identity, cultural integrity, or economic progress and overseas employment caused the policy decision-making on the language issue to swing from one extreme to another (Bernardo 2004; Bernardo and Gaerlan). After such swings, the pendulum stopped dead center in 1973, resulting in the poorly formulated and unrevised Bilingual Education Policy (BEP).

This compromise policy, embodied in the Department of Education and Culture (DEC) Order No. 25, s. 1973, operationally defines the nature of bilingual education in the country as the separate use of Filipino and English as the media of instruction in specific subject areas. As promulgated, Pilipino (changed to Filipino in 1987) was the designated medium of instruction for social studies, music, arts, physical education, home economics, practical arts and character education. English, on the other hand was decreed the teaching language for science, mathematics and technology subjects. The same language allocation by subject is provided in the 1987 Policy on Bilingual Education disseminated through Department Order No. 52, s. 1987. Hewing closely to the spirit of the 1987 Constitution, the policy aimed to enhance learning in the two languages as a way of achieving quality education through the propagation of Filipino as a language of literacy; the development of Filipino as a linguistic symbol of national unity and identity; the cultivation and elaboration of Filipino as a language of scholarly discourse; and the retention of English as an international language for the Philippines and a nonexclusive language of science and technology.

Where has the Bilingual Education Policy brought the country? This question is best answered by studying the performance of school children in all the subject areas of the curriculum over the last 30 years and correlating these with implementation assessments of the BEP. Unfortunately, longitudinal data based on stable product assessments of student learning are not available. The absence of data on both student learning and systematic process assessments of the BEP has made it nearly impossible to directly link achievement scores to the Bilingual Education policy alone. Thus, Gonzalez and Sibayan (1998), who evaluated the impact of BEP implementation on student achievement, were unable to establish the significant effect of the BEP. They concluded instead that providing favorable learning environments, teacher preparation or competencies, and optimal

teacher-student ratios are among the factors that contribute to improved language and literacy learning.

Although it makes perfect sense, in the absence of good longitudinal data for Gonzales and Sibayan not to find any significant effect of the BEP on the declining student performance at the time, the fact that achievement in both English and Filipino has been low for more than two decades suggests that the BEP is not implemented well enough to result in language proficiency in both English and Filipino. This policy seems to have grossly failed to support learning of the two languages, much less, learning through the use of these languages. Perhaps the strongest proof of the BEP's failure is the observed profile of teachers currently implementing the BEP who were themselves students during its initial implementation. It is this younger set of teachers who have been reported as greatly deficient in their English language skills.

What has kept the Department of Education as an institution from developing bilingual competence as well as the competence to learn though these two languages among Filipino children?

First, DepEd formulated a weak policy on bilingual education that does not stand on strong theoretical grounds. It ignored the long-standing and empirically validated view of how learning best happens among children (Harris, 1979) and how new language learning should be built upon a mastery of the child's native/mother language (Gudschinsky 1979). Furthermore, the policy also glossed over the socio-cultural issues in education by relegating the local languages as auxiliary mediums of instruction which teachers can use informally. The reported bias of some teachers, being members of (regional) linguistic communities, against the BEP might have also undermined its effectiveness (Castillo, 1999).

Second, DepED surrendered the power to decide on the language of schools rather than advocate research-based policy. It relinquished control over the curriculum and its content decades ago to politicians (in Congress or in the Office of the President). At present, Department of Education waits for directives from the Office of the President, legislators or donors. With the promise of employment for Filipinos in the call-center industry/resource management sector, the Arroyo administration is aggressively championing the use of English as the medium of instruction in Philippine schools through the 17 May 2003 Executive Order 210 "On Establishing the Policy to Strengthen the Use of the English Language as a Medium of Instruction in the Educational System. In addition, more than 200 congressional representatives signed House Bill 4701 on "Strengthening and Enhancing the Use of English as the Medium of Instruction in Philippine Schools." Popularly known as the Gullas Bill, this proposed legislation seeks to make English the medium of instruction from Grade 3 onwards with Filipino taught only as a subject. These directives to establish English as the primary language of education is being advanced in the context of nationwide English proficiency training for teachers whose proficiency in the language is said to be at the Grade 3 level. The incongruity between reality and policy directives is glaring in its utter disregard for evidence. Opposing the Gullas Bill is House Bill 3719 or "An Act Establishing a **Multi**-**Lingual** Education and Literacy Program" written by Congressman Magtanggol Gunigundo. This bill espouses the use of the mother tongue in all grades of elementary education (Box 4).

The control of politicians over the language of instruction contrasts sharply with the situation in 1939 when the Department of Education secretary decided on the issue because of its curricular significance for learning. In 1957, the Revised Philippine Education Program, which was based on a UNESCO research, implemented the use of the local languages for Grades 1 & 2 while English was taught as a subject. This was one of the few times when research conclusions—

particularly the finding of the Aguilar Experiment conducted from 1948 to 1954, that all subjects, including English, were learned better when children were first taught in their mother tongue (Harris, 1979)—informed education policy.

Third, exacerbating the loss of efficacy in determining the language policy is a seeming lack of serious effort on the part of DepEd to explain the crucial role of language to policy makers. Unaware of what language will best enable children to learn, those charged with deciding on how education is to be delivered to the country's future generation have relied solely on employment growth paradigms in deciding on the language of education, ignoring the widely accepted research findings on culture, learning and child development. Emphasis on global competitiveness and the dollars brought in by overseas employment has made those responsible for the education of the nation's children inadvertently adopt an erroneous view of the learning process. Instead of forging paths out of poverty and unemployment, poor education policy on languages of learning has made schooling more difficult for children and thus less effective in achieving education goals.

Finally, DepEd has yet to negotiate a shift from structural learning paradigms to more socio-constructivist methods of teaching and assessing language and literacy learning. This, despite the adoption of national competency based standards for teachers that are aligned with the new paradigm and the experiences of projects like BEAM. Teachers narrate that lessons continue to be taught by rote with emphasis on codes or structural aspects (Diaz de Rivera 1994; Castillo 1999; Asian Development Bank 1999). Part of the reason for the failure to shift paradigms is a lack of appreciation of the need to make such a shift. It is not understood, for instance, that the emphasis on products rather than learning processes is anathema to the formation of more critical and creative thinking skills. Neither are the following known—that various studies on reading education and academic achievement reveal reading comprehension problems due to a lack of oral language mastery, poor vocabulary and poor listening comprehension; that the effect of excellent teaching strategies aimed at developing reading comprehension are always mediated by the commonalities between the text (to be read) and the students' prior knowledge which includes their language competencies; and that the greater the intersection between the two, the greater the comprehension, especially among younger children learning to read (Ocampo 2006, 2008a).

WHAT HAVE KEPT REFORM INITIATIVES IN DEPED FROM TRANSFORMING BASIC EDUCATION[xxv]

The value of a learning-centered paradigm that privileges the active role of learners is recognized by many DepEd officials and teachers on the ground. Proof of this are the BEAM trainees' expressed appreciation of the ideas shared in their sessions and the TEEP teachers' enthusiastic experimentation with individualized or group modes of teaching multi-grade classes. Apart from substantive theoretical issues, what have kept DepEd from shifting paradigms may be the same institutional factors that have constrained it from scaling up successful reform initiatives like SBM.

Externally Induced Reform

DepEd's almost absolute dependence on the implementation of foreign-assisted programs that have reform activities built into pilot-project components is clearly discernable in the last 20 years. More specifically, the Department's concrete efforts involving reforming curricula, instructional practices and delivery systems, teacher development activities, governance systems, and instructional materials, among others, were almost exclusively pursued under the auspices of

foreign-assisted programs. It thus seems that reform activities were undertaken only as DepEd moved from one set of reform pilot projects under one foreign-assisted program to another[xxvi].

In the last 20 years, foreign donor agencies (AusAID, JBIC, WB, ADB, etc.) did not only fund these projects, they also initiated, nurtured, monitored and saw them through their completion. Externally driven, the reform projects raise concern over DepEd's institutional capacity to eventually initiate and sustain them. More than apprehension over the Department's financial wherewithal to support such projects, however, is the question—whether DepEd has a critical mass of institutional actors and enough spaces within its bureaucratic culture, to introduce new ideas into its practices and policies. A highly centralized and hierarchical institution like DepEd, which has some deeply entrenched practices, may have neither the means nor the incentive to conceive of alternative educational principles, creative processes and resourceful practices to the status quo. This does not mean, however, that the DepEd personnel lack creativity or resourcefulness. On the contrary, there have been many experienced and insightful DepEd officials and staff with reformist philosophical orientations and a deep sense of mission. Unfortunately, their position in DepEd's hierarchical bureaucracy and the multiple day-to-day demands on their time, have rendered them powerless to reform even the practices and mindsets within their turfs.

Under these circumstances, donor-initiated and externally induced reform projects have been about the only means in the last two decades to introduce new educational reform ideas into DepEd. The consultants and project staff of donor agencies were actually the bearers of new discourses. But since they were not always at the forefront of these discourses some of them may have introduced ideas that were new to DepEd but were already somewhat dated. Nonetheless, these consultants and a few insiders from DepEd and other government agencies like the National Economic and Development Agency (NEDA) are to be credited for contextualizing emerging discourses within DepEd realities and perpetuating them in the bureaucracy.

Education Reform in a Petri Dish: The Pilot Project Mindset

DepEd's manner of undertaking reform is to projectize it and the Department's idea of projectization is to pilot test the efficacy of reformist interventions on a limited scale so as not to risk failure in large-scale implementation. The idea of using pilot projects in the process of education reform derives from a positivistic quasi-experimental model which is designed to test the measurable effects of particular interventions on some target outcomes. In education, the quasi-experiment involves the introduction of an intervention or set of interventions (e.g. an alternative teacher supervision system) into an existing system, without attempting to fully control the range of other variables operating within the context (e.g., variations in teacher background, size of school, profile of students, etc.), then observing whether significant improvements can be measured soon after the intervention is completed.

Reinforcing the quasi-experimental approach to education reform is the myth that large scale change can be comprehended by understanding what happens on a very small scale. This view ignores properties of large-scale changes that might be "diametrically opposed to those in effect in small-scale research" (Stanley 1996). It also runs counter to contemporary theorizing that reform efforts are best undertaken in large scale, coordinated, context-sensitive multiple efforts that are sustained over time (Townsend 2004; Hargreaves 2004). Sustained efforts are deemed necessary if the goal is to transform school systems rather than merely improve on existing practices.

The pilot project mentality is deeply ingrained in the DepEd bureaucracy. Its pervasiveness is underscored by the taken-for-granted assumption that pilot testing is required by the need to deliver a uniform or one-size-fits-all education to Filipino learners across the archipelago, regardless of differences in their socio-cultural and political economic environments. Uniformity from this viewpoint is conflated with maintaining academic standards.

An important institutional consequence of this conflation is the privileged role of the DepEd central office in defining the standards—common curriculum, pedagogy, textbooks, learning materials, and system of quality assurance and assessment—and transmitting them to the schools through the regional, schools division and district offices. Culturally-sensitive curricula, pedagogical approaches and learning materials that deviate from the standard would be discouraged in theory even if they enhance the acquisition of learning competencies, unless the Central office stamps its approval on their quality and usefulness.

The conflation of quality standards with the uniform application of reform interventions throughout the entire system reinforces the pilot testing mentality. It is, after all, too risky from the DepEd perspective to generalize a reform measure without success on a small scale. Interestingly though, the uniform application of pilot tested reform initiatives to diverse learning contexts has rarely happened. Because education reform has been undertaken through discrete and donor-initiated projects, DepED has not fully graduated from pilot testing reform interventions on a limited number of pilot schools to its presumed second phase—the scaling up and uniform implementation of the reform. Not until BEAM and TEEP did DepEd conduct an experiment covering all schools in more than 40 divisions.

The unprecedented BEAM and TEEP experiment effectively challenged DepEd's assumptions about education reform. For instance, the Department has begun to understand that education reform experiments require scale—tens of thousands of schools in contiguous geographic areas rather than a few hundred schools scattered across provinces—to make a difference. DepEd has also slowly realized that any reform initiative, no matter how effective in particular areas of the country, cannot be cascaded down uniformly to schools. In fact, the Department has adopted the phrase 'rolling down' to describe the adaptation of interventions to different terrains. It has also begun to discover the wisdom of enabling experiments that allow schools to choose appropriate materials and strategies that would enhance their learning environments. In fine, DepEd is evolving, albeit very slowly, from the cocoon of small-scale quasi experiments.

Having critiqued the notion of piloted or projectized reform, it is important to qualify that there is nothing inherently wrong with treating the conceptualization and implementation of particular reform interventions as projects. In fact, this might be the way to focus the attention of units within DepEd to achieve particular performance outcomes. Projectization becomes problematic, however, when a mission as important as scaling up or sustaining reform is not undertaken without external prodding and when the bearers of institutional reform in the bureaucracy no longer vigorously exert efforts to sustain reform gains after meeting project targets.

Pilot Projectized Reform at the Margins of DepEd

The task of instituting new ideas from pilot projects within the bureaucracy is particularly challenging because most of the donor-initiated reform projects are administered within DepEd but outside its main line of operations. In truth, most of the projects in Box 1 were actually handled by a specially designated DepEd office—the Educational Project Implementation Task Force or EDPITAF, which has its own internal project staff and external consultants. Other DepEd offices (at the central, regional, and division levels) may be involved in specific project

activities, but only when needed and with explicit instructions from the DepEd Secretary or Undersecretary (through a Department Order). For the most part, the management and operations of these donor-initiated reform projects exclude most of the organic units of the DepEd bureaucracy. Conversely, the consultants and internal project staff are not directly involved in the delivery of most of the Department's services. As a consequence, the reform projects remain peripheral to the operation of the DepEd bureaucracy throughout their implementation.

Given this scenario, it is not easy for key components of the reform projects to be assimilated into DepEd's practices. The difficulty is aggravated by the negative sentiments of the DepEd insiders towards the projects, their consultants and contractual project staff. There seems to be a widespread view among staff members that the pilot projects are pursued primarily for the huge financial resources they bring in to DepEd. They view with much skepticism the participation of highly paid consultants, some of whom are perceived to lack grounding in DepEd realities and the "proper" motivation to reform education. It does not help that the perceived financial support given to regular DepEd staff members (i.e., from the central, regional, and division offices, and the schools) in the form of Employee Extra Duty Allowance (EEDA) and per diem for their engagement in various projects, reinforce the cynical outlook of uninvolved officials and members of the DepEd bureaucracy. Such a seemingly pervasive outlook further cuts off the reform projects, the new educational discourses they introduce, and their overall positive outcomes, from mainstream DepEd practices.

Waged at the margins of DepEd operations, the donor-initiated and projectized nature of education reform have ostensibly prevented the Department from orchestrating or directing the reform process. DepEd does not seem resolute, for instance, to take on the responsibility of processing the experiences and outcomes of every reform project it approves, drawing their implications for a long-term reform agenda, and carrying out changes in reform goals and strategies if warranted. Instead, DepEd seems to have simply moved from one project to the next, little or no effort to harmonize or interrelate project outcomes that would enable it to avoid overlaps and resource wastage, promote policy and pedagogical consistency, and connect with wider social reform initiatives.

Despite this tendency, there have been many instances when certain reform features migrate to subsequent projects because of individual DepEd personnel who carry over the reform principles and practices to the new projects they are asked to work with. While this has been a positive development, it does not mean that DepEd has institutionalized such principles and practices. When their bearers are given assignments that no longer directly relate to reform, their advocacies are likely to be relegated to oblivion. With the loss of institutional memory, subsequent donor-initiated projects would probably waste precious time reinventing wheels that had worked well for similarly situated reform projects in the past.

Untapped Project Lessons for Setting Policy Directions: ### *Which Level to Lodge SBM Implementation In as Case in Point*

The final reports or mid-term assessments of reformist frameworks and projects like BEAM and TEEP usually analyze their strengths and weaknesses. The question is whether DepEd has an institutionalized system of processing project outcomes and their implications for reforms in the public school system.

In theory, the implications of the BEAM and TEEP experience should have been assessed by the Research, Innovation and Policy Evaluation System (RIPES) that DepEd created in 2003 to rationalize decision-making in the area of research and innovation and their utilization. After all, RIPES is mandated to expand the roles of the Executive and Program Committee of the Department and serve as clearing house for its research and innovation activities. Unfortunately, the RIPES Secretariat, which was lodged in the Planning and Programming Division of the Office of the Planning Service, was later transferred to the DepEd Special Concerns Office under the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Legal Affairs. This move weakened the policy research unit within DepEd considerably even before it could operate effectively. It also wasted the talents and training of the staff employed to ensure evidence-based policy formulation and institutionalized research management.

Had RIPES been operational, it could have proposed a plan on how to more effectively decentralize education through SBM on a national scale. The experiences of the BEAM and TEEP projects could have been a basis for a recommendation on whether the DepEd schools division or the regional office ought to be the unit in charge of providing SBM support. More particularly, it could have processed the following observations to refine the Department's organizational policy in this regard.

Within the framework of decentralization, BEAM and TEEP worked through different layers of the bureaucracy. BEAM operated through the regional offices of Regions XI, XII and ARMM. Working primarily through this level facilitated the remarkable changes in classroom philosophy, organization, and culture in many BEAM schools. It also promises to ensure the sustainability of the project's contributions in a hierarchical system where power is still concentrated in the regional and central offices.

In contrast, TEEP bypassed the regional offices (while emphasizing their role in quality assurance) and made the divisions directly responsible for SBM implementation and the provision of support to schools. This decision was guided in part by a study commissioned by the Project—the Center for Public Resource Management's *Decentralized Management of Resources for Education.* This study proposed the designation of the schools division office as the enterprise unit in which to lodge the decentralized function of supporting schools. Accordingly, the division office has a comparative advantage over the region because it strikes a balance between geographical coverage that reflects local conditions and the cost of upgrading capacities for resource generation and management. The geographic coverage of the regional office is too wide although the cost of upgrading capacities, resource generation, and management would be relatively small. On the other hand, the cost of lodging decentralization in a unit lower than the division (i.e., the districts) would be too high because there are too many districts and their initial capacities are low.

The TEEP experience affirms the wisdom of lodging decentralization in the school divisions rather than the regional office. Empirically, TEEP schools with strong division support showed more significant and sustained improvements in NAT scores than those with less supportive divisions (Bautista, 2005). However, the TEEP set up where division superintendents accounted for their achievements in regular face-to-face work planning meetings on which the Project management based the granting of incentives or disincentives—e.g. additional support for good performance and the reallocation of unabsorbed funds to other divisions for those that are not able to move funds—impelled even the seemingly less supportive divisions in TEEP to make sure SBM was implemented in their schools. Thus, the average TEEP schools performed better in NAT than the other poor division clusters.

While NAT is a weak universal test that may not be attuned to the development of higher order thinking skills and varied learning assessments, it should not be difficult hypothesize that pupils in the BEAM schools would score higher in NAT because it tests more basic competencies. Indeed, this may have actually been the case for specific BEAM schools where school heads and teachers understood and applied the learner-centered themes of BEAM training. That the performance of divisions, with the exception of North Cotabato, which also happens to be a TEEP division, has not been at par with TEEP and the other poor and non-poor division clusters suggests a number of possibilities. One is that NAT and better quality assessments like BEAM's RAMSE are completely incompatible (therefore the need to shift to another universal metric). It is also quite likely that the schools BEAM covered did not receive the regular encouragement and follow-up division support that spelled the difference for the TEEP schools. Had BEAM combined TEEP's mode of division support with what many consider to be its superior learning-centered education model, the integration of BEAM's ideas into many more classrooms, at least in Regions XI and XII might have proceeded at a much faster pace[xxvii].

Conversely, the introduction of BEAM's philosophy of education and pedagogy into the TEEP divisions would have further enhanced teaching and learning in their schools. Interestingly, the "rolling down" of BEAM's learning approaches into the terrain of the TEEP divisions seemed timely in 2006. At the time, participants of the TEEP Completion Workshop held in July 2006, whose schools have shown remarkable improvements in NAT scores—some jumping from a low mean percentage score of 15 to 60 within three years—began asking for new pedagogies. Since they had proven themselves on DepEd's universal test, they felt more confident to move on to the use of alternative ways of honing the critical thinking skills of their pupils. Unfortunately, this happened when DepEd officials pitted TEEP against BEAM, asking division superintendents to choose between the two models even before assessing their strengths and weaknesses.

For whatever its worth, the NAT result in the BEAM divisions underscores the importance of tapping into the potential synergy of the BEAM and TEEP strategies. Admittedly, BEAM's philosophy, which underlies the current national teacher competency standards, the teacher pre- and in-service capacity-building on learner-centered facilitation, and the development of varied student assessments, are necessary for long-term and sustained effects on classroom learning and performance outcomes. However, TEEP's SBM strategies would, in all likelihood, hasten the reform process when SBM is scaled up nationally. These strategies include: 1) the milestones that require planning with stakeholders (and annual reporting/accountability to stakeholders), 2) actual fund management by the school heads, 3) their supervision of school building construction and procurement of goods, 4) the formal and informal "training on the run" of division officials, school heads and teachers, 5) the formation of clusters of leader and satellite schools, small monograde and multigrade/incomplete schools among the leader schools; and 5) focused division support and assistance especially to disadvantaged schools.

Metaphorically, BEAM's valuable interventions would have had a higher probability of rooting faster had TEEP's division-mediated SBM been used to till the soil. In other words, the TEEP SBM model, which gives premium to strong schools division support, among other features, is a good preliminary or simultaneous strategy for shaking prevailing systems and inducing education stakeholders at the school level, to open up to the much-needed shifts in learning paradigms that the BEAM model strongly advocates. DepEd as an institution would have been served better had RIPES arrived at assessments such as this and brought them to the attention of program implementers.

Constraints Beyond DepEd's Control

Education reform is not completely within the control of DepEd, however. Apart from Congress and the Office of the President, other agencies like the Department of Budget and Management (DBM), the Commission on Audit (COA) and local government units (LGUs) have affected the education reform process as well.

Reflecting on governance issues in DepEd, former Undersecretary Juan Miguel Luz (2008) argues that DBM's annual budgeting cycle has not addressed the problems of education for the most part. He cites two reasons for this:

> "First, the annual budget allocates funds for identified deliverables but pays no attention to whether deliverables from the previous year(s) have been delivered or not. The period for budget preparation and defense is done well before the programs and projects of the previous budgets of the previous year are delivered. The reality: whether these programs are in fact delivered or not is immaterial to the drafting of the succeeding year's budget. Therefore, no one is accountable for performance.
>
> Second, the education budget cycle and the national budget cycle do not coincide. The latter is based on the calendar year; the former starts with the commencement of the school-year in June. In truth, the entire budget cycle of DepEd is closer to 18 months from budget call to initial release of funds versus a 12-month cycle for the national budget"

The mismatch between the DBM and DepEd budget cycles results in delayed releases of DepEd allocations, adversely affecting reform-oriented projects. Take the case of TEEP. The release of the remaining 25% of the 2005 budget allocation in the first quarter of 2006, led to the non-issuance of contracts for much needed works that should have been covered by this fund balance.

DepEd's adherence to an annual budgeting cycle tends to undermine reform efforts in another way. Since the inculcation of a reform-orientation within DepEd entails keen awareness among its officials and staff of clearly set performance goals and targets, Luz argues further that the unsynchronized DBM and DepEd budget cycles makes it easier for DepEd leaders to just focus on inputs as measures of performance. DepEd, is thus distracted from the goals of quality education, the real bottom line in a context where reform has not taken root.

The Commission on Audit for its part has a double-edged effect on DepEd's reformist interventions. On the one hand, it serves as a good antidote to corruption. If the stringent provisions of the procurement law were enforced and COA checks its enforcement, there would be no corruption in DepEd. On the other hand, COA might have also unknowingly hindered or slackened the pace of the reform process. In the TEEP experience, COA disallowed the advances the Project made to LGUs to speed-up the LGU-led building constructions, which, unfortunately, were not honored by subsequent politicians. Fear of such disallowances, whether warranted or not, has unwittingly contributed to the DepEd officials' preference for auto-piloting or doing what they are used to doing, rather than engaging in a reformist mode of institutional existence. Even career executives who may be convinced of the remarkable outcomes of reform projects are vulnerable to coasting along rather than risking the loss of retirement benefits to COA disallowances.

Like COA, the LGUs have a nuanced effect on education reform. The experiences of BEAM and TEEP as well as private sector NGOs like SYNERGEIA[xxviii] reveal their potential contribution in pushing reforms measures in geographic areas led by LGU officials who are committed to the

delivery of basic services. Where local officials were progressive, TEEP schools flourished. Similarly, in places covered by Synergeia, Local School Boards chaired by the local chief executive had a greater likelihood of addressing access and quality issues. In truth, the commendable efforts of Synergeia in creating local school boards in areas where LGU officials are enlightened (e.g. Naga City) and building a critical mass of LGUs committed to quality education, are helping create effective models of school governance.

It is unfortunate, however, that the efforts of the very few reform-minded LGU heads are severely undermined when the guards change with local elections. It is also regrettable that enlightened LGU executives do not yet constitute a majority at this time. In some TEEP municipalities, mayors from deeply seated political clans stood in the way of reform simply by throwing their weight around. They harassed school heads to resign and give way to less eligible relatives, interfered with the appointment of teachers, and pressured the TEEP staff to disregard its needs-based priority list of schools requiring new classrooms for the sake of schools within the vicinity of their more influential constituents. Some LGU officials also meddled directly in civil works projects. TEEP experienced, for instance, local executives who insisted on the selection of particular school building contractors without the usual bidding.

The uneven maturity of LGUs in terms of democratic governance brings to the fore the issue of the form decentralization should eventually take in education[xxix]. At least two models exist—the devolution to LGUs ("municipalization" in Latin America) and the decentralization of management within the state's education bureaucracy, from central offices to the schools. As in Central America, the Philippine model has taken the second form, with the consequence that municipalities have been secondary players in education delivery (Gropello, 2006).

There is growing pressure, however, on LGUs to increasingly take responsibility for the delivery of basic education. Interestingly, the concept of the School Governing Council or Local School Board (SGC/LSB) bridges the devolution model that puts the onus of providing basic education on the shoulders of LGUs and the current decentralization mode that devolves power from the Central DepEd Office to the schools. While chaired by the Chief Local Executive, the SGC/LSB, in theory would be respectful of the autonomy granted to schools. But in the face of uneven LGU maturity, it may be wise to establish SGCS/LSBs in phases depending on the political maturity of the LGUs.

The TEEP experience offers an interim solution in areas where patronage politics prevails. In compliance with the provisions of then Secretary Florencio Abad's *Schools First Initiative (SFI)* to set up School Governing Councils (SGC) or Local School Boards (LSB), division superintendents in politicized areas supported the setting up of SGCs but allowed for flexibility in the choice of chairs. The SGC/LSBs were not necessarily chaired by the local chief executive but by the PTCA president, an NGO representative, or the school head, depending on the preference of the body that elects the Council officials.

Policy Covers, Policy Continuity and Leadership: Do They Matter?

Education reform requires appropriate policy covers and continuity over time. RA9155 provided the impetus for the development of SBM. To its credit, DepEd demonstrated policy continuity as far as SBM is concerned—from the lobby for the passage of RA9155 to the stipulation of its internal rules and regulations, down to the implementation of SBM and its eventual integration into BESRA. This is remarkable indeed considering the impulse of Filipino government leaders to reinvent the wheel for the sake of a legacy that will be associated with them. It is also

significant in light of DepEd's past record of having two Department Secretaries who derailed a reform agenda as major as EDCOM.

As far as the language issue is concerned, however, DepEd has not demonstrated the resolve to review the bilingual policy despite overwhelming research evidence for its revision. Thus, as noted earlier, the Department virtually left policy making on this issue to politicians. DepEd's reluctance to revise its bilingual policy may not be due solely to the Department's concern with the political controversy generated by such a review. Rather, some of its officials and staff, like other education advocates, are themselves unconvinced of the need to teach young children in the mother tongue. Lack of awareness of scientific evidence on cognitive processes and the increasing universality of the English language with globalization seem to have clouded their view on this matter (Bernardo, 2004; 2008).

Policy continuity is important but it is not enough. While the appropriate policy and its continuity across DepEd administrations are necessary for reform, they are not sufficient to bring it about. If reform is to take place, gain momentum and lead to transformative effects, policies—which are but abstract guidelines on paper—must be operationalized and implemented resolutely. However, policy implementation is constrained when the institution is unable to match the resistance to reform from within and outside its ranks, with the will to carry out its policies. Take the case of decentralization. The seeming reluctance of DepEd to scale up a division-mediated SBM and the seemingly equivocal position of its officials on the proposed Congressional amendment of RA9155 to restore the prerogatives of district supervisors over school heads, suggest the capacity of interest groups within the bureaucracy to wage an effective resistance to the implementation of a legislated policy.

Top leadership matters; changing Secretaries too often constrain reform. In the two instances of the language issue and decentralization, leadership at the highest level of the DepEd bureaucracy is crucial to break the impasse either in policy revision or the implementation of existing policy. However, the rapid succession of DepEd's top leaders—six secretaries in eight years since 2000!—has left very little time for the theoretical and empirical arguments surrounding the language issue to sink in. Unfortunately, it has also broken the momentum of decentralization. In every transition from one DepEd Secretary to the next, the organic staff would "wait-and-see" to assess if expending energy on decentralization and SBM is worth it.

Indeed leadership at the top can make a difference The DepEd Secretary has the power to push the bureaucracy to prioritize the implementation of a reform agenda. For instance, while all DepEd secretaries from Raul Roco to Jesli Lapus supported SBM, two stand out for their contribution to its development. It is quite evident from the TEEP experience that the groundwork for SBM was laid quickly without being thwarted by internal resistance to decentralization when the Secretary (Roco) indicated his personal resolve to make TEEP move through the divisions. Similarly, SBM flourished and became DepEd's flagship program under Secretary Florencio Abad. In fact, Abad even managed to get the Department of Public Works and Highway's share of the school building funds for DepEd to manage under the principal-led construction mode.

But involvement of the highest official in DepEd is a double-edged sword in a regime of projectized and disjointed reform. Roco's direct involvement in TEEP is a case in point. It made the Project more susceptible to the politics of DepEd. Throughout the period after Roco's administration, even while SBM under TEEP was blossoming, its achievements seemed to have been underestimated partly because the project was associated with Roco. In a sense, TEEP became a virtual orphan after Roco, an exception to the common belief that success has many mothers and fathers.

In contrast to TEEP, BEAM seems to have been less affected by the central politics of DepEd[xxx]. In fact, its contributions are widely recognized and hailed by DepEd's officialdom at all levels. Apart from its remarkable achievements and the inherent value of its contributions, the reasons behind BEAM's acceptability are instructive. First, BEAM is supported by a grant rather than a loan. The loan for big ticket items like civil works has made some officials who are against borrowing money, more wary of TEEP and, unwittingly, less open to recognizing its achievements. Second, BEAM focused on the substance of education reform—learning in the classroom. This relegated potentially controversial and politically contentious civil works projects to minimal priority in BEAM. Third, BEAM's leader, who personally projects deep commitment and missionary zeal, is an Australian who has managed to protect the project from being associated with any DepEd official while maintaining collaborative links and congenial relations with central, regional, and division DepEd officials and personnel. Fourth, BEAM might have found it easier to convince regional directors, superintendents, selected educators and other high DepEd officials of the value of its programs because they saw for themselves how these programs worked in Australian schools during their study tours. Fifth, BEAM operated through the regional office, and therefore, had less powerful enemies to contend with. Finally, BEAM's programs focused on Mindanao and were far from the center. Moreover, the central office valued BEAM's contributions to teacher and Madrasah education nationwide.

DepEd's top leadership matters but it is equally important, to have a strong second layer of career executives. DepEd Secretaries usually have priority program thrusts that differ from what DepEd as an institution is committed to do. In such a situation, the onus for sustaining previous reform efforts should fall on the undersecretaries and assistant secretaries, preferably career executives who understand institutional imperatives. At least one of them must take the lead to ensure that the bureaucracy takes on the reformist tasks it had set for itself. Several factors would prevent this from happening, however: the replacement of undersecretaries and assistant secretaries with new appointees because they serve in a coterminous capacity with the DepEd Secretary; their inability to mobilize colleagues and subordinates because they do not have the track record to gain respect; they do not have the energy to push changes; they do not have the support of the Secretary; or they are unable to communicate or coordinate with their colleagues in the Dep Ed officialdom.

Leadership at the division and school levels is clearly more important for effective policy implementation as long as the central offices do not put obstacles in the way. Although the personal support of DepEd's top leaders (the secretary, undersecretaries, and assistant secretaries) is crucial in pushing reform, the TEEP experience also reveals that leadership at the division and school levels is even more important for effective policy implementation. Despite its marginalized status vis-a-vis the DepEd central office, SBM in TEEP prospered because of the leadership of division superintendents and supportive district supervisors, many of them performing outstandingly. In fact, there is now a critical mass of such leaders at the division and district offices who are capable of taking charge of SBM implementation in other division clusters, if institutional projectization (with or without external funds and with systematic processing of lessons) ends up to be the way to move the reform agenda forward.

Two points are worth noting with regards to leadership on the ground. First, division superintendents are effective only if they are selected on the basis of their professional capabilities. The politicization of the selection process in many instances has hampered the capacity of superintendents to mobilize school heads and other stakeholders. Second, in the context of SBM and decentralization, it is even more crucial for school heads, whether they be principals, head teachers or teachers-in-charge, to possess the capacity and sense of mission that

classroom reforms demand. The BEAM and TEEP experiences attest to many heroic school leaders who have turned the dismal situation of their schools around (TEEP-DepEd 2005). Yet, for every excellent instructional leader and school manager, many more school heads who are either ineligible for the post, have had no formal training, or are too engrossed with credentialing in a system that privileges degrees over performance, constrain classroom reform (Luz 2008).

Cultural Barriers

Aside from structural and leadership issues, informal constraints also exacerbate DepEd's difficulty to pursue and sustain education reform. These constraints include the "extensions, elaborations and modifications of formal rules, socially sanctioned norms of behavior, and internally enforced standards of conduct. They consist of "practices resulting from informal and written constraints that have evolved in the context of repeated interaction" (North 1990: 40). These prevailing practices and the mindsets that underlie them constitute the institutional culture of a bureaucracy. In the case of DepEd, they have kept the Department from reflecting on its projects, reform discourses and the results of education research.

Inertia and resistance to change. As with other bureaucracies, resistance to institutional change appears to be the rule rather than the exception in DepEd. The issue of language in teaching and in learning illustrates this point. The cultural barriers in language-related reform may be linked to various implicit assumptions held by many educated Filipinos including policy makers. These include suppositions such as: (a) only one language should be used in instruction; thus, for bilinguals, one language has to be chosen over another, (b) the language codes of bilinguals should be kept separate during learning, (c) in order to maximize the learning of English, all other languages should be minimized, if not removed altogether during learning, and (d) the introduction of mother tongue and/or Filipino at any point of schooling has the effect of weakening English instruction (Bernardo 2007).

Such postulations have reinforced the institutional policies and practices of DepEd, rendering alternative views about the role of language in learning unworthy of consideration. Thus, the scientifically validated relationship between the use of the learner's mother tongue in the first years of school and learning how to think, understand, and acquire new and even complex ideas, is ultimately resisted by DepEd. Any acknowledgement or appreciation of the merits of this alternative conception is finally dismissed for pragmatic reasons such as the difficulty of implementing the policy given its demand for new textbooks, instructional materials, tests, etc.

Beyond language, DepEd's inertia and general resistance to change is also apparent in the Department's unwillingness to adopt approaches, processes, and procedures that worked effectively in reform projects. By way of illustration, TEEP managed to change the system of budget allocation for elementary schools in the course of its implementation. The Project required division superintendents to submit school-by-school accounting of the division funds and material goods delivered to schools from their offices. This became necessary because the "traditional" DepED finance system—which otherwise tightly restricts the allotments for regional offices, division offices and secondary schools to the amount specified in the General Appropriations Act—gives division superintendents much flexibility in allotting division funds to specific elementary schools. In other words, superintendents were not required to account (not even after the fact) for how much of their budget were allocated for particular elementary schools. Budgetary discretion in this regard has led to the ludicrous purchase in some instances, of goods that schools don't need at all (e.g. 100 dictionaries for small schools). Unfortunately, the prudent practice TEEP introduced was not sustained. After TEEP completion, many division

superintendents reverted to the system of discretion in the allocation of funds to elementary schools.

As noted earlier, TEEP also managed to effect the drilling down of cash from the central office to the divisions (skipping the regional offices) and in a quick manner. The time the funds reached the divisions was reduced by at least two weeks through a simple innovation. Vouchers and actual checks made the rounds of the relevant central offices only once, with those responsible for financial management exerting extra vigilance to avoid anomalies. Interestingly, this innovation worked while TEEP was ongoing. Soon after the project ended, DepEd reverted to the old system of routing vouchers and checks separately for the 23 TEEP divisions.

More regrettable was the curtain call on the drilling down to schools of cash allocations (rather than equivalent goods) after TEEP completion. This happened even before the practice was voluntarily adopted by all 23 division superintendents. It is interesting that while they agreed to do so in principle (and in time), only five division superintendents at project end drilled down the division's MOOE budget to elementary schools based on a formula that privileged the disadvantaged schools in the division. This was perhaps one policy that superintendents found very difficult to implement and those who did were commendable for letting go of a major source of power and discretion. It is unfortunate that some of the divisions that drilled down cash have had great difficulty in sustaining the devolution of financial power to schools. BESRA's universal implementation of this policy based on the TEEP experience would thus, start nearly from scratch.

Reverting to old practices at the end of project life reflects DepEd's resistance to scaling up changes that work. The inertia of such resistance is rooted in the bureaucracy's prevailing power structure. The division superintendents' decision, for instance, to renege on their expressed commitment (in principle) to drilling down cash to schools after the completion of TEEP, illustrates the very real problem of devolving the power of the purse. The same struggle to let go of traditional power manifests in the regional directors' reaction to the drilling down of funds to the divisions and in the district supervisors lobby for the restoration of their prerogatives through the amendment of RA 9155. At the end of the day, the resistance of DepEd officials at the central, regional, division, and district levels to the devolution of specific powers to the offices directly under them, and, eventually to the schools they serve, taps into the fear of losing control when the hierachical culture of DepEd is undermined by the decentralization reform thrust.

Hierarchical Culture: "No Memo, No Action". The governance of DepEd is not only highly centralized, it is also extremely hierarchical. For instance, no policy or practice in the lower levels of the hierarchy may change or take place unless there is an explicit DepEd Memo from the central office that allows it. Luz aptly describes this syndrome:

> "The DepEd bureaucracy lives by the DepEd Memo. This is so ingrained in the system that administrators and school heads will wait for [it] rather than act on their own. A common joke made: A principal will wait for a DepEd Memo on "principal empowerment" before he will act on an issue."(Luz, 2008)

This cultural mindset is undermining DepEd's moves towards decentralization. Indeed, despite the success of SBM in both BEAM and TEEP and the proven capacity of school heads to supervise classroom construction and manage funds, they are still constrained by the fear of being sanctioned for instituting necessary changes in their schools without a corresponding Memo. On the part of the Central office, the "No Memo, No Action" thinking reflects a general distrust of the school heads and classroom teachers' ability to think for themselves and their schools.

Culture of Obeisance. DepEd's hierarchical culture with its "No Memo, No Action" mode of operation has led to some rather ridiculous scenarios. There have been instances of schools rejecting much-needed donations from credible donors because of the absence of a Memo from higher authorities. These cases reveal a related cultural feature that explains why the institutional hierarchy is deeply entrenched and resistant to change: the culture of obeisance in the DepEd bureaucracy (and possibly other Philippine bureaucracies).

How is this culture manifested?

Thirty years ago, the late University of the Philippines professor Priscilla Manalang provided snippets of a prevalent culture that survives to this day:

> "In response to bureau demands, much of the teacher's time was spent in filling out forms and drafting reports to be submitted on specified deadlines. Prior to SY1979-1980, more than 100 reports were expected of the school heads at the end of the school year...whole days were occupied with working on statistics required at short notice. On such days, teachers were summoned from the classroom to help gather data, organize, and draft reports. Because there were no office personnel, teachers themselves acted as clerks and typists...On other days...related to their duty was the serving of refreshments or meals to important visitors such as district supervisors and other school officials…teachers even prepare food in the kitchen (Manalang 1977: 88, 119).

The so-called school "observation visitations" of the higher-ups do not only engage teachers in the choice of gifts for the guests to bring home—thus earning the pejorative description of these visits as fruit-ful and fish-ful "*bitbit-ations*" (visits that enable carrying back fruits, fish, and other delicacies)—but also preparing pupils during class hours to welcome DepEd's important visitors.

Socialized in this deferential culture, teachers hardly complain about the multiple tasks they are made to perform outside their primary teaching duty. Nor are they wont to express their concerns to higher authorities. Similarly, school heads, division superintendents, and regional directors, no matter how outspoken, would defer to those above them even if they are more experienced or knowledgeable on an issue. Although such deference has killed many initiatives, there are hopeful signs that the culture of obeisance has begun to change with SBM. Some officials at the central, regional and division offices have decried the empowerment of school heads, citing their increasing stubbornness and arrogance. Accordingly, principals have begun to answer authorities back, read as: they are now (thankfully) expressing their positions on specific issues.

The culture of obeisance is shored up by tacitly accepted sanctions for disobedience in the bureaucracy. These range from formal punishments—poor performance ratings, delayed promotions and the threats of a COA disallowance or potential administrative cases—to informal penalties that include withdrawal of privileges, assignment of insufferable or even hazardous tasks or reassignment to a less preferred unit.

Aside from undermining initiative and resourcefulness within the bureaucracy, the culture of obeisance is also linked to the apparent tolerance for wrongdoing in DepEd (as well as other government agencies in the Philippines). This culture seems to go hand in hand with employees and lower echelon officials turning the other way when faced with misdemeanor in public office, cheating and generally corrupt practices. Expressing disagreements or taking an ethical stance to correct wrong actions is deemed too inconvenient and risky to one's job or career.

As far as education reform is concerned, the culture of obeisance has another downside that is associated with an otherwise welcome premise—that the human agency of individuals operating at the lowest rung of the bureaucracy cannot be fully eroded no matter how controlling the bureaucratic structures and processes. The downside is staff resistance to changes affecting normal operations that are imposed from above. This resistance, which morphs into a "weapon of the weak"[xxxi], has the power to undermine reformist initiatives. Even at higher levels of the bureaucracy, Bureau directors can quietly resist changes introduced by their superiors, especially if these are proposed by outside technical consultants who are perceived to be supercilious but ignorant of the complex DepEd situation. These officials may comply minimally to the changes required by projectized reformist interventions (especially if these are accompanied by a DepEd Memo).

Minimal compliance to program or project implementation as the normative response of different units of the bureaucracy undermines the spirit of reform. It highlights the paradox of DepEd as a weak institution as far as pushing education reform is concerned and a strong institution in resisting and sustaining much-needed change.

RETHINKING THE PROJECTIZATION OF REFORM

How to transform DepEd from a coping and reform-resistant institution into a dynamic and reformist one is its major challenge at this juncture. This challenge translates to the problem of infusing the bureaucracy with the fervor of a reform movement in response to the never ending lamentations about the deterioration of Philippine basic education. At first blush, this is almost asking for the moon. However, the BEAM and TEEP experience in more than 40 divisions shows that such movement-like fervor can be approximated without necessarily changing guards. Unfortunately, the passion for change has risen or fallen with the project life cycle. The palpable spirit of ground-level reform in TEEP, for instance, appears to have waned after the completion of the project, supporting the view of skeptical reformists within and outside Dep Ed that the institution has no means to carry out reform other than through disjointed externally-initiated projects. Hopefully, this is no longer the case.

The Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA)

In 2006, DepEd formulated the Basic Education Reform Agenda (BESRA) and has since forged consensus among different stakeholders on its implementation. BESRA is a comprehensive and sector-wide reform package that is remarkable in many respects.

First, it aims to change the entire sector, and not just specific target sites for pilot implementation. The articulation of the intended scale and scope of BESRA is not something that is typically heard from DepEd. BESRA thus addresses the problem of disjointed and projectized reform.

Second, in terms of its perceptive analysis and extensive recommendations, BESRA parallels the Congress-initiated EDCOM. Lodged in the executive branch of government, however, it promises to overcome EDCOM's weakness of having a strong Congressional backing for legislative proposals but "much less influence on eventual action" (Imperial, 2007).

Third, Like EDCOM, BESRA integrates past and present education reform frameworks and discourses. Its general objectives are anchored on the targets of EFA and refer to universal access and success for children in basic education schooling. BESRA's discourse adopts the shift from education as the acquisition of knowledge and skills to education as the learning of key

competencies—abilities, both cognitive (e.g. higher levels of thinking such as being able to critically reflect on information in order to apply these for the learners' purposes) and non-cognitive (e.g. values, beliefs and motivations)—that enable the successful implementation of tasks with complex requirements (Bautista and Anonuevo 2005).

Reiterating EDCOM and the National Action Plan EFA 2015, BESRA considers functional literacy as a key competence to learn in basic education. Broadly conceived, functional literacy is "the capacities to access, integrate, evaluate and manage information and knowledge. It provides learners a window to the world and the linguistic, textual and symbolic tools to engage with the world as acting and autonomous individuals interacting with various groups"[xxxii]

The idea of functionality in relation to daily life entails focusing on the learner and her interaction with the environment in which she is expected to function. As such, the notion implies context specificity. It also involves sensitivity to the culture and the language of the learner as well as program autonomy, responsiveness, diversity, and flexibility. For these reasons, BESRA, like EDCOM before it, pays special attention to the language of learning and the decentralization thrust that enhances the relevance and effectiveness of learning programs. In fact, decentralized governance through school-based management as articulated in RA 9155 is the core strategy of BESRA. The empowerment of schools and local communities as catalysts for the implementation of various strategies to achieve education reform is a major advocacy.

Fourth, Beyond discourses, BESRA benefited immensely from new research findings on cognitive processes as well as strategies that have actually worked for reform projects like BEAM and TEEP. BESRA's documents, for instance, integrated entire sections of the DepEd-TEEP's SBM manual. In contrast, decentralization and SBM were abstract concepts when EDCOM completed its work in 1991.

Fifth, BESRA's comprehensiveness is reflected in the five Key Reform Thrusts (KRTs) around which recommendations are organized:

- KRT 1: Get all schools to continuously improve with active involvement of local stakeholder;
- KRT 2: Enable teachers to further enhance their contribution to learning outcomes using clearly defined competency standards;
- KRT 3: Increase social support to attainment of desired learning outcomes by defining national curriculum strategies, multi-sectoral coordination, and quality assurance;
- KRT 4: Improve impact on outcomes from complementary early childhood education, alternative learning systems and private sector participation; and
- KRT 5: Change the institutional culture of DepED to better support these key reform thrusts

The above KRT's are proposed to be integral parts of the multidimensional sector-wide reform effort. The breadth of BESRA's policy actions is manifested in its inclusion of action plans for long-standing issues such as the use of the mother tongue in the early years. Approaching reform in the broad and multi-component approach of BESRA is a significant deviation from the typical pilot project design that isolates problem variables for intervention. Instead, BESRA aims to address several areas of concern simultaneously and in a concerted manner.

BESRA as projectized reform

While it offers a way out of the de facto "reform of the basic education system through disjointed projects", BESRA still exemplifies key features of projectized reform. For one, the initiative for BESRA emanated formally from DepEd but, unlike EDCOM, its formulation was supported by the World Bank. Moreover, the scale of the intended reform throughout the country requires bigger investments for specific components and sub-components and hence, financial assistance from foreign donor agencies and the private sector.

The role of external donors and agencies may not be confined solely to providing funding support for BESRA implementation, however. There seems to be demand as well for external technical support to read, process, and prioritize the outputs of BESRA to help DepEd plan a more effective approach to large-scale sector-wide reform. As with previous reform projects involving the Department, external consultants, rather than an internal DepEd team may be asked to provide the intellectual resources for planning and carrying out the expected reform.

Like most of the earlier externally funded reform projects, the task of coordinating the various components of the sector wide reform falls on EDPITAF. If EDPITAF operates independently of the rest of the DepEd bureaucracy as in the past, the downside of BESRA implementation would be the lack of wide-spread acceptance and ownership of its outcomes, unless of course the leadership at various levels of DepEd's bureaucracy is deeply committed to BESRA and indifferent to the organizational modality of its implementation in EDPITAF.

Is there institutional commitment to BESRA such that DepEd executives would push its implementation regardless of their own sense of priorities? The observations presented earlier regarding the future of SBM—i.e. the Second Joint Implementation Review Mission of the World Bank and AusAid's Aide Memoir about the DepEd officials' engagement with BESRA at the national and regional levels but not at the ground level, DepEd's seemingly disinterested response to the proposed amendment to RA9155 in support of the lobby of district supervisors; the balance amendment of the teachers' Magna Carta and other issues arising from BESRA—present a mixed prognosis, depending upon whether one looks at the same glass as either half empty or a half full.

Additional concerns about the rapid turnover of Department Secretaries and the second and third echelon of officials who serve with them conterminously tend to tilt the perspective towards the "half-empty" outlook, fueling skepticism about the future of BESRA. Will BESRA be another addition to the country's virtual museum of well-analyzed, coherent and discursive reform surveys with recommendations that have wide-ranging implications for education reform, if implemented? Or will it finally catalyze the massive transformation of Philippine basic education (and with it, higher education), from the ground up?

Seeds of hope: When a Project is Less of a Project

The verdict is far from made. Although there are indications that BESRA might just operate like another reform or pilot project, there are important differences in how BESRA will be pursued by DepEd compared to other reform projects.

One important difference lies in the reconfiguration of EDPITAF's management of BESRA. It will differ drastically from the old practice where EDPITAF operated almost completely independently of other DepEd offices. BESRA documents suggest that EDPITAF will involve various sectors in different levels of the bureaucracy not only in the implementation of the project, but also in key planning aspects of the reform activity. The preparatory work that went

into finalizing the BESRA policy proposals already demonstrated this change in practice. The various policy proposals were developed after intensive consultations in workshops organized by consultants, and involving various partners—DepEd personnel at the school, division, region, and central/national levels, key representatives from NEDA, CHED, the Civil Service Commission, the Professional Regulatory Commission, business and industry, local government units, NGOs, private foundations, corporate foundations, academe, among others. This unprecedented level and scope of consultation has contributed to an unusually high level of acceptance of many of the key policy proposals. Enhancing the acceptability of BESRA and broadening stakeholder ownership of the agenda, however, would require the more active involvement and visibility of the DepEd Secretary as its chief advocate and champion.

Interestingly, the involvement of many sectors of the DepEd bureaucracy and of external stakeholders would not have been possible without the support of foreign funding and external consultants. Thus, in this particular respect, projectization had its advantages. However, the project management's (i.e., EDPITAF's) plan of undertaking a wider and deeper level of consultation of the DepEd bureaucracy, with external funding support and, when necessary, outside consultants to realize this plan, indicate an important shift in defining the relationship between reform project activities and the mainstream of the DepEd bureaucracy.

A similar shift can be found in the creation of a Technical Coordinating Team and Technical Working Groups (TWG) responsible for the various KRTs of BESRA[xxxiii]. The TCT, which is chaired by senior DepEd managers, is responsible for providing central-level coordination and forwarding BESRA recommendations for adoption by the DepEd management The TWGs, on the other hand, are new quasi-decision making bodies created within the DepEd bureaucracy that are mandated to plan and oversee the implementation of each of the KRTs in BESRA. They are, in fact, headed by Bureau/Service directors. The introduction of TWGs partially addresses the original concern regarding the marginalization of large sectors of bureaucracy, as the TWGs bring in the perspectives of other sectors through their representatives.

Another important development relates to the extent to which DepEd has engaged the larger public in its BESRA advocacy. DepEd has pushed BESRA rather strongly as the framework for all reform activities in Philippine basic education, including foreign assisted reform projects. Its advocacy with the donor community was so effective, that most members of the international donor community now only support projects that fall within the specific reform components of BESRA. An unintended consequence of this advocacy is the forged unity of the international donor community behind a common resolve to make BESRA work. Collectively, foreign donors now have a clear framework for ensuring that DepEd only pursues reform activities that are aligned with BESRA. Suddenly and perhaps unwittingly, DepEd has thus put itself in a position of having stronger accountabilities to the donor community, which is DepEd's main benefactor for the more expensive aspects of BESRA.

But the increased external accountabilities are not only established in relation to foreign donor agencies. Even local stakeholders are now standing in a stronger and clearer position to hold the DepEd accountable for the progress of BESRA. The captains of private sector industry led by the Philippine Business for Education, for instance, adopted BESRA as the framework around which its own intervention projects and advocacies will revolve. Other private foundations are likewise aligning their education related projects to the BESRA principles and designs. These commitments were built by extensive

consultations and advocacy work with these groups. Therefore, the stakeholders have a deep understanding of BESRA, and would know when DepEd is not towing its own line.

The more extensive involvement of the DepEd bureaucracy, the wide consensus building that include varied education stakeholders, and the increased levels of accountability being exacted from the DepEd are important features of BESRA that address some of the key limitations of DepEd's projectized reforms. These positive developments remain tenuous, however, since DepEd can easily revert to old practices when the BESRA implementation becomes too difficult or when leaders at the top echelons of the bureaucracy fail to prioritize BESRA reforms.

Recommendations for Moving BESRA forward

The following recommendations aim to support DepEd's difficult struggle to move BESRA forward and, in the process, strengthen its institutional capacity for education reform.

Constitute the Technical Coordinating Team as the Central Command of the BESRA Reform Process; Assign the Accountability for decentralized Reform to Members of the TCT. A reform movement as wide in geographical coverage and deep in substantive scope as BESRA demands committed cadres at the highest echelon of the bureaucracy. While it may be unrealistic to expect all members of the Team to give BESRA their full attention given the many brush fires DepEd puts out on a day-to-day basis, it is nevertheless urgent for one or two members of the TCT to treat BESRA as her/their time-bound project and work full time in managing, monitoring, coordinating and if necessary, helping fill gaps and troubleshooting the complex implementation of BESRA throughout its different phases. Backed by the authority of the DepEd Secretary, the ones in charge should be accountable to the TCT, the central command of the reform operations which ought to meet regularly and in full force to assess the progress of BESRA. (Incentives for the TCT and those responsible for BESRA's implementation ought to be in place).

A preliminary task for the TCT includes sifting through the BESRA recommendations to identify the legislative agenda that it will also actively pursue.
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Reconfigure the role and operational functions of the central office and lower levels of the bureaucracy To carry out the BESRA strategies, it id necessary to redefine the role of the DepEd Central Office including its various Bureaus. DepEd's top-down management process, in which no one down the line moves without an explicit Memo from the central office, is antithetical to the core values of decentralization in BESRA. As such, it needs to be reconfigured. For the schools to be truly empowered, the central office might have to take on different functions other than prescribing particular practices. Perhaps it should take on roles that are more similar to orchestrating different units and ensuring that they move towards the same goal, even as they may move through various routes. For example, the Central Office might focus on helping different schools and communities determine which among the various types and levels of reform interventions are more appropriate, given the characteristics of the schools and the communities. In this regard, there would also be a need to reconfigure the functions and processes of the Regional and Division offices, as well. Such reconfigurations would require capacity building for DepEd staff even at these higher levels of the bureaucracy.

While the roles and functions at different levels of DepEd are being reconfigured, it might be opportune to begin rethinking the organization of the bureaucracy. Rather than the present structure based on education levels (e.g. elementary, secondary), the Department bureaus might be rationalized along more functional lines (e.g. quality

assurance, learning contexts and strategies, alternative learning systems). The functional integration of existing levels promises to enhance cross-cutting policy and program reform.

Assess and manage resistance to change. One of the key issues relates to DepEd's ability to absorb the consequences of many of the BESRA policy thrusts. Decentralization through SBM is such a major policy shift that it is quite likely for a huge bureaucracy like DepEd not to fully appreciate its consequences for the Department's functioning at many levels. The seemingly equivocal position of some DepEd representatives on the district supervisors' lobby in Congress to amend RA9155 attests to this. It is recommended that the Department take deliberate steps toward assessing and anticipating the risks at different levels of DepEd's operations. These include risks at the community and school level, keeping in mind the wide diversity of economic and socio-political conditions surrounding the over 50,000 schools in the country. There are also important risks related to the middle and higher levels of the DepEd bureaucracy.

Since decentralization, by definition, will mean shifting resources and decision making closer to the ground, there are very real risks associated with the capacity of DepEd's Central bureaus, regional offices, and division offices to absorb the consequences of decentralization. They can very easily undermine the decentralization efforts. Anticipating these risks, learning from the experiences of BEAM and TEEP, and, more important, mobilizing DepEd's human resources and social capital to rally support among DepEd's officialdom for BESRA should contribute towards fine-tuning the implementation aspects of its policy thrusts.

Strengthen TWGs and multisectoral decision making processes. As previously noted, the creation of TWGs is a positive step towards gaining more wide-spread ownership of the outcomes of projectized reforms, as it involves a process of representation and consensus building around policy thrusts in the various KRTs of BESRA. However, the effectiveness of the TWGs is highly dependent first and foremost upon the sense of accountability of members (and most specially the chair) for the success of their respective KRTs. It also depends on whether the TWGs remains truly representative, and strives to forge consensus within their respective constituencies. The risk of unilateral decision making is likely when sector representatives start viewing their participation as merely token, and are not actually part of the decision making and planning processes.

There are two ways by which the multisectoral representation in the TWGs can be strengthened. First, DepEd could find a way to provide financial, material, and human resources to support genuine consultative activities of the different TWG members. The suggestion clearly has a strong projectized flavor, but infusion of external support for such consultative activities can only work to further strengthen the push towards more decentralization. Second, the outputs of the TWGs should carry more weight in the final plans and decisions of DepEd as an institution. This suggestion might require drawing more direct lines of reporting and accountability from the TWGs to the DepEd's central decision making group.

Expand advocacy for and the social marketing of BESRA. Getting the entire DepEd bureaucracy to become more aware of BESRA and commit to it in the shortest possible time is urgent. There is still a lack of awareness, if not resistance, half-heartedness or skepticism about BESRA even among the ranks of undersecretaries and assistant secretaries.Beyond DepEd, the commitment of more sectors to BESRA would redound to a stronger network of support and create a larger community that can demand accountabilities from the Department. Thus, in the short term, advocacy and social marketing will provide DepEd the resources to

augment its limited coffers. The success of the Brigada Skwela is an important case in point. Over the long term, this wide social network will be a watchdog that will keep the bureaucracy on its toes, so to speak. The target of such advocacy and marketing efforts should include key sectors of the government bureaucracy, especially both houses of congress, as well as the private sector. In relation to the private sector, DepEd might begin to experiment on the contracting of basic education services and maximizing other forms of private-public partnership under BESRA.

Prioritize capacity building. The key features of reform directed at decentralization involve empowering and capacitating sectors of the DepEd bureaucracy that have traditionally been left to fend for themselves and make do with what little they have. For decentralization to work, DepEd needs personnel, especially teachers, who can be effective in spite of the limited resources at their disposal. DepEd should, therefore, prioritize efforts to build capacities among its staff, and focus on capacity building that is self-sustaining in the long term.

In recent years, DepEd has harped quite a bit on life-long learning, but it has not taken steps to ensure that its own personnel are capable of sustaining learning and development on their own and within their own circumstances. Thus, capacity building should not only focus on the development of technical skills, but more importantly, on the skills that will empower the staff to continue learning and to drive their own professional development.

Continue developing efficient systems of procurement, financial management, human resources, and formula-based allocation of MOOE. The Second Joint World Bank and AusAid Aide Memoir on the implementation of BESRA noted improvements in the system of procurement of goods. It cited, for instance, that DepEd's decision to unbundle the procurement of book manuscripts from printing, contributed to the lower price of textbooks. Moreover, in the area of financial management, the Aide Memoir also states that much more work is needed in implementing agreed upon financial management systems that are in accordance with the New Government Accounting Systems, various COA and DBM circulars and other rules and regulations. The human resource information system and the formula-based allocation of MOOE, that are currently being developed and piloted under the AusAid performance incentive program, are important initiatives that problematize DepEd's management information systems, the links of oversight agencies, and, in the case of the allocation of MOOE, the need to take into account minimum service standards and poverty-focused allocation[xxxiv]. In connection with formula-based MOOE allocation, the drilling down of funds directly to schools via this formula would go a long way in improving financial management at the lowest levels of the bureaucracy and more importantly, in giving SBM an extra push through greater empowerment of school heads.

Prioritize efficient and cost-effective interventions. Given the volatility of the fiscal situation that surrounds DepEd's operations, it is not likely that the material resources available will improve dramatically in the future. DepEd's dependency on donor organizations is understandable as it pushes for major reforms, but there are long-term consequences to such dependence. Thus, DepEd should push for reform activities that do not require additional infusion of external funds, or that involve more cost-effective use of existing funds at all levels of the bureaucracy. In the long run, the goal of DepEd is to undertake reform or school improvement efforts that are no longer implemented as an externally funded project although they may be organized internally as projects for purposes of focusing attention on building the capacity of schools to keep improving themselves with support from their communities.

Define new metrics of success. At some point, when the consequences of BESRA become more concrete, DepEd will need to develop appropriate metrics for assessing its progress. Clearly some of the standard metrics such as participation rate, cohort survival rate, and drop-out rate,
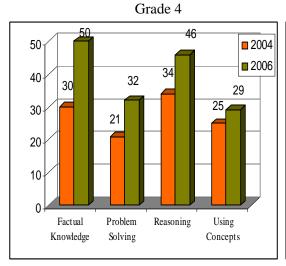
and all those defined in the EFA 2015 need to be preserved, albeit with a common operational definition among actors at all levels of the bureaucracy. But in some of the more important BESRA goals, particularly those related to school-based management, teacher quality, and the attainment of curriculum standards, DepEd will need to develop better assessment tools and assessment systems. In particular, some metrics will need to be reconsidered. For example, if some schools successfully develop learning modules that involve indigenous learning resources, textbooks may become superfluous. Thus, the metric of one textbook per student may no longer be appropriate.

The most important metric to develop, however, relates to student learning. Earlier studies have revealed fundamental problems in DepEd's systems for assessing student learning, and in DepEd's internal capacity to maintain an adequate educational assessment system. The performance of BEAM schools in higher-order thinking, for instance, suggests that some schools are helping students achieve much higher levels of attainment that are not being measured by DepEd's existing tests and measures. But the need for new success metrics should also apply to the various levels of the DepEd bureaucracy as they take on new functions. One of the more effective ways of facilitating the transitioning into new responsibilities is the adoption of appropriate performance appraisal systems with corresponding success indicators.

Beyond BESRA, it is imperative to continue mobilizing state and private sector investments in both formal and alternative learning systems, strengthening LGU involvement, broadening the community of education stakeholders in the country, pursuing reforms and innovations that promise to enhance learning-centered teaching, and moving towards a multi-annual budgeting system that aligns budget allocations to performance (Luz, 2008). To sustain reforms beyond the life of BESRA, however, the adverse impact on education reform of a rapid turnover of DepEd Secretaries, Undersecretaries and Assistant secretaries has to be addressed. It demands the decoupling of the terms of offices of undersecretaries and assistant secretaries from that of the Secretary and, more important, the appointment to these positions of career executives who would depoliticize the bureaucracy, ensure the continuity of education reform thrusts and programs, and institute the future changes entailed by the rolling down of reforms from the top and the transformations that full-scale decentralization would certainly engender from below. The highest assurance or batting average to ensure continuity through appointment of careers executives or CESOs can be had by enlisting no less than the President's support and the advocacy role of the Career Executive Board and the Civil Service Commission.

IN CONCLUSION, BESRA offers the very real possibility of shifting out of an externally induced, disjointed and projectized mode of pursuing education reform. The biggest challenge facing DepEd today is how to substantiate, operationalize, and implement BESRA with firm resolve and unflinching commitment. Addressing this challenge calls for focused orchestration at the highest levels of the institution through a proactive Technical Coordinating Committee which should meet more than once every six months; transformative leadership at the central, regional division, district, and school levels of the bureaucracy; strong partnerships with an ever expanding community of education reform advocates and change catalysts in government, academe, the private business sector, non-government organizations, donors, and geographic communities; and a critical mass of organic staff and DepEd partners who will pursue clearly defined goals and strategies with the fervor, sense of urgency and mission of reformists who are bent on making a difference for future generations of Filipino children. Hopefully with BESRA, DepEd can begin to change the structures, processes, procedures, mindsets, and behavioral practices that have thwarted the transformative potentials of reform interventions since George Counts joined the Monroe Survey and wrote his critique of Philippine education in 1925[xxxv].
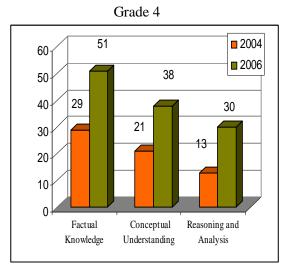
Figure 1. Mean Percentage Scores of Grade 4 and Y2 Students in the Anchored Items of the
Regional Assessment of Mathematics, Science and English by Thinking Skills,
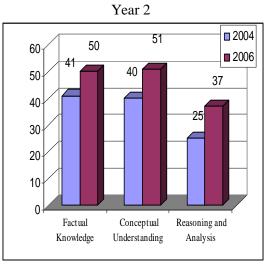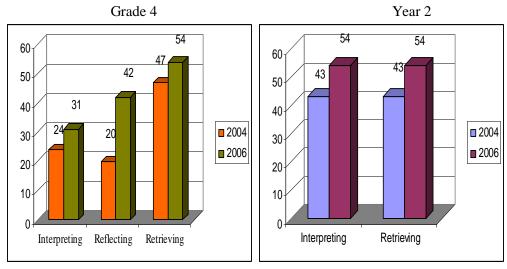Mathematics, 2004 and 2006, BEAM

Source: BEAM RAMSE 2007

Figure 2. Mean Percentage Scores of Grade 4 and Y2 Students in the Anchored Items of the
Regional Assessment of Mathematics, Science and English by Thinking Skills,
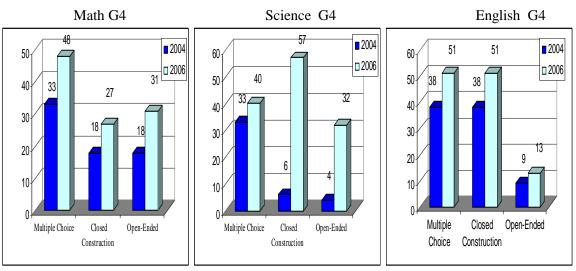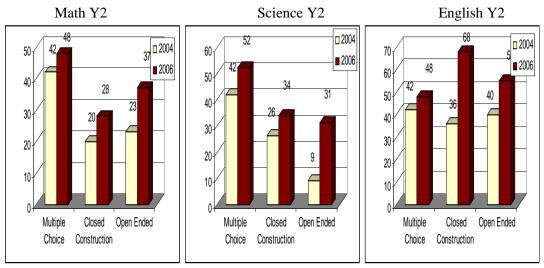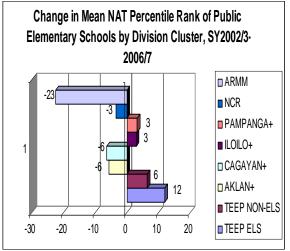Science, 2004 and 2006, BEAM

Source: BEAM RAMSE 2007

Figure 3. Mean Percentage Scores of Grade 4 and Y2 Students in the Anchored Items of the
Regional Assessment of Mathematics, Science and English by Thinking Skills,
English, 2004 and 2006, BEAM

Source: BEAM RAMSE 2007

Figure 4. Mean Percentage Scores of Grade 4 Pupils in the Anchored Items of the
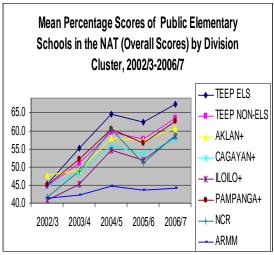Regional Assessment of Mathematics, Science and English by Type of Question,
2004 and 2006, BEAM

Source: BEAM RAMSE 2007

Figure 5. Mean Percentage Scores of Year 2 Students in the Anchored Items of the
      Regional Assessment of Mathematics, Science and English by Type of Question, 2004
      and 2006

Source: BEAM RAMSE 2007

Figure 6a.

Figure 6b

Source: JBIC TEEP External Review Team BEIS+ [integrated BEIS and NAT file]

Figure 7a

Change in Mean NAT Percentile Rank of Public Elementary Schools by Division Cluster, SY2002/3-2006/7

Legend: ARMM, NCR, PAMPANGA+, ILOILO+, CAGAYAN+, AKLAN+, TEEP NON-ELS, TEEP ELS

Values shown: -23, -3, 3, 3, -6, -6, 6, 12

Figure 7b

Mean Percentage Scores of Public Elementary Schools in the NAT (Overall Scores) by Division Cluster, 2002/3-2006/7

Legend: TEEP ELS, TEEP NON-ELS, AKLAN+, CAGAYAN+, ILOILO+, PAMPANGA+, NCR, ARMM

Source: JBIC TEEP External Review Team BEIS+ [integrated BEIS and NAT file]

Figure 8a

Change in NAT Percentile Ranks of Monograde Elementary Public Schools by Division Cluster, SY 02-03, SY 06-07

Legend: ARMM, Pampanga+, Iloilo+, Cagayan+, Aklan+, TEEP non-ELS, TEEP ELS

Values shown: -22.6, 4.6, 4.8, -4.8, -4.1, 7.4, 12.4

Figure 8b

Change in NAT Percentile Ranks of Multigrade and Incomplete Schools by Division Cluster, SY02-03, SY 06-07

Legend: ARMM, Pampanga+, Iloilo+, Cagayan+, Aklan+, TEEP non-ELS, TEEP ELS

Values shown: -22.5, -5.9, -2.7, -10.1, -8.9, 4.3, 9.9

Source: JBIC TEEP External Review Team BEIS+ [integrated BEIS and NAT file]

Figure 9. Change in NAT Rankings* of Teacher-in-Charge Headed Small Monograde Schools by Division Type, 2002-03 to 2004-05
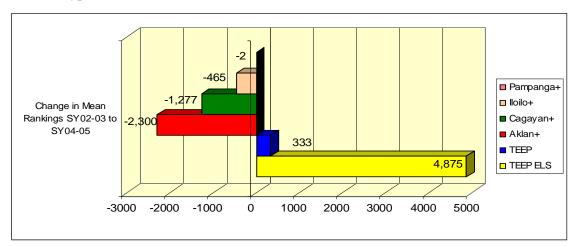

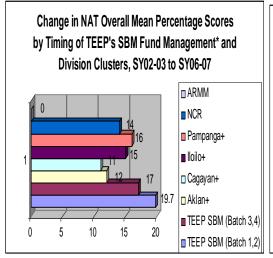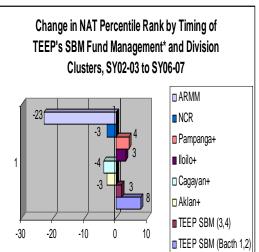Source: JBIC TEEP External Review Team BEIS+ [integrated BEIS and NAT file]
* For Math, Science and English only [no data for Filipino and HEKASI in SY 2002-2003]

Figure 10a

Figure 10b

* SBM Batches 1 and 2 managed SBM funds earlier than SBM Batches 3 and 4

Figure 11. Percentage of Schools surpassing 60% on the NAT in Math, English and Science (and Overall) from 2002 to 2005

Source: JBIC TEEP External Review Team BEIS+ [integrated BEIS and NAT file]
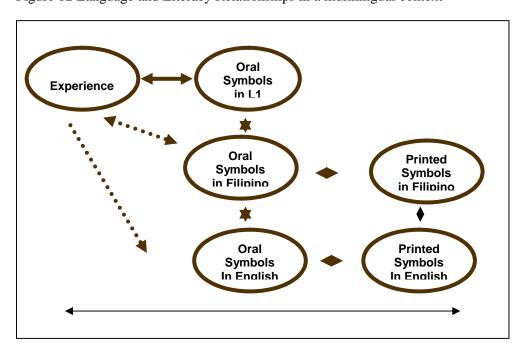
Figure 12 Language and Literacy Relationships in a multilingual context
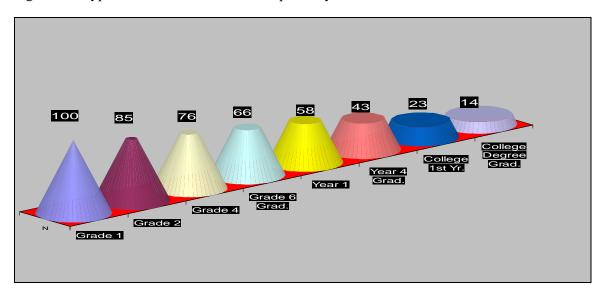
Source: Ocampo, 2008

Figure 13. Typical Cohort Survival over the past 30 years since 1975

Source: Presentation of a DepED official during the KRT3 Regional Consultations on English and Filipino learning strategies dated 31 July 2006

Box 1: Educational Surveys, Sector Studies, Reform Packages and major Education Development Projects in Basic Education∗

The work of the Department Education has been informed by numerous comprehensive surveys that point to the problems of educational system and the causes of these problems. As shown in the time-line below, through the decades, the surveys have pointed to essentially the same problems, and the inability of the Department of Education to reform the system. In recent years, the work of reforming the problematic educational system has also been guided and assisted by several large-scale reform programs and projects. Is the Department of Education able to learn the right lessons from these projects?

Review and Reform	Key Features
1925 Monroe Survey	First comprehensive survey of Philippine education. Already observed problems regarding low levels of student achievement and pointed to the use of English in instructions, teaching qualifications, educational facilities, and centralization or lack of adaptation of education to needs of the Filipino people as the main causes of low achievement level.
1936 Commonwealth Survey	The survey involved seeking the opinions of educational "experts" but did not involve systematic gathering of primary data on the educational processes and outcomes.
1949	First comprehensive survey of Philippine education after American colonial

UNESCO Survey	period. Reiterated many of problems noted in Monroe and Commonwealth Surveys. Note language of instructions remains "the most perplexing problem" and additional problem of lack of appreciation of national heritage and ideals. Recommended improved budget for education, efforts to improve teacher qualifications, restoration of Grade 7, strengthening community school movement, and resolution of language issue through vigorous research program
1960 Swanson Survey	Reiterated observations of previous surveys and also noted problems in the education of cultural minorities and in the adaptation of foreign educational practices to local conditions. The survey also lamented on how previous recommendation of previous surveys had not become effective because of poor financing, difficulty in getting public understanding and *inertia to change*. Called for prioritization of investments for primary education and strengthening secondary education.
1967 Review of the Swanson Survey	Found that many of recommendations of the 1960 Swanson Survey had not been implemented by the Department of Education.
1970 Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education (PCSPE)	Reiterated many of the findings of previous surveys; reiterated the language problem, but further noted the mismatch between educational output and country needs. The survey called for reorganization of the educational system to address overcentralization (which resulted in the creation of BHE, BNFE, EDPITAF and NMYC), and for a political solution to language problem.
1972 Ten-Year National Development Program	Education Development Decree of 1972 defined a ten-year education plan that focused on curriculum development, upgrading physical facilities, adoption of cost-saving instructional technology, retraining of teachers and administrators, accreditation, admissions testing, guidance and counseling, democratizing access through financial assistance, and shifting funding of basic education from national to local government.
1973 Instructional Management by Parents, Community and Teachers (IMPACT)	SEAMEO project supported by the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC)and the Netherlands government implemented in the Philippine and Indonesia that involved the use of modularized self-instructional systems with the support of parents and community based instructional managers to provide access to education to students in remote areas in the country.
1976 Survey of Outcome of Elementary Education (SOUTELE)	Measurement and analysis of learning outcomes of a sample of Grade 4 students in the country, that included surveys of school, teacher, and student characteristics. The survey indicated poor achievement levels even in the basic reading, writing, and quantitative skills. Survey noted differences across socio-economic conditions of students and school environments, and explicitly linked socio-economic inequalities in society to differences in educational outcomes.
1982-1989 Program for Decentralized Education (PRODED)	Funded by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and focused on improving the curriculum to strengthen the emphasis on science, technology, math, reading and writing.
1988-1995	Funded by the IBRD to sustain the curriculum reforms initiated in PRODED

Secondary Education Development Program (SEDP)	into the secondary education curriculum. The project also aimed to expand access to secondary education by implementing a student-centered, community-oriented curriculum.
Education for All Philippine Plan of Action 1991-1999 (EFA I)	A national action plan formulated in the wake of President Corazon Aquino's proclamation declaring 1990-1999 as the Decade of Education for All (EFA). The Plan adopted policies and strategies that included alternative learning systems covering non-formal/informal education; improvement of learning achievement stressing creative and critical thinking; upgrading of teacher competencies; strengthening of partnership among school, home, the community and local government; and self-reliance in resources generation
1991 Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM)	Comprehensive study that reiterated many of the problems that were stated in earlier surveys, which resulted in a 12-items Legislative Agenda and a comprehensive set of program recommendations and operational priorities. Congress enacted seven of these items were approved into law within the next five years; but the DepEd and other educational agencies has so far failed to implement most of the program recommendations. The EDCOM Report included the first basic articulation of the principles of decentralization and school-based management in the basic education sector.
1990-1996 Second Elementary Education Project	Under the World Bank funded Second Elementary Education Project, four experiments addressed the problem of dropouts in low-income communities: school feeding programs, use of multilevel learning materials, school feeding programs with parent participation, and use of multilevel learning materials with parent participation.
1994 - 2002 Philippine Non-Formal Education Project	Funded by the Asian Development Bank and focused on improving literacy and numeracy skills among the uneducated, enhancing their capacities for self-help activities, and expanding access to basic education by supporting nonformal education programs for youth and adults. The project also focused on capacity building of the DepED and NGOs, and communities for managing and conducting nonformal education programs.
1989 – 1992 Philippines-Australia Science and Mathematics Education Project (PASMEP)	Funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and aims to improve the effectiveness of science and mathematics education at the secondary level by improving the curriculum, management and curriculum support services.
1996 – 2001 Project in Basic Education (PROBE),	Funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and focused on improving quality of teaching and learning in Science, Mathematics, and English in basic education. The project had various components including textbook development, teacher training, among others.
1998 Philippine Education Sector Study (WB/ADB PESS 1998)	WB/ADB study noted numerous problems allocated to management of education sector: misallocation of public sector spending, low quality at high unit cost, poor access to mass education; skills development for competitiveness, general sector management. Study posed many policy options that related to institutions reforms, improved sector management, improving investments and access to basic education, while reiterating

	recommendations of previous surveys.
1998-2006 Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP)	Funded by Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and the World Bank and focused on civil works, educational processes development (including student assessment, in-service training of teachers, curriculum and instructional resources development) and school-based management principles in finance and administration.
2000 Philippine Human Development Report (PHDR 2000)	Reiterated key points from previous survey but highlighted the problems of quality of educational services for the poor and the inefficiencies in the allocation of educational resources. The report also pointed to the need to ensure that the elements of the educational processes are relevant to the lives of Filipinos living in different communities, and the possibility of rethinking curricula and pedagogies to make the educational system more responsive human and social development goals.
2000 Presidential Commission for Educational Reform (PCER 2000)	Picked up from recommendations of EDCOM, PESS and Philippine Education for All Assessment. Proposed nine key reforms, four of which were relevant to basic education: the creation of National Coordination Council for Education, strengthening teacher competencies at basic education level, expanding options for medium of instruction in early grades, and the establishment of National Education Evaluation and Testing System.
2000 Philippine EFA Assessment	Noted that significant gains in providing access to primary schools and improving basic literacy rates, but reiterated problems regarding international and external efficiencies of the system, and the need to improve functional literacy rates
2000 – 2006 Secondary Education Development and Improvement Project (SEDIP)	Funded by the Asian Development Bank and JBIC and had similar goals and components as the TEEP, but focusing on secondary education.
2002 -2007 Basic Education Assistance for Mindanao (BEAM)	Funded by the AusAID and focused on capacity-building of education personnel at all levels, curriculum and materials development, and programs to improve access to quality education to indigenous peoples, Muslim groups and multi-cultural communities.
2005 – ongoing Strengthening Implementation of Visayas Education (STRIVE),	Funded by the AusAID and has similar goals and project components as BEAM (i.e., capacity building, materials development, improving access to quality education), but focusing on schools in the Visayas provinces.
2006 – 2010 Sixth Country Program for Children	Supported by the UNICEF and incorporated the Child Friendly Schools (CFS) Program which focused on transforming primary schools into Child-Friendly learning systems by providing resources and training for teachers school heads, and division supervisors on child-friendly principles, approaches and practices (See also First to Fifth UNICEF Country Programs).
2006 Philippine Education for All	Defines specific targets under the broad aim of achieve functional literacy for all Filipinos. The Plan articulates several key tasks including assessing of school performance, expansion of early child care and development,

2015 Plan	transformation of non-formal and informal delivery systems into alternative learning systems, improving teaching practices, adopting a 12-year basic education cycle, and several enabling conditions related to the management of reforms.
2006 – onwards Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA)	Integrated reform framework articulated by the DepEd that provides a coherent conceptual and policy structure for the various reforms needed by the system, particularly the targets defined in the Philippine EFA 2015 plans and the Millennium Development Goals. The reform hat focuses on key reform targets related to the implementation of school-based management, improvement of teaching quality, curriculum and pedagogy in the key learning areas, and incorporates the Philippine EFA 2015 plans, among others.

∗The table does not provide a comprehensive list of all the surveys and reform projects that have been undertaken in the past century, and instead highlights some of the significant surveys and reforms for illustrative purposes.

BOX 2: COMPONENTS OF BEAM AND TEEP

BEAM
Component 1: Human resource development
- General Management Training
- In-Service teacher training
- pre-Service Teacher Training
- Assistance for teachers of special groups (e.g. children with special needs, those in multi-grade classes, and those from conflict-affected and indigenous communities);
- Capacity Building for Muslim Education Teachers and Administrators
- National English Proficiency Program - Mentors Training Program
- Student Assessment
- Support for piloting of new strategies to integrate BEAM and other DepEd initiatives (e.g. BESRA, Schools First Initiative [SBM]) in pilot divisions; and
- School Management

Component 2: Materials Development
- Establishment of Materials Development Centers
- The development and piloting of an internet-based software tool, the Learning Guide

Component 3: Access
- Support for individual access programs (e.g. community learning centers, early childhood education, accreditation and equivalency, functional literacy cum livelihood enterprises development; and distance learning)
- Institute for Indigenous Peoples Education
- Support to Madaris to obtain DepEd recognition and accreditation and training of Madaris teachers and administrators
- Distance Learning Program
- Development of service providers

Component 4: Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation

TEEP
Component 1: Civil Works
- School building Program based on building mapping
- Construction of division offices

Component 2: Education Development
- Student assessment
- Curriculum, Instructional Materials and Textbooks (CIMTEX)
- In-Service Training for teachers
- School Improvement Innovative Facility, (Demand Side Financing)
- School Improvement Innovative Facility (Supply Side Financing)
- Policy Research and Strategic Planning to support research for education reform
- Shool-based Management

Component 3: Finance and Administration
- Accounting, Budget and Finance
- Procurement
- Information, Education, Communication, and Advocacy
- Monitoring, Evaluation, and Management System

BOX 3: Comparator Groups for TEEP Performance in the National Achievement Test

TEEP targeted the divisions assumed to be the poorest at the time—the Social Reform Agenda provinces and ARMM (which it dropped because of peace and order problems). To assess the project's impact, the TEEP Review Team classified the non-TEEP divisions along the poverty dimension. Since the classification of divisions corresponding to provinces was not consistent across different poverty indicators, the Team combined several indicators:

- The Human Poverty Index (HPI), which uses indicators of the most basic dimensions of deprivation: a short life, lack of basic education and lack of access to public and private resources. For the provinces of the Philippines, the HPI measures were drawn from the 2002 Philippine Human Development Report.
- the 1997 and 2000 Fixed Level of Living (FLOL) or consumption-based LOL that measures the percentage of people whose incomes fall below the minimum amount of money required to satisfy the most basic food (2000 calories per day) and non-food needs using per-capita expenditure rather than per capita income as the official measure of well-being.
- the 2000 official poverty line of the National Statistical Coordinating Board that measures the percentage of people whose incomes fall below the minimum amount of money required to satisfy the most basic food (2000 calories per day) and non-food needs using per capita income as the yardstick of well-being. .

Based on the poverty status of provinces/divisions along the four measures of poverty, the schools under TEEP were compared to the following division clusters:

- **ARMM**
    Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.

- **AKLAN**+ the clearly poor provinces that satisfied all the poverty indicators

Aklan, Camarines Norte, Lanao del Norte, Northern Samar, Sarangani, Sorsogon, Western Samar and Zamboanga del Norte

- **CAGAYAN**+ provinces that satisfy two or three of the poverty indicatorrs criteria:
  Agusan del Norte, Albay, Bohol, Cagayan, Camarines Sur, Camiguin, Catanduanes, Cebu, Compostela Valley, Davao Norte, Davao Oriental, Isabela, Oriental Mindoro, Occidental Mindoro, Marinduque, Misamis Occidental, Quezon, Siargao, Siquijor, South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Surigao del Norte

- **ILOILO**+ provinces that satisfy only one of the above criteria
  Bukidnon, Davao Sur, Iloilo, Negros Occidental, Nueva Ecija, Nueva Vizcaya, Occidental Mindoro, Palawan

In addition to the poor provinces, TEEP schools were also compared to non-poor provinces, cities and the National Capital Region.

- **PAMPANGA**+ Bataan, Batangas, Bulacan, Cavite, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, La Union, Laguna, Misamis Oriental, Pampanga, Pangasinan, Quirino, Rizal, Tarlac, Zambales and all cities outside NCR

- **NCR**

Not all TEEP provinces were poor along the four poverty indices. Agusan Sur, Biliran Ifugao, Leyte, Masbate, North Cotabato, Surigao Sur, Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga Sibugay were the clearly poor provinces. Abra and Guimaras were poor but on only one index. Aurora, Batanes, and Benguet were non-poor. Since the schools in the poor TEEP provinces did better on the National Achievement Test than those in the non-poor TEEP provinces, the TEEP Review Team did not disaggregate the TEEP schools by poverty level. Instead, TEEP schools were dichotomized into two subgroups: the Elementary Leader Schools (ELS) with about 396 schools on the one hand and the non-ELS (the remaining 8200 schools) on the other. The ELS received TEEP inputs earlier than the non-ELS. Departing from the practice of confining ELS to big central schools, TEEP's ELS included model multigrade and small monograde schools. In fact 16% of ELS were big monograde schools; 35% medium complete pure monograde, 30% small complete pure monograde and a sizable 19% were multigrade and/or incomplete (MGIS)

Box 4 Comparison of the Salient Features of Various Recommendations on the Medium of Instruction in Schools

	Mother Tongue/Child's Language	Filipino	English	Other Philippine/Foreign Languages
Bilingual Education Policy	▪ Auxiliary language of instruction	▪ Subject from Gr. 1 onwards ▪ Medium of instruction for MAKABAYAN	▪ Subject from Gr. 1 onwards ▪ Medium of Instruction for Math and Science	▪ none
House Bill 4701 or The Gullas Bill	▪ **Optional** Medium of Instruction	▪ Subject from Gr. 1 onwards	▪ Subject from Gr. 1 onwards	▪ none

	Mother Tongue/Child's Language	Filipino	English	Other Philippine/Foreign Languages
	until Gr. 2		▪ Medium of Instruction from Gr. 1 onwards	
House Bill 3719 (The Gunigundo Bill)	▪ Medium of instruction up to Gr. 6	▪ Subject from Gr. 1 onwards	▪ Subject from Gr. 1 onwards	▪ none
BESRA Recommendations	▪ Medium of instruction until Gr. 2 ▪ Formal literacy instruction starting at Preschool (Kindergarten) or Gr. 1 ▪ Auxiliary language of instruction from Gr. 4 onwards	▪ Subject from Gr. 1 onwards ▪ Formal literacy instruction starting at Gr. 2 ▪ Medium of instruction for ▪ MAKABAYAN from Gr. 3 onwards	▪ Subject from Gr. 1 onwards ▪ Formal literacy instruction starting at Gr. 3 ▪ Medium of instruction for Math and Science from Gr. 4 onwards	▪ Oral language development in Arabaic (for Madaris schools) from Gr. 1 onwards ▪ Literacy in Arabaic (for Madaris schools) from Gr. 4 onwards ▪ Arabic as Medium of instruction for an elective or special subject in Maradis schools from 1st year HS onwards ▪ Philippine Regional/Foreign language elective for students from 3rd year HS onwards

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NOTES

[i] Some of EDCOM's major policy or restructuring proposals were not really for the then DECS to implement but for other agencies through executive action and, in the case of Congress, through enabling laws. It is also important to note that EDCOM through Congress did not provide effective and systematic monitoring mechanisms to overcome resistance and ensure compliance or deliberate execution of the measures. EDCOM merely assumed that after the issuance and publication of the Report everything would

move and become self-executory which is obviously not the case and is not reasonable to expect or assume.

[ii] The National Competency-Based Teacher Standards is a key element of the Teacher Education and Development Program (TEDP), which evolved into one of the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) of the BESRA. It promotes unified development of pre-service and in-service education of teachers as one continuum and advocates greater formal partnership between the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Teacher Education Institutes (TEIs), the Professional Regulations Commission, the Department of Education and the Civil Service Commission (CSC) for the improvement of both pre- and in-service education. The TEDP seeks to conceptualize the teacher's career path as a continuum that starts with entry to a teacher education program and ends when a teacher retires from formal service. (DepEd pdf file as of April 30, 2008).

[iii] This figure represents the proxy cohort survival rate (PCSR) which is computed in the absence of data for tracking children who entered Grade 1 in SY1996-1997 and reached 4th year high school in SY 2005-06. The PCSR for a grade or year level is the enrolment at that grade level as a % of Grade 1 enrolment for the same year. Enrolments in the higher grades or years are always compared to Grade 1. A low proxy cohort survival rate is an indication of high dropout rates. The figures cited are averages computed by the ADB TA-4524 PHI Project Team [Honesto Nuqui, Cynthia Bautista, Flor Teh and Maria Luisa Doronila+ from the BEIS 2003-2004 and from the SY2004-2005 and 2005-2006 Division Data obtained from the staff of each Division of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

[iv] East Asia Pacific Education Indicators. Education at a Glance. World Bank downloaded June 2008.

[v] It should be noted that the NAT is a very recent instrument.

[vi] The TEEP-related figures are computed from the JBIC External Review Team's database that links the SY2003-2004 Basic Education Information System (BEIS) with data on the National Achievement Test. The BEIS lists 38500 schools while the NAT data were available for only about 29,000 schools. When the two datasets were combined with the TEEP school-by-school project database, the resulting data set was down to only 25,179 schools. Schools with no data or incomplete data were culled out. The JBIC Team referred to this merged dataset as BEIS++.

[vii] The RAMSE 2007 Mathematics test for Grade four pupils comprises the learning competencies from Grades 1 to 1V based from the Philippine Elementary Learning Competencies (PELC). These competencies were formulated from the Basic Education Curriculum in Elementary Mathematics. The 30-item Grade Four Mathematics test contained four strands, namely: Numbers, Geometry, Measurement and Graphs and Tables. These test items measures likewise the different thinking skills of the pupils as knowing facts and procedures, using concepts, solving routine problems and reasoning.

[viii] The RAMSE 2005 Mathematics test for Second Year students included the learning competencies from Grades 3 to 6 in the elementary and YI to Y2 in the secondary level. These competencies were based in the Basic Education Curriculum for Mathematics. Number, Measurement, Algebra, Geometry and Graphs & Tables were the five strands considered. These strands measured the different skills of every student namely: knowing facts and procedures, using concepts, solving routine problems and reasoning. The thirty-three (33) test items were further classified into multiple choice, close constructed and open-ended types of test.

[ix] The BEAM divisions are as follows: Region XI: Compostela Valley, Davao del Norte, Panabo City, Tagum City, Island Garden City of Samal, Davao Oriental, Davoda del Sur, Digos City, Davao City. Region XII: Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Cotabato CXity, South Cotabato, General Santos City, Saranggani, Koronadal City, Kidapawan City, and Tacuring City. BEAM also covers the ARMM school divisions: Basilan, Lanao del Sur I, Lanao del Sur II, Maguindanao (recently split into two divisions); Sulu I, Sulu II, and Tawi-tawi. TEEP, on the other hand, originally covered 26 Social Reform Agenda provinces/divisions excluding the city divisions in these provinces: Abra, Agusan del Sur, Antique, Apayao, Aurora, Basilan, Batanes, Benguet, Biliran, Capiz, Cotabato, Eastern Samar, Guimaras, Ifugao, Kalinga, Leyte, Maguindanao, Masbate, Mountain Province, Negros Oriental, Romblon, Southern Leyte, Sulu, Surigao del Sur, Tawi-Tawi, and Zamboanga del Sur.   Peace and order problems in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao's provinces of Basilan, Maguindanao, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi resulted in their exclusion from the project in 1999, leaving only 22 school divisions. With the split of Zamboanga del Sur into

Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga Sibugay in 2004, TEEP ultimately covered a total of 23 divisions. The number of schools was estimated from the SY200-2005 Basic Education Infomation System.

[x] The discussion of TEEP throughout this paper draws largely from the unpublished report of the 2006 TEEP JBIC External Review Team. The Review Team members are as follows: Honesto Nuqui (team leader), Maria Luisa Doronila[*], Maria Cynthia Rose Banzon Bautista. Victoria Catibog, Ricardo Aquino and Jeffrey Ducanes.

[xi] Of the total appraised cost of P12.7B, P 4.4B (34.4% of total project cost) was borrowed from World Bank, P4.5B (35.4 % of total) from JBIC and the remainder, P 3.8B (comprising 30.2%) was covered by the Government of the Philippines. Fifty six percent (56%) of TEEP's P12.7B budget was allocated for civil works[xi].

[xii] BEAM is funded by the Government of the Philippines and the Government of Australia through a grant of AUD$36 million (roughly US$25.66M)[xii] from the Australian Agency for International Development. The Philippine government contribution is managed by DepEd's Educational Development Projects Implementation Task Force (EDPITAF) while that of the Government of Australia is through the Australian Managing Contractor, Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM).

[xiii] "Principal Empowerment", a thrust shared by both TEEP and BEAM is the EDCOM prescription upon which SBM in the Philippines was founded.

[xiv] Dr. Maria Luisa Doronila, who died in the line of duty in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao through another ADB Technical Assistance that introduced a more refined version of the TEEP Division Education Development Plan to ARMM, was the Midterm Review member, ADB-TAD-BEM education consultant, turned TEEP consultant who helped launched and energize SBM in TEEP.

[xv]RAMSE classifies test items according to types, thinking skills, learning strands and curriculum levels. Its results through the years reflect the notable improvements in the performance of Grade 4 and second year high schools students from a sample of BEAM schools across the three regions covered by the projectThe RAMSE utilizes a two-staged sampling design: schools are sampled in the first stage proportional to size from the Basic Education Information System data for a given year. An average number of 7579 Grade 4 pupils and 8754 second year high schools students were tested from 2004 to 2007. Additional data from about 386 Grade 4 teachers and 473 second year high school teachers were also obtained.

[xvi] Another weakness is the lack of comparability of NAT exams in SY2002-03, 2004-05, and 2006-07. The NAT was not given to the same grade level in each year although one can treat the test as being administered to the same cohort of students: in 2002-03 when the cohort was in Grade 4, in 2003-04 when the group was in Grade 5 and finally in 2004-05 when the group was in Grade 6. Because the NAT results from these years are not directly comparable, the TEEP Review Team used the absolute rank of a school based on its NAT MPS and the change in ranks from 2002 to 2004.

[xvii] As computed by the JBIC External Review Team. The total among disbursed is P11.5B (or 90.6 % of P 12.7 B in project allotments). If the total disbursement is spread over the 8,600 schools in TEEP, the implied average disbursement per school is about P 1.3M over the 8.5-year period. If the P11.5B is spread over the 1.7M total enrolment, the implied average disbursement is only P6,849 per pupil.

[xviii] The account of the establishment of the Principal-led Building Program is based on interviews with the private sector team that advised Secretary Roco—i.e. Mr. Ramon Pasicolan, Mr. Jojo Vilches

[xix] Project IMPACT involved pilot schools (community learning centers) in Naga, Cebu, Sapang palay, Bulacan, and Solo, Indonesia.

[xx] Re-launching of Project Instructional Management by Parents, Community and Teachers (IMPACT) www.seameo-innotech.og/innotech/news/achiee/2005qrt1&2/1stqt2005_eIMPACT.htm

[xxi] Based on the 7 August 2006 Memo of NEDA Chief Education Development Staff (EDS) Napoleon Imperial and Senior EDS Rozanno Rufino to NEDA Directorg Erlinda Capones on their IMPACT System Observation Visit

[xxii] National Program Support for Basic Education (NPSBE) and Support to Philippine Basic Education Reform (SPHERE). Aide Memoir, Second Joint Implementation Review Mission, 25 February to 7 March, 2008. Submitted to DepEd on 18 April 2008.

[xxiii] The National Language Policy enshrined in the 1987 Philippine Constitution prescribes Filipino as the national language of the Philippines. Moreover, it states that Filipino shall be further developed and enriched on the basis of existing Philippine and other languages. The primacy of the Filipino language was affirmed on 25 August 1988 when then President Corazon Aquino signed Executive Order No. 335

enjoining all government agencies to take necessary steps to use the Filipino language in official transactions, communications, and correspondence.   In addition, the Commission on the Filipino Language, formerly the Institute of Philippine National Language, was mandated to formulate and implement programs and projects for the full and effective implementation of the Executive Order. Although Filipino is the official language and the language of schools is expected to be increasingly Filipino, it is important to note that the Constitution also designated English as an official language for purposes of communication and instruction.

[xxiv] Based on the presentation of a DepED official during the KRT3 Regional Consultations on English and Filipino learning strategies dated 31 July 2006

[xxv] Some overlooked but real institutional factors like the resignation, promotion to administrative jobs and retirement of well-trained teachers, the lack of regular merit-based incentive schemes, and the relatively unreformed pre-service education that has not served as long-term source of well motivated new teachers who will replace those leaving the service for overseas employment are not discussed in this chapter.

[xxvi] See the section "Mere Plans and projects or Outright Policy Reform" in Imperial, Napoleon (1986).

[xxvii] While BEAM covers ARMM, the region is unique from the other regions within the scope of the project. SBM and the whole of BESRA package has no chance of being institutionalized, much less, introduced systematically in ARMM for as long as the Organic Act that created it is not harmonized with the Governance of Basic Education Act and ARMM Department of Education is not incorporated in the National Education for All Committee (NCEFA). To date, power rests on the ARMM Governor and the DepEd Secretary. Any hope of improving the situation of education in the area would depend upon devolution to schools through the ARMM divisions.

[xxviii] Synergeia Foundation is a coalition of individuals, institutions, and organizations working together to improve the quality of basic education. It works with local governments, DepEd, academics and various civil society groups.

[xxix] The following discussion of the decentralization of basic education is taken primarily from the 2006 TEEP JBIC External Review Team Report by Honesto Nuqui (team leader), Maria Luisa Doronila[*], Maria Cynthia Rose Banzon Bautista. Victoria Catibog, Ricardo Aquino and Jeffrey Ducanes.

[xxx] While BEAM has been shielded from DepEd's central politics (relative to TEEP), the politics BEAM confronts is no less constraining. It is working in the areas TEEP gave up on in the late 1990s because of the peace and order situation. BEAM's promotion of school management and student-centered learning innovations in ARMM is hampered by its deeply entrenched feudal culture and system of patronage politics; the proliferation of development aid and the politics of donor agencies with overlapping projects for education; and the limited time of teachers to translate BEAM's philosophy of learning into classroom activities because of the inordinate time spent by teachers participating outside the classroom, in various training programs that are not necessarily compatible with BEAM's concept of education.

[xxxi] The phrase 'resistance of the weak', which focuses on the human agency of seemingly powerless people is taken from James Scott (1987). *Weapons of the Weak: .Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

[xxxii] OECD as cited in Bautista and Anonuevo, 2008

[xxxiii] To date Technical Working Groups have been constitited for 1) SBM; 2) the Teacher Education and Development Program; 3) Quality Assurance and Accoundability; 4) Resource mobilization; 5) Monitoring and Evaluation; 6) National Learning Strategies; and 7) Alternative Learning System.

[xxxiv] National Program Support for Basic Education (NPSBE) and Support to Philippine Basic Education Reform (SPHERE). Aide Memoir, Second Joint Implementation Review Mission, 25 February to 7 March, 2008. Submitted to DepEd on 18 April 2008.

[xxxv] To provide a "living testament" and readily available institutional memory, BESRA work and outputs should be expertly and well organized and documented as a landmark Reform Agenda the way it was done with the monumental Presidential Commission to Study Philippine Education and the multi-volume EDCOM Report.

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