Annex 2: Case Studies and Discussion Papers

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The Tahderiyyah program as a model to support education in conflict and post-conflict areas in ARMM

A Case Study

Summary

The case study aimed to examine the Tahderiyyah curriculum implementation as an appropriate model to support education in conflict areas especially in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The case study utilised secondary data through various reports, complemented by primary data gathered through focus group discussions and key informant interviews in selected Tahderiyyah centres that were supported by the Basic Education Assistance for Muslim Mindanao (BEAM–ARMM) program, through the UNICEF and the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA). The findings of the study were:

▪ The Tahderiyyah curriculum follows the national curriculum on Early Childhood Education or Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), which has four thematic areas: Myself, My Family, My Community, My School (or My Day Care). The Tahderiyyah program adapted the thematic areas with an innovation to include Islamic values education.

▪ The Tahderiyyah curriculum was recognised by the Department of Education as an appropriate kindergarten curriculum for Bangsamoro Development Agency operated Islamic community schools through DepEd Memorandum Order No. 36 series of 2013; is aligned with the national

kindergarten curriculum and complements the madrasah kindergarten curriculum implemented under the Department of Education's Arabic Language and Islamic Values (ALIVE) Program.

- The Tahderiyyah centres were established in 811 most disadvantaged Muslim communities in Mindanao. With support from UNICEF and BDA these 811 Tahderiyyah centres have catered to some 50,000 children. In areas where communities have no access to day care centres, the Tahderiyyah program contributes to increased access by providing the requirements of ECCD, particularly in conflict areas.

- In terms of transitioning learners from the Tahderiyyah centres to the next grade, i.e. Kindergarten to Grade 1, Department of Education (DepEd)–ARMM schools are ready to accept Tahderiyyah program completers and receive the ECCD checklist from the Asatidz[1] to guide DepEd teachers on the performance of the learners from the Tahderiyyah centres.

Having found the Tahderiyyah program to be an appropriate strategy to provide access to ECCD for young children in conflict areas, it is necessary for UNICEF, BDA and DepEd–ARMM to ensure that the program is sustained in these areas. DepEd–ARMM needs to be more proactive in mainstreaming the Tahderiyyah program as a strategy for access, especially in providing ECCD to underserved communities, by assisting the Tahderiyyah centres to comply with accreditation requirements, by relaxing some of these requirements.

With the upcoming Pathways program, DepEd–ARMM will have to find strategies to enhance community participation in the Tahderiyyah program especially by strengthening social preparation; enhancing the capacities of school administration and/or management to undertake strategic thinking and planning; continuing capacity development of the Asatidz and *Imams*[2] to enhance their knowledge and skills in DepEd's ECCD curriculum; and providing support to BDA to develop policies and strategies for establishing and supporting private madaris and Tahderiyyah centres, as well as for the mainstreaming of traditional madaris and Tahderiyyahs into DepEd's educational system.

Introduction

In recognition of the significant role of private madaris (plural for *madrasah*, the Arabic term for 'school') in providing basic education to children in ARMM, the BEAM–ARMM program aimed to provide support to pre-school education through its ECCD component. The component is implemented via the Tahderiyyah program (an ECCD program for children in areas of conflict) by the UNICEF, in collaboration with the BDA.

The Tahderiyyah component of the BEAM-ARRM program was designed to expand the use of the Islam-responsive pre-school curriculum that was successfully piloted as part of the Days of Peace Campaign. The curriculum combines the madrasah Tahderiyyah curriculum with the standard DepEd pre-school curriculum and is applicable to the cultural context of ARMM while following the national standards on ECCD,

Objective and Research Questions: The main objective of this case study is to examine the Tahderiyyah program as an appropriate model to support education in conflict and post-conflict areas in ARMM. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

- Is the Tahderiyyah curriculum responsive to the needs of the target age groups? (e.g. responsive to the development needs of pre-school children? Does it meet Permit to Operate standards e.g. K–12, balanced?)

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[1] Tahderiyyah teachers
[2] Religious teachers

- What positive gains have been achieved in implementing the Tahderiyyah program? (e.g. contribution to access to early childhood education, impacts on peace advocacy in the region, etc.).

- How does DepEd–ARMM intend to institutionalise the Tahderiyyah to ensure smooth transition of relevant students?

Significance of the study: The findings of this study will inform decision making by several stakeholders in the education sector in ARMM. They will inform:

- UNICEF's advocacy for ECCD as intrinsic to the rights of the child—especially in areas where there are challenges to access to basic social services. The findings of this study will strengthen UNICEF's mandate to provide opportunities for stakeholders such as the BDA, local government units, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and other related agencies including international donors to collaborate on ECCD.

- BDA, as they continue to establish development programs in the Bangsamoro region. With ECCD and basic education being aspirations of the Bangsamoro communities, the findings of this study will strengthen the BDA's objective to ensure ECCD for younger children to prepare them for basic education and address gaps and weaknesses of the program including issues on sustainability.

- DSWD and Local Government Units – to recognise the need for better collaboration with other stakeholders in the provision of ECCD especially in areas of conflict or in areas where access to basic social services is challenging.

- DepEd–ARMM - as a reference for the development or strengthening of policies on transition of learners from Tahderiyyah centres to regular DepEd schools. The findings will also inform DepEd–ARMM's considerations on requirements for the accreditation of Tahderiyyah centres or madaris where there are Tahderiyyah programs.

Methodology: The study utilised both secondary and primary data. Secondary data consisted of BEAM–ARMM program six-monthly progress reports, data from the program's Unified Management Information System, and other relevant literature. For primary data, focus group discussions and key informant interviews were conducted among school administrators, teachers and parents of learners from selected Tahderiyyah centres. Other key informant interviews were conducted with UNICEF, BDA, *Tarbiyyah*[3], and the DSWD–ARMM.

Limitations of the Study: Visits to some focus group discussions and key informant interviews at selected Tahderiyyah centres did not proceed due to security issues particularly in Lanao del Sur and Tawi-Tawi. However, the information gathered from the four Tahderiyyah centres that were visited was sufficient for the purpose of the study. The study did not cover the gender disparity that exists with more girls than boys attending Tahderiyyah centres and madaris in ARMM which requires an in-depth study.

Findings and discussion

The Tahderiyyah curriculum: The Tahderiyyah curriculum follows the national curriculum on Early Childhood Education or ECCD, which has four thematic areas: Myself, My Family, My Community, My School (or My Day Care). The Tahderiyyah program adapts this curriculum with an innovation that highlights faith, namely: My Creator, Myself, My Family and My Community. It is similar to the national curriculum except for its emphasis on faith, i.e. My Creator, as part of inculcating Islamic values. This thematic area includes the *Surrah*, the *Dua'*, the *Hadith*[4] and the Expression of the Week. The thematic

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[3] Moro Islamic Liberation Front's Education Committee

[4] Surruah are chapters of Qur'an, Dua is Prayer and the Hadith are teachings of Prophet Muhammad.

area on school (My School) is subsumed into the thematic area on community (My Community). In every thematic area, the subjects on literacy (Literacy Exploration 1&2), arts and crafts are integrated.

Tahderiyyah sessions are intended to be conducted for four hours daily over five days. However, this does not always occur, as most of the Asatidz (teachers) are voluntary and have to work for a living. Thus some classes are only conducted over four, three or even two days. Three-day Tahderiyyah classes are usually held from Friday to Sunday, while two-day classes are usually held on weekends. To compensate for the reduced number of days, additional hours are added to the four-hour session, with weekend Tahderiyyah classes being conducted over the whole day.

Tahderiyyah learners are assessed in terms of developmental blocks in accordance with the ECCD checklist. These consist of Fine Motor, Gross Motor, Receptive Language, Expressive Language, Self-help, Cognitive, and Socio-Emotional. The learners' progress is assessed according to age levels. Figure 1 enumerates these developmental blocks in the ECCD checklist as a child proceeds through the Tahderiyyah program.

Figure 1   Developmental domains in the ECCD checklist

Developmental Domains	Age		
	3	4	5
Fine motor			
Gross motor			
Receptive language			
Expressive language			
Self-help			
Cognitive			
Socio-emotional			

The Asatidz are trained to identify the progress of learners in terms of the developmental blocks. The ECCD checklist assessments provide information regarding the readiness of children to transition from kinder to Grade 1. The ECCD checklist is provided to teachers in the schools to which Tahderiyyah learners transition. At the time of writing the case study 156 Asatidz have assessed 2,561 learners (877 male, 1,684 female) using the ECCD checklist.

Positive gains from the Tahderiyyah program: The Tahderiyyah program complemented the ECCD efforts of the DSWD noting that as of SY 2016–2017 the DSWD has established 2,286 day care centres in ARMM catering to 94,909 young children, including 362 Supervised Neighbourhood Program groups, which cater to some 13,039 children who are not able to participate in regular day care centres.[5] However, there are still barangays in ARMM with no access to ECCD through the day care centres. UNICEF and BDA have assisted in establishing Tahderiyyah centres in most disadvantaged Muslim populated communities in Mindanao. UNICEF supported about 811 from 2011 to 2015 mostly in ARMM, and continued support to 335 of the 811. Tahderiyyah centres from 2015 to 2017. Together, they have catered to some 50,000 children, particularly in conflict areas as part of the Tahderiyyah program's contribution to access to ECCD in the region.

The Tahderiyyah program is greatly appreciated by communities in ARMM because it enables their younger children to access early childhood education and helps to prepare these children for basic education in regular DepEd–ARMM schools or in private madaris. Moreover, parents appreciate the Islamic values taught in the Tahderiyyah centres which helps them preserve Islamic culture.

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[5] Interview with Kay E. Lintongan, Child and Youth Welfare Specialist of DSWD–ARMM, 7 March 2017.

Some 'weekend Tahderiyyahs' include learners who attend regular DepEd schools on weekdays. Parents welcome these students learning Islamic values to supplement what they learn in DepEd schools.

According to parents who participated in the focus group discussions, their children get to understand the value of peace from the lessons on the Islamic values offered by the Tahderiyyah centres. In separate interviews, both Dr Abdullah Ismael Gayak, Chair of the Technical Working Group of the *Tarbiyyah*, and Dr Mohammad Yacob, Executive Director of BDA, explained that the Tahderiyyah program responds to one of the basic aspirations of the Bangsamoro communities, the education of their children, especially in conflict areas. Thus the Tahderiyyah program contributes to the attainment of peace in these communities.

Role of DepEd–ARMM: In terms of learners transitioning from Tahderiyyah centres to the next grade, i.e. Kindergarten to Grade 1, DepEd–ARMM schools are ready to accept Tahderiyyah program completers and receive the ECCD checklist from the Asatidz to guide DepEd–ARMM teachers on the performance of the Tahderiyyah completers. This was made possible through two DepED central Memoranda on transition from the Tahderiyyah centres to regular public schools, namely:

- acceptance of Tahderiyyah program completers from community-based schools to Grade 1 (DM-CI–2016-00102); and
- administration of the Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) instead of Validation Assessment for Tahderiyyah Completers entering Grade 1 (DM-CI–2016-00152).

The first memorandum is an advisory to all schools to accept Tahderiyyah completers in Grade 1 while waiting for the results of a validation test that would be arranged in coordination with UNICEF and DepEd Central Office. The second memorandum eases the burden of the Tahderiyyah completers by allowing them to take the Philippine Educational Placement Test with waived fees in lieu of the validation examination.

DepEd–ARMM facilitates the accreditation of the Tahderiyyah centres by ensuring their compliance with accreditation requirements. However, there are challenges for the Tahderiyyah centres in applying for accreditation. These are reduced when the Tahderiyyah centre is located within an existing madrasah that operates higher-grade levels than kindergarten. Some of these madaris are either in the process of getting accreditation from DepEd–ARMM or have already been accredited and granted a Permit to Operate (PTO). Once given a PTO, the madrasah is entitled to a subsidy from DepEd–ARMM of PhP5,000 per learner per annum which is allocated for teacher salaries (80%), and physical development of the school (20%).

For most Tahderiyyah centres, especially those operating as independent Tahderiyyahs, i.e. not connected with or part of existing madaris, accreditation with DepEd–ARMM is challenging because of requirements which they may not be able to comply with such as land ownership, i.e. the land should be owned by the Tahderiyyah centre; an organisational structure with a functional governing Board (which is also a requirement for registering with the Securities and Exchange Commission); and obtaining Securities and Exchange Commission registration itself.

Comparison with other programs

A 2016 study[6] on non-state actors in basic education commissioned by DFAT through the Education Analytics Service (EAS) and conducted in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Laos and Kenya, found that non-state actors play a significant role in areas where government services are

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[6] Report on the study on 'Non-State Actors in Basic Education' by Yung Nietschke, Education Analytics Service (EAS). August 2016.

lacking or inadequate and thus have an important role in expanding access to education. The same experience applies to the Tahderiyyah centres, and private madaris[7] in ARMM.

Another finding by the EAS study was that in general private schools offer higher quality education and report better learning outcomes than public schools. The case of private madaris in ARMM paints an opposite picture as generally DepEd–ARMM public schools offer higher quality, as they have better facilities and more qualified teachers. While a few private madaris offer quality education, and probably better than some public schools, in general the private madaris in ARMM are below the standard of public schools. The Tahderiyyah centres supported by BEAM-ARMM were provided resources to raise the level of learning outcomes of learners. Continuing to provide and sustain quality education through the Tahderiyyah centres in ARMM remains a challenge, To address this challenge, the Tahderiyyah program has developed the ECCD checklist to assess the developmental readiness of children to enter Grade 1. The acceptance of Tahderiyyah learners and their performance in Grade 1 are positive indicators of quality education being offered through Tahderiyyah centres.

As most Tahderiyyah centres are situated in conflict areas that are often remote from the urban centres and not attached to a madaristhey are usually supported by the local community. Visits to Tahderiyyah centres as part of this case study confirmed this positive involvement of communities. Teachers in these Tahderiyyah centres are local volunteers whom the community can barely support. They have to find other means of livelihood to support their own families so can only teach for two or three days during the week.

The Tahderiyyah centres visited hardly look like schools as they may just be a space in the barangay hall or adjacent to somebody's house or a makeshift structure on a small piece of land. Stakeholders, noted that those Tahderiyyah centres which are fortunate enough to have structures that resemble regular classrooms face the challenge of maintaining these structures, e.g. repairs, source of water, toilet facilities, etc.

The EAS study observed that in Bangladesh, Kenya, Pakistan and Myanmar non-state schools have better teaching standards despite less qualified teachers and lower salaries. While BEAM-ARMM has provided training and mentoring activities to Asatidz, public school teachers have more regular in-service training. In-service training for Tahderiyyah teachers is still wanting according to BDA officials. BDA officials indicated that continuing in-service training and workplace coaching and mentoring for their kindergarten teachers is needed and they plan to propose this to the Pathways program.

Another key finding by EAS was that a strong regulatory, policy and legal environment can help control quality education service delivery by non-state actors. This was observed in all six countries where the government gave formal recognition to non-government schools, changed the education law to enable private sector engagement, provided subsidies to teacher salaries and training, provided free textbooks and learning materials, established school grants programs, and offered student stipends to poor households.

This is also true in the Philippines where DepEd has policies to mainstream madrasah education and has committed to provide subsidies to private madaris that implement the prescribed curriculum and have the necessary PTOs. The PTO is a regulatory tool to accredit private madaris to ensure that their curriculum is aligned with the national standards. By implementing the standard madrasah curriculum prescribed by DepEd, the Tahderiyyah centres ensure that their learners progress through the same developmental blocks for pre-school children. The subsidies are supposed to be spent on teachers' salaries (80%) and the school's physical development (20%). In terms of student stipends, the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (*4Ps program), implemented by the DWSD is a conditional cash transfer program that provides subsidies to identified poor families on condition that recipients ensure

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[7] Private madaris are the source of Islamic education in ARMM but have recently been encouraged to register and get accredited with the Department of Education (DepEd) and use DepEd's prescribed curriculum for madrasah education which has a balance of Islamic education and the regular subjects taught in public schools. There are still many madaris in ARMM which are not yet accredited with DepEd–ARMM due to difficulties in complying with the requirements for accreditation. Many private madaris have a Tahderiyyah program.

that their children go to school. Recently the BEAM–ARMM program, through UNICEF, was able to lobby the DSWD to include the Tahderiyyah program as an educational facility in the 4Ps.[8] Thus beneficiaries of the 4Ps comply with the condition to send their children to school by sending them to a Tahderiyyah centre.

A final observation by the EAS study was that community engagement in the management of non-government schools, for example, through parents' involvement on school management committees, has positive effects on the quality of education. The study also observed that locally hired teachers are more likely to stay and are more accountable to parents for the children's learning outcomes. This is very true in the case of the private madaris and Tahderiyyah centres where communities actively participate in the affairs of the school through Parents-Teachers' and Community Associations or Parents-Teachers' Associations, thereby contributing to the sustainability of the school. In selected instances the barangay local government may provide support to the madrasah or Tahderiyyah centre although this is not widespread. Likewise locally hired teachers or volunteers at these private madaris or Tahderiyyah centres are more committed because they come from the community itself.

Conclusion

The Tahderiyyah program is appreciated by the communities in which it operates as it fills a void in the provision of basic education services in most of these conflict and post conflict areas. For communities in hard to reach, conflict-ridden areas who lack basic social services on ECCD such as the day-care centres provided by the DSWD, the Tahderiyyah program is a viable strategy to respond to the ECCD needs of young children as it follows the national curriculum on ECCD and simultaneously addresses the requirements for Islamic values education. Thus, it is an appropriate model to support education in conflict and post-conflict areas in ARMM, particularly in the provision of ECCD.

As a strategy for access to ECCD in conflict areas in ARMM, the Tahderiyyah program has reached more than 50,000 children 3 to 5 years old, and those who have completed kindergarten have transitioned to Grade 1 in public schools or private madaris. Parents consider the fact that their young children are going to school is an indicator of peace. The Tahderiyyah program has contributed to the promotion of peace in ARMM as parents and communities feel assured that their children will gain an understanding of the world around them through education. The motto of the *"Oplan Balik-Tahderiyyah"*, a campaign by the UNICEF and the BDA to encourage parents to send their pre-school children to the Tahderiyyah centres, was *"Isang munting hakbang tungo sa kapayapaan",* which could be translated to the Tahderiyyah as "a small step towards peace". The parents who were interviewed see the Tahderiyyah as promoting peace and a place where their children imbibe education as a vehicle to promote understanding and peace. They realise that with proper education from an early age their children would be less enticed to armed conflicts,

The challenges in obtaining a PTO serve as a disincentive for the Tahderiyyah centres to apply for accreditation with DepEd–ARMM. Of the 335 Tahderiyyah centres that are currently assisted by the UNICEF through the BDA not one has a PTO. DepEd–ARMM's Bureau of Madaris Education should be able to assist the Tahderiyyah centres comply with the requirements to obtain a PTO by finding ways to make the requirements more user-friendly. For example, DepEd could waive the requirement for a land title in the name of the Tahderiyyah centre and require only certification that the Tahderiyyah centre is given permission by the land owner to use the land to conduct the Tahderiyyah program. Or in relation to the requirement to match the annual DepEd subsidy of P5, 000 per learner once a PTO has been issued, each student is required to pay a monthly tuition fee of PhP500 to the Tahderiyyah centre as a counterpart. For parents who struggle to make a living in remote areas where cash is not

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[8] This is the 4Ps National Advisory Council (NAC) Resolution No. 35 Series of 2016 on the inclusion of the Tahderiyyah Program as an educational facility for preschool children in the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program.

easily earned, the required counterpart is not feasible especially as the Tahderiyyah centres are already mostly voluntary initiatives by the communities.

In terms of transitioning the kindergarten completers of the Tahderiyyah centres to Grade 1, DepEd issued two memoranda allowing Tahderiyyah completers to be enrolled in regular public schools. This assures Tahderiyyah completers of acceptance into the next grade to continue their education.

Recommendations for Pathways

Having found the Tahderiyyah curriculum to be an appropriate strategy to provide a developmentally appropriate and DepEd-recognised pre-school and kindergarten education for children in conflict areas, it is necessary for DepEd–ARMM and the DSWD to ensure that the program is sustained in these areas. It is timely for DepEd–ARMM to be more proactive in mainstreaming the Tahderiyyah program as a strategy for access through "culturally appropriate" kindergarten services to underserved communities by assisting the Tahderiyyah centres comply with accreditation requirements, particularly by relaxing some of these requirements. It is recommended that DepEd–ARMM look into the following:

- Enhance community participation to the Tahderiyyah program by strengthening social preparation, organising a community school management board which may also serve as the school Board of Directors required for the school's registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission, and invest in their capacity development.

- Invest in the capacity development of the school administration and/or management so that they are able to better undertake strategic thinking and planning especially in partnership-building with stakeholders including local governments at various levels which are mandated to provide support to ECCD as stipulated in the ECCD Act of 2000 also known as Republic Act 8980.

- Continue to invest in the capacity development of the Asatidz including *Imams* to enhance their knowledge and skills in the required DepEd ECCD curriculum.

- Support the BDA to develop policies and strategies for establishing and supporting private madaris and Tahderiyyah centres, as well as for the mainstreaming of the traditional madaris and Tahderiyyahs into DepEd's educational system, i.e. to enable traditional madaris and Tahderiyyahs to implement the curriculum prescribed by DepEd. The BDA itself with its varied tasks related to promoting peace and development such as advocacy work, partnership-building, establishing local economic models, supporting children's rights to basic education, etc., needs further capacity-building in policy development, strategic planning and program development to be more responsive to the development needs of the Bangsamoro communities, including the mainstreaming of traditional madaris.

Prospects for private madaris in enhancing access and participation in ARMM

A Case Study

Summary

This case study, which aims to look into the contribution of private madaris on access and participation in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), gathered primary data through focus group discussions and key informant interviews in selected private madaris that were assisted by the Basic Education Assistance for Muslim Mindanao (BEAM–ARMM) program, and with other stakeholders, and analysed secondary data, including a comparison with international practices and standards. The following were the findings of the study:

- Private madaris in ARMM play a significant role in expanding access and participation in the region, especially in areas where government services in basic education are inadequate. Thus there is a great opportunity for private madaris to contribute to education in ARMM, especially because of the cultural context which values preservation of the Filipino Muslim cultural heritage and which is supported by the Department of Education (DepEd) by prescribing a standard madrasah curriculum and subsidies for its implementation.

- The challenges in establishing and operating private madaris in ARMM include the cumbersome registration process with the Securities and Exchange Commission as a requirement for accreditation with DepEd, and the accreditation process itself. Once granted a Permit-to-Operate (PTO), the private madrasah is entitled to a subsidy of PhP5, 000 per learner, subject to a

counterpart contribution of PhP5, 000 per learner in the form of tuition fees. The matching contribution is a challenge, especially for poor families who cannot afford to pay the required tuition fees. Therefore, there is a need to review this policy. Other challenges include recruitment of qualified teachers, low salaries, physical development of the school itself and the sustainability of these private madaris.

- Private madaris need technical assistance for the registration and accreditation process. Of the 52 madaris assisted by BEAM–ARMM, 44 have been accredited by the Department of Education of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DepEd–ARMM) through the Bureau of Madaris Education (BME), while two are securing the renewal of their PTOs.

Other recommendations include:

- Investment in the capacity-building of school heads and administrators in school management.

- Investment in the capacity-building of teachers in the prescribed madrasah curriculum especially for implementation of the new K–12 curriculum.

- Support to the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) in developing policies and strategies for establishing and supporting private madaris, as well as for mainstreaming of the traditional madaris into DepEd's educational system, (i.e. to enable traditional madaris to implement the curriculum prescribed by DepEd).

- Investment in the capacity-building of local communities to be able to link-up with local governments and other stakeholders in basic education such as the local school boards of municipal governments as duty-bearers in responding to the rights of children for basic education.

Introduction

In recognition of the significant role of the private madaris (plural for *madrasah* which is the Arabic term for 'school'), in providing basic education to the children in ARMM, the BEAM–ARMM program aimed to provide support to the private madaris in terms of capacity-building and facilitating their accreditation with the DepEd–ARMM, through the BME.

Objective and research questions: The main objective of this case study is to examine the contribution of the private madaris on access and participation to basic education in ARMM. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

- What is the contribution of the private madaris on access and participation to basic education in ARMM?

- Is the curriculum implemented in the madaris responsive to the K–12 curriculum?

- How viable are private madaris in enhancing access and participation to basic education in ARMM?

- What are the opportunities as well as challenges for operating private madaris in ARMM?

- How does DepEd–ARMM support the private madaris become a viable system for basic education in the region?

- How many of the BEAM–ARMM supported madaris have been BME accredited and achieved their PTO?

- What are the issues with accreditation and how can these be addressed in Pathways?

Significance of the study: The findings of this study will be useful for DepEd–ARMM and for DepEd as a whole, in policy and decision-making regarding the accreditation of the madaris and the provision

of support as key stakeholders in access and participation in basic education in the region. The study will also inform the upcoming Pathways program in developing interventions with DepEd–ARMM to improve K–3 education in the region.

Methodology: The study utilised both secondary and primary data. Secondary data consisted of BEAM–ARMM six-monthly progress reports, data from the program's Unified Management Information System, and other relevant literature. For primary data, focus group discussions and key informant interviews were conducted with school administrators, teachers and parents of learners from selected madaris supported by the program.

Limitations of the study: Some of the intended visits to madaris for focus group discussions and key informant interviews did not proceed due to security issues particularly in Lanao del Sur and Tawi-Tawi. However, information gathered from the five madaris that were visited was sufficient to establish some trends regarding the contribution of the private madaris to access and participation in ARMM. The study did not look into the performance of students in the private madaris, nor gender disparity, although in ARMM there are more girls than boys in the private madaris.

Findings and discussion

Contribution of private madaris to access and participation: According to Nafeez Suhod, Director of BME, there are more than 1,000 traditional[9] madaris in ARMM which offer Arabic classes on weekends, including around 300 traditional madaris that have been accredited by BME. Each of these madaris has 15–20 or more learners. While the learners are not counted by DepEd, they could equate to about 10% of the total elementary learners in ARMM, although many learners at traditional madaris also attend a regular DepEd–ARMM school on weekdays. The traditional madaris play a significant role in the education of the Bangsamoro children because they provide lessons in Islam that are not normally taught in public schools that offer only Arabic language and Islamic values under the ALIVE[10] program. The traditional madrasah teaches the Arabic Language, the *Qur'an* (Holy Book), the *Hadith* or the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed (SAW[11]) and the *Fiqh* or the rules of *Halal* and *Haram* (what are lawful and prohibited) and rituals for the observance of the five pillars of Islam.[12]

The more than 300 traditional madaris registered by BME are using a Unified Traditional Madrasah Curriculum according to Director Suhod, which was designed and agreed upon by BME together with the school administrators of these madaris and religious leaders. The rationale for using a unified curriculum is to implement standards in the classes that are offered in the traditional madaris to address the varying orientations of teachers who have been trained at different schools both locally and abroad.

The 52 private madaris in ARMM assisted by BEAM–ARMM have a total enrolment of 3,258 in school year (SY) 2016–2017. These differ from the traditional madaris mentioned above as these are recognised by DepEd and given A PTO by BME, as well as school identification numbers. Furthermore, their learners are entered into the Learners Information System on DepEd's Enhanced Basic Education Information System and given Learner Reference Numbers. They are called 'Pilot Madaris' as they have adopted the curriculum prescribed by DepEd which differs greatly from the curriculum used in the traditional madaris.

Private madaris curriculum: In 2004 DepEd issued Department Order No. 51, s. 2004, prescribing a standard curriculum for elementary public schools and private madaris. The standard curriculum

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[9] A traditional madrasah offers Arabic classes only on weekends (Saturdays and Sundays). Lessons include Arabic language, the Qur'an, the sayings of the prophet Mohammed, the Islam laws and rituals for the observance of the five pillars of Islam.
[10] Arabic Language and Islamic Values Education (ALIVE), incorporated in public schools where there are significant numbers of Muslim students.
[11] Meaning *Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam* or *peace and blessings be upon him*.
[12] The Five pillars of Islam: *Shahada* or the Profession of Faith, *Salat* or daily prayers, *Zakat* or almsgiving, *Saum* or fasting during the Ramadan, and *Hajj* or the Pilgrimage to Mecca.

consists of the following subjects in public schools: English, Science, Math, Filipino, Makabayan, ALIVE; and in private madaris: *Qur'an*, *Aqidad*[13] and *Fiqh*, *Seraah*[14] and *Hadith*, and Arabic Language, with English, Science, Mathematics, Filipino and Makabayan.

DepEd Order No. 51, s. 2004 was amended by DepEd Order No. 40, series of 2011 enjoining public schools with substantial Muslim enrolees and private madaris to implement the Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum which has two models: a) Refined Elementary Madrasah Curriculum for public schools which consists of: English, Filipino, Science and Health, Mathematics, Makabayan, Character Education, and ALIVE; and, b) Refined Standard Madrasah Curriculum for Private Madaris which consists of: English, Filipino, Science and Health, Character Education, Arabic Language, *Qu'ran*, *Aqidah* and *Fiqh*, *Seraah* and *Hadith*. The refined curriculum aims to: (a), establish a smooth transfer of Muslim pupils from recipient private madrasah to public schools with ALIVE program or vice-versa; (b), unify the long history of dichotomy of education among Muslims; and, (c), promote Filipino identity whilst preserving the Filipino Muslim's cultural heritage.

At present the pilot madaris are still implementing the Refined Standard Madrasah Curriculum. However in the light of the implementation of the K–12 program, BEAM–ARMM has initiated workshops and training activities to orientate these pilot madaris on the new curriculum.

Viability of the private madaris **in enhancing access and participation in ARMM:** Theoretically, there is considerable potential for the private madaris to contribute to access and participation in basic education in ARMM. While the current enrolment in the 52 BEAM–ARMM assisted madaris is only 3,270 (SY 2016–2017), which is minimal relative to the Gross Enrolment Rate in ARMM, the number of learners enrolled in the traditional madaris is quite significant, even assuming that 50% of the learners in these traditional madaris are also enrolled in regular public elementary schools. The added value of learning the *Qur'an* and Islamic tradition, which has played an important role in preserving Muslim cultural heritage in the region and in the country, enhances the potential of private madaris to address access and participation in ARMM.

Given the opportunity and the capacity to implement the Refined Standard Madrasah Curriculum these private madaris enable children who may not be accommodated in regular DepEd schools due to the lack of teachers or classrooms to access the same quality and content that is offered in public schools. According to Dr Ismael Abdullah Gayak, Chair of the Technical Working Group of the *Tarbiyyah*[15], after the BEAM-ARMM program ends, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front through the BDA plans to establish madaris in school-less barangays in ARMM that have no access to educational services provided by DepEd–ARMM or alternative delivery modalities.

There are some long established private madaris that have demonstrated stability and capacity for sustainability and are providing quality education in their respective areas from kindergarten to upper elementary, high school and even college courses. Thus, madaris continue to be relevant in providing a balanced education to children and serving Bangsamoro children to attend and stay in school.

Opportunities and challenges in operating private madaris **in ARMM:** As ARMM is a Muslim region and private madaris put great value on Islamic education, they have the potential to thrive in this cultural context. Parents who participated in the focus group discussions for this study expressed satisfaction and strong support for the kind of education that their children gain from the private madaris. They stated that they are happy that their children are able to absorb the values of their Islamic faith including the Arabic language, which are brought home and practiced. With the anticipated passing of the Bangsamoro Basic Law which will grant expanded autonomy to ARMM, *Tarbiyyah's* vision for quality education for children in ARMM offers a great opportunity for private madaris. This is enhanced by DepEd's intent to mainstream madrasah education into the country's

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[13] Understanding of beliefs associated with the faith (*Aqidah Islamiyyah*), the fundamentals of Islam (*Usul At-thalathah*), and the Oneness (*Tawhid*) of Allah (SWT) [*Subhanahu Wa Ta'alla*] or Glory to Him.
[14] Understanding the life of the Prophet Mohammed (SAW).
[15] The Tarbiyyah is the Education Committee of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

educational system, with corresponding incentives and support to private madaris that implement the prescribed madrasah curriculum.

Despite these opportunities, there are several challenges in establishing and operating private madaris in ARMM, especially in resource-poor and difficult to reach barangays where local communities struggle to support the madaris. One challenge to obtaining a PTO and accreditation from DepEd is the requirement for madaris to match the subsidy offered by DepEd. This requires at least PhP5, 000 tuition fee for each student for which DepEd provides PhP5,000 per student annually. Some madaris have closed down because parents who are unable to pay the tuition fee have transferred their children to nearby public schools. This is one of the reasons why traditional madaris, which are mostly operated voluntarily by the local communities, are unable to gain assistance from DepEd or unwilling to get accreditation from DepEd.

Another challenge is getting competent teachers for the madrasah to implement the prescribed curriculum, especially in resource-constrained communities. Teachers in the private madaris should have an education degree and have passed the Licensure Examination for Teachers, especially those implementing the DepEd prescribed curriculum. Unfortunately, as salaries are low and dependent on tuition fees and subsidies from DepEd (assuming that the madrasah is accredited), the common experience among private madaris is that once their teachers pass the Licensure Examination they seek opportunities in better-resourced public schools and regular salaries.

Major challenges in gaining DepEd accreditation and obtaining a PTO are: (a) the requirements for registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission, which requires a Board of Trustees among other things; (b) land, which should be owned by the madrasah but most often the school is built on private property or public land owned by the Barangay local government; and (c) lack of support by some local governments who may be constrained by their own limited resources.

DepEd–ARMM's support to private madaris**:** DepEd–ARMM provides technical assistance to private madaris to gain accreditation and obtain PTOs by providing them with information on the accreditation process. DepEd–ARMM also assists DepEd Central office in monitoring the private madaris. DepEd Central's requirements for PTOs are beyond the control of DepEd–ARMM which can do nothing if the madrasah is unable to comply with the requirements.

The BEAM–ARMM program has supported BME and the private madaris' compliance with the requirements to obtain PTOs by facilitating the registration of the madaris with the Security and Exchange Commission, and the relaxation of requirements on land ownership. DepEd–ARMM now accepts that in lieu of a deed of donation or a certificate of land ownership, private madaris can secure certification from the landowners for the free use of their land by the madaris.

Current number of private madaris **accredited by DepEd–ARMM:** Of the 52 private madaris being assisted BEAM–ARMM, 50 have been accredited by DepEd–ARMM and granted PTOs and two are working on the renewal of their PTOs.

Issues on accreditation and how Pathways may support the accreditation of the private madaris**:** Pathways may look into capacity building of prospective members of the madaris' Board of Trustees so that they are capable of managing the madrasah and gaining Securities and Exchange Commission registration, including providing assistance to the madaris with this registration. Pathways should continue to explore land ownership alternatives and alternative mechanisms to the counterpart DepEd subsidy. Another area where Pathways may provide assistance is in building the capacity of BME for more proactive monitoring of the private madaris to ensure that they are able to comply with the requirements for accreditation.

Comparison with other programs[16]

A 2016 study[17] on non-state actors in basic education commissioned by DFAT through the Education Analytics Service (EAS) and conducted in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Laos and Kenya, found that non-state actors play a significant role in areas where government services are lacking or inadequate and thus have an important role in expanding access to education. The same experience applies to the private madaris, and Tahderiyyah centres[18] in ARMM. Most private madaris, except a few of the traditional madaris, cater to the needs of underserved communities in the region. When the private madaris charge a minimal tuition fee, especially the pilot madaris, many parents have difficulty in paying the madrasah as most of the communities are poor. However, the private madaris continue to provide education to the communities as they regard education as a basic right of the child.

Another finding by the EAS study was that in general private schools offer higher quality education and report better learning outcomes than public schools. The case of private madaris in ARMM paints an opposite picture as generally DepEd–ARMM public schools offer higher quality, as they have better facilities and more qualified teachers. While there are a few private madaris who offer quality education and probably better than some public schools, in general the private madaris in ARMM are below the standard found in public schools. There is no measure for learning outcomes in private madaris to compare with public schools except for those that have been established longer and have been participating in government-initiated achievement tests. Some school heads did attest to cases of learners from private madaris who transferred to public schools and excelled which could indicate better learning outcomes in those particular source private madaris.

The EAS study observed that in Bangladesh, Kenya, Pakistan and Myanmar non-state schools have better teaching standards despite less qualified teachers and lower salaries. In the case of ARMM, generally public schools tend to have better teaching standards than the private madaris and the Tahderiyyah centres as public school teachers have access to continuing training and capacity-building while the teachers in private madaris and Tahderiyyah centres seldom have access to in-service training and many of them are less qualified than their counterparts in public schools.

Another key finding by EAS was that a strong regulatory, policy and legal environment could help control quality education service delivery by non-state actors. This was observed in all six countries where the government gave formal recognition to non-government schools, changed the education law to enable private sector engagement, provided subsidies to teacher salaries and training, provided free textbooks and learning materials, established school grants programs, and offered student stipends to poor households. This is also true in the Philippines where DepEd has policies to mainstream madrasah education and has committed to provide subsidies to private madaris that implement the prescribed curriculum. The subsidies are supposed to be spent on teachers' salaries (80%) and the school's physical development (20%). In terms of student stipends, the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* (4Ps program), implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development is a conditional cash transfer program that provides subsidies to identified poor families on condition that recipients ensure that their children go to school.

A final observation by the EAS study was that community engagement in the management of non-government schools, for example, through parents' involvement on school management committees, has positive effects on the quality of education. It also observed that locally hired teachers are more likely to stay and are more accountable to parents for the children's learning outcomes. This is very true in the case of the private madaris and Tahderiyyah centres where communities actively

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[16] This section is shared with the case study on the Tahderiyyah program but in this particular case study the emphasis understandably is the private madaris than the Tahderiyyah program.
[17] Report on the study on 'Non-State Actors in Basic Education' by Yung Nietschke, Education Analytics Service (EAS). August 2016.
[18] The Tahderiyyah program is an Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) program implemented by the BEAM–ARMM program through UNICEF and the Bangsamoro Development Agency, to cater to children in conflict areas in ARMM. Some of the Tahderiyyah centres are part of the private madaris while some of them operate as independent community schools.

participate in the affairs of the school through Parents-Teachers' and Community Associations or Parents-Teachers' Associations, thereby contributing to the sustainability of the school. In some instances, the barangay local government may provide support to the madrasah or Tahderiyyah centre. Creative ways of engaging community support include community members who are Overseas Filipino Workers in the Middle East providing voluntary donation to the madrasah. Locally hired teachers or volunteers at these private madaris or Tahderiyyah centres are more committed because they come from the community itself.

Conclusion

Private madaris play a significant role in access and participation to basic education in ARMM especially in areas which are underserved or where government services in basic education are inadequate. More importantly private madaris provide Islamic values in their curriculum, albeit balanced by the other core subjects that are normally taught in public schools, specifically in implementing the standard madrasah curriculum prescribed by DepEd. There is a considerable opportunity for establishing and operating private madaris in ARMM especially in the cultural context of the region, which attaches a high value to preserving the Filipino Muslim heritage with DepEd providing the enabling environment to mainstream private madaris in the country's educational system. Hopes for a more autonomous Bangsamoro region are a further source of support for more culturally appropriate policies for basic education in the region.

Establishing and operating private madaris are not without challenges. These include the cumbersome Securities and Exchange Commission registration process to obtain a legal personality, establishing the physical school, recruiting competent teachers, registering with DepEd to obtain PTOs that will enable subsidy support from DepEd as well as the issue of sustainability. Technical assistance is necessary for private madaris in all of these processes. Overall, 50 out of 52 madaris assisted by BEAM–ARMM have been accredited by DepEd–ARMM while two are now renewing their PTOs. Local governments are regarded by BDA and communities to have the capacity to support private madaris but few local governments, especially at the barangay level, have resources to provide assistance to these private madaris.

While previous studies confirm the significance of private madaris as non-state actors in expanding access and participation to basic education especially in underserved communities, there is a need to further invest in the capacity-building of the private madaris to (a) comply with the registration or accreditation processes; (b) recruit and train competent and committed teachers; (c) engage communities and local governments to support private madaris; (d) the capacity-building of DepEd–ARMM itself, specifically BME, to respond to the needs of the madaris in the accreditation process; and (e) the ongoing capacity-building of the private madaris to provide access to quality education to Bangsamoro learners in resource-poor communities.

Recommendations for Pathways

Aside from the previous recommendations to provide technical assistance to the registration and accreditation processes of private madaris, including the capacity-building for BME in providing support to the private madaris in accreditation, other recommendations that Pathways may consider are:

- Invest in the capacity-building of school heads or administrators in school management as a continuing area for improvement: The BEAM–ARMM program's intervention in the capacity-building of school heads and school administrators in school management includes basic leadership and management skills and financial management to enhance the governance system of the private madaris, and to improve the accountability and transparency of their financial

management systems as would-be recipients of subsidies from DepEd. School management must also be able to build partnerships with various stakeholders including local government units and local school boards.

- Invest in the capacity-building of teachers in the prescribed curriculum especially towards the implementation of K–12: Recognising the significant role and contribution of private madaris to basic education in the region, there is a need to enhance the quality of education in these madaris to positively impact student performance. It is necessary to support the capacity building of the teachers who are less qualified than their counterparts in public schools, including by providing learning materials and tools. Implementation of the K–12 curriculum necessitates further demand for capacity building for teachers to enable them to catch up with the new curriculum.

- Provide support to the BDA in developing policies and strategies for establishing and supporting private madaris and tahderiyyah centres, as well as in the mainstreaming of the traditional madaris and tahderiyyahs into DepEd's educational system, i.e. to enable traditional madaris and tahderiyyahs to implement the curriculum prescribed by DepEd. As the development arm of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the BDA is at the forefront of all development initiatives in support of the peace process in ARMM, supported by the *Tarbiyyah* in the education sector. The BDA itself, with its varied tasks related to promoting peace and development such as advocacy work, partnership-building, establishing local economic models, supporting children's rights to basic education, etc., needs further capacity-building in policy development, strategic planning and program development to be more responsive to the development needs of Bangsamoro communities, including the mainstreaming of traditional madaris.

- Invest in the capacity-building of local communities to be able to link-up with local governments and other stakeholders in basic education such as the Local School Boards of municipal governments as duty-bearers in responding to the rights of children for basic education. In many instances, basic education is not a priority of municipal governments so that the functioning of the Local School Boards as mandated by law is often neglected. In some cases, municipal governments have no capacity to engage with non-state actors to provide basic education to areas which are difficult to reach and lack government public schools. As right holders, local communities should be able to demand from their local government appropriate support for the right of their children to basic education.

School-based hygiene activities in Maguidanao II: The scaling up of the Essential Health Care Program

A Case Study

Conducted by GIZ and SEAMEO INNOTECH

Summary

The Essential Health Care Program (EHCP) has been scaled up in the Department of Education–ARMM (DepEd-ARMM) division of Maguindanao II to 75 schools targeted by the BEAM-ARMM program and to an additional 10 schools which were not targeted by the program. The division has been a strong advocate for EHCP and was awarded best EHCP implementing division by the DepEd-ARMM Regional Office in 2015. A qualitative study was conducted to better understand which existing structures and mechanisms were leveraged for scale up, the factors which supported the scale up process and institutionalisation of EHCP, and the ongoing barriers to implementation. The study identified five key factors which enabled the successful EHCP scale up in Maguindanao II: the development of a conducive policy environment, strong support from DepEd–ARMM leadership; development of strong ownership in DepEd–ARMM staff; ability of DepEd at all levels to maximise

limited resources; creation of improved working arrangements among school health personnel; and the promotion and adoption of simple steps for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) improvements. Despite these factors, additional challenges remain which constrain implementation on a wide scale. Water access remains an enormous challenge in Maguindanao, limiting the ability of schools to practice daily hygiene habits. In addition, without any school-level funds, schools lack the necessary resources to fund simple materials to sustain the program, particularly toothpaste, toothbrushes, and maintenance and repairs of WASH infrastructure. The continued strong reliance on DepEd–ARMM health personnel as the leaders in ensuring EHCP implementation limits the integration of the program into the School Head's responsibility to ensure a conducive learning environment.

Introduction

Significance of the study: DepEd-ARMM's EHCP combines three low-cost evidence-based hygiene interventions in schools: daily group handwashing with soap, daily group toothbrushing with fluoride toothpaste and bi-annual deworming. EHCP is implemented in all provinces in ARMM. As part of the BEAM-ARMM program, the scale-up of EHCP was supported with technical assistance from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) using the Fit for School approach. The approach follows the key principles of simple, scalable, sustainable and systems thinking. It aims to transform public primary schools into supportive learning environments where children can practice healthy habits, learn and thrive. The program promotes a stepwise approach for schools to improve according to their resources, circumstances and capabilities.

Although the quality of EHCP implementation varies throughout the region, the Division of Maguindanao II has demonstrated its ability to integrate WASH in Schools (WinS) into division structures and processes and, as a result, has some of the top-performing schools with regards to WinS, as identified by the DepEd-ARMM Regional Office. According to the last round of DepEd–ARMM's WinS monitoring, 83% of schools in the division practice group handwashing with some or all students, 89% of schools practice group tooth brushing with some or all students, and 89% of schools offer deworming. Understanding the experience of how Maguindanao II scaled up EHCP can offer lessons and guidance to other divisions on how to scale up WinS using existing DepEd–ARMM resources and structures. It can also provide insights on how to develop ownership and institutionalise new initiatives.

Objectives and research questions: The study aimed to review the structures, systems and approaches / strategies which the division of Maguindanao II has used to scale up EHCP within the unique context of ARMM. The following main research questions were considered:

▪   How was EHCP scaled up in Maguindanao II?

▪   What were the facilitating factors that enabled the scale up in the division and school levels?

▪   What were the barriers to scale up at division and school levels and how were these addressed?

Methodology: The study was conducted through key informant interviews and focus group discussions of DepEd-ARMM staff at the regional, division, district and school levels. Four schools within Maguindanao II were selected by the division for participation in the study, based on their accessibility, diversity of contexts and their strong EHCP performance.

Limitations: The study is limited by its scope. Security considerations limited the focus of the study to the Division of Maguindanao and focus group discussions were conducted in schools that were accessible from Cotabato City.

Findings and discussion

EHCP was scaled up in Maguindanao II, gradually increasing the number of targeted schools from 5 to 75 from 2011 to 2015. The division identified target schools based on criteria that provided the best opportunities for successful implementation. In the first year of the program, five schools were targeted. The division and region then reflected on that piloting and were able to understand the tangible benefits of the program. While the initial momentum for the piloting was strongly supported by GIZ, following the first year DepEd–ARMM began to develop a strong appreciation for the program after recognising its potential. Over the following five years, that appreciation developed into strong ownership and now DepEd–ARMM operates the program, with GIZ's support phasing out in 2017.

The scale up process was largely driven by DepEd–ARMM's school health personnel, who conducted orientations from division to school levels, conducted regular monitoring, and mobilised engagement of the school community. Since 2015, efforts have focused on sustaining the program and supporting WASH improvements in the entire division more broadly. The strategy has also shifted to focus more on EHCP implementation as part of School Based Management and engaging School Heads to take the lead in ensuring implementation, based on DepEd–ARMM's School Health and Nutrition Policy.

Enabling factors

Policy environment: DepEd–ARMM created a conducive policy environment at the regional and division levels. Most notably DepEd–ARMM's School Health and Nutrition Policy identifies EHCP as a strategic action area. The policy strongly emphasises the focus of DepEd–ARMM's school health efforts on preventive, evidence-based measures and away from treatment-focused interventions, which complements the EHCP concept. In addition, in the division of Maguindanao II, the Schools Division Superintendent issued a memo that all schools should implement EHCP, whether they were targeted by the BEAM–ARMM program or not. This instruction demonstrated the division's commitment to the program and gave School Heads clear guidelines on what was expected for implementation. This environment provided the policy framework on which health personnel could scale up the program, particularly to non-target schools. However, the instruction for immediate scaling up to all schools somewhat limited the division's ability to learn from the pilot experience and develop a gradual scale up strategy based on the learnings and experience from school-level implementation.

Strong support for EHCP from DepEd–ARMM leadership: From the start of the program, there was strong support for the EHCP from the leadership of DepEd-ARMM, both at the Regional and Division levels. The development of strong internal advocates for the program has been instrumental in sustaining momentum through changes in DepEd–ARMM leadership since the start of BEAM–ARMM. Despite changes in Regional Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries, 'ambassadors from within' (as described by DepEd–ARMM) were able to orient the new leadership on the program and advocate for continued support. In addition, strong leadership and vocal support was expressed from the division level. The Schools Division Superintendent was noted for 'leading by doing'. The Division office maintained impeccable toilet facilities, handwashing stations with soap, and kicked off the implementation of transparency boards by installing one themselves. The Schools Division Superintendent also ensured that EHCP was integrated into regular school evaluations including the inter-school and inter-district visitations. Moreover, strong leadership was particularly evident in support for deworming advocacy. Leaders at the regional and division levels both publicly took deworming pills to alleviate concerns regarding their safety and were very vocal in their promotion of deworming, which contributed to the significant increase in deworming coverage. According to the Health and Nutrition Unit of DepEd–ARMM, deworming coverage increased from 17% when the program started in the 2011–2012 school year to 65% in the 2016–2017 school year. The Regional

Office also highlighted EHCP at wider ARMM events, most notably the monthly 'People's Day' activity, where EHCP is demonstrated each month as DepEd–ARMM's contribution to the event.

Strong ownership: DepEd–ARMM developed strong ownership over the program and describe it as their 'flagship school health program'. DepEd–ARMM noted that reviewing the benefits of the piloting and understanding the impact EHCP was having on school children helped to strengthen their appreciation for the program. Some health personnel reported that in the early months of the program they were somewhat hesitant to push for implementation on the ground, as they perceived EHCP to be 'GIZ's program'. However, once they started to see implementation at the school level and understand the potential impact of the program and how schools were able to implement it, they developed a strong identity associated with the program. Health personnel noted that EHCP was a very visible program on school grounds which helped to strengthen their visibility as school nurses and to demonstrate their contribution at school level. This strengthened their ownership of the program as school communities closely identified them with the program. Similarly, at school level, school communities, especially parents, were more open to contributing manpower and funds for EHCP after seeing the implementation of the program and its tangible benefits for their children (improved hygiene habits, cleaner school environments). Closely related to this was the alignment of the program's core message of cleanliness and hygiene with Islamic values of cleansing before prayer time and maintaining a high standard of personal hygiene. These two factors were instrumental in mobilising school-level support and encouraging Parent Teacher Associations to raise the necessary resources to implement the program. The division was also able to promote the program to attract support from outside the education sector. In particular, they were able to secure the provision of hygiene kits from the Maguindanao Provincial Government to support EHCP. As ownership grew, DepEd–ARMM, especially the Regional Office, also became more open to taking on the full funding of the program.

Mobilising funds and maximising existing resources: From the onset of the program, GIZ provided only limited financial assistance for its implementation and expressed clearly that, as EHCP was a DepEd program, it should be primarily funded by DepEd. This approach resulted in school communities mobilising funds and maximising existing resources to initiate the program. Schools targeted by the BEAM–ARMM program were given hygiene kits to cover the first year of EHCP and group washing facilities. However, beyond that, all other expenses including orientations and workshops, school materials, additional washing facilities and water needed to be covered by DepEd–ARMM. The division looked to creative ways to maximise limited available resources. The *Bayanihan* spirit was leveraged to engage school communities to provide the needed labour and minimal funds to kick start the program. Gradually, the funding of materials was taken over from GIZ by DepEd–ARMM. The division noted that this lack of financial resources forced teachers and school heads to think more creatively (e.g. developing handwashing facilities from indigenous materials, holding popularity contests to raise funds for water access). Without significant funding, the division rarely held separate activities for EHCP. Instead, they integrated EHCP advocacy and reporting into other ongoing division activities which minimised costs and helped to institutionalise and mainstream the program. Furthermore, this self-funding by DepEd–ARMM contributed to long-term sustainability and helped to strengthen ownership of the program.

Improved health workforce working arrangements: In addition, the health workforce created improved working arrangements to meet the new challenges presented by EHCP implementation. Previously, health personnel in Maguindanao II were not assigned to specific schools. Since the introduction of EHCP required nurses to visit schools regularly to conduct orientations and to monitor program implementation, schools were clustered into groups and assigned to a specific nurse. This working arrangement has endured and is now the basis for the current structure of the health personnel assignments in the division. This strategy has also improved the health personnel's ability to manage other school-level health programs and integrate EHCP into their implementation, particularly with regards to the School Based Feeding Program and School Gardening This arrangement also ensured that nurses could share knowledge between schools. Strong working relationships between the division-level EHCP Coordinator and the Schools Division Superintendent also allowed for the

integration of EHCP into division activities like the evaluation of the inter-school visitation and regular division meetings, where, according to the formal DepEd structure, a division nurse would not normally participate. These informal working arrangements helped to strengthen EHCP's position on the division's agenda.

Promotion of gradual simple steps: With limited available resources, gradual simple steps were encouraged so that schools could tangibly see what they could do on their own to implement the program. For example, schools without water access encouraged children to bring water from home or fetch water from residents nearby to school; and in cases where schools could not fund permanent washing facilities they constructed group facilities, called tippy taps, from old plastic bottles and string. Promoting these low-tech and low-cost options helped to make EHCP feasible for any committed school to implement, regardless of available funds. This also provided health personnel with specific recommendations to provide to schools in low-resource settings.

Barriers

Water access: However, the program faces several barriers to strengthen sustainability. The primary barrier identified by DepEd–ARMM personnel and stakeholders is water access. Based on Maguindanao II's latest round of WinS monitoring about one quarter of schools do not have any access to water on school grounds and nearly half do not have potable water. Nearly half of schools also arrange for children to bring water from home to school. This lack of water or limited water on schools grounds makes practicing daily hygiene activities and maintaining WASH infrastructure a significant challenge.

School-level resourcing: Moreover, in their first year of the program, target schools were provided with hygiene kits and group washing facilities. However, as the program evolved, responsibility for the provision of materials has entirely shifted to DepEd–ARMM. While the Regional Office has made additional group washing facilities available to some schools, many schools still struggle to mobilise the needed funds annually for new toothbrushes, toothpaste and soap as well as regular maintenance and repairs of WASH infrastructure. Without funds available at school level or materials provided from the Regional Office to schools, it will be a challenge for some schools to sustain program implementation over time.

Operationalisation of school health and nutrition policy: While the School Health and Nutrition Policy provides an important policy basis at the regional and division level with regards to EHCP, there is a potential to strengthen its operationalisation at district and school levels. In particular, with regards to roles and responsibilities, School Heads should be responsible for leading implementation with health personnel providing technical assistance where needed. However, in reality, school health personnel continue to take a strong lead in ensuring implementation while School Heads are often less active. In such situations, EHCP implementation becomes dependent on the role of school nurses. However, some schools are only occasionally visited by school nurses and school nurses do not have any authority over School Heads or teachers to affect implementation. The perception of EHCP as a separate issue under the health personnel limits integration of EHCP into School Based Management and the responsibilities of the School Head.

Comparisons with other programs

Relative to the need for improvements in WinS, resources for WASH within the education sector are often very limited. Often good practices can be established but their impact remains limited if they cannot be sustained and implemented at scale by existing government structures. In some cases, significant investments are made to improve WASH in a few schools but these prove too expensive to scale up and tend to have lower government ownership and poor sustainability once funding ceases.

For this reason, the Fit for School approach, based on the '4S' principles of simplicity, scalability, sustainability, and systems thinking, is being increasingly adopted by Ministries of Education in Southeast Asia. Through this approach other countries, particularly Lao PDR, Cambodia and Indonesia are also making gradual stepwise low-cost improvements in WASH which have the potential to be scaled up to many schools. The approach is closely aligned with the Three Star Approach for WinS. Developed by GIZ and UNICEF, the approach aims to guide a stepwise process towards reaching national standards for WASH by focusing on low-cost solutions and simple models that can be realistically scaled up. It aims to address the bottlenecks that block the effectiveness and expansion of current WinS programs. Experiences like the scale up of EHCP in Maguindanao II to 85 schools using limited resources are of particular interest within this context as many schools can be reached using resources that the education sector can realistically provide on its own.

Conclusion

The experience of Maguindanao II provides important insights into the opportunities to expand / strengthen EHCP in other divisions, and simple WASH improvements more generally on a large scale. A step-wise, low-cost approach was central to the ability of DepEd–ARMM to implement the program. Limited external resources for program implementation meant that schools had to be creative to use their own means to implement the program, which ultimately was key to sustainability and strengthening ownership of the program. The commitment of DepEd–ARMM leadership has also been instrumental in scaling up the program and has strengthened over time as ownership within the agency grew. This support also enabled the health workforce to adopt flexible working arrangements to better support EHCP at school-level. Despite these promising aspects of the program, there are still some factors which limit the quality of implementation across the division. Schools continue to struggle with lack of access to water and the funds needed to properly implement the program over the long-term. Moreover, sustainability of the program would be strengthened by increased integration of EHCP into School Based Management and the responsibility of School Heads.

The experience of Maguindanao II has implications for the continued evolution of EHCP in ARMM. DepEd–ARMM's scale up of the WinS monitoring system provides an opportunity for renewed momentum to strengthen and expand EHCP implementation to all schools in the region. The system sets daily group handwashing, daily group tooth brushing and offering deworming as part of the minimum requirements to reach the one star accredited status. Through this system, schools are recognised for their efforts to initiate and sustain EHCP and are given specific direction on how to make incremental steps to improve WinS overall. While the context of the division of Maguindanao II is unique, many of the strategies that were used there could also be adapted to other divisions to support scaling up. Momentum at school and division levels would also need to be strongly supported by the region, particularly with regards to sustainable long-term funding for EHCP.

The promising scale up of EHCP with limited external support, provides a potential model for the continued improvement of WinS in the region. However, there is still significant work to do to improve the state of WASH in DepEd–ARMM schools. Infrastructure is poor throughout the region and cleaning and maintenance of existing facilities needs further attention. In addition, formation of healthy habits requires that schools practice daily hygiene activities routinely in a consistent manner and in an environment with the necessary materials available.

Recommendations for Pathways

In continuing support to create conducive learning environments, low-cost, gradual WASH improvements should be promoted. DepEd–ARMM's WinS monitoring and corresponding accreditation system provides the framework in which to encourage schools to make gradual WASH

improvements. There are small improvements that schools can do immediately, such as constructing tippy taps, encouraging children to bring water from home, fund raising projects for concrete handwashing facilities, soap, toothbrush & toothpaste and installing rainwater harvesting systems. Through the WinS monitoring, DepEd–ARMM can track such improvements made by schools. However, a regional solution is needed to address the gap in infrastructure in toilets and water access over the long-term. The Community Led Sanitation Construction concept has shown initial promise as an opportunity to fast-track WASH infrastructure improvements in hard-to-reach areas.

Support for routine hygiene habits in schools should continue at the school, division and regional levels. The region has demonstrated its intention to continue funding daily hygiene activities through its production of group washing facilities. Advocacy to continue this production and complement it with the provision of hygiene kits for all schools would enable all schools the opportunity to practice daily activities. In particular, this should be integrated within the wider WinS and school health landscape. With the expansion of DepEd-ARMM's School Based Feeding Program, midday meals in schools provide an opportunity to mandate daily group handwashing prior to eating and daily group tooth brushing after meals. In addition, support for deworming advocacy should continue. Low-cost and time-effective advocacy interventions have had a significant impact, contributing to nearly quadrupling the deworming coverage in DepEd-ARMM over a six-year period.

Finally, continued emphasis is needed to integrate WinS into School Based Management. While health personnel provide valuable technical assistance, efforts should continue to mainstream WASH into the responsibility of School Heads. There is a strong need to strengthen the operationalisation of the School Health and Nutrition Policy, which clearly outlines the central role of the School Head and wider school community in improving WinS. Creating and ensuring healthy learning environments which support the wellbeing of learners is firmly rooted in School Based Management, and ensuring access to appropriate WASH infrastructure and healthy habits is a central part of that.

Further research in ARMM to study the relationship between WinS and learning outcomes or other educational indicators would better enable DepEd–ARMM to understand the impact of WASH improvements on their overall mission. Additional research is needed on the process of hygiene habit formation in the school setting and how healthy habits developed in schools are transferred into the household and vice versa. Such research would help DepEd–ARMM to refine their hygiene interventions to best ensure that they contribute to habit formation and that those habits are being carried over into the home.

The Fit for School approach of ensuring that all technical assistance is simple, scalable, sustainable and based on systems thinking has enabled the BEAM–ARMM program to institutionalise WASH interventions in schools in Maguindanao II and across ARMM more broadly. In the scale up process, working through the existing structures within DepEd–ARMM, strengthening WASH as part of School Based Management and only promoting interventions which could be realistically achieved using DepEd–ARMM's own means, rather than relying on external resources, has been a central part of the sustainability of this approach.

A school-based reading program model in ARMM – Reading Across Levels, Languages, and Learning Areas

A Case Study

Summary

This case study focuses on the results of the Basic Education Assistance in Muslim Mindanao (BEAM–ARMM) introduced reading program to address one of the most prevalent issues among children in ARMM schools. Students are not reading at their grade levels, with a significant number of students not reading well – or at all – when they reach the end of their elementary years.

The study shows that teaching reading in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) is as challenging as the varied socio-political, economic and cultural contexts of the region. It also demonstrates that contextual factors have stronger influence on students' abilities to read and understand what they read than person-bound factors (like teachers' own attitudes and commitment to teach). The Reading Across Levels, Languages, and Learning Areas (Read ALLL) program started in 2015, and has since engaged and benefited 259 elementary and 86 secondary school teachers from the nine Department of Education (DepEd) divisions in the ARMM. Through Read ALLL, students are expected to improve their learning outcomes, as shown in their scores in the 2016 National Achievement Test (NAT), which is a strategic objective of the BEAM–ARMM program.

A statistical review and analysis of the of the scores of Grade 3 students from Dangkalan Elementary School in the Lamitan City Division in the 2016 NAT showed that those who underwent instruction in Grades 2 and 3 from Read ALLL trained teachers performed significantly better in Filipino and English reading, science, and mathematics than their counterparts who did not receive Read ALLL interventions. Overall, Grade 3 students from Dangkalan Elementary School (with the Read ALLL intervention) increased their 2016 NAT scores in English (Reading) compared to the decreased scores of students from the Lamitan City division in the same year. These results can be attributed to the changes in teachers' skills in reading instruction as a result of BEAM–ARMM Read ALLL interventions. More importantly, some crucial factors also contributed to improved NAT scores among the school's students. These include teachers' improved reading proficiencies; favourable student and teacher attitudes toward reading and writing; leadership and instructional supervision performed by the Principal and all out support from community stakeholders.

Introduction

Through BEAM–ARMM's Read ALLL program, teachers have been trained to develop learners' reading skills across languages, focusing on learners' first language, then gradually teaching them to transition to other languages such as Filipino, and English. The program has equipped teachers with appropriate strategies in teaching reading across grade levels, from elementary to secondary, and in providing explicit and remedial lessons for learners who are not reading at their grade levels. It has guided teachers in incorporating key component skills in reading across learning areas like science, mathematics and social science. Moreover, it has provided teachers continuous professional development to improve their own reading and writing, as well as listening and speaking skills.

Significance of the study: Study results are important for the successor program after BEAM–ARMM, but also in making known the impact of an innovative program like Read ALLL. Through this study, program implementers and key education stakeholders in the region will be aware of the benefits of a similar program or a replication of Read ALLL in additional schools in the region. Consequently, they may conceptualise a much more focused and context-specific reading program. Such a program will enable students to perform better not just in reading and languages but also in other subjects such as science and mathematics.

Objectives of the case study: The case study aimed to: a) identify and describe factors that constrain and promote desired competencies in teaching reading; b) describe the levels of support from school administrators, supervisors at the district and division levels; division superintendent, and regional and local government officials to teachers' professional development and students' learning outcomes; c) identify factors that led to changes in student learning outcomes; and d) identify strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of Read ALLL in the region.

Methodology: The case study took a mixed method approach to research, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative approaches were used in making a statistical review and analysis of the 2016 NAT results of students who received Read ALLL interventions compared to those who did not receive Read ALLL instructions or interventions. Qualitative approaches were used to elicit textual or qualitative data that identified key drivers or factors that influenced desired competencies in teaching reading and in describing different levels of support from other education stakeholders in the region. Qualitative approaches included the use of tools like key informant interviews and focus group discussions among representative students and teachers involved in the Read ALLL program, as well as of their parents and the local government officials in Lamitan City.

Limitations of the study: First was the available time for the study team to cover as many Read ALLL schools to gather data using qualitative tools (two weeks). The study team focussed on the Dangkalan Elementary School within the Lamitan City Division in Basilan Province, one of the success stories of the BEAM–ARMM reading program. The study team also had to deal with security-related issues, as some targeted schools could not be visited due to sporadic armed clashes between the

Philippine military and an 'extremist' group in the Lanao del Sur area[19]; and potential kidnapping threats in Sulu province[20] during the data collection period.

It is also important to note that the Read ALLL program was introduced and the baseline conducted in mid-2015 and the NAT and teacher assessments post-tests were conducted in August 2016. The results shown, although substantial, come from only nine months of implementation. It would be important to conduct follow up reviews in the future.

Findings from statistical review and analysis

After nine months of intervention (June 2015 to February 2016), teachers from the program significantly improved in their reading proficiencies, as shown in the following:

- Teachers improved their abilities in letter-sound, phoneme segmentation, word reading, oral reading fluency, and comprehension skills. Teachers improved most in phoneme segmentation and least in comprehension.

- Of 345 teachers who participated in the assessment 64% improved in their reading comprehension i.e. 62% of elementary school teachers and 67% of secondary school teachers

- On the average, teachers increased their comprehension scores by 12% or 7 percentage points from the 2015 baseline.

- The proportion of teachers at the proficient and advanced reading levels increased from about one third (35.6%) to almost half (49.6%).

Figure 2 **Pre- and post-test teacher assessment results**
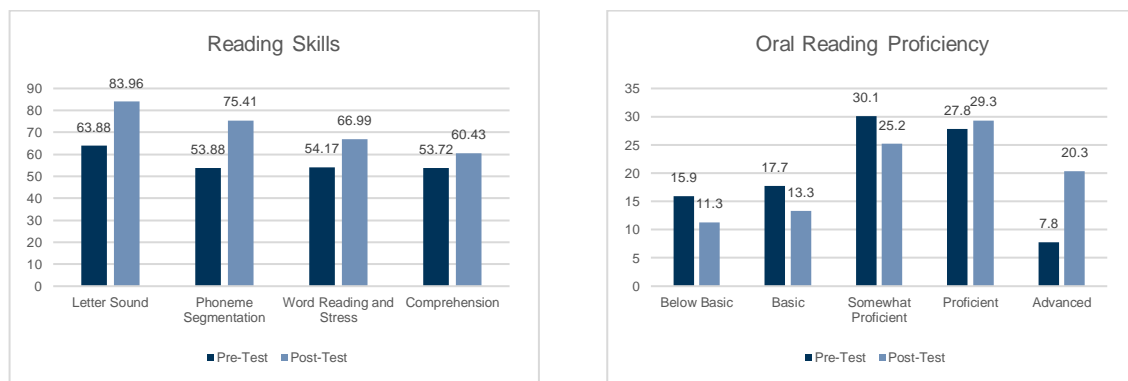
Dangkalan Elementary School in Lamitan City schools Division is a medium sized school. The school is one of the 45 schools that implemented Read ALLL at the beginning of the school year 2015–2016. According to their School Improvement Plan, one of their goals is, 'to make every child a reader at their grade level.'

In 2014, about 25% of Grades 3 to 6 students were either non-readers or were reading below their academic grade level. Teachers assigned to these students in 2015 knew that they had to provide remediation for the students to meet the school's academic requirements. At that time, teachers were unsure of the methodologies in teaching reading in the first, second, or third language, nor had a

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[19] The first week of data gathering was supposed to be done in Marawi City and Lanao del Sur; however, the team had to forego going there at that time (February 14-15) because of news about skirmishes between the Philippine military forces and those of the notorious 'Maute group.'

[20] On the second week of the fieldwork period, the study team was also scheduled to visit Jolo. The team was able to visit Jolo, but only for a limited time—one day only, traveling from Zamboanga to Jolo overnight on the 16 of February, and traveling back to Zamboanga in the evening of the same day. This was decided after the team was apprised of the current security situation in Jolo. There were schools in Jolo that the study team was not allowed to go to for the same reason.

regular program and a well-structured lesson to apply to non-readers in their remedial class. They also did not know how to purposefully engage the community in providing an enabling environment at home for their children to do meaningful literacy activities.

The key results from the 2016 NAT showed the following changes in the outcomes of students' learning, especially in Reading:

▪ Grade 3 students from Dangkalan Elementary School who underwent instruction from Grades 2 and 3 trained teachers were performing significantly better in Filipino and English reading, science, and mathematics than their counterpart Grade 3 students in 2014 who did not receive Read ALLL interventions. Grade 3 students who received intervention from Read ALLL trained teachers in 2015 to 2016 had higher overall mean percentage score by 12% or 9.77 percentage points higher than Grade 3 students who did not receive the same interventions in 2014.

▪ Grade 3 students from Dangkalan Elementary School who did not receive Read ALLL intervention performed more poorly than the average Grade 3 students of the Division of Lamitan City in 2014, compared to those who received Read ALLL interventions.

▪ Overall, achievement scores of Grade 3 students of Lamitan City division in English reading, science, and mathematics decreased over time from 2014 to 2016. In contrast, the NAT scores of Grade 3 students from Dangkalan Elementary School increased in the same period (see Figure 3 below – scores of Dangkalan in both pre- and post-intervention in green columns; scores of other students in Lamitan without Read ALL inside orange boxes).

Figure 3 **2016 national achievement test, Dangkalan Elementary School**
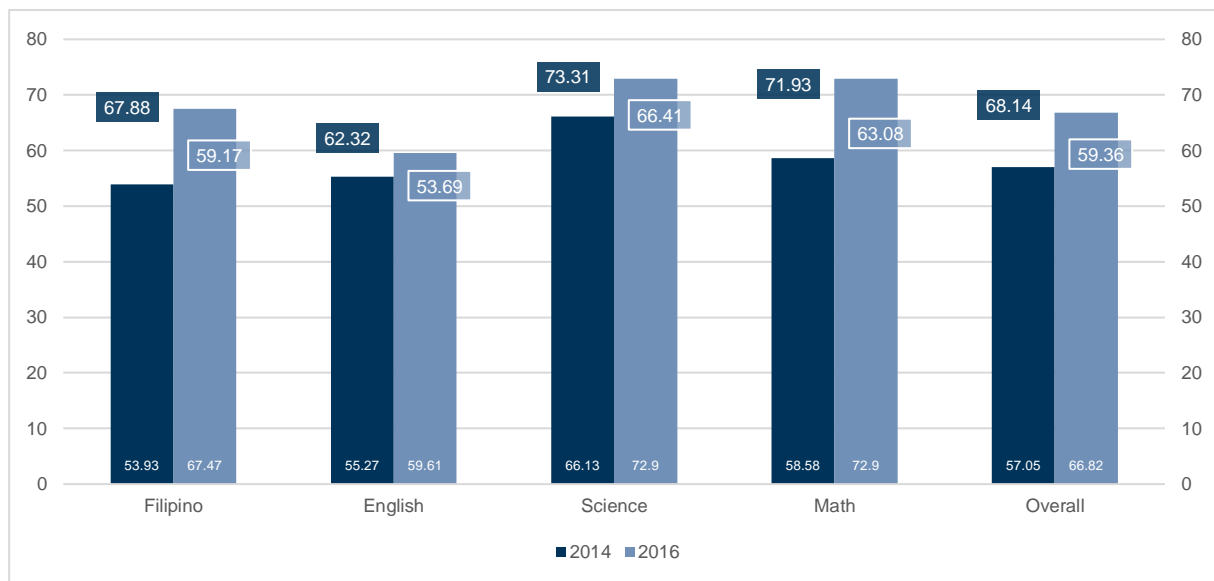
Findings from qualitative research tools

In Dangkalan Elementary School, teachers in general have strong commitment and a positive attitude toward taking responsibility for developing their own reading and writing skills through constant practice on their own, and in their openness to being mentored by their peers and their principal during the Learning Action Cell sessions. As shared in key informant interviews, teachers are now more confident about their reading and writing skills, and in realising that they can only teach reading and writing well if they themselves are equipped with the skills and motivation to constantly improve. This leads to enthusiasm in helping poor readers read at their grade level and in finding joy in reading, as

much as they did. During focus group discussions parents agreed that 'the way teachers taught our children to read has helped them learn to read, and to enjoy being able to read'.

Moreover, teachers recognise the need that for students to learn better basic concepts in science, mathematics, English and other subjects, they really need to be taught how to read, and understand what they are reading. After the Read ALLL teachers were trained, they organised remedial reading sessions for students reading below their grade level and saw dramatic results in the way they read and understand basic concepts in students' textbooks in different learning areas. Prior to the reading program, some students in Dangkalan Elementary School (from Grades 3 to 6) showed that they could only read (and understand correctly) an average of 19 English words per minute, as measured in the Rapid Assessment of Reading Skills. After the first few interventions, at the end of the third grading period (December), the same students could read 48 words correctly in one minute.

Context-bound factors clearly showed a positive impact towards having a conducive environment for learning. These include: providing access to print materials and provision of wider opportunities for children to read and write; family engagement and commitment to provide the same enabling environment for learning at home; a strong educational leadership and a nurturing environment among peers and immediate superiors; and equally strong support from the principal and from the community's sense of ownership of the reading and learning program through Read ALLL.

Comparison with other programs

Results of the case study on Dangkalan Elementary School's students' learning outcomes in the 2016 NAT resonate with some international best practices in teaching reading to diverse populations of students, in terms of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Crawford and Torgesen (2006)[21] of the Florida Centre for Reading Research identified seven common traits observed in successful schools that implemented a reading program called Reading First. Of the seven, only two can be categorised as person-bound factors (intrinsic) of the teachers or learning facilitators, i.e. strong (educational) leadership and positive belief and teacher dedication. The five other factors are context-bound, and manifested stronger influence in transforming students' reading skills and abilities. These are: professional development (of teachers and facilitators); scientifically based intervention programs; parent involvement; data utilisation and analysis; and effective scheduling. This study is quite relevant in the culturally diverse and challenged environment in the ARMM given the basic principles upon which the program operates. These are: children enter school with very diverse instructional needs because they differ in talent and preparation for learning; they have different levels of oral language skills and knowledge and they may have different mother tongue languages; the impact of their home environment and exposures; they also have different learning behaviours and attitudes and motivation to learn. One student may require more intensive intervention in reading skills than another.

More importantly, the program recognises that the classroom teacher alone cannot provide all the required interventions to meet the needs of all students. Thus, there is a need to mobilise support from all education stakeholders – principals, supervisors, parents, community members, and local government officials – to ensure the attainment of improved learning outcomes, not just in reading but also in other learning realms, especially science and mathematics. Without an enabling environment, no meaningful learning can take place, especially in reading.

A case study of a Philippine classroom in 2013 showed that indeed, learning environments differ from context to context, and there is a need to understand local cultures and the emphases that these

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[21] Crawford, E.C. and Torgesen, J.K. 2006. 'Teaching All Students to Read: Practices for Reading First Schools with Strong Intervention Outcomes: Summary Document. Tallahassee, FL: Florida Center for Reading Research. Can also be accessed through this link: http://www.readingrockets.org/article/teaching-all-students-read-practices-reading-first-schools-strong-intervention-outcomes

cultures put on reading skills. These are on oral, performance skills (so the stress is on teaching correct pronunciation and good performance in oral reading) rather than on understanding the meanings of words that are read, and how these translate to being able to learn other life skills. Protacio and Sarroub (2013) indicated in their case study that this might be true in impoverished contexts like those in the Philippines where textbooks are inadequate, and therefore, some 'excellent' readers are made to do oral reading in front of the class so the rest of the students without textbooks can hear the same stories that oral readers read.[22] The case study offers similar insights in understanding context-bound factors in the highly challenging environment of the ARMM.

Conclusion

Human beings do not learn in a vacuum. Different elements, factors, and dynamics shape how individuals in society learn, and all these elements influence the content, quality, and pace of one's learning. All these elements are at work, whether the learning process takes place in a formal or informal setting.

The elements that shape the learning processes of individuals can be grouped into two main factors – intrinsic or person-bound and extrinsic or context-bound factors (Guskey, 2005).

As shown in this case study, students with Read ALLL interventions have shown improvements in their 2016 NAT scores largely due to many context-bound factors, more than the person-bound or intrinsic ones (like individual attitudes and motivations of teachers). Extrinsic factors include working environment in the schools, availability of other print and reading materials, engagement of the family and their extended members in the learning of the children, in being mentored effectively by their education leaders (e.g. their principal) and peer mentors (tutors) in a non-threatening and safe environment for teachers to develop their own reading and writing skills; strong leadership and good education governance in managing the a school's Read ALLL program, as in the case of Dangkalan Elementary School.

Recommendations for Pathways

The Read ALLL in Dangkalan Elementary School is just one island of success in the efforts to improve learning outcomes of ARMM pupils through their NAT scores. In order to create a wider and stronger impact on learning outcomes in the highly challenged environment of the ARMM, the following are recommended:

- Continue the program and expand it to other areas in the region.

- Intensify implementation of the program, using insights from other contexts and similarly situated areas around the world, particularly, in conflict-affected areas, using the Healing Classrooms approach of the International Rescue Centre (see http://www.healingclassrooms.org/basics/2/1.1.html.

- Alternatively, Pathways can examine effective strategies of teaching in contexts of emergencies and armed conflict (see International Network for Education in (contexts) of emergencies – INEE, http://www.ineesite.org/en/education-in-emergencies,

- Develop a periodically updated data base on learners' performances in various achievement tests and assessments, and conduct analysis on the correlations between reading abilities and performances in other learning domains, especially science and mathematics. The data base must

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[22] Protacio, Maria Selena and Loukia K. Sarroub. 2013. 'A Case Study of Reading Instruction in a Philippine Classroom,' in Asia Pacific Journal of Education. Singapore: National Institute of Education Singapore and published by Routledge, Taylor and Francis. Can also be accessed at http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1132&context=teachlearnfacpub

be designed to show sex-disaggregated and age-disaggregated data of learners and their learning outcomes across different learning areas.

- Craft a stringent Monitoring and Evaluation framework that will constantly address challenges as they confront the reading program in various areas in the region, so as to identify early any possible problems and critical issues affecting the program. This includes the conduct of periodic assessments of the reading program.

- Include the Parent Teacher Associations and Local School Boards in periodic planning for improving learning outcomes so as to create support for overall learning outcomes rather than having strong support only for sports development.

The Learning Partnership Program in Wao District 1 Schools: school-based professional development of teachers toward improving learning outcomes in ARMM

A Case Study

Summary

The Learning Partnership Program (LPP) is an emerging option for school-based professional development for teachers to help them improve teaching competencies, and consequently improve learning outcomes among their students. BEAM–ARMM introduced LPP in November 2015.

This case study looks at the program's strengths and weaknesses, as shown in the results of the assessments at baseline and in December 2016, a year after LPP inception. In particular, the study focuses on the results among elementary schools in Wao 1 District, Lanao del Sur 1 Division. It used both qualitative approaches (key informant interviews and focus group discussions) as well as quantitative analysis of survey data on the National Assessment Test (NAT) scores of students in 2014 and in 2016. It also looked at the results of the self-assessments of teachers in terms of the eight components of the program, namely: collaborative planning, learning facilitator selection, key players'

roles and functions, time allocation and venue, learning partnership activities, program support, policy and technical support, and program assessment and evaluation.

Quantitative analysis showed significant increases in the results of students' NAT in 2016 compared to their 2014 scores compared to the scores of students under schools that did not implement LPP. Moreover, an assessment in December 2016 of teachers' self-ratings showed increases in at least three of the eight components of the program. On the other hand, qualitative approaches identified factors that influenced students' learning outcomes, many of which are more context-bound (extrinsic) than person-bound (intrinsic).[23]

Introduction

Professional development is crucial for teachers because they are front-liners in the process of moulding children and youth, the so-called hope of the future. It is part of teachers' continuing education as facilitators of learning among their students. Since schools are multiplier institutions, the quality of professional development among teachers can pave the way for more successful learning outcomes not only for students but also for their respective families and communities.

As an emerging option for a school-based professional development program, the LPP is based on the principle that when teachers are competent and fully capacitated to undertake their mandated tasks, they are able to positively push the learning outcomes of their students. Being school-based, professional development is done by and for the education stakeholders themselves. In this sense, it is a highly empowering continuous development tool that can lead to meaningful learning among its implementers but also, and more importantly, among its intended beneficiaries: the students. The concept is simple: teachers learn from each other in the confines of their schools and their districts, with support from their school principals and district supervisors.

Significance: Assessments of the progress of any development intervention are helpful to inform implementers of the program's best practices and lessons learned. In a dynamic development context like the ARMM, periodic assessments of an intervention will prevent future mismatches and mishaps between implementers and their partners, and also avoid any more inappropriate development frameworks and programs. This is particularly significant for programs designed to contribute to peacebuilding through educational development interventions, as in the case of BEAM–ARMM, as they provide opportunities for feedback and further refinements so that programs are contextually appropriate.

This case study is significant because of the insights it can offer similar future endeavours in the challenged socio-political context of the region. Any development undertaking can only be deemed successful if it allows the partners to take the 'driver's seat'. In the case of the LPP, education stakeholders are involved in the process of developing themselves professionally within their own school contexts, learning by doing together with their peers and colleagues, as well as their school communities. External facilitators like trainers from BEAM–ARMM act only as catalysts, providing the support to make endogenous professional development take place.

Objectives: The case study aimed to: (i) identify and describe factors that constrain and promote desired competencies in teaching core subject areas like English (Reading), mathematics and science; (ii) describe the levels of support from school administrators, supervisors at the district and division levels; division superintendent, and regional and local government officials to teachers' professional development and students' learning outcomes; and (iii) identify strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of LPP in Wao 1 District, Lanao Sur 1 Division.

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[23] See Annex 1 for the conceptual framework of the bigger study under which this case study is part of. In the framework, factors that influenced or led to improved student learning outcomes are identified and described. The framework is an adapted version of Guskey's (2005) model of understanding the relationship between professional development and student learning.

Methodology: A team of BEAM–ARMM researchers conducted fieldwork to gather qualitative data on the factors influencing the success of LPP as it was implemented in the elementary schools in Wao 1 District, Lanao del Sur 1 Division. Researchers conducted key informant interviews and focus group discussions with a purposive sample among stakeholders involved in the LPP, like teachers, principals, district supervisors, division superintendents, students and their parents, as well as community leaders and local government officials. Results of the key informant interviews and focus group discussions were organised in data capture forms, after which they were collated and analysed using the three main objectives of the study, as the main themes upon which the case study conclusions were drawn.

For the quantitative component of the study, the team reviewed and compared the 2016 NAT results of students in schools implementing LPP and in those without the intervention. To establish a basis for determining changes in the mean percentage scores of students before and after their teachers went through LPP interventions, the team also reviewed the 2014 NAT vis-à-vis the 2016 NAT scores of the students.

Using an assessment rubric designed for the program, BEAM–ARMM conducted a baseline of the professional development of teachers during project inception. This was needed to establish a frame for measuring changes in the levels of teachers' competencies vis-à-vis students' learning outcomes before and after at least one year of program implementation. In December 2016, the same rubrics-based assessment was conducted in 16 selected schools among the nine school divisions in ARMM.

Limitations: As in all case studies, the results are only considered conclusive as far as the subjects of the study are concerned, i.e. education stakeholders in Wao 1 District, in the division of Lanao del Sur 1. However, such results can be indicative of the impact of similar programs undertaken in other areas that are designed to improve students' learning outcomes.

Findings and discussion

One year after LPP inception, BEAM–ARMM conducted an assessment of the implementation of the program in selected 16 schools among the nine school divisions in the region. The assessment tools used were the same as those used prior (November 2015) to the implementation of the program.

Across the 16 LPP implementing schools, teachers involved in the program posted improved ratings in their perceptions of the program from November 2015 to December 2016. In the 2015 baseline assessment, teachers scored themselves at .95 in terms of the eight program components. The descriptive equivalent of a score from .6 to 1.5 is 'beginning stage,' according to the LPP assessment rubric. In the hierarchy of levels, the beginning stage is the second lowest stage. The highest stage is Stage 3, with scores of 2.6 to 3.0, described as 'leading to excellence stage.'

In the 2016 assessment, the same teachers assessed in 2015 scored the LPP implementation in their schools as 1.73, or in the 'established stage,' the second to the highest stage in the evolution of the LPP as a school-based professional development program. These scores are aggregates of all the 16 schools including the Kabatangan Elementary School.

It is important to note here that the highest increases in the self-ratings among teachers were in only three of the eight components of the program, namely: learning facilitator selection, key player roles and functions, and learning facilitator activities. The lowest scores were registered in the policy and program support and program assessment and evaluation components. The three components are within the control of the teachers and principals involved directly in the conduct of LPP activities. However, the main activities in the two components with the lowest rates are the domains of those in the higher levels in the education hierarchy, i.e. division and regional levels, as well as community and local government support.

Qualitative data affirmed that issues related to policy and decision making, including overall program support could have been managed better if higher level education officials, and government officials of the Local School Boards were supportive of the needs of schools implementing LPP. Both key informants and participants in the focus group discussions observed that the levels of support are more intense at the principal and district levels; support wanes at the division and even more so at the regional level. One district supervisor claimed that 'there is no support from the division...'[24]

All key informants and focus group discussion participants were hard put to mention any support from the region, indicating there was none at all, as far as LPP implementation is concerned. Teacher participants in the focus group discussions claimed that the local Parents and Teachers Association provided some support but, as in other regions, only for minor infrastructure like a concrete pathway for the students and teachers to use on rainy days. The Parents and Teachers Association also sponsored one feeding program session, but this was discontinued due to lack of funds. The Local School Board in Wao has supported school programs, primarily the travel of athletes, and the purchase of their uniforms during division and regional meets; the honoraria of volunteer teachers, and minor school repairs and construction. In other words, LPP was not considered a priority in terms of either policy or program support by both internal and external stakeholders. Informants stressed that the strongest push and support for LPP implementation came from BEAM–ARMM technical staff, trainers and facilitators.

With regards to the NAT 2016, Grade 3 students in 11 of 28 LPP implementing schools registered increased mean percentage scores (MPS) compared to their 2014 scores. Some of these LPP schools posted significant increases from 13 (Jolo 1 District) to a high 34.80 (Jolo 2). The increase in the 2016 NAT scores of Wao 1 students' was also impressive, at 15.49. The other schools and districts whose students posted increases in their 2016 NAT scores are listed in Table 1 below. A comparison of the average MPS of the two NATs in the five top performing schools is shown in Table 1.

Table 1   Grade 3 students NAT overall mean percentage scores, 2014 and 2016

LPP Districts	2014 MPS	2016 MPS	Difference in MPS	Remarks
Sulu				
Jolo 1	31.46	45.32	13.86	Increased
Jolo 2	28.77	63.57	34.80	Increased (highest increase)
Jolo 3	42.07	50.44	8.37	Increased
Talipao	56.15	61.25	5.10	Increased
Lanao Sur 1				
Wao 1	51.21	66.70	15.49	Increased
Wao 2	63.45	64.48	1.03	Increased
Lanao Sur 2				
North Pualas	64.11	66.75	2.64	Increased
Kapatagan	48.63	48.92	.29	Increased
Maguindanao 1				
South Upi	63.25	65.60	2.35	Increased
Marawi				
Central District	63.83	68.99	5.16	Increased

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[24] From the transcripts of the key informant interviews and focus group discussions, conducted by BEAM – ARMM research team in Kabatangan Elementary School, Wao District I, February 14-15, 2017. All qualitative data are culled from these transcripts.

LPP Districts	2014 MPS	2016 MPS	Difference in MPS	Remarks
North District	70.59	71.16	.57	Increased

Table 2   Average MPS of NAT scores in 2014 and 2014 (selected districts)

LPP districts	Mean 2014 score	Mean 2016 score
Jolo 1, 2, 3, Talipao and Wao 1	41.93	57.46

A statistical review of the NAT 2016 scores showed that Grade 3 students in the five districts with the highest increased NAT scores also achieved high scores in English (Reading), science and maths.

According to the collated responses of teacher key informants, Grade 3 students of the top five performing districts in the 2016 NAT came from schools that demonstrated strong support from school heads (principals), district supervisors and from the division leadership. Such strong program support from key players and decision makers also influenced improved learning outcomes among students.

Key informants revealed that they are motivated to implement LPP activities when their principals or school heads give them maximum support, not only in terms of mentoring during the Learning Action Cell sessions, but also in providing material support to conduct LPP activities like meetings between the learning facilitators and learning partners. Learning facilitators are identified collaboratively based on their specialisation or subject area expertise, years of teaching experience and training, educational attainment, demonstrated concern for teachers and students, and commitment to deliver on mandated tasks and responsibilities.

In Wao 1 District, teachers reported several benefits from participating in LPP. These include: skills sharing that greatly boosted the confidence of the learning partners, since the mentoring and coaching by the learning facilitators is done in an atmosphere of trust leading to good rapport among teachers; teachers realising the importance of understanding individual differences among their colleagues as much as among their pupils; making the learning partners continuously improve on their pedagogical approaches and content knowledge of their fields of specialisation. Teachers are more motivated to teach when they are aware that they can consult their learning facilitators whenever they encounter challenges in managing their classes. These result in an enhancement of their teaching capabilities, and consequently the improvement of their students' learning outcomes. Both learning facilitators and learning partners realise the value of knowledge and skills sharing in teaching that they are willing to spend their own money just to ensure they are equipped with latest technology (laptops, smart (mobile) phones, tablets) and in printing materials downloaded from the internet. Such high levels of commitment and dedication in teaching rubs off on students, and inspires conscientiousness.

Despite best practices in implementing LPP in some schools, there are some aspects in program implementation that limit its success. These are the factors that constrain teachers to develop their skills to their full potential, such as: irregularity in scheduling learning facilitators—learning partners mentoring and coaching sessions; teachers assigned to learning areas that they have had no pre-service training for and thus lack content mastery in the subject they are teaching; lack of materials like textbooks and supplementary readings; multi-tasks of teachers (as coordinators of various non-academic programs, including athletics); and lack of support from fellow teachers, school heads, parents and community leaders, as well as from the Local School Boards. Perhaps the most serious weakness is the apparent lack of an enabling environment provided by the policy making body at the higher echelon, like the DepEd–ARMM Regional Office. And, exacerbating these issues, is the reality of frequent class interruptions due to non-academic activities like sports events, from the school to the division and to the regional levels.

Comparisons with other programs

In several studies on professional development and its relationship to improved student learning, Guskey (2000)[25] identified a number of factors that contribute significantly to student learning. From Guskey's perspective, three factors influence the quality of professional development among teachers. These are: content (topics or concepts included in the professional development); process (procedures, approaches, how pedagogic skills are shared); and context (technical and material support from peers, supervisors, and higher officials, external support from parents, local and regional government officials). In his framework, Guskey showed how each of these factors interacts with the other to shape the kind and quality of professional development program that will be put in place.

A survey on primary schools in 71 villages in rural Gansu Province in China showed that teacher professional learning communities provide environments where teachers engage in regular research and collaboration. These collaborative activities have been shown to be effective as a means for connecting professional learning to the daily realities faced by teachers in their classrooms. The study by Sargent and Hannum (2009)[26] demonstrated that collaborative activities among peers in schools have resulted in the dissemination of reforms and innovations that have contributed to students' learning outcomes. Such strategies have been useful in China's most resource-constrained schools, like the rural villages in Gansu province. The study further found that teachers' professional learning communities (LPP in the ARMM) are shaped by institutional supports, principal leadership and teachers' initiative.

Lewis and Tsuchida[27] conducted a study in Japan (1997) on the role of joint teacher activities and peer collaboration in the teaching of science. They demonstrated the important role of joint lesson activities among teachers in a school. Such collaborative strategies contributed to the transformation of teaching practices (especially in science) from traditional methods to inquiry based methods and led to more desirable results in students' learning outcomes.

The National Office of the Department of Education issued DepEd Order No. 35, series of 2016 on 7 June 2016 mandating the creation of the Learning Action Cell as a K–12 basic education program school-based continuing professional development strategy for the improvement of teaching and learning. The order recognised the importance of policy and institutional support for continuing professional upgrading of teachers through the school-based Learning Action Cell, 'which primarily functions as a professional learning community for teachers that will help them improve (teaching) practice and learner achievement.' (DepEd Order 35, item number 2).

Conclusion

This case study's results resonate with the findings of other studies which showed that better outcomes can result from joint activities, following the age-old adage that 'in union, there is strength.' Indeed, in the resource-impoverished school divisions in a region like the ARMM, individualistic, vested interests among teachers and administrators in school communities can no longer achieve desired learning outcomes among their students. Even in highly individualistic societies in the United

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[25] Guskey, Thomas. 2000. Evaluating Professional Development. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press, a Sage Publications Company. Also follow Guskey's subsequent articles and presentations on the framework for understanding the relationship between professional development and student learning outcomes. In particular, refer to his synthesis article, 'What works in professional development?' co-written with Kwang Suk Yoon, Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 90, No. 07, March 2009, pp. 495-500.

[26] Sargent, Tanja and Emily Hannum. 2009. 'Doing More with Less: Teacher Professional Learning Communities in resource constrained primary schools in rural China,' in Journal of Teacher Education. Vol 60 (3), pp. 256–276. Can be accessed through these links: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3010364/. http://jte.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/60/3/258 DOI: 10.1177/0022487109337279. Accessed 11 April 2017

[27] Lewis, C. and Tsuchida I. 'Planned Educational Change in Japan: the case of Elementary Science Instruction.' In Journal of Educational Policy, Vol 12 (5): 313-331. As cited in Sargent and Hannum in *ibid.*

States of America, collegial approaches among teachers in schools have been shown to create more positive impact among students and the way they learn[28].

As Sargent and Hannum pointed out, stakeholders and leaders in the educational hierarchy in schools, especially in impoverished communities, can do more with less: by pooling their skills together and sharing these in a regular, and non-threatening environment teachers can jointly push for better learning outcomes among their students. But to do so, there needs to be adequate, constant and consistent support from the principal (school level); supervisors (districts and division level) and superintendent (division) and from the regional level (through the office of the Regional Secretary of DepEd–ARMM). In addition, there should be supplementary support from external stakeholders, like local government officials through the Local School Boards. Parents' support through home guidance and role modelling in learning can also contribute toward improving their students' learning outcomes. This case study assessed that, as practiced in ARMM, LPP had limited success due to weaknesses in policy and institutional support and in leadership and governance in the educational hierarchy.

Education is a process of change, especially changing and developing the minds of youth in a constant and consistent system of instruction, role modelling, mentoring and coaching. It is also, by necessity, a planned type of change. Educational interventions that have succeeded have always been planned carefully, thoughtfully, considering all factors that can spell the difference between success and failure. Any strategy, including professional development, as in the case of the LPP, has to be anchored on an informed, assiduously formulated strategic plan. Plans can only be as good as the way they are implemented on the ground. They are all the more challenging when implemented in the socio-economic, political and culturally diverse milieu of the ARMM. Such a complicated context requires a constant review of past and present initiatives and a critical assessment of these vis-à-vis different components in the professional development system. But this critical assessment is absent in the region, which is marred by a web of interlocking politics of patronage and a palpable culture of silence among those who occupy the lowest rung in the educational hierarchy.

Recommendations for Pathways

Given the above conclusions, Pathways should consider the following recommendations:

▪ Conduct consistent, periodic reviews and stocktakes of all initiatives undertaken within the LPP framework, coming up with measures to address problems. For this purpose, create a regular panel of reviewers of the professional development programs in schools to conduct an independent review. The panel can comprise technical staff of DepEd–ARMM with technical support from Pathways in tandem with local education experts.

▪ Work with DepEd–ARMM in rationalising teacher deployments and assignments to the extent possible and within the bounds of civil service laws based on pre-service preparations, teacher trainings attended and the localisation law.

▪ Devise a policy framework that allows for a de-loading of responsibilities of teachers and school officials engaged in the LPP activities either as learning facilitators or learning partners. Some non-teaching personnel in the division could be tasked to do paperwork that is an additional burden on teachers (for example, preparing documentation for 4Ps beneficiaries among students and their families).

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[28] Cited in the literature review section of Sargent and Hannum's study on elementary schools in rural China, *loc. cit.* Sargent, Tanja C. and Hannum, Emily C., 'Doing More With Less: Teacher Professional Learning Communities in Resource- Constrained Primary Schools in Rural China' (2009). Gansu Survey of Children and Families Papers. 14. h p://repository.upenn.edu/gansu_papers/14

- Undertake an information dissemination and educational communications campaign to constantly update internal and external education stakeholders on the value of embedding a professional development system within their schools.

- Review practices of designation and deployment of teachers in fields that are not the major fields of specialisation during their academic and post-graduate trainings.

- Consider various windows of incentives to schools that have demonstrated success in mobilising both human and material resources to implement LPP successfully. At the same time, identify windows of support that draw on the participation of the private sector, making companies accountable for their corporate social responsibility in supporting LPP efforts and initiatives.

Alternative Delivery Models in the Philippines Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao

A Discussion Paper

Summary

In the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), given the context of low socio economic indicators, conflict, lack of access to basic education, low enrolment and school retention rates and with 438 barangays (18%) without any primary or elementary school, Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) approaches which are contextual and linked and aligned to the Department of Education in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (DepEd–ARMM) are much needed.

This paper presents a solid case for the redefinition of ADMs in basic education in the ARMM which are relevant and contextual to the issues specific to ARMM. This is based on examining the current smorgasbord of available ADM approaches and proposing some rearrangement of the menu. In addition, the role of the state, through the DepEd Central and DepEd–ARMM is reasserted with these entities responsible and accountable for the provision of free, quality basic education for all children in the Philippines and for ensuring that all children have access to basic education. This includes implementing ADM approaches where and when warranted. Some contextual ADM options are provided for consideration by DepEd–ARMM.

Introduction

The objective of this paper is to describe ADM options for consideration by the DepEd–ARMM in the ARMM context. Such options need to be considered by DepEd–ARMM and the Australian Government in light of their upcoming commitment to supporting education and peace in ARMM called Pathways, which is expected to commence in July 2017.

The paper provides an assessment of existing ADM approaches in ARMM such as BRAC as part of the BEAM–ARMM program for 2012 –2017 and the Alternate Learning System (ALS) run by DepEd–ARMM for out of school youth. These modalities have sought to address the ARMM context of poverty, low socio economic indicators, poor educational outcomes, and ongoing conflict which all restrict the ability of many children in ARMM to attend regular schools.

Research was conducted during April 2017 with data collected from both primary and secondary sources. Secondary data is the major source of quantitative information, however qualitative data through key informant interviews was also used. Key informant interviews were carried out in Cotabato City with relevant staff of BRAC, DepEd–ARMM, the BRAC Transition Team and the BEAM–ARMM program. Limitations to the study were the quality at times of the secondary data and the short period in which to undertake the field work.

Findings and discussion

Socio-economic, conflict and education disparities: There is considerable disparity between the ARMM and national data with respect to economic performance, poverty incidence and frequency of conflict as well as education performance indicators. In addition, there is significant variation between different areas within ARMM (by school division and by province) as evidenced by the range of status/performance relative to the indicators. For example, the following graph (Figure 4) shows that the gross regional domestic product for ARMM is the lowest in the Philippines being 50 times lower than the National Capital Region (the highest in the country).[29]

Figure 4   **Gross domestic product (PhP) by region, 2012–2014**
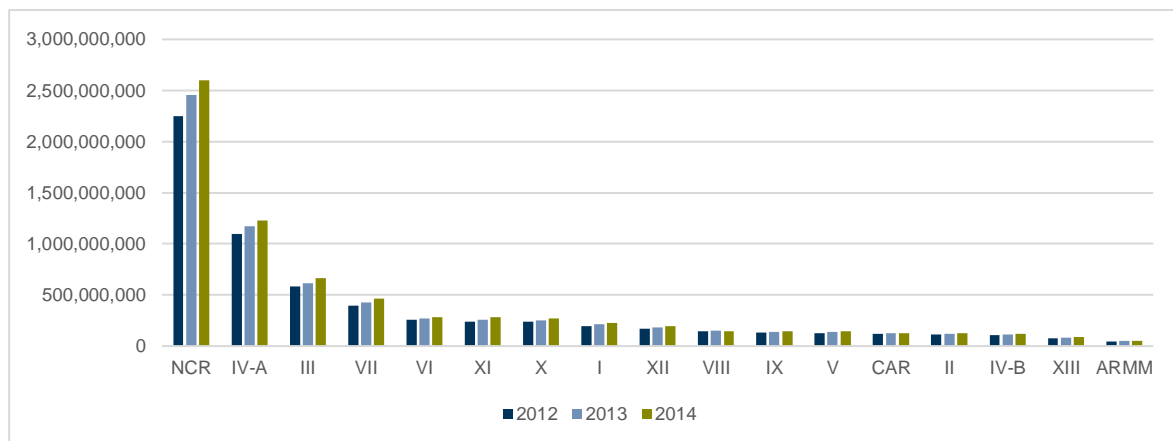
Source: Philippine Statistics Authority

Figure 5 shows significant variation between the provinces in ARMM with respect to poverty incidence. Tawi-Tawi, for 2012, approximates the national average of poverty incidence (close to 20%), while Lanao del Sur reported almost 70% in 2012.

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[29] Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Pathways Investment Design Document, Annex A, Descriptive Analyses of Basic Data, March 2016.

Figure 5   **Poverty incidence (%) among families in the ARMM (2006, 2009 and 2012)**

	Tawi-tawi	Basilan	Sulu	Maguindanao	Lanao del Sur
2006	50.2	28.2	35.2	46.4	38.6
2009	29.4	28.8	35.5	43.3	48.7
2012	21.9	32.1	40.2	54.5	67.3
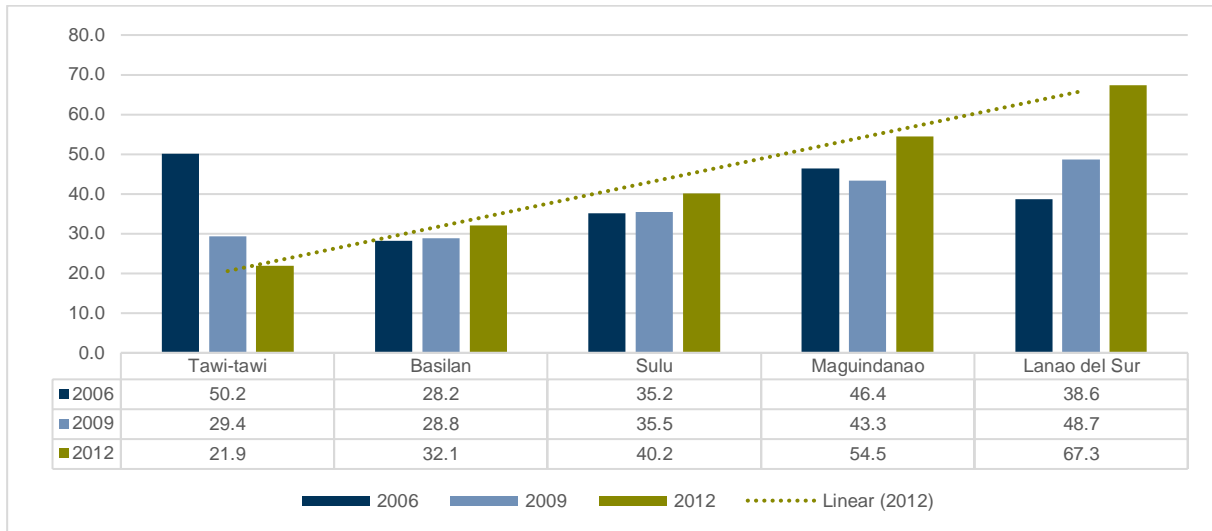
Source: Philippine Statistics Authority

Figure 6 provides data which shows an exceptionally wide variation in the level of conflict incidence based on population between the provinces in the ARMM with the highest levels reported in Basilan and the lowest levels reported in Tawi-Tawi.

Figure 6   **Conflict incidence per 100,000 persons in ARMM provinces (2011–2013)**

	Tawi-Tawi	Sulu	Lanao del Sur	Maguindanao	Basilan
2011	16	24	17	48	86
2012	8	13	9	20	80
2013	7	16	21	44	58
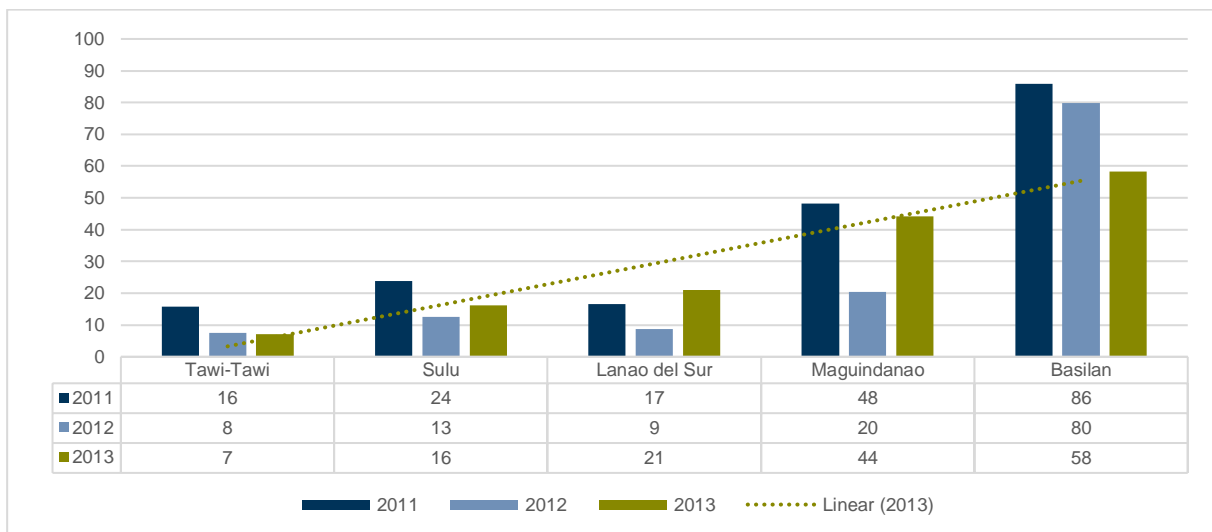
Source: International Alert and World Bank. Bangsamoro Conflict Monitoring System First General Report 2011–2013

Figure 7 shows an average increase in both gross and net elementary enrolment rates between 2010–2014 for the ARMM and for the nation. However, there is a slight reduction in both the gross and net enrolment rates for the ARMM and at the national level between 2013 and 2014. This has been explained by the DepEd as a result of better data collection which has eliminated a number of errors in enrolment data. Gross and net enrolments for the ARMM are significantly below the national averages with net enrolments showing the greatest difference.[30]

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[30] Ibid footnote 1

Figure 7   **Gross and net elementary enrolment ratios (%): ARMM compared to national 2010–2014**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
ARMM	81.91%	74.98%	66.77%	106.11%	96.91%
National Total	98.64%	98.92%	106.72%	111.11%	109.20%

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
ARMM	70.50%	64.38%	55.50%	87.48%	75.44%
National	81.95%	83.03%	89.39%	93.72%	92.49%
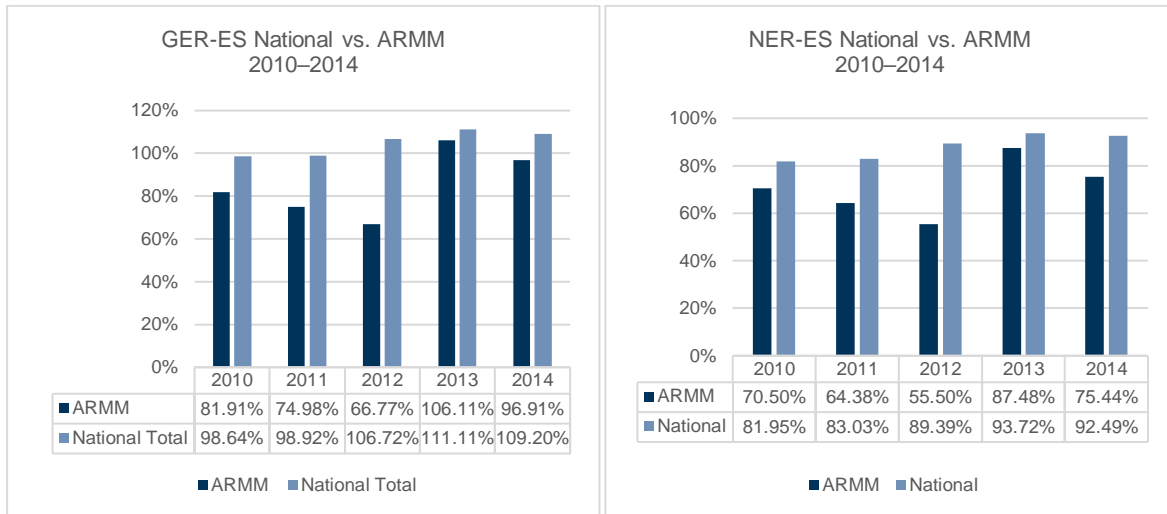
Source: Department of Education Central Office

Access and participation in education in ARMM: Coupled with lower enrolment rates in ARMM is the fact that more children drop out of school when compared with other locations in the Philippines. For example, DepEd Central Office enrolment data for 2010–2014 shows that there is a high level of drop-out in the first three years of school. This pattern is more pronounced for the ARMM with almost double the percent decrease in enrolments when compared to national levels. When data is disaggregated by school division, school divisions in Lanao, Marawi City and Tawi-Tawi show a decrease in the percentage of enrolment for *all* grade levels.

Figure 8 shows the much lower elementary completion rate of students in ARMM (particularly boys) than national rates. ARMM completion rates are consistently less than 50% of the national rates and have not improved significantly over the five year period of 2010–2014.

Figure 8   **Elementary completion rate by sex (%), ARMM compared to national (2010–2014)**

	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
ARMM	34.15	38.67	21.63	24.39	24.45	28.58	35.52	40.85	36.41	39.38
National	65.78	75.66	64.4	73.57	68.62	77.16	68.32	74.77	82.32	87.14
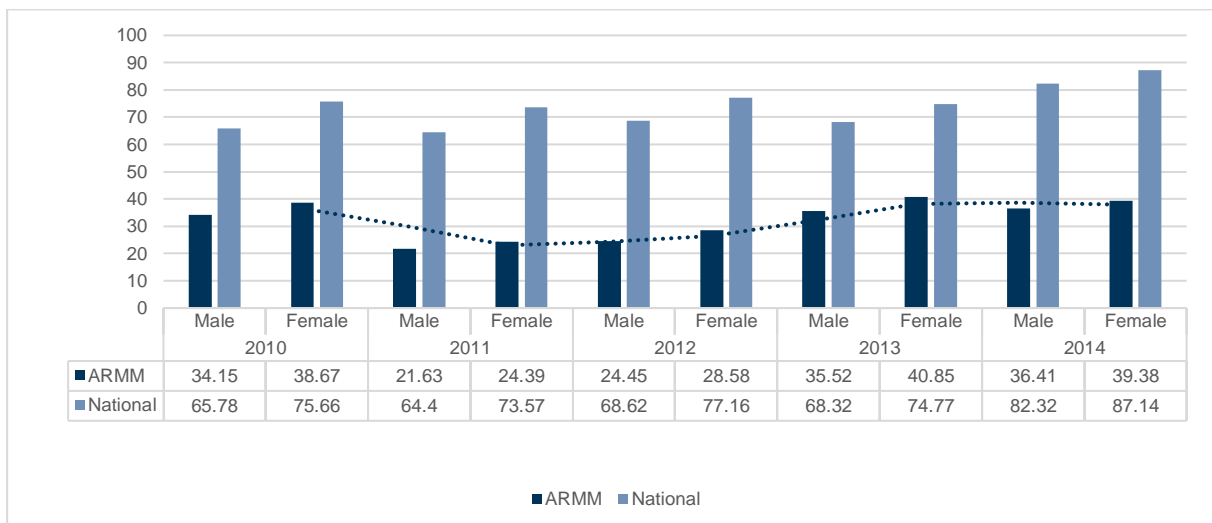
Source: Department of Education Central Office

On learning outcomes, the quality of basic education remains a challenge as evidenced by the results of the National Achievement Test expressed in mean percentage score (MPS) as shown below in Figure 9. Note only Grade 3 is shown on the graph but the secondary level testing also showed the

lowest in ARMM over the three years (37.94%; 44.49% and 41.07%). Grade 3 for ARMM has low results in all three school years with lowest MPS when compared with other regions in 2012–2013 and second lowest for the other two years.

Figure 9   **Grade 3 national achievement test results (MPS) by region, 2012–2015**
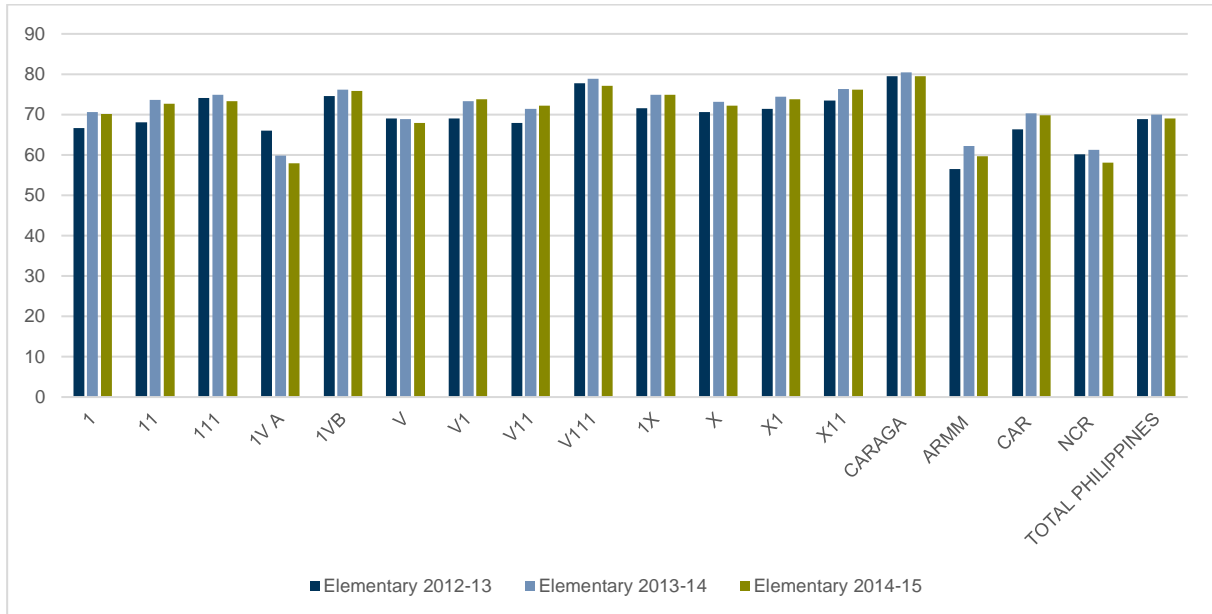
Source: National Education, Testing and Research Centre Department of Education

Policy and mandate for education in ARMM including ADM: The Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001[31] defines an Alternative Learning System (ALS) as 'a parallel learning system to provide a viable alternative to the existing formal education instruction. It encompasses both the non-formal and informal sources of knowledge and skills'. The same definition has been used in the ARMM Basic Education Act of 2010.[32] The ARMM Act also provides for the establishment of a Bureau of Alternative Learning System[33] which functions in accordance with the Act as an informal accelerated learning program for out of school youth and unschooled or illiterate adults. It currently does not have an alternate learning system with a formal basic education focus. Also note the use of the term ALS and not ADM.

Basic education framework: A basic education system needs to address the parameters shown in Figure 10 below to be fully functioning and adequate. This applies to education being provided in traditional classrooms or through ADM approaches such as home schooling. In the Philippines, this system is required to be under the control and supervision of the State or Department of Education. Education can be provided through other private providers including madrasah however this requires a Permit to Operate be issued by the Government.[34]

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[31] Republic of the Philippines, Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, Section 4. Definition of Terms (a)
[32] Republic of the Philippines, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. ARMM Basic Education Act of 2010, Section 4 Definition of Terms
[33] Republic of the Philippines, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. ARMM Basic Education Act of 2010, Section 40
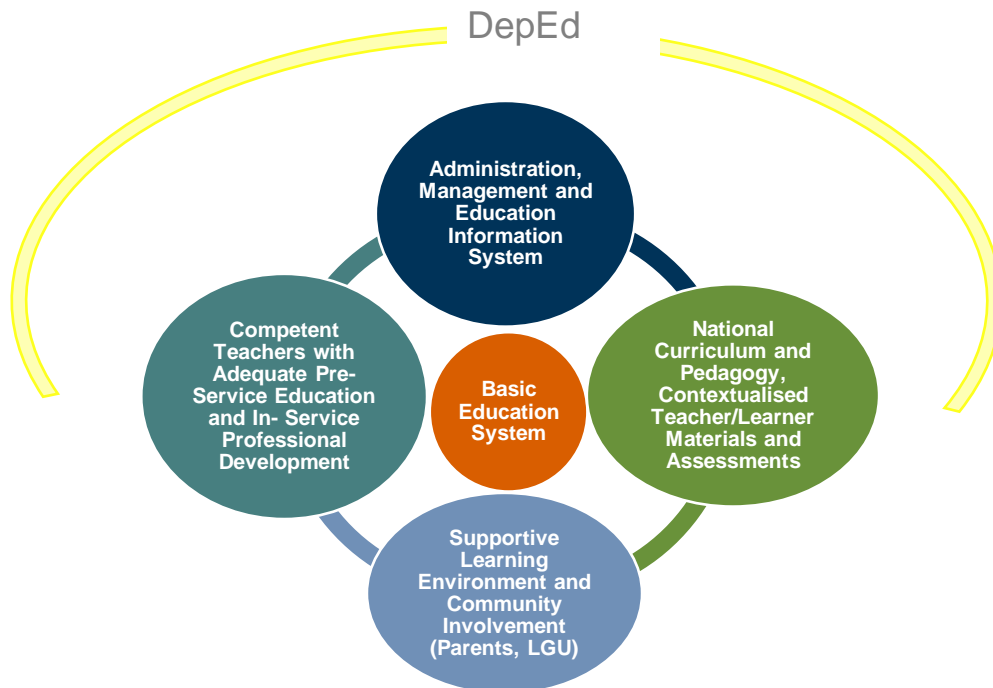[34] As defined in Department Order 88 June 24 2010

Figure 10   Basic education framework

Source: Author's notes

In the ARMM this framework needs to be contextualised. For example, the national K–12 curriculum needs to be supported with contextualised teacher and learning materials; as per Presidential Executive Order No. 570 of 2006 peace education needs to be mainstreamed for teachers in the pre-service curriculum and ongoing professional development; children need to be taught in their mother tongue and have access to reading materials in their language group.

Education context in ARMM: Given the context of low socio economic indicators, conflict, lack of access to basic education, low enrolment and school retention rates and with 438 barangays (18%) currently without any primary or elementary school, ADM approaches have evolved from the 1990s onwards. These ADM modalities have responded to issues such as universal access to basic education, improving access, participation, retention and completion rates as well as addressing disparities in education outcomes and achievements rates. They were also aligned to the Department of Education mandate and policies. By 2012 a range of ADM approaches[35] were being piloted and implemented under separate Department Orders, at which time the Department of Education issued Department Order 54/2012 titled 'Policy Guidelines on the Implementation of Alternative Delivery Modes (ADM)'. This Department Order provides policy instruction on how to effectively manage and implement ADMs as well as utilise the Government's ADM appropriated funds.

However, DepEd–ARMM only currently offers ALS and Special Education for out of school youth or children with disability respectively, through its alternate programming. During the second phase of the original BEAM program (2005–2009) funded by DFAT, distance education using radio was piloted to reach out of school youth as part of ALS. This approach was not extended beyond that program.

All of these factors support the need for ADM approaches in basic and early education, which follow the Philippines regulatory framework and policies and are effective and successful in ARMM.

BRAC in ARMM: As part of the design process for the BEAM–ARMM program, a review and analysis was undertaken of existing ADM approaches which concluded that BRAC would be the best fit at that time for the program to address prolonged access issues to basic education in ARMM. The stated

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[35] Some of these ADMs were: Community and Teachers (E-Impact); Modified In-School Off- School Approach (MISOSA); Open High School Program such as EASE/Home Study Learning Program); Kariton Klasrum (mobile/push cart classroom); Learning Circle Program; BEAM Distance Learning Program and the Tahderiyyah curriculum.

objective of BRAC was to 'improve access to and quality of pre-school and elementary education particularly in communities without government schools or have difficulty in access'.[36] In addition, Learning Centres in communities of one classroom were to be established considering the following criteria:

- Barangays without schools

- Number of out of school children

- Distance to public schools

- Security and risks.

This BRAC objective is significant to this paper as, under the auspices of the BEAM–ARMM program which formally ends 30 June 2017, BRAC was running 730 Learning Centres in its final year in all nine of the ARMM regional education divisions, with 21,640 learners. With the closure of the BEAM–ARMM program a plan has been agreed to transition all BRAC learners into DepEd–ARMM schools.

BRAC operations in the ARMM were similar to those established in Bangladesh with a Learning Centre comprising: one classroom, one cohort of 30-35 children and one learning facilitator. The overall implementation is out-sourced to local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which also assume responsibility for training the learning facilitators and providing them with monthly updates. The learning facilitator is a female from within the same community as the Learning Centre, who receives a stipend of Philippine pesos 8,000 a month and is not a teacher, although 33 learning facilitators or 5% had achieved their Licensure Examination for Teachers. The learning facilitators are trained and supervised by the NGOs (who were also not teachers).[37]

The key objectives of this transition plan are to: (i) make sure that these BRAC learners do not have their basic education interrupted; (ii) bring the BRAC learning facilitators under the supervision of a DepEd–ARMM School Head; (iii) link any remaining BRAC Learning Centres to a near-by DepEd–ARMM school; and (iv) ensure that all BRAC learners are enrolled in a DepEd–ARMM school in school year (SY) 2017–2018 and have their own Learner Reference Number from DepEd.

For the upcoming SY 2017–2018 all of these learners will be transitioning to DepEd–ARMM schools using the modalities described below. A one year extension of BRAC funding from July 2017 – June 2018 has been agreed by DFAT to cover some costs associated with this transition such as learning facilitator and teacher allowances, Learning Centre and classroom rentals, after which the BRAC/DFAT contract will be closed and DepEd–ARMM will have to fully cover any ongoing associated costs for additional teachers or classrooms within their own budget.

With support of the BEAM–ARMM program, a DepEd–ARMM BRAC Transition Team was formed to prepare for this transition process. Learning Centres were categorised as described in Table 3 below into nominal groups 2, 3 and 4[38], following extensive assessments and consultations between BRAC, their partner NGOs, DepEd–ARMM region, division, districts, school heads and near-by schools, BRAC learning facilitators and communities. A final validation was done by DepEd–ARMM region and division supervisors.

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[36] BEAM–ARMM Alternative Delivery Model (ADM) Project. Project design and implementation plan 2012–2017, 4 November 2011 page 29.
[37] Note that the absence of education knowledge among the LFs and the NGOs has been a major concern of this approach with DepEd–ARMM. Particularly in light of findings such as the following from BRAC, Profile and Effectiveness of Learning Facilitators in the ADM in ARMM, BRAC 2014: ´ '*The overall results on the mean percentage scores (MPS) of LFs in the three core subjects of the K–12 are not very satisfactory. Quite a number of LFs got low MPS, particularly in Araling Panlipunan and Mathematics. The results reflect the capacity of the LFs to teach these subjects effectively*'.
[38] Group 1 have already transitioned.

Table 3   **BRAC learning centres, numbers by nominal groupings**

Division	Number of Learning Centres			
	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Total
Lamitan	1	8	2	11
Basilan	7	13	8	28
Marawi City	24	7	0	31
Sulu	14	22	5	41
Tawi-Tawi	2	39	20	61
Lanao del Sur 1	41	118	16	175
Lanao del Sur 2	19	149	22	190
Maguindanao 1	14	96	28	138
Maguindanao 2	10	20	25	55
Total	**132**	**472**	**126**	**730**

Source: DepEd–ARMM BRAC Transition Team

Group 2: The main criteria for being in Group 2 is that learners can be easily absorbed into nearby schools—so 4,096 children from 132 Learning Centres have been successfully enrolled in near-by DepEd–ARMM schools and will transition in June 2017. This will require an additional 47 teaching staff which DepEd–ARMM has agreed to provide. See Table 4 below for a summary of these figures.

Table 4   **Group 2 BRAC learners and learning centres transitioning to DepEd–ARMM schools in SY 2017–2018**

Division	Number of Learners by Grade				Number of Learning Centres
	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Total	
Lamitan	30	0	0	**30**	1
Basilan	97	130	0	**227**	7
Marawi City	0	526	129	**655**	24
Sulu	171	213	0	**384**	14
Tawi-Tawi	0	59	0	**59**	2
Lanao del Sur 1	398	714	398	**1,510**	41
Lanao del Sur 2	228	240	77	**545**	19
Maguindanao 1	160	199	53	**412**	14
Maguindanao 2	86	139	49	**274**	10
Total	**1,170**	**2,220**	**706**	**4,096**	**132**

Source: DepEd–ARMM BRAC Transition Team

Group 3: The main criteria for being in Group 3 is that learners cannot be absorbed in nearby DepEd–ARMM classrooms due to lack of classrooms and/or teachers. This involves 13,465 learners from 472 Learning Centres as shown in Table 5. This group of learners will stay in the Learning Centre for the next SY with a DepEd–ARMM school being identified as the 'mother unit'. This unit will provide teachers to the Learning Centre from the nearby school and the school head will visit the Learning Centre regularly and provide supervision and monitoring. The Learning Centre will have the same school identification number as the school and the learners will be enrolled as learners in the 'mother unit'.

Table 5   **Group 3 BRAC learners and learning centres transitioning to DepEd–ARMM schools in SY 2017–2018**

Division	Number of Learners				Additional Teachers Needed	Classrooms to be rented	Number of Learning Centres
	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Total			
Lamitan	92	94	-	**186**	6	6	8
Basilan	187	193	-	**380**	10	3	13
Marawi City	-	146	48	**194**	2	6	7
Sulu	419	276	-	**695**	19	14	22
Tawi-Tawi	254	471	442	**1,167**	39	20	39
Lanao del Sur 1	1,093	1,938	414	**3,445**	69	86	118
Lanao del Sur 2	1,015	2,218	804	**4,037**	79	81	149
Maguindanao 1	729	1,438	658	**2,825**	80	42	96
Maguindanao 2	158	352	26	**536**	12	9	20
Total	3,947	7,126	2,392	13,465	316	267	472

Source: DepEd–ARMM BRAC Transition Team

Group 4: The main criteria for being in Group 4 is that learners cannot be absorbed in nearby classrooms due to distance or cultural factors. This involves 3,779 learners from 126 Learning Centres as shown in Table 6. Those learners will be required to stay in their Learning Centre for the SY with a DepEd–ARMM school being identified as the 'mother unit' with the same functions as described above for Group 3.

Table 6   **Group 4 BRAC learners and learning centres transitioning to DepEd–ARMM schools in SY 2017–2018**

Division	Number of Learners				Additional Teachers Needed	Classrooms to be rented	Number of Learning Centres
	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Total			
Lamitan	34	29	-	**63**	2	1	2
Basilan	124	124	-	**248**	8	7	8
Marawi City							
Sulu	89	65	-	**154**	5	5	5
Tawi-Tawi	89	351	150	**590**	20	6	20
Lanao del Sur 1	200	332	-	**532**	16	12	16
Lanao del Sur 2	228	360	58	**646**	22	17	22
Maguindanao 1	179	414	192	**785**	28	9	28
Maguindanao 2	189	513	59	**761**	25	10	25
Total	**1,132**	**2,188**	**459**	**3,779**	**126**	**67**	**126**

Source: DepEd–ARMM BRAC Transition Team

Conclusion and recommendations for Pathways

The proposed BRAC transition plan will ultimately see the learners currently in a Learning Centre able to receive the integrated free public education systems to which they are entitled under DepEd–ARMM's mandate. But given that there are still children in ARMM that do not have access to basic education and that the BRAC approach will be absorbed into DepEd–ARMM, there will still be a need

for ADM approaches in ARMM that are effective and contextual to ensure universal access and participation.

In ARMM there are a range of different contextual scenarios which would require different ADM responses in anticipation of ultimately, in the longer term, being absorbed into the government system. Table 7 below summarises these. These options have been informed by the BRAC transition currently underway. Any adoption of these approaches should be accompanied by longitudinal monitoring and research to determine issues and adjustments that need to be made during implementation and to determine success.

Where options are for a single teacher teaching all subjects, it would be best to use a model that can provide intensive support to the teacher as modelled by BRAC in its monthly refresher training for their learning facilitators or a model that uses K–12 developed modules for learners and the teacher to serve as ready guide and reference.

Pathways is urged to discuss and consider the proposals below with DepEd–ARMM.

Table 7   Proposed ADM responses to ARMM contexts and prospects for transition into DepEd–ARMM

Contextual Issue	ADM Response		Possible Transition Scenario
	ADM Type	Possible ADM Scenario	
Conflict			
Conflict – clan based or rido and children's movement is restricted to certain areas with no schools for more than 6 months. Needs a long-term solution.	▪ Home/community based ADM: Children could be grouped in class groupings as required. ▪ Modified version of existing home based ADM approach of DepEd. Currently not available in ARMM. ▪ Group 4 model used in BRAC transition period and reinforced with teaching and learning modules (e.g. IMPACT) ▪ Could be institutionalised into a redefined Bureau of ALS DepEd–ARMM.	▪ Identify nearest DepEd school and teacher(s) with capacity to support and monitor a community based volunteer teacher. ▪ Recruit and train a community based volunteer teacher to undertake classes, preferably from community with the rido. ▪ Mobilise monthly allowance for volunteer teacher. Options are LGU or DepEd–ARMM. ▪ Identify a nearby DepEd–ARMM 'support school' which provides regular supervision and monitoring by the School Head to the volunteer teacher. ▪ Develop capacity development modules on understanding root causes of conflict and peace building and provide ongoing training to volunteer and school based teacher in same. Could be funded by Pathways and/or DepEd–ARMM. ▪ Contextualise curriculum teacher and learning materials from either IMPACT or MISOSA. Could be funded by Pathways and/or DepEd–ARMM. ▪ Establish community based school association with parent/LGU/community which meet monthly to discuss progress, issues and solutions of the ADM approach.	Policy response required by DepEd–ARMM to adopt applicable elements of IMPACT/MISOSA. Funds should be sought through the ARMM regional budget process for the ADMs. Could be funded by Pathways in the interim.

Contextual Issue	ADM Response		Possible Transition Scenario
	ADM Type	Possible ADM Scenario	
Armed conflict – where children are evacuated to safe areas while conflict takes place or their school has become an evacuation centre for no more than 6 months. Needs a short-term solution.	▪ Mobile ADM which is located in an evacuation site: ▪ The aim is not to interrupt the children's education as a result of evacuation. ▪ There should be a unit on Education in Emergencies (EiE) at the Bureaus of Elementary Education and Secondary Education that can be immediately mobilised quickly to coordinate efforts.	▪ DepEd–ARMM develops a response plan for such situations with International Organisations and NGOs who are willing to be supervised by DepEd and use existing modules and not just generate play activities. ▪ Can apply modules already developed by ADM programs such as IMPACT and MISOSA. Children who can read would be able to do these at home. ▪ Children and families should be offered post-traumatic stress counselling. ▪ Develop capacity development modules on understanding root causes of conflict and peace building and provide ongoing training to volunteer and school based teacher in same. Could be funded by Pathways and/or DepEd–ARMM. ▪ Funding should be incorporated into the Regional Government disaster response plan. ▪ Approach and funding streams can be fine-tuned by Pathways.	Policy response required by DepEd–ARMM to organise an EiE composed of representatives from Bureau of Elementary Education, Bureau of Secondary Education and ALS to develop guidelines and coordinate efforts. Funds should be sought through the ARMM Regional budget process for the ADMs. Could be funded by Pathways in the interim.
Natural disaster			
Natural disaster	As above for B	May not require conflict sensitive and peace building capacity development.	
Lack of access to classrooms			
Lack of access: isolation and remoteness such as having no government school within sensible walking distance caused by terrain such as mountains and rivers and remoteness such as living on islands. Isolation can also be the result of cultural factors such as experienced by some indigenous people.	▪ Home/community based ADM: Children could be grouped in class groupings as required. ▪ Modified version of existing home based ADM approach of DepEd. Currently not available in ARMM. ▪ Could be institutionalised into a redefined Bureau of ALS within DepEd–ARMM.	▪ Identify nearest DepEd–ARMM school and teacher(s) with capacity to support and monitor a community based volunteer teacher. ▪ For school-age children especially those who are at the early grades and children who cannot yet read. ▪ Recruit and train a community based volunteer teacher to undertake classes following regular DepEd curriculum, preferably from community with the rido. ▪ If only one teacher teaching all subjects, provide instructional materials and modules (e.g. from MISOSA and IMPACT) and more frequent training such as the training program implemented by BRAC.	Policy response required by DepEd–ARMM to redefine the policy on establishing new schools in school-less communities which should include ADM and ALS at the interim. This should be coupled with concrete plan to establish new schools in these areas. Funds should be sought through the ARMM Regional budget process for the ADMs. Could be funded by Pathways in the interim.

Contextual Issue	ADM Response		Possible Transition Scenario
	ADM Type	**Possible ADM Scenario**	
		▪ Identify a nearby DepEd–ARMM 'support school' which provides regular supervision and monitoring by the School Head to the volunteer teacher.	
		▪ For over-aged children who can read	
		▪ Group children by level: elementary and secondary	
		▪ Assign a mobile teacher	
		▪ Use ALS curriculum and modules as appropriate for their level.	
		▪ Mobilise monthly allowance for volunteer/mobile teacher. Options are LGU or DepEd–ARMM.	
		▪ Develop capacity development modules on understanding root causes of conflict and peace building and provide ongoing training to volunteer and school based teacher in same.	
		▪ Contextualise curriculum teacher and learning materials. Provide classes in student's mother tongue and provide language appropriate learning materials.	
		▪ Could be funded by Pathways and/or DepEd–ARMM.	
		▪ Establish community based school association with parent/LGU/community which meet monthly to discuss progress, issues and solutions of the ADM approach.	

BEAM–ARMM'S capacity building program on governance improvements in classroom construction in ARMM

A Discussion Paper

Summary

The Basic Education Assistance for Muslim Mindanao in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BEAM–ARMM) program has engaged the Department of Education in the region (DepEd–ARMM) as its partner in improving governance in the region's classroom construction management system. This partnership recognises the importance of functional classrooms in creating a conducive environment for improved learning outcomes among the region's students. The latter is the strategic goal of BEAM–ARMM as a development intervention program in basic education.

Classroom construction is an imperative in the region, given its long history of dismal development indicators in basic education infrastructure. For some time, the region has faced serious problems in classroom construction completion rates, as reported in the 2012 Commission on Audit Report. In that report, 'completion rate was 0%, with 0 classroom built out of the targeted 1,032 for the region.'[39] The same report described problems related to weak and poor governance of the department in terms of overseeing classroom construction management procedures, from procurement/bidding, to the

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[39] See this link, http://news.abs-cbn.com/nation/01/23/14/coa-deped-missed-target-classrooms–2012 for the full news report. Accessed on 12 April 2017.

stringent enforcement of building contracts. From 2010–2015, DepEd–ARMM had an estimated allocation of 5,482 classrooms.[40] The process of taking an inventory of the status of these construction projects is ongoing with technical assistance from the program.

The improvements in the systems for the construction and repair of classrooms in the ARMM were made possible after strengthening the technical capacities of 1,175 school officials, parents and teachers' association members and other stakeholders as part of the local technical working groups that reviewed the quality of materials used in the construction of classrooms. As a consequence of the capacity building program provided by BEAM–ARMM, school officials and other stakeholders are now able to make sure that the principles of good governance, (especially transparency and accountability) are embedded in the different aspects of classroom construction management, from the procurement process to quality control and contribute to the enforcement of building contracts.

Introduction

Since its creation as the only autonomous region in the country, the ARMM has been perceived to be a neglected region due to weak governance and abject development indicators. The situation has been the result of a confluence of various challenges rooted in history, exacerbated by intermittent and protracted armed conflicts, widespread perceptions of corruption and impunity among its political leaders.

This context provided BEAM–ARMM the impetus to conceptualise an appropriate and participatory capacity-building program among key education stakeholders themselves to make sure that good governance practices and procedures are followed in the construction and repair of dilapidated classrooms in the region. Aside from training school officials to be technically skilful in examining various aspects of classroom construction and repair, the intervention was also a mechanism for institutionalising reforms in the education infrastructure sector.

In 2013, BEAM–ARMM started the arduous process of engaging local education stakeholders, especially school principals, officers of parents and teachers' associations. This was done through a series of training and workshops to make them technically knowledgeable about classroom construction processes and procedures, especially within government's financial management systems. Four years on, a cadre of para-engineers has been formed and has strengthened DepEd–ARMM's ability to ensure the completion of one of the agency's key resources: classrooms.

Significance of the study: This paper summarises how the BEAM–ARMM program provided the institutional support and needed capacity building interventions among the key stakeholders of DepEd–ARMM to empower them to take active roles in overseeing classroom and related facilities construction in different school divisions: The engagement of BEAM–ARMM to institutionalise the process was critical given that from 2010–2012, ARMM had an allocation of 2,178 classrooms with a budget of PhP1.68 Billion for construction: In the years 2013–2015, this increased to 3,304 classrooms with an allocation of PhP3.18 billion:

Key stakeholders became actively involved in better planning and programming, as well as in ensuring transparency and accountability in the management of classroom construction processes. Consequently, more classrooms were completed in less time, at less cost, and of better quality than those built before BEAM–ARMM interventions. These interventions clarified the roles and the scopes of work among partners, especially among contractors and paved the way for improved learning environments for students in the region.

Program gains shared through this study will become the standard for strengthening and expanding the use of participatory governance systems developed and piloted through BEAM–ARMM.

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[40] Consolidated report from DepEd–ARMM region and divisions March 2017

Objectives of the study: This paper aims to: (i) describe the various governance challenges in school facilities improvement in the ARMM; (ii) describe the various interventions that BEAM–ARMM introduced to address these challenges; (iii) share anecdotal evidences on how these interventions have improved the governance arrangements in classroom construction in the region; and (iv) provide recommendations to sustain and further improve on these initiatives.

Methodology: The paper is derived from analysis of the following qualitative and quantitative sources: key informant interviews with stakeholders involved in the project, e.g. principals and senior officials of DepEd–ARMM; reviews of several project reports and news reports on various media; process documentation of consultative meetings with different school officials and the monitoring committees of classroom construction in the school divisions.

Limitations: This paper is limited in terms of its objectives, which are mainly anecdotal descriptions of how partners experienced being put in the forefront of planning, decision making, monitoring and evaluation, and especially on building their capacities in the technical intricacies of classroom construction management. Inferences on correlations of how the BEAM–ARMM built classrooms as well as those that are being built with technical assistance from BEAM–ARMM have created impact in improving learning outcomes are beyond the scope of this paper. But the impressions of stakeholders are indicative of the empowering effects of project results. As such, they leave a legacy that is more long lasting than that created out of a purely infrastructure project.

Findings and discussion

The BEAM–ARMM program design included a target number of classrooms to be constructed or rehabilitated. After an initial assessment of classroom needs and the condition of existing classrooms as well as consultations with key DepEd–ARMM and DFAT officials, the program established that there were several realities on the ground that needed to be addressed before facilities' improvements could commence.

The first challenge was the absence of a clear cut system for the rationalised and needs-based prioritisation of sites where classrooms needed to be built and repaired. The former system of identification was limited to the DepEd Central generating the priority list from the Enhanced Basic Education Information System (EBEIS). The initial review conducted by BEAM–ARMM identified flaws in DepEd–ARMM's EBEIS as much of its information was quite spurious.[41] As part of the review, schools that were classified with the codes 'black' and 'red' were validated on the ground. Black schools referred to schools that have no instructional rooms that complied with specifications for standard and functional classrooms. Among these are makeshift or temporary (open) learning spaces. On the other hand, red schools were those that have a classroom to student ratio of 1:56 and above. The process of identifying priority areas and schools took almost a year as it had to include ground verification of data in the EBEIS.

The review findings helped change the manner of identifying priority schools for construction. The findings showed that there are other factors that cannot be determined just from the EBEIS, for example: site ownership issues (no clear documentation of the deed of donation, only verbal agreements) or inappropriate building designs (largely due to the lack of a stringent environmental scanning of the school building site, i.e. being flood prone, vulnerable to landslides and liquefaction of ground soil). The ground verification also exposed the weaknesses of the EBEIS given the integrity of the data in the system: the number of students and classrooms in some schools did not match those in the EBEIS. These findings were the basis for DepEd Central Office and DepEd–ARMM to mutually

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[41] A top DepEd–ARMM regional official admitted this in a meeting with BEAM – ARMM PMO BE staff, saying that they have already 'cleaned' the spurious information and bloated figures and other erroneous inputs in their data base from 2011 to 2012. (From the notes of the NIEGS, in a meeting with them regarding the conduct of the qualitative learning outcomes of the study, 22 March 2017, BEAM – ARMM PMO)

agree to allow the region to conduct their own identification and validation process to come up with the priority list instead of centralising the selection at DepEd Central Office.

Also, enforcement of building contracts between school officials or DepEd–ARMM and the service providers for classroom construction was problematic. Many construction contractors in the ARMM were known to leave school infrastructure projects unfinished and completed classrooms were often later found to be of substandard construction materials and quality. An intensive vetting process to validate the past performance of prospective contractors particularly in the ARMM was necessary.

In consultation with DFAT and DepEd–ARMM, it was agreed that as DepEd–ARMM had its own underspent classroom construction budget, and, to address the challenges outlined above, the program should redirect its efforts to technical assistance, i.e. in capacity development for DepEd–ARMM division and regional officials rather than construction implementation. This decision was supported by insights and empirical data from the DFAT funded Philippines Classroom Construction Initiative that strongly supported the shift to technical assistance rather than direct implementation.[42] Among these were the following: 'the most significant weakness identified through the capacity assessment is …related to the divisional level's capacity to carry out appropriate assurance of contractor performance…'; the reality that some engineers are appointed directly rather than a selection process due to 'urgent need and/or political influence,' and the lack of mobility funds for DepEd officials to '…adequately monitor classroom construction.'

BEAM–ARMM subsequently developed a capacity building program that involved training, mentoring and coaching in actual inspections of ongoing construction projects, development of tools and the provision of equipment to gather more accurate data on the progress of construction. The capacity building program included three critical elements: (i) pre-construction meeting; (ii) progress monitoring; and (iii) punch listing. The pre-construction meeting brings together the school head, community stakeholders, and the contractor and his workers prior to the start of construction to discuss the Program of Work, construction timeline, design and standards, and more importantly the roles of each one in the construction. This establishes relationships and builds confidence among parties. The progress monitoring provides DepEd–ARMM with a source of information on current status of work and enables the division and regional office to make informed decisions to ensure that contracts are managed well. The 'punch listing' strategy sees the parties involved in the pre-construction meeting and other interested stakeholders do a final inspection prior to the full completion of the construction project to identify defects that have to be rectified prior to final handover. This strategy was not for fault finding but rather for making objective observations on the physical status of school buildings.

To further develop the capacity of DepEd–ARMM officials in the entire range of processes in classroom construction management, BEAM–ARMM also helped organise the Project Management Team at the regional level, and Construction Management Teams at the division levels. A Regional Memorandum No. 288 Series of 2016 was issued to officially create teams and to define their roles and responsibilities. The Project Management Team is headed by the Assistant Secretary for Special Projects and is composed of the Division Physical Facilities Coordinators, and the Regional Physical Facilities Coordinator. Each Construction Management Team is headed by the Schools Division Superintendent and comprises the Division Physical Facilities Coordinator as well as district supervisors and school heads who had ongoing construction in their areas. The teams' main role is to support the Regional Secretary as the head of the Procuring Entity in the effective monitoring of ongoing classroom construction.

To assist members of the Project Management Team and Construction Management Teams to become effective in their roles, they were given technical training, on-site workshops, mentoring and coaching so as to improve their abilities in all technical aspects of classroom construction: from plans and designs, to assessing the quality and appropriate quantity of materials against standards in

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[42]Culled from the Final Report of the Independent Completion Review, Classroom Construction Initiative (Phase I), AidWorks Initiative Number INK 346. 2014. Atkins, Susan (Team Leader), with Ten Bellosillo, Jeanne Illo, and Kaye Bysouth. https://dfat.gov.au/about-uspublications/Documents/philippines-classroom-construction-initiative-icr.pdf. 21 May 2014.

construction design, and acceptable timelines to be able to determine whether projects are finished within the timeline agreed in project contracts. These interventions gave DepEd–ARMM personnel, for the first time, a sense of confidence and empowerment in engaging directly with contractors. The program also helped institute mechanisms for transparency and accountability in project implementation. For example, through the punch listing process stakeholders and contractors jointly conduct a final inspection for defects that are to be rectified by the contractor before project handover.

BEAM–ARMM, in collaboration with DepEd–ARMM, gathered the geographic coordinates of all schools listed in the EBEIS. The program then developed the School Facilities Inventory System (SFIS), an automated but offline system that can store data on each room in each building or structure in each school in the ARMM. The SFIS includes site layouts and pictures as well as relevant information about the facilities in each school. The system, which is still a work in progress, is installed in the division offices for data entry. It will be housed at the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Special Programs for future use. Al Rashid Dano, a member of the Construction Management Team in Basilan had this to say of this system[43]:

> This is a very useful tool that gives us an overall condition of our facilities and at the same time (it) can take us inside any classroom anytime. Identifying sites for construction and rehabilitation will be easier.

In an interview with Philippine News Agency reported on October 13, 2016, DepEd–ARMM Secretary Dr John Magno acknowledged the huge impact of capacitating DepEd officials in the basics of construction to ensure good quality classrooms are built in their schools. Sec. Magno stressed the importance of getting a good grasp of building design and specifications of good quality construction materials. '…This is one of our strategies to prevent contractors from short-changing the schoolchildren, the end-users of our classrooms,' the Secretary noted.

A principal from Maguindanao I division, Elma Maliga, of Sapakan National High School in Rajah Buayan municipality, was also interviewed on her experience as a participant in the capacity building program for classroom construction management. She said that while she had no engineering background and had previously been quite passive about the quality of the materials used in the construction of classrooms in her school, she now had the technical knowhow to make sound assessments of the quality of building materials used. In that interview the principal of Sapakan National High School said,

> …I am now checking every construction material delivered by the contractors to our school. I want to see how the contractors install the columns of the classroom building – from assembling the iron bars to the pouring of concrete. (PNA news October 13, 2016)[44]

The program also connected DepEd functionaries in charge of classroom construction monitoring with other partners and development stakeholders to strengthen collaboration and coordination in classroom construction. An example is training for the ARMM Regional Project Monitoring Committee, the body tasked to monitor projects including classroom construction across all agencies in the region. Representatives from the DepEd Central Office's Physical Facilities and Schools Engineering Division, as well as government line agencies like the Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Health, the Office of the Regional Governor the Regional Planning and Development Office and the Commission on Audit participated.

The Executive Director of the Regional Planning and Development Office said that the SFIS is a tremendous boost to their ability to monitor regional projects especially since DepEd–ARMM is one of the biggest agencies with high investment projects.

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[43] Key informant interview with Al Rashid Dano, of the Basilan Division.
[44] See this link for the full news report: http://www.pna.gov.ph/index.php?nid=2&rid=931081. Accessed 14 April 2017.

All these initiatives have resulted in the improvement of governance of classroom construction in the region, and in enhancing capacities of key basic education stakeholders to monitor and evaluate classroom construction projects by themselves. A compilation of the training materials, assessment, monitoring, and reporting tools developed by the program along with a documentation of good practices and processes already adopted by DepEd–ARMM will be packaged and will be handed over to DepEd–ARMM and other relevant agencies for their ready reference.

Comparison with other programs

The former DepEd Secretary, Brother Armin Luistro, FSC, recognised the importance of the classroom construction projects as part of the government's extensive investment in education.[45] In a ceremony to handover classrooms for the City of Malolos Integrated School on April 18, 2015, the DepEd reported on the accomplishment of the government's continuing Public Private Partnership in education infrastructure projects. The construction of a two story, six classroom school building and that of a two story, 12 classroom building in Malolos City were all attained thru this partnership. The two buildings are part of Phase 1 of the PPP School Infrastructure Project that aims to build 2,867 classrooms for Region III alongside 2,156 classrooms in Region I and 3,853 classrooms for Region IV-A. In that report, Secretary Luistro underscored that building quality classrooms is crucial to the learning outcomes of students.

Internationally, multiple studies have concluded that the quality of school buildings and facilities has a significant impact on both teacher and student outcomes. In a study conducted and published by Pennsylvania State University's Centre for Evaluation and Education Policy Analysis (2015) on the Importance of School Facilities in Improving Student Outcomes[46], the results showed the profound impact of school facilities on teacher and student outcomes. The review concluded that facility quality is an important predictor of teacher retention and student learning. The physical and emotional health of students and teachers depend on the quality of the physical infrastructure, which makes establishing safe, healthy buildings essential. The report also acknowledged that improving the quality of school buildings and the adequacy of school facilities is quite expensive. However, the researchers also concluded that 'when the positive impacts of facility improvement on teachers and students are translated into dollar figures, the rewards of such investments far outstrip the cost of the investments.' Such rewards include improved student learning outcomes.[47]

Conclusion

In other regions in the country, classroom construction can be delivered in partnership with local and external contractors since there are engineers at both the division and regional level offices to provide technical advice to regional directors and school division superintendents on classroom construction. In the complex, resource-constrained region of the ARMM, there is only one engineer under the DepEd regional structure who is assigned to the regional office. Technical capacity is lacking in the region, particularly at the division level. Because of the lack of technical expertise among DepEd–ARMM officials, some contractors have tended to leave projects unfinished or complete projects using substandard materials.

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[45] See this link for the full report: http://www.deped.gov.ph/press-releases/pnoy-inspects-newly-built-deped-psip-classrooms-region-iii

[46] See this link for the report: https://sites.psu.edu/ceepa/2015/06/07/the-importance-of-school-facilities-in-improving-student-outcomes/

[47] Please refer to this link for the full report, https://sites.psu.edu/ceepa/2015/06/07/the-importance-of-school-facilities-in-improving-student-outcomes/

The prudent and judicious decision to build internal capacities within DepEd–ARMM divisions has contributed to them becoming an empowered partner in the process of classroom construction management.

Recommendations for DepEd–ARMM

Given the situation in the ARMM, the following are recommended for future implementation:

- Sustain the SFIS and expand the capacity building program for future construction in the region.

- Address issues around data integrity and validity in the EBEIS by supporting the capacity building needs of school heads and provide incentives for getting their school data right.

- Provide a stronger link between DepEd Central and DepEd–ARMM to address issues on school facilities improvements to include programs that address issues around site ownership and disaster risk reduction.

- Advocate for stronger procurement processes that link with government efforts for transparency and accountability.

- Strengthen the feedback loop from the schools to the region and to proper authorities so that erring contractors are given due legal attention and performing contractors with support.

- Develop the capacity of community organisations to participate in simple classroom repair and maintenance projects.

- Provide a monitoring fund for those directly involved (and capacitated) members of the school, division and regional monitoring teams for them to have greater mobility in monitoring and evaluating schools being constructed.

- Conduct a research study on the correlation between the quality of school buildings/classrooms and student learning outcomes in the ARMM context.

Recommendations for Pathways

- Extend the use of the SFIS in areas covered by the program and support policy development on improving learning environments.

- Build in mechanisms to provide incentives for improving the integrity of EBEIS data in all applicable program activities.

- Provide opportunities for linking DepEd–ARMM with DepEd Central and vice versa through common programs in construction management.

- Continue strengthening the engagement of parents and other stakeholders in maintaining school facilities.

Strengthening institutional capacities in DepEd–ARMM through BEAM–ARMM's interventions for educator professional development

A Discussion Paper

Introduction

Starting in 2012, the *Basic Education Assistance for Muslim Mindanao in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao* (BEAM–ARMM) has implemented a series of teacher training programs intended to deepen teachers' content knowledge and instructional skills in science, mathematics, and reading to carry out the Enhanced Basic Education Program (K–12 Program). Improving teacher competencies is ultimately aimed to improve student learning outcomes, the strategic objective of BEAM–ARMM.

By April 2017, the program has trained 12,325 teachers in science, mathematics, reading instruction, and instructional practices. This number included selected teachers from 217 schools all over the ARMM who were trained on localised, school-based professional development practices, as embodied in the Learning Partnership Program, and teachers from 45 schools who were trained on school-wide reading instruction called the Reading Across Levels, Languages and Learning Areas program.

This paper discusses how BEAM–ARMM contributed to strengthening capacities within DepEd–ARMM in the professional development of its corps of educators across different levels of basic

education – early childhood, elementary and secondary. It describes briefly each of the strategies in teacher training programming and phasing, and the milestones within each phase, noting incremental gains within the four and a half years of project implementation.

Significance: Documenting the gains of a professional development program for educators is important for several reasons. For one, any capacity building process goes through different stages, with key milestones in each stage that are hoped to inform subsequent phases of the process in order to address problems along the way. For another, incremental gains as well as lessons learned from each phase of the process need to be disseminated, to inform stakeholders and partners of the value for money invested in this project. Most importantly, documentation of a capacity building program also shows how internal capacities toward transparency and accountability become embedded in a program. The last two are keys to improved governance of any development initiative.

Objectives: This paper seeks to share insights on the BEAM–ARMM program's process of educating the educators in the ARMM with partners and stakeholders. The region is one of the most blighted areas in the country in terms of human development indicators. Addressing the complex development challenges in the region needed a well-thought out intervention plan, especially in education. It is in this context that BEAM- ARMM's Educator Professional Development (EPD) program was developed.

Methodology: This paper draws on various reports and process documentations of the different components and phases of EPD, and some key achievements along the way. It reviews and synthesises the reports from where the insights and conclusions are drawn and upon which a set of recommendations are offered to the successor program (Pathways).

Limitations: This report is limited to the descriptions of the processes that EPD entailed, and how these were implemented on the ground. There was no inferential study done on the correlation between the levels of EPD implementation and student learning outcomes. So, whatever conclusions are made here are limited only to the anecdotal documentation of all the processes and interventions that took place as part of EPD.

Another limitation relates to the context, processes and outcomes of EPD as a capacity building project among various partners within the education bureaucracy in the region. Like any capacity building initiative, the EPD requires longer than just 4.75 years. Problems that accrued over several decades in the education bureaucracy in the region cannot be addressed completely within a limited project timeline. However, the seeds of building professional capacities among the region's educators have been sown through the EPD initiatives. Hopefully, these will take root gradually for the region to graduate from the back burner of development vis-à-vis other regions in the country.

Findings and discussion

BEAM–ARMM partnered with DepEd–ARMM in 2012, when the latter started to implement the Enhanced Basic Education Program (the K–12 program). The K–12 program presented huge challenges to the entire education bureaucracy, not only in the region, but throughout the country. Educators had to be familiar with new materials, approaches and strategies for teaching. Parents also had to deal with two additional years of basic education for their children – from 10 to 12 years – before they could proceed to tertiary or college level education. These challenges spelled difficulties for all stakeholders, especially teachers.

The usual hurdles of having to come to grips with a new program such as the K–12 were more intense in a region like the ARMM. In other parts of the country systems for efficient and effective project implementation often already exist. However, in the ARMM, while formal structures are in place, the parameters required for effective, efficient, transparent and accountable governance in EPD are still to be fully developed. These challenges required project implementation to step back and fine tune program strategies to address immediate context-related problems. Thus, the project's first set of

activities only started in early 2013 (training for administrators). Figure 11 illustrates key milestones in the implementation of BEAM-ARMM supported K–12 training.

Figure 11   Milestones in K–12 program implementation
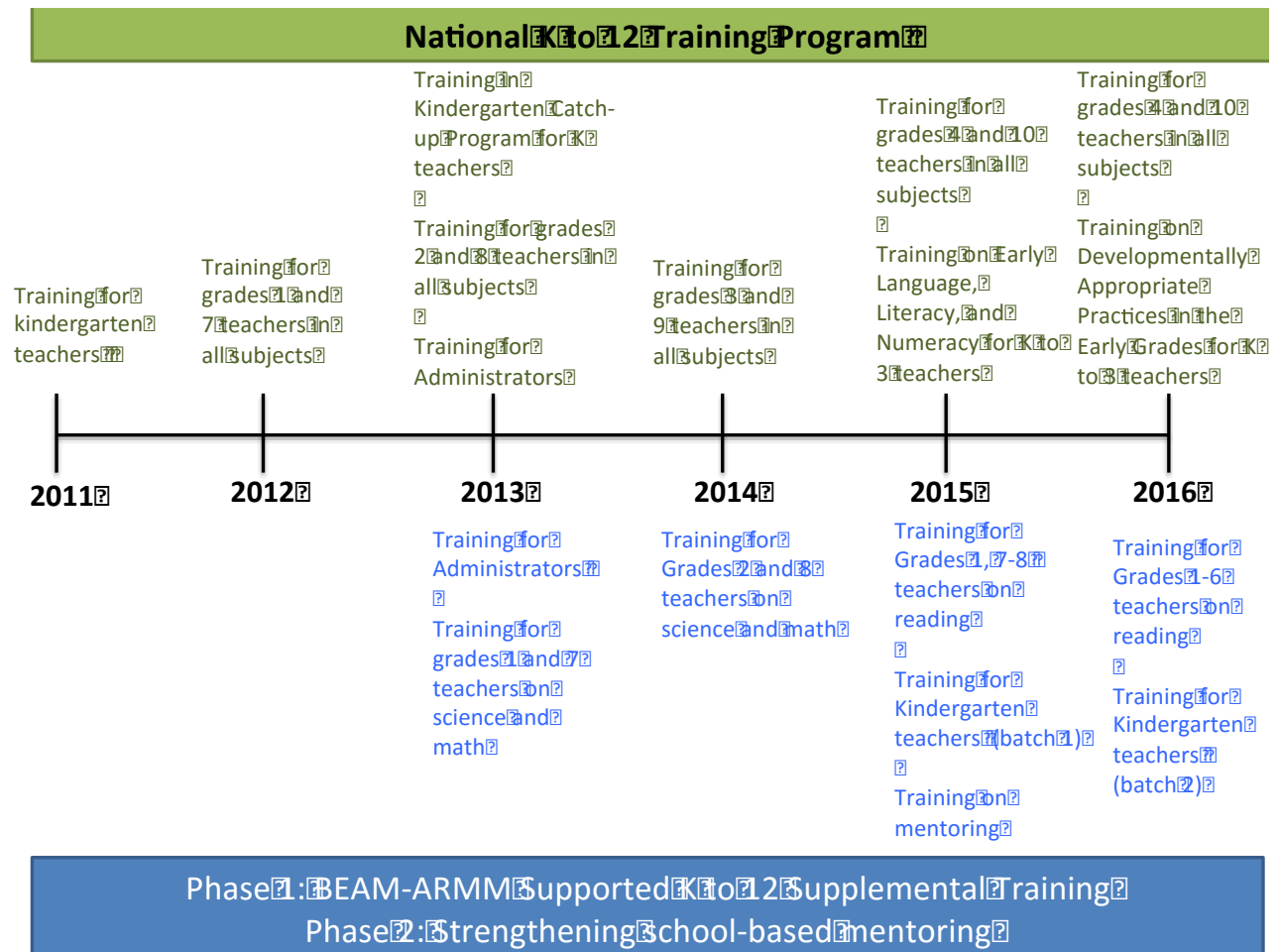
BEAM–ARMM programmed its teacher training to focus on improving: (i) the content mastery and instructional practices among Grades 1 and 2 teachers, and 7 and 8 teachers, specifically in the core subjects areas – science, mathematics, and reading; (ii) content and instruction of kindergarten teachers on the kindergarten curriculum; (iii) reading instruction as well as reading skills of teachers using a self-managed learning program for teachers on reading; (iv) capacity of school, district, and division administrators in providing instructional supervision to teachers using the K–12 curricula; and (v) the ability of schools to create school environments that encourage positive mentoring activities among teachers.

As conceptualised, EPD included the following basic training interventions among educators in different echelons of the department: (i) K–12 training for DepEd ARMM administrators; (ii) supplemental trainings for kindergarten teachers; (iii) supplemental trainings for Grades 1, 2, 7, and 8 science and mathematics teachers; (iv) supplemental training for teachers in Grades 1 to 6 on reading; and (v) training on mentoring and instructional leadership and support under the Learning Partnership Program. These interventions supported DepEd–ARMM's expressed need to further improve their implementation of the K–12 program in the region.

BEAM–ARMM's first strategic activity was to train school, district, and division administrators on the K–12 program. The activity enabled education leaders to make informed management decisions when addressing curriculum concerns among teachers, and confusion among community members regarding K–12.

A phased-in training for teachers followed immediately, with a supplemental training in science and mathematics for Grades 1 and 7 teachers. The conduct of the training for kindergarten teachers started later in the BEAM–ARMM program to allow DepEd–ARMM some time to finalise its teacher items for kindergarten.

On teacher training programming: BEAM–ARMM followed a five-stage process in programming its teacher training sessions with DepEd–ARMM leaders and teachers engaged depending on their varied capacities. Figure 12 illustrates the design process for teacher training programming.

Figure 12   **Design process in teacher training programming**
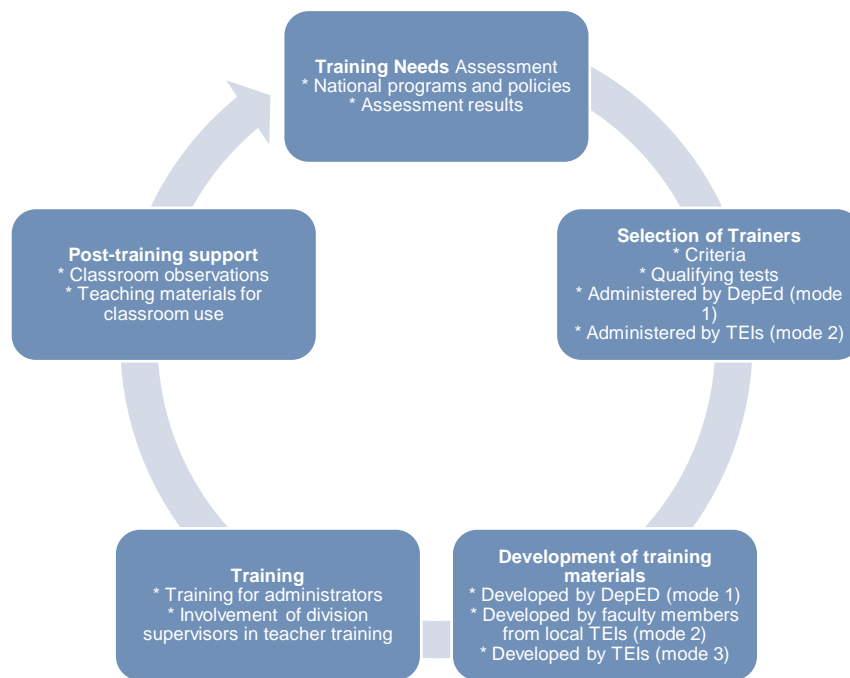
A unique feature of the program was the linkage forged between BEAM–ARMM with National Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), the education faculty of local TEIs, National DepEd Training and Delivery Division, and Regional DepEd officials in different stages of project implementation. Partnership with these institutions enabled the exchange of technical expertise between specialists of the institutions and DepEd–ARMM in addition to BEAM–ARMM's technical inputs. DepEd–ARMM and BEAM–ARMM engaged institutions with the required expertise and experience to respond to specialised technical needs in the ARMM context. These included: engaging DepED National for the kindergarten training program; DepED Region 12 for the training on K–12 for DepED administrators; faculty members from local TEIs for the training on reading for Grades 1 to 6; and a national TEI for the training of science and mathematics teachers. See Figure 13 for descriptions of the specific types of engagement of each group of partners.

Figure 13   Teacher training strategies, levels and types of engagement of various institutions, and nature of engagement of all EPD stakeholders

Teacher Training Stages	Level of DepEd–ARMM Engagement	Kind of Engagement		Technical Specialist Support under BEAM–ARMM's technical guidance
Training needs assessment	Bureau heads of elementary and secondary Regional subject coordinators Division subject coordinators	Identification of training type / direction for administrators and teachers Identification of training topics / activities based on teacher / student assessments, national programs and policies	←	DepED National National TEI Faculty of local TEIs
Selection of Regional / Division Trainers	Regional subject coordinators	Identification of criteria (e.g. skills, attributes) Test development and/or administration Selection of regional and division trainers based criteria and test results	←	National TEI Faculty of local TEIs
Development of training materials	Regional subject coordinators / Division coordinators / Regional trainers / DepED National	Modules development workshops Identification of materials for teachers' use with students in the classroom	←	National TEI Faculty of local TEIs DepED National Other DepED regions
Training	Regional subject coordinators/ Division subject coordinators/Regional trainers	Training facilitators Supervision and monitoring	←	National TEI Faculty of local TEIs DepED National Other DepED regions
Post-training	Regional subject coordinators/Division subject coordinators	Monitoring and supervision Impact/outcome study		

Governance in education: DepEd–ARMM's partnership with BEAM–ARMM in the EPD processes and teacher trainings also promoted key characteristics of improved governance in education. These are: transparency and accountability, as well as participation of stakeholders leading to a high level of the sense of ownership among education leaders and teachers. These are critical for sustainability of the interventions beyond the project timeline.

Transparency and accountability: Before program implementation, DepEd–ARMM's process of selecting trainers was largely based on their position in the regional education hierarchy, track record in the delivery of training, and more importantly, on the recommendation of their immediate supervisors. This meant limited transparency in the selection process, and in meeting stringent requirements for performance in training tasks. With BEAM–ARMM's push to develop improved governance systems in education interventions, DepEd–ARMM adopted more competitive and objective processes in selecting prospective trainers. Selection was open to all interested teachers, coordinators or supervisors and anyone who met pre-determined criteria and requirements that were made public from the outset of the selection process.

One of the criteria for choosing trainers from within the ranks of DepEd teachers and coordinators was their scores in pre-test and post test conducted before and after the trainings for mathematics and science teachers. Increased scores in the post test served as a pre-qualification criterion. Other criteria for selecting trainers among DepEd teachers included academic qualifications, demonstrated training and facilitating skills.

When processes of an intervention are made transparent, it is easy to demand accountability from project implementers. If processes and criteria give way to personal and political considerations, then accountability will be contested. Those transgressing project guidelines can invoke their 'political capital' and get away with irregularities and anomalies. Transparency and accountability are important in ensuring relevant and quality content and delivery in teacher training. The coordinator of the region's kindergarten program, Ms Kartini Tahir, expressed during various phases of the EPD the value of transparent processes in trainee and trainer selection for all interested educators in the ARMM. In comparing the BEAM–ARMM process of selection vis-à-vis the previous department approaches when anyone could become a trainer if recommended by a high ranking official, she said that through this type of process DepEd–ARMM was able 'to discover talented teachers…we need to adopt this process of selection because we get to choose the rightful trainers to begin with – those who are …knowledgeable about early childhood education and early grade training…'

Participation and ownership of project impact: Consistent with its aim of building the capacities of its partners, BEAM–ARMM elicited maximum participation from different members of the education hierarchy in the region, from regional down to school level officials. The Assistant Secretary for Programs as well as regional coordinators and division, district, and school administrators were involved at various stages in the programming of the teacher training series. Over its 4.75 years BEAM–ARMM's EPD facilitated the gradual handover of teacher training responsibilities to DepEd–ARMM functionaries, based on their demonstrated capacities and skills.

DepEd–ARMM regional coordinators, division, district and school-level officials were also trained and mentored on instructional supervision skills, and in tracking the progress of trained teachers in their instruction. They were trained in using the Standards-based Classroom Observation Protocol for Educators (SCOPE) instrument for classroom observation and instructional supervision. School heads were also trained in various tools to enhance their instructional supervision in specific subject areas like science, mathematics and reading.

Recently, 16 DepEd–ARMM teachers and coordinators were selected to join the research team that conducted a qualitative study on student learning outcomes as part of BEAM–ARMM's end of program activities. The DepEd–ARMM researchers were involved in the entire process of the research activity – from the formulation of research questions, to tool development and critiquing, data gathering and analysis, not just as field workers. For these teachers and coordinators, the activity provided significant capacity building in doing scientific data gathering and analysis and prepared them for future assignments such as managing the region's Basic Education Research Fund.

Special focus – the kindergarten training program: The kindergarten training program is a BEAM–ARMM EPD initiative that showcased the full engagement of participating DepEd officials – from training needs assessment, selection of trainers, training modules development, to post-training support for kindergarten teachers.

Until 2015, kindergarten teachers in the ARMM were not trained even if they were engaged in the K–12 program. This was due to their employment status – they were all volunteer teachers, not tenured 'employees.' With BEAM–ARMM's facilitation, DepEd–ARMM gradually appointed permanently tenured teachers to teach kindergarten classes. With program support, kindergarten teachers were trained in October 2015 and August 2016.

The selection of regional and division trainers started three months prior to the scheduled training in 2015. Interested teacher applicants responded to an invitation to apply as a trainer through a letter of intent. The Regional kindergarten and Mother Tongue-Based Multi-Lingual Education coordinators

shortlisted applicants based on their qualifications vis-à-vis set criteria. Shortlisted applicants then took qualifying exams that included: a multiple choice test to assess their content knowledge on early childhood development; a writing test to assess their ability to compose paragraphs and conceptual understanding in teaching early grades; and a practical computer test to assess their literacy in developing presentations. A panel presentation then assessed applicants on their speaking and facilitation skills. Trainers were chosen based on acceptable scores across all of these tests.

In relation to module development, a regional training team composed of the DepEd–ARMM kindergarten coordinator and selected regional trainers undertook a modules development workshop in partnership with DepED National and BRAC. A more experienced trainer-writer, including those from DepED national, BRAC, and BEAM–ARMM, partnered with a less experienced trainer-writer in developing training modules. Participants in the workshop undertook dry runs, peer critiquing and editing of their work. Modules were improved and simplified through constructive feedback from the training team. Activities designed in the modules were rich in interactive games and dialogues that targeted certain competencies in the curriculum. The exchange of technical inputs from coordinators and specialists from DepED National and BRAC made the modules substantial, reflective of current national policies on kindergarten education and practical in the context of the ARMM.

To ensure cultural acceptability of reading materials that were to be distributed to teachers, the Regional kindergarten and Mother Tongue–Based coordinators reviewed children's storybooks. They also prioritised teaching-learning and assessment materials such as manipulables, charts, and toys.

> …Writing the modules was a challenge because it was our first time to do it. We were not confident at first, but we learned a lot from the experience. It capacitated us in writing training modules. And because we developed the modules, we knew the content by heart. We were confident in delivering our topics. We were more passionate in the training because we owned the modules. Developing the modules took long but it was a worthwhile investment.
>
> – Kartini Tahir, ARMM Regional Coordinator for Kindergarten Education.

All kindergarten teachers left the training with a complete set of curriculum guides and teacher's guides, children story books, toys, manipulables, and other teaching and assessment materials and supplies for use in their respective classrooms. Teachers were able to apply the lessons in the curriculum and teacher guides because kindergarten learning kits were made available.

DepED–ARMM developed the Kindergarten Classroom Observation Record Sheet with technical assistance from BEAM–ARMM. This tool provided school heads with an objective and targeted assessment for observing kindergarten classes. Reports from monitoring visits revealed that teachers who were trained in kindergarten physically restructured their classroom space to adhere to an ideal kinder classroom. They modified some activities in the teacher's guide making use of available local materials. In the past, they used to skip some parts in the teachers' guide because of unavailable alternative materials.

Conclusion

BEAM–ARMM's interventions in EPD showed the importance of partner engagement from the start of project implementation. EPD is an example of doing development *with* the stakeholders and not *for* them. Doing development with stakeholders means that project implementers had deep understanding of the region's complex contexts, and were able to design interventions that led to achieving project outcomes (effectiveness). Although it is too early to see the full impact of these improvements on learning outcomes, milestone achievements such as teachers using play-based approaches in kindergarten and teaching strategies learned from the training as well as anecdotal stories from parents of their children not wanting to miss classes with trained teachers attest to the achievements

of the EPD program. An assessment on teacher competencies in August 2016 shows significant improvements in their scores from their baseline in 2013–2014 (see Attachment 1).

Education is considered a core development strategy as it is a process that leads to multifarious changes starting at the individual, to the community and societal levels. It is the cornerstone of building a more inclusive, harmonious and cohesive society. It needs the collective efforts of all stakeholders in the process, especially those mandated to facilitate the education process in schools.

The process of developing educators is a recognition of the important partnership between external donors and key stakeholders in the region's education hierarchy. Where the partnership is based on building internal capacities and on the acknowledgment of local capacities, it is bound to accrue important incremental gains. Such gains may not be as grand as the impact of massive infrastructure projects, but putting primary stakeholders in the driver's seat to determine their own direction is a more sustainable alternative. Moreover, when partners have a strong sense of ownership of the project, they will make sure that it will be sustained even beyond the BEAM–ARMM program.

Recommendations for Pathways

Pathways should consider and discuss with DepEd–ARMM the following:

- Rationalisation of the DepEd–ARMM organisational structure following the national HR reform in the other regions. The implementation of the Organisational Rationalisation Plan will ensure that a unit is focused on teaching / training and learning delivery including the implementation of professional development programs for teachers. In the meantime, it is important that Pathways and DepEd–ARMM organise a team that will support teacher training on a full time basis. A corps of skilled trainers must be organised, and work full time as trainers, on-site mentors and coaches.

- The Human Resources Information System developed with DFAT funding in 2013 should be populated to include the inventory of training that teachers have received from BEAM–ARMM and from DepEd. Initial data could be extracted from BEAM–ARMM's Unified Management Information System. This will provide Pathways with initial information on the resources available and help in planning additional or supplemental training for teachers.

- Professional Development activities must be localised at school, district and division levels, with the full engagement of the division supervisors.

- Support DepEd–ARMM in the review of the plantilla and the human resource landscape of the region, to identify positions that are still to be filled, and teachers that need to be upgraded to their rightful rank, given their qualifications and updated trainings. This can be rationalised as an incentive program for those who have participated actively in EPD training and have become effective trainers.
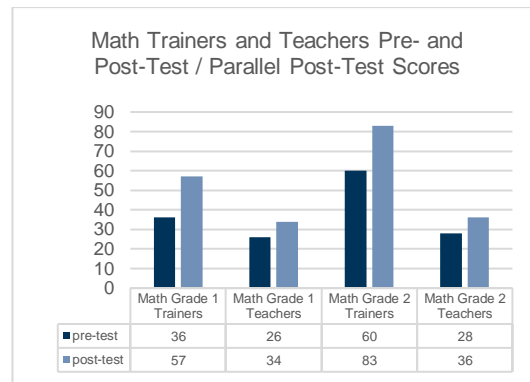
Attachment 1: Assessment of teachers' pre- and post-test scores – science and mathematics

The results of the pre- and post- tests conducted by BEAM–ARMM validate that the selection of the trainers has been based on their relative competence on the learning area as compared to their colleagues. It also shows the improvements in the overall scores of the teachers.

The baseline test was conducted at the start of each training. The post-test was conducted in August 2016, at least six months after the training.

The charts below show the results of the pre- and post- tests conducted by BEAM–ARMM showing the difference in the scores of the trainers and the rest of the teachers at pre- and post- test. These validate the effectiveness of the selection process for trainers, i.e. they have been selected on the basis of relatively higher level of knowledge and overall competence. It also shows the improvements in the overall scores of the teachers.

The baseline test was conducted at the start of each training. The post-test was conducted in August 2016, at least six months after the training.

Science trainers and Teachers Pre- and Post-Test / Parallel Post-Test Scores

	Science Grade 1 Trainers	Science Grade 1 Teachers	Science Grade 2 Trainers	Science Grade 2 Teachers
pre-test	56	34	65	41
post-test	66	42	68	50

Math Trainers and Teachers Pre- and Post-Test / Parallel Post-Test Scores

	Math Grade 1 Trainers	Math Grade 1 Teachers	Math Grade 2 Trainers	Math Grade 2 Teachers
pre-test	36	26	60	28
post-test	57	34	83	36
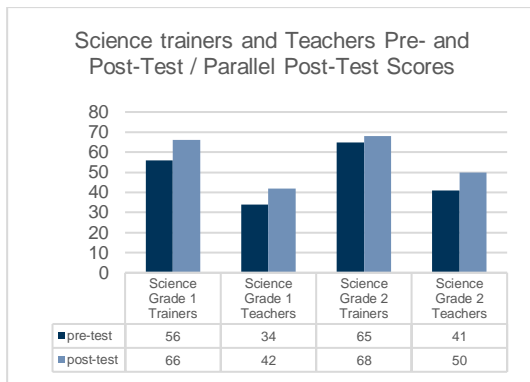
Improving school-based management in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao

A Discussion Paper

Introduction

School-based management (SBM) is a DepEd initiative that decentralises decision-making from the Central Office and regional field offices to individual schools to enable them to better respond to their specific education needs. The initiative is in support to *Republic Act No. 9155* or the *Governance of Basic Education Act* of 2001 and the implementation of the 2006–2010 Basic Reform Agenda. The implementation of this Act is guided by the following principles upon which SBM was developed: (i) The Department of Education must serve the students and teachers, its primary constituents; (ii) the school is the heart of the formal education system and the seat of learning; (iii) the principals, school administrators and teachers-in-charge (hereinafter collectively referred to as school heads) must exercise instructional leadership and sound administrative management of the school; and (iv) parents and the community shall be encouraged to be actively involved in the education of the child. Participation and coordination between schools, local school boards and Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs) must be maximised. One of RA 9155's objectives is to encourage local initiatives for the improvement of schools and learning centres and to provide the means by which these standards may be achieved and sustained.

Decentralisation is a highly important consideration for DepEd-ARMM given the geographic spread of its component divisions and schools. Getting access to the services of the regional office or waiting for decisions to be made is challenging. For example, the Tawi-Tawi division, the farthermost division, is three flights from the regional office and it takes two days to travel from DepEd-ARMM regional office

via Zamboanga City to that province. The tyranny of distance is compounded by very weak communications infrastructure. Also, the dialects spoken across five provinces and two cities in the schools and divisions are diverse. These conditions add up to a compelling argument for a contextualised and decentralised approach to education governance. There is, however, a counter argument against full decentralisation given the current capacities at the district and school levels to support SBM.

The predecessor Australian – funded education program of BEAM-ARMM, called BEAM, jumpstarted SBM implementation in the region in 2004. The BEAM program closely collaborated with DepEd Central Office, and greatly contributed to the development of national policies on SBM. ARMM served as pilot areas for implementation of SBM. Through BEAM, school heads were trained on School Improvement Planning (SIP) and School Governing Councils were organised and engaged. Some schools were provided with grants to support school projects identified and prioritised in their SIPs.

The BEAM project's support to DepEd-ARMM also included interventions on capacity building for quality leadership. It supported a Training Development Needs Assessment and development of a Training Development Master Plan. The development of the Principal's Performance Development Framework and Teacher Performance Development Framework, which ultimately provided the basis for the National Competency-Based Teacher Standard, were two other significant innovations.

Building on these foundations, BEAM-ARMM supported SBM implementation by further providing practical opportunities for school heads to apply SBM through various initiatives and projects undertaken in their schools.

Significance: This paper presents the gains from the work that BEAM-ARMM partners have undertaken and presents lessons learnt as well as recommended next steps for Pathways and DepEd-ARMM. It also discusses BEAM-ARMM's contributions to improve school heads' capacities in school-based management and in providing mechanisms for strengthened partnership among education stakeholders to support education improvements in schools and their communities.

Objective: This paper aims to present discussion points to stir informed debate that will influence continuing support and policy on SBM in the ARMM. For projects to be truly demand-driven, it is important that school heads, teachers, and other stakeholders continue to be supported in school and community-based education planning, management, implementation, reporting, and continuous improvement.

Methodology: This paper draws on various reports, documentation, and results of surveys, focus group discussions and key informant interviews undertaken for this purpose. Specifically, the BEAM-ARMM team facilitated the following.

- focus group discussions with eleven school heads of Wao District, Lanao del Sur 1;

- self-assessment using SBM Assessment tool by school heads of Wao District, Lanao del Sur;

- focus group discussions with 28 school heads from Basilan and Lanao del Sur 1 & 2;

- surveys conducted with 87 school heads of TechVoc Senior High Schools;

- documentation of discussions from trainings and workshops conducted; and

- field report preparation of staff from school visits carrying out mentoring and coaching activities.

Limitations: This discussion on SBM in the ARMM is limited to the experience of BEAM-ARMM from 2012 – 2017. There were attempts to use the SBM assessment tool to measure the levels of SBM practice in selected schools in the region but because the practice has not fully taken off yet, the assessment was put on hold. One of BEAM-ARMM's performance indicators is for 1,000 of the schools to have improved SBM practice. A standardised assessment tool was prescribed by DepEd Central Office but its use was discontinued in 2014 because it was undergoing review and revisions at

that time. In its absence, evidence of practice was gathered using the various projects and interventions undertaken by BEAM-ARMM.

Findings and discussion: Decentralisation through site management or SBM is a major global education reform which started in the 1980s. In the Philippines, its implementation came with the legislation of *Republic Act (RA) 9155* or the 2001 *Governance of Basic Education Act*, a landmark law that transferred, at least in theory, the governance of basic education to schools. Within the law's legal framework, DepEd instituted SBM to make those closest to the delivery of services more accountable for the results of their operations. This was DepEd's response to the issue of excessive centralisation that the Monroe Survey[48] noted as early as the 1920s. Caldwell (2005) defined school-based management as the systematic decentralisation to the school level of authority and responsibility to make decisions on significant matters related to school operations within a centrally determined framework of goals, policies, curriculum, standards, and accountability.[49] SBM enables schools to undertake educational decision making for school needs, to use their limited resources effectively and to strengthen local participation in managing school affairs (Vally & Daud, 2015).

In the context of developed countries, SBM means that greater control is given to school heads to manage their schools. Examples elsewhere are schools in countries such as the Netherlands and UK. In the Philippines, and especially in the ARMM, the principle of SBM is less ambitious, because it focuses mainly on giving parents and the community the opportunity to participate in planning activities and a school head is allowed limited authority by the regional government. SBM is mostly contingent on the capacity of the school head to plan, implement, and deliver the strategic reform agenda that attempts to address the education gaps specific to his/her school and community.

Previous achievements in SBM[50]: With support from the BEAM program, from 2004 to 2009, 1,974 school heads and supervisors in ARMM participated in four cycles of training on leadership, management, student learning and assessment, teacher and school head competency-based standards, school governance and SIP. Other activities included the conduct of school governing council workshops, orientation meetings of cluster coordinators, and monitoring and evaluation of the schools of participants in an In-Australia study tour. BEAM also provided financial grants to 364 public schools to support the implementation of their SIPs and the required associated training in basic school financial management to recipient school heads.

An assessment of SBM in ARMM was conducted by a team commissioned by the Australian Embassy in May 2010 after the closure of the BEAM program. The big picture issues at that time were: (i) the low capacity at the regional and division offices as well as at the school level in terms of the human and financial resources to support the institutionalisation of SBM across the region; (ii) the need to address the condition and availability of classrooms and other facilities; (iii) the need to strengthen leadership, improving security of tenure of, and selection on the basis of merit and suitability; (iv) improving the accuracy of data in the Enhanced Basic Education Information System; (v) planning at all levels; and (vi) the need for a quality assurance and accountability framework.

BEAM-ARMM contributions to school-based management: This paper highlights the efforts to strengthen the capacity of school heads in their role as education managers and coordinators at the school level. Over 2013–2017, many BEAM-ARMM interventions were implemented through the school heads. Capacity building activities took the form of practical application in implementing the projects and activities coupled with face to face training to build the school heads' skills in planning, designing, managing, and monitoring projects.

SBM practices encompass the following principles: leadership and governance, curriculum and learning, accountability and continuous improvement, and management of resources. BEAM-ARMM

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[48] "A Survey of the Educational System in the Philippine Islands" by the Board of Educational Surveys and Columbia University, 1925.

[49] Caldwell, Brian. 2005. "School Based Management". Paris, France. The International Institute for Education Planning and The International Academy of Education.

[50] Summary lifted from BEAM Program's SBM Assessment Report. 2010.

activities served as a platform for school heads, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to strengthen SBM practice in their respective schools. Key SBM activities supported by BEAM-ARMM to operationalise these principles are described below. Indicators of these SBM principles are provided in Attachment 1 at the end of this paper.

Leadership and governance

School improvement planning: BEAM-ARMM, working with the School Effectiveness Division of the DepEd Central Office, UNICEF under their Country Program, and with technical inputs from the DFAT funded Basic Education Sector Transformation (BEST) program, supported the development of School Improvement Plans in the ARMM. Some 1,974 school heads were trained on the enhanced School Improvement Planning. This in turn resulted in 1,200 SIPs developed, 150 of which were funded by BEAM-ARMM through its SIP support fund simulating the use of the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE).

The SIP process required the participation of parents, children, teachers, and other community stakeholders in gathering relevant education data, analysing their situation using these data, identifying education gaps, and agreeing on projects to resolve school-level issues and improve education results in the community. The process included a reporting process through the School Report Card and transparency boards which are two of the school level mechanisms for accountability and transparency.

The SIP was also the basis for GiZ[51] in planning their assistance to schools, thus making the planning process more relevant for schools to undertake.

Twenty-four (18 females and 6 males) Division and Regional SBM and SIP Coordinators were trained as trainers to enable them to conduct mentoring and coaching for school heads in developing, fine-tuning, and updating their SIPs and more importantly to support the implementation of the activities in the SIPs.

Curriculum and learning

Training on K12 and school-based professional development: The first training undertaken by BEAM-ARMM was on the implementation and management of the new K–12 program for school heads. Subsequent training was focused on improving the competencies of teachers in teaching core learning areas. Trained teachers were also provided with teaching and learning materials which support teachers' development of their own materials. Modelling school-based learning programs that are contextualised to the needs of both teachers and based on students learning requirements, BEAM-ARMM also piloted the Learning Partnership Program (LPP) and the Reading Across Levels, Languages, and Learning Areas (Read ALLL) (See related case studies on LPP and Read ALLL).

The highest level of SBM practice in this domain is reached when stakeholders are involved in addressing issues in the teaching and learning processes. Given the context of ARMM where a large number of the parents have had a very low level of education and those who have reached college are busy earning a living for their family, support to learning has been very low in most schools. Dangkalan Elementary School is one example where parents work with teachers to enable them to mentor their children on reading when at home.

The LPP and Read ALLL programs provide venues for teachers led by the school head to discuss lessons and how the activities, examples and materials could be contextualised to their community's setting.

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[51] GIZ is one of the implementing partners of BEAM-ARMM and was responsible to manage the program's component on School Health/WASH.

Accountability and continuous improvement

School report card[52]: The enhanced SIP includes a framework for accountability and continuous improvement. It uses the process of developing the School Report Card to get an agreement on how to measure success as a school, when, and who is involved.

Each school agrees on when and on the process of updating the School Report Card to reflect progress on their agreed education performance indicators. Some schools have agreed to review their progress every quarter, others have agreed to do it every semester. The periodic assessments allow schools to adjust the activities that they have agreed upon and to review the availability of resources to undertake projects that they have planned.

Management of resources

Transparency boards: BEAM-ARMM instituted a practice that promotes participation and transparency in schools. Through transparency boards, the public can see what resources the school has and how they are being utilised towards addressing the needs of the school.

Capacity building in school financial management: The program also strengthened the capability of schools heads' and schools' disbursement officers in school finance management. A total of 806 school heads and school disbursing officers from 658 schools were trained in simple accounting. One hundred and fifty of these schools received small grants from the program to practice what they learned from that training by actually implementing the activities in the SIP. The learnings from this initiative will help DepEd-ARMM get the schools ready to start receiving their Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) and to sustain their standing so that they will continue to receive MOOE. The DepEd-ARMM regional office has indicated that they have allocated MOOE budget in 2017 for all schools. The release of this budget will be staggered, based on the readiness of schools.

Capacity building in school facilities improvement: One important responsibility of school heads and community stakeholders is to provide a quality learning environment to students and teachers. BEAM-ARMM successfully improved the capacities of the region and schools divisions to quality assure classroom construction[53] projects in schools. School heads are now able to report on the progress of construction, engage with contractors, involve parents in addressing construction issues, and participate in inspections to ensure that they are going to receive quality classrooms for their children. In addition, the program developed and introduced the School Facilities Inventory System that informs and helps school heads plan and lobby for resources to be used in facilities improvement. The School Facilities Inventory System complements DepEd's Enhanced Basic Education Information System and provides the region with a solid basis for prioritising schools for investment programming.

Number of schools with improved SBM practice: BEAM-ARMM improved aspects of SBM practice in 1,276 elementary schools and in 85 secondary schools through various interventions as discussed above and as shown in the table below. These activities promoted the participation of stakeholders. The table includes schools that improved in SIP; engaged with the community in classroom construction and rehabilitation; strengthened stakeholder participation through the Learning Partnership Program and Read ALLL and implemented the Essential Health Care Program (EHCP). The data shows that a total of 1,361 schools actively participated in at least one of these interventions.

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[52] The School Report Card is prepared by the school head and the teachers with inputs from parents on the school's progress in the attainment of agreed indicators.

[53] See Discussion Paper: Capacity Building on Governance Improvements in Classroom Construction in the ARMM in Annex 2.

Table 8 **Number of schools with BEAM-ARMM interventions that improved SBM practice**

Level	Number of schools By number of interventions implemented					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Elementary	751	137	119	202	61	6
Secondary	75	10	0	0	0	0
Total	826	147	119	202	61	6
Grand Total	**1,361**					

Challenges in improving SBM practice

A number of factors have limited the DepEd's capacity to fully realise the potential of education reform that SBM might bring.

As defined, SBM provides for the devolution to schools of some of the administrative and resource responsibilities previously held centrally at the regional level including planning, resource allocation and budgeting and flexibility in staffing arrangements. Under the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy (MMA) Act No. 279[54], the school head's authority, accountability, and responsibility includes: (i) creating an environment within the school that is conducive to teaching and learning; (ii) offering educational programs, projects and services that provide equitable opportunities for all learners in the community; (iii) introducing new and effective modes of instruction to achieve higher learning outcomes; (iv) administering and managing all personnel, physical and fiscal resources of the school; (v) recommending the staffing complement of the school based on its needs; and (vi) encouraging and institutionalising staff development.

MMA Act no. 303 [55] reinforces SBM practice as stated in Article IV, Section 19 which states that "the administration of the Department of Education-ARMM and the schools shall exhibit good governance that ensures accountability, transparency, responsibility and observance of the rule of law to improve the quality of service and of teaching." The Act also provides that "the Autonomous Regional Government shall formulate measures to implement the principle of shared governance which recognises that every unit in the education bureaucracy has a particular role, task and responsibility inherent in the office and for which it is principally responsible for outcomes". These measures shall promote SBM as a system that is owned by the school.

Despite the strong policy basis for the implementation of SBM, school heads in ARMM still encounter challenges in practice. They are unable to fully exercise their functions due to: inadequate resources; the incomplete decentralisation process; and their lack of capacity to fully implement their functions to effect education reform. These constraints are described in more detail below.

Inadequate resources: Resources are needed to carry out reforms in school. As of SY 2016-2017, only about 5% of the elementary schools receive MOOE at PhP7,500 per month which is well below the amount received by counterpart schools in other regions. The rest of the schools depend on parent and community contributions and on irregular LGU contributions. All major projects e.g. mass training of teachers, classroom construction, provision of furniture and learning materials are centrally funded at the regional level and school heads have no influence on the kind of programs funded by the region.

School heads who participated in the SIP training expressed their lack of motivation in doing SIPs because of the lack of clarity on funding sources to support the implementation of their plans. All admitted that their great reliance on parents to finance school activities has actually reduced

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[54] Regional Legislative Assembly, ARMM. 2009. An Act Providing for a System of Basic Education for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Amending Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act Numbered Fourteen Therefor, and for Other

[55] Regional Legislative Assembly, ARMM. 2012. An Act Strengthening the Basic Education System in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, and for Other Purposes.

participation among parents and community members. Although some parents have been fully committed to providing support in cash or in the form of services, the school heads feel that this practice is taking a toll on parents and has resulted in lower participation among stakeholders.

There were efforts by BEAM-ARMM to connect the annual investment plan from the SIPs to the regional investment plan that is going to be proposed for the 2018 government budget. This did not eventuate fully as processes at both the school level and regional level were not fully established prior to the program closing.

DepEd-ARMM has recently announced that MOOE will now be made available to all schools in the region. This news was greatly welcomed by the school heads. Division SIP and SBM coordinators, however, think that not all schools will be ready to receive and use the MOOE due to lack of preparation and training. The training on MOOE utilisation was not an original BEAM-ARMM target but it emerged as a critical priority resulting in the program supporting training for school heads and disbursement officers from 658 schools. To sustain this effort, the program also trained the SBM and SIP coordinators on supporting MOOE implementation.

Incomplete decentralisation process: The results of focus group discussions and key informant interviews show that school heads have no role in the selection and deployment of teachers. They have no influence over the number of teachers assigned to them resulting sometimes in more teachers than they need, or often the wrong type of teacher, or even, insufficient teachers. This results in teachers not recognising the school head's authority over them and undermines the school heads' efforts to effectively implement the curriculum. School heads suggested that it would be more efficient for DepEd to consult with them on their actual needs for teachers as well as tools, facilities, and teaching materials so that they receive resources, materials and facilities that they actually need.

Low capacity in school management: All of the school heads who participated in the focus group discussions and key informant interviews believe that they still lack the full competencies that are expected of them to attain the highest level of SBM practice. They realised that the new SIP processes demand a higher level of coordination and facilitation skills to motivate stakeholders to contribute to the assessments and planning processes. They found simple accounting system introduced by BEAM-ARMM challenging. School heads of the 150 schools that piloted the MOOE funds utilisation required a high degree of one-on-one mentoring and coaching on budgeting, procurement, recording and reporting by BEAM-ARMM and DepEd-ARMM coordinators.

With the implementation of K-12, school heads admitted that they also need retraining and continuous upgrading in order to exercise their responsibility for instructional leadership and supervision. They wished to be enabled to take responsibility for orienting stakeholders on the K-12 and for bringing them into the school's SBM processes as part of shared governance.

Conclusion and recommendations

In a region like the ARMM that is lagging in all educational performance indicators, SBM is taking a long time to fully reach its potential. Its adoption and full implementation has been slow. It continues to be challenged by allegations that it reflects political preference rather than the true spirit of transfer of powers. It is also constrained by the capacity of people at different levels to carry out their respective functions.

There are, however, good practices that can be used as building blocks to consolidate an SBM framework for ARMM. Moving forward, the recommended steps are:

▪ Sustain the support to strengthen SIP and budgeting and link the process to regional investment planning so that priority projects that are recommended in the SIPs are included in the regional budget.

- Include all schools in the release of MOOE. However, there is a need for a team composed of regional and division staff to support and guide school heads in preparing the requirements for the receipt of the MOOE. There is also a need for continued support in complying with recording and reporting requirements. Resources have to be provided for this team to mobilise this school-level support.

- Develop and implement a suite of capacity building programs for school heads, and those at the regional and division levels who are tasked to support them, to enable them to effectively carry out their duties. The work that the BEST program is doing in collaboration with the National Educators Academy of the Philippines could be a reference and resource.

- The spirit of SBM is shared governance. Schools should increase efforts to involve parents and other stakeholders in school activities that will allow them to understand the learning needs of their children and their role in supporting the process. This could be attained through their continued involvement in refining and updating their SIPs. The School Report Card can be a good way to share the results of their collective efforts to improve their children's performance.

- Develop mechanisms to increase participation of school heads and to improve transparency in hiring and deployment of teachers.

- The SIP is a context-specific and needs based plan of each school. Increase its relevance by supporting the implementation of the plan and in ensuring that it becomes the basis for funding either by the government or donors.

Attachment 1: SBM domains and indicators

Principles / Domains	Indicators
Leadership and Governance: A network of leadership and governance guides the education system to achieve its shared vision, mission and goals making them responsive and relevant to the context of diverse environments.	• In place is a development plan (e.g. SIP) developed collaboratively by the stakeholders of the school and community. • The development plan (e.g. SIP) is regularly reviewed by the school community to keep it responsive and relevant to emerging needs, challenges, and opportunities. • The school is organised through a clear structure and work arrangements that promote shared leadership and governance and define the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders. • A leadership network facilitates communication between and among school community leaders for informed decision-making and solving of school-community wide learning problems. • A long term program is in operation that addresses the training and development needs of school and community leaders.
Curriculum and Learning: The curriculum learning systems anchored on the community and learners' contexts and aspirations are collaboratively developed and continuously improved.	• The curriculum provides for the development needs of all types of learners in the school community. • The implemented curriculum is localised to make it more meaningful to the learners and applicable to life in the community. • A representative group of school and community stakeholders and materials for developing creative thinking and problem solving is established. • The learning systems are regularly and collaboratively monitored by the community using appropriate tools to ensure the holistic growth and development of learners and the community. • Appropriate assessment tools for teaching and learning are continuously reviewed and improved, and assessment results are contextualised to the learner and local situation and the attainment of relevant life skills. • Learning managers and facilitators (teachers, administrators and community members) nurture values and environments that are protective of all children and demonstrate behaviours consistent to the organisation's vision, mission and goals. • Methods and resources are learner and community-friendly, enjoyable, safe, inclusive, accessible and aimed at developing self–directed learners. Learners are equipped with essential knowledge, skills, and values to assume responsibility and accountability for their own learning.
Accountability and Continuous Improvement: A clear, transparent, inclusive, and responsive accountability system is in place, collaboratively developed by the school community, which monitors performance, which monitors performance and acts appropriately on gaps and gains.	• Roles and responsibilities of accountable person /s and collective body / ies are clearly defined and agreed upon by community stakeholders. • Achievement of goals is recognised based on a collaboratively developed performance accountability system; gaps are addressed through appropriate action. • The accountability system is owned by the community and is continuously enhanced to ensure that management structures and mechanisms are responsive to the emerging learning needs and demands of the community. • The accountability assessment criteria and tools, feedback mechanisms, and information collection and validation techniques, and processes are inclusive and collaboratively developed and agreed upon. • Participatory assessment of performance is done regularly with the community. Assessment results and lessons learned serve as basis for feedback, technical assistance, recognition and plan adjustment.
Management of Resources: Resources are collectively and judiciously mobilised and managed with transparency, effectiveness, and efficiency.	• Regular resource inventory is collaboratively undertaken by learning managers, learning facilitators, and community stakeholders as basis for resource allocation and mobilisation. • A regular dialogue for planning and resource programming, that is accessible and inclusive, continuously engages stakeholders and supports implementation of community education plans.

Principles / Domains	Indicators
	▪ In place is a community-developed resource management system that drives appropriate behaviours of the stakeholders to ensure judicious, appropriate, and effective use of resources.
	▪ Regular monitoring, evaluation, and reporting processes of resource management are collaboratively developed and implemented by the learning managers, facilitators, and community stakeholders.
	▪ There is a system that manages the network and linkages which strengthen and sustain partnerships for improving resource management.

Developed by the Schools Effectiveness Division, DepEd Central Office

Factors that influence the employability of out-of-school youth in ARRM: The BEAM–ARMM Program Technical Vocational Education and Training experience

A Discussion Paper

Summary

This discussion paper focuses on the results of the Basic Education Assistance for Muslim Mindanao in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BEAM–ARMM) program efforts to enhance the employability of 11,000 out-of-school youth (OSY) and senior high school students from across the region through technical, entrepreneurial, and basic life skills support. The paper assesses various modalities of delivering such support and identifies the most appropriate modality for getting OSY into employment in the complex environment of ARMM.

Over four training cycles from 2014–2017, an average of 56% of TVET graduates were able to secure jobs. By establishing partnerships with local industries to deliver TVET training that responded to local business needs, the program achieved an employment rate of 68% in Cycle 3. However, the preferences of industry partners resulted in the exclusion of a significant segment of the OSY – especially women.

The study also identified the importance of mechanisms such as Provincial Technical Education and Skills Development Committees (PTESDC) and Regional TESDC of ARMM to provide TVET stakeholders in ARMM the platform to interact, resolve issues and forge partnerships to address skills shortages and the employment rate in ARMM.

Introduction

The TVET component of the BEAM–ARMM program was designed in support of ARMM's economic growth brought about by the prospects for sustained peace in the region. The program invested heavily in equipping 10,993 OSY in the region with technical and entrepreneurial skills, preparing them for employment opportunities. Alongside the training, BEAM–ARMM forged ties with key players from the TVET sector to rally a suite of support for the training of OSY. Local Government Units (LGU) provided some OSY groups with financial support. DepEd–ARMM and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)–ARMM extended their expertise in the recruitment, training, and certification of TVET graduates. Industry players pledged to hire the graduates following their training. The BEAM–ARMM program achieved its target of training 11,000[56] OSY and getting, at least 50 percent employment rate among its TVET graduates.

Despite ARMM's record-high investments and employment rates in the past six years, the region is still home to many of the country's poorest towns and provinces. Data from the National Statistical Coordination Board showed that ARMM consistently had the highest poverty incidence among families in 2006, 2009, and 2012.[57] Across the baseline studies conducted by the BEAM–ARMM program, OSY pointed to poverty as the major factor which stopped them from attending school. ARMM had the lowest cohort survival rate in 2012 at only 27.5 percent.[58] The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) upheld this finding and reported that the region had 576,000 out-of-school children and youth, the highest in the country.

Objectives and research questions: Implementing the four training cycles of the TVET component was challenging. There were roadblocks along the way, many of which are external factors beyond the control of the program. This paper will document the program's experience in order to:

- Present the results of the TVET training.

- Identify lessons and best practices that future TVET programs in ARMM could build on.

- Promote policies that could contribute to strengthening the TVET sector in ARMM.

This discussion paper will also answer the following questions:

- What approaches and modalities were proven effective in implementing a TVET program in ARMM?

- What were the challenges that the program had to deal with during the course of implementation?

- How the program was able to overcome these challenges?

- What lessons or best practices could be shared by BEAM–ARMM to future TVET programs, especially in ARMM?

- What policy measures are needed to strengthen the TVET sector in ARMM?

Significance of the study: The discussion paper identifies best practices for training of OSY and preparing them for employment and offers future TVET programs an effective model for implementation of OSY training and preparation for employment. It also identifies opportunities to

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[56] Combined OSY and senior high school students trained by the BEAM–ARMM Program.
[57] 2012 Full Year Official Poverty Statistics by the National Statistical Coordination Board
[58] Cohort Survival Rate in Elementary Level by Region, SY2012–2013 http://bit.ly/2p6mfX0

strengthen institutional mechanisms for broader stakeholder engagement in the TVET sector, recognising that TVET is a shared responsibility. The paper advocates for gender inclusion in the identification of courses and employment opportunities so that women can participate in the benefits of economic growth, including in traditionally male dominated trades.

Methodology: Several BEAM–ARMM program-commissioned studies and results of TVET forums were referenced for this paper. References included the Labour Market Assessment, which was commissioned as basis for the identification of course offering during the first cycle of training; baseline and tracer studies of TVET trainees and graduates which were used to track their progress; the results of TVET forums which were used to contextualise the issues and challenges that beset the TVET sector in the region. Lastly, secondary data and related literature were gathered to substantiate findings.
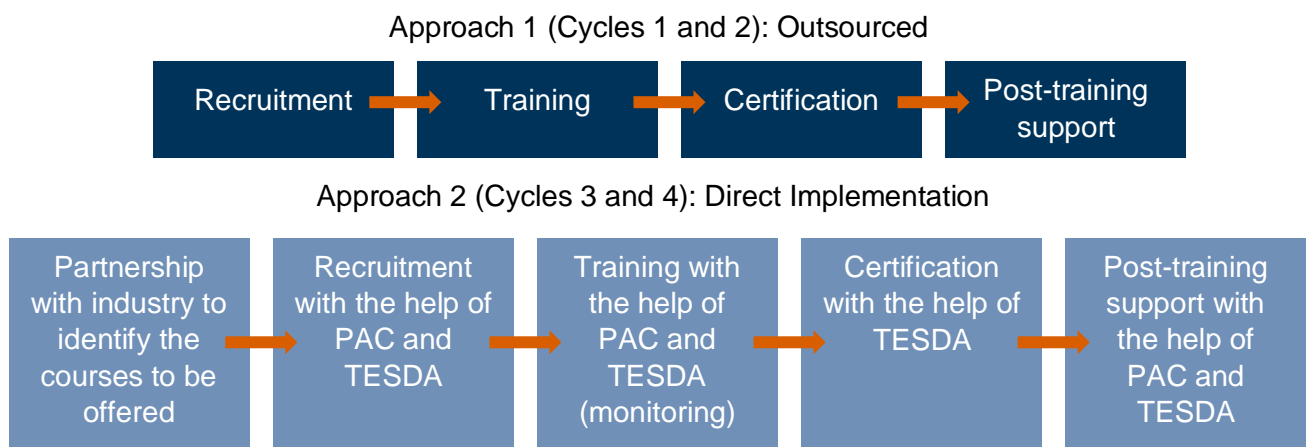
Limitations: This case study is constrained by the unavailability of data on the employment rates of TESDA nationwide in years 2016 and 2017 as well as TESDA–ARMM's employment rates in 2015, 2016, and 2017. The data on TESDA–ARMM and TESDA national's employment rates from 2015 to 2017 were forecasted through a time series analysis using the moving average method.

This case study only focuses on the training of OSY and the reactivation of PTESDCs. It does not include aspects of BEAM–ARMM's support for technical and vocational education via the Senior High School track which was also part of the TVET component.

Findings and discussion

Outsourced vs direct implementation of TVET: The program devised several approaches and modalities to implement the training. The first two cycles from 2014 to 2015 were outsourced to non-government organisations (NGOs) and Technical Vocational Institutions (TVIs) as shown in Figure 14 below. Many of the NGO-managed training programs were community-based. They hired trainers and brought them to the communities of the OSY. Unlike the NGOs, the TVIs accommodated their trainees at their training centres while also doing community-based training. Both the NGOs and TVIs procured the tools and equipment that were used by their trainees during and after the training (as post-training support). They had control of the disbursement of OSY allowance and purchasing tools and equipment for the training and for the OSY. But this modality proved to be counterproductive as the program had to deal with issues on procurement as well as the quality of the training, tools, and equipment provided.

Figure 14   BEAM–ARMM TVET implementation approaches

Approach 1 (Cycles 1 and 2): Outsourced

Recruitment → Training → Certification → Post-training support

Approach 2 (Cycles 3 and 4): Direct Implementation

Partnership with industry to identify the courses to be offered → Recruitment with the help of PAC and TESDA → Training with the help of PAC and TESDA (monitoring) → Certification with the help of TESDA → Post-training support with the help of PAC and TESDA

BEAM–ARMM decided to directly implement the remaining two training cycles from 2016 to 2017 in order to take control over the delivery and quality of the training. The services of the TVIs were limited to providing trainers and facilitating the assessment of the trainees after their training. The program procured all the tools and equipment and distributed the allowances to the trainees on a weekly basis. Given the workload of managing and monitoring the training, this modality took a heavy toll on the limited number of BEAM–ARMM TVET staff. Direct implementation proved to be taxing yet it resulted in improved quality of the training and distribution of quality tools and equipment.

The direct implementation approach of the program had the additional benefit of industry players participating in the identification of course offerings and pledging to hire completers following their training. The participation of the members of Provincial Advisory Committee, which is composed of LGUs, TESDA, and DepEd–ARMM representatives, in the recruitment, training, certification, and provision of post-training support was also seen as instrumental in the improved delivery of the training.

Identification of course offerings: The identification of course offerings between the first and the last two training cycles changed. Although BEAM–ARMM had a list of priority courses (based on the Labour Market Assessment) for the first two cycles, the NGOs and TVIs that were commissioned to implement the training had a freer hand in determining the courses that they would offer. The choice of courses offered initially was guided by the demand of skills in their localities. But the identification of course offerings in the last two cycles was more strategic. BEAM–ARMM partnered with industry players inside and outside of ARMM in order to secure the employment of the trainees following their training. This approach proved to be effective as Cycle 3's employment rate rose to 68 percent.

Factors affecting the employability of TVET graduates

Exclusion: The industry-based approach to identifying the course offering is ideal but did have adverse implications. Firstly, the industry players upgraded the minimum educational attainment requirement from elementary level to high school level. Some preferred high school graduates only. Secondly, they preferred male applicants especially for traditionally male dominated trades such as welding, carpentry, and electrical installation. Moreover, they would not employ TVET graduates below 18 years of age. Lastly, in the case of security services completers employers ultimately required a minimum height, to the dismay of those who did not qualify. These preferences of partner-industries resulted in the exclusion of some TVET graduates – especially women – in the last two training cycles.

Post-training support: The provision of post-training support was also seen as critical to increasing the chances of TVET graduates to land jobs. BEAM–ARMM tracer studies revealed that majority of the families of OSY are poor, earning only P3,000 per month. As of 2014, a family of five needed at least P6,125 a month to meet basic food needs, and at least P8,778 a month to meet basic food and non-food needs[59]. Many OSY said they spend whatever money they have on the subsistence of their family. They lamented that they could not afford to pay for the processing of pre-employment requirements such as National Bureau of Investigation clearance, authenticated birth certificate, Social Security System, and Home Development Mutual Fund membership applications. Unlike in Cycles 1 and 2, BEAM–ARMM assisted its Cycles 3 and 4 graduates to obtain these documents to facilitate their employment applications. They were also trained in work-readiness, basic life skills, and most especially, the Islamic values as required by some industry partners.

Lack of employment opportunities: There is scarcity of employment opportunities in ARMM especially in the localities where the TVET graduates are from. The TVIs also share this sentiment, as they are also required to find employment for their graduates.

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[59] http://www.nscb.gov.ph/pressreleases/2015/PSA–20150306-SS2-01_poverty.asp (retrieved on Oct. 16, 2015)

Jobs-skills mismatch: Industry players stressed that the jobs-skills mismatch also affects the employability of the TVET graduates. They see an oversupply of dressmaking and hospitality completers when they are in dire need of welders, carpenters, and heavy equipment operators. As a result, many companies based in ARMM import workers from cities and towns of other regions. They suggested aligning the course offerings of TVIs to their specific human resource requirements. Some industry players also require specific skills set that need to be reflected in the curriculum of the TVIs.

Competition with college graduates: The OSY TVET graduates also have to compete with college graduates who possess higher educational qualifications compared to them.

Lack of job-matching facility: Many of the TVET graduates lack access to information on jobs. They don't know where to go to get information on jobs that are available even in their localities.

Participation of women to the training: Although a significant number of female OSY were trained in Shielded Metal Arc Welding, they were assigned to different jobs at Hanjin Heavy Industries and Construction Philippines, a shipbuilding company based in Subic, Zambales. Some of them were given office work and the rest are doing painting jobs: Table below shows the participation of female OSY to the training from Cycles 1 to 4.

Table 9   Distribution of female graduates per training cycle

Cycles	Male	Female	Total
1	3,001	2,213	5,214
2	2,167	2,485	4,652
3	565	281	846
4	244	0	244

Significant numbers of women were seen in traditionally male dominated trades in Cycles 1 and 2 as shown in Table below.

Table 10   **Female OSY in Male Dominated Trades in Cycle 1 to Cycle 4**

Training course / program	Cycle 1				Cycle 2				Cycle 3				Cycle 4		Total				Total
	M	%	F	%	M	%	F	%	M	%	F	%	M	%	M	%	F	%	Total
Agricultural Crops Production	240	63	139	37	211	45	263	55	475	64	271	36	0	0	926	58	673	42	1599
Carpentry	176	91	18	9	60	58	43	42	0	0	0	0	76	100	312	84	61	16	373
Electrical Installation and Maintenance	612	93	49	7	168	87	26	13	0	0	0	0	25	100	805	91	75	9	880
Heavy Equipment Operation	0	0	0	0	25	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	100	46	100	0	0	46
Hollow block making	15	50	15	50	123	72	48	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	138	69	63	31	201
Masonry	52	72	20	28	72	58	53	42	0	0	0	0	0	0	124	63	73	37	197
Motorcycle & Small Engine Servicing	491	89	62	11	102	93	8	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	593	89	70	11	663
Plumbing	62	61	39	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	62	61	39	38	101
Security Services	7	58	5	42	67	67	33	33	46	92	4	8	0	0	120	74	42	26	162
Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW)	230	86	36	14	67	89	8	11	44	88	6	12	122	100	463	90	50	10	513
Total	**2999**	**58**	**2215**	**42**	**2167**	**47**	**2485**	**53**	**565**	**67**	**281**	**33**	**244**	**100**	**3589**	**76**	**1146**	**24**	**4735**

Comparative analysis of BEAM–ARMM, TESDA–ARMM, and TESDA national employment rates 2014–2017: The program's employment rate peaked following the Cycle 3 training in 2016. The tracer study revealed that 68% of the TVET graduates were employed, which is higher compared to the employment rates in Cycles 1 and 2 at only 59% and 47% respectively as shown in Table . This could be attributed to the industry-based approach to the identification of courses adopted from Cycle 3. Unlike in Cycles 1 and 2, BEAM–ARMM collaborated with key industry players that would employ the OSY following their training. The industry players created the demand for work and the program designed the training to cater to that demand.

Table 10   Comparison between BEAM–ARMM employment rates and the employment rates of TESDA–ARMM and TESDA national 2014–2017 (%)

Year	BEAM–ARMM	TESDA–ARMM	Nationwide
2014	59%	31.8%	65.4%
2015	47%	26.72%	66.2%
2016	68%	25.72%	67.7%
2017	50%	24.72%	69%
Average	**56%**	**27.24%**	**67.1%**

Institutional mechanism: The mechanism to provide TVET stakeholders in ARMM the platform to interact, resolve issues, and forge partnerships was seen as wanting in recent years. All the PTESDCs as well as the Regional TESDC of ARMM became inactive over the last five years due to leadership issues and the cost of running these bodies. These committees were mandated by Republic Act 7796, otherwise known as the TESDA Act of 1994, to coordinate and monitor the delivery of all skills development activities by the public and private sectors. During the series of TVET forums organised by BEAM–ARMM from 2016 to 2017, stakeholders clamoured for this mechanism to help address their concerns.

TVIs raised concern regarding the inclusion of employment criteria in the tendering of TESDA-funded scholarship programs, which compels them to look for employment opportunities for their graduates. They reasoned that their mandate is only to train, adding that "the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) is the agency tasked to find employment opportunities for their graduates."

TVIs claimed that as there is lack of employment opportunities in ARMM, many of their graduates remain jobless. The industry players on the other hand see the mismatch between the supply of TVET graduates and their demands. They suggested aligning the course offerings of TVIs to their specific human resource requirements.

The LGUs supported the call to match the supply of TVET graduates to industry demand. LGUs could provide leadership and the policy measures to facilitate the discourse between and among TVIs and the private sector. The provincial LGUs play a critical role as chair of the PTESDC in each of the provinces. BEAM–ARMM helped reactivate the PTESDCs following the TVET forums. All the five PTESDCs of ARMM have been reactivated as of April 2017. BEAM–ARMM provided technical assistance in preparing the work plans of the committees.

Comparison with other programs

BEAM–ARMM's industry-based approach to identifying course offerings, training, and providing post-training support is also seen in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.[60] The Asian Development Bank (ADB)

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[60] Innovative Strategies in Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Accelerated Human Resource Development in South Asia. p.xv

noted that matching the supply of TVET training to the private sector's demand for skilled workers is a good practice. ADB pointed out that in order to raise the relevance of the training, employers must be involved in directing and evaluating the training system. It also added that the labour market assessment, which BEAM–ARMM carried out prior to the training, is another best practice found in Marshall Islands.[61] BEAM–ARMM is the first TVET program to offer a full suite of pre and post-training support for OSY in ARMM.

Conclusions

BEAM–ARMM was able to achieve its target of a 50% employment rate among its TVET completers. A critical factor that contributed to achieving its target was its flexibility in developing and improving on its approaches to implementation, procurement, monitoring, and in engaging stakeholders. The program's shift from outsourcing to directly implementing the training resulted not only in better quality training but also in the tools and equipment that were supplied to OSY.

The industry-based approach to identifying or designing the training program resulted in higher employment rate among the TVET completers. However, this could also result in the exclusion of completers – especially women.

There is a lack of employment opportunities in ARMM, prompting the program to explore partnerships with companies in Manila and neighboring key cities and provinces.

Furthermore, the provision of post-training support should not only be limited to the distribution of tools and equipment as well as training on life skills and work-readiness. Post-training support must include assistance for the processing of pre-employment requirements.

Other factors affecting the employability of the TVET completers included the qualifications set by industry player; provision of post-training support especially for the processing of pre-employment requirements; lack of employment opportunities; jobs skills mismatch; competition between TVET and college graduates; and the lack of a job-matching facility.

Lastly, institutional mechanisms such as PTESDC and RTESDC are critical not only for the implementation of TVET training but also in strengthening the TVET sector as a whole.

Recommendations for DepEd–ARMM

- A TVET program implementer must have overall control of the training starting from the recruitment process, identification of courses with the help of industry players, monitoring of the training, and during the provision of post-training support.

- The program implementer must ensure the quality of the training delivery as well as the tools or equipment to be procured. This makes the direct implementation approach more desirable.

- There is a need to advocate for gender inclusion in the identification of course offerings and employment of TVET graduates. Women should be treated as equally capable as men even in traditionally male dominated trades.

- TVET is a shared responsibility of the TVET stakeholders. Therefore, a TVET program implementer must create opportunities for the stakeholders to take part in the training program.

- Institutional mechanisms such as PTESDC and RTESDC must be strengthened. LGUs must take a closer look at the benefits of strengthening these mechanisms.

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[61] Good Practice in Technical and Vocational Education and Training. p. 53

- There is a need to expand the membership of PTESDC to more TVET stakeholders and relevant government agencies. DepEd–ARMM and DOLE–ARMM must sit as members of the committee.

- The Public Employment Service Office (PESO) must be proactive in disseminating information on available jobs in partnership with DOLE. Information on job vacancies must trickle down to the barangay level. The PESO serves as a job-matching facility. It must have a database of supply of skilled workers and companies that would need these supplies of skills.

- Local chief executives, who chair the PTESDCs, must be proactive in asserting their mandate to facilitate and coordinate development efforts. After all, the success of the TVET sector will benefit a significant portion of their voting constituents – the youth.

- Future TVET programs must invest in the pre-employment requirements of TVET graduates, especially if they are OSY.