

Education

The provincial level education practices to be discussed in this section are the kindergarten program and related practices, the reading program, multilingual education, the essential health care package, among others.

Kindergarten Program

Kindergarten Teacher

A stable kindergarten program requires teachers have a permanent status. Those that render six hours of classroom service each day are considered for permanency, if the DepEd budget has allocation items for them.

To be able to satisfy the 6-hour requirement, a kindergarten teacher has to have afternoon classes. The afternoon session would be for another batch of children that could not be accommodated in the morning in the same classroom of the same school.

If there are not enough students for an afternoon session, then the kindergarten teacher has to become a mobile teacher, i.e., teach in one school in the morning and another nearby school in the afternoon. 'Nearby' could mean walking for an hour from one school to another.

There are some instances where parents organize kindergarten classes in their barangay which does not have a public school. Such class is then serviced by a DepEd subsidized teacher in a borrowed room (barangay hall or day care center).

Given the possible options, there are a lot of instances where a teacher could only handle one class (three hours each day). Under such instances, the teacher is then considered as a DepEd subsidized teacher. This situation arises when parents organize kindergarten classes then ask for support from the DepEd. The volunteer may have received zero honorarium initially or had received a small amount from parents contributions. Some kindergarten classes were also initially supported by funds from other sources, such as faith-based groups.

Kindergarten Classroom/Building

A stable kindergarten program requires classrooms that are permanent, exclusive and safe. Some elementary and primary schools have extra rooms in their existing building and are now assigned as kindergarten classrooms. At some instances, other rooms, previously intended as clinics, multimedia rooms or kitchens are repurposed for kindergarten use.

Others schools are not as lucky. With the absence of permanent kindergarten classrooms, they now temporarily use spaces that are less than the ideal. Some have to make do with utilizing the old Bayanihan buildings that are by now condemned or condemnable. Still, others use makeshift classrooms that have to be reassembled after every typhoon that passes by.

There are classes being held in barangay halls, day care centers or multipurpose halls in areas where the nearest schools are far away from the point of view of five-

year-old children. These borrowed classrooms make the classes less credible in the eyes of the public. The absence of space for storing their learning and play materials prevents the kindergarten from moving forward in terms of providing better service.

The single classroom building concept is a good idea that could solve the problems mentioned earlier. As a prefabricated building, completion time is shorter (although there is some waiting time for the components to arrive on location). Such buildings are now being used in Bila and Otucan in Bauko and Kayan in Tadian.

Fixtures

Play Fixtures. In Tadian CS and Bauko CS, they opted to place the play facilities inside the classroom. This would prolong the life of the see-saw, slide and jungle bars since they do not get exposed under the rain. This would also make the play area exclusive for pre-schoolers and eliminate the occurrence of bullying on the playground (for kindergarten kids, at least). Tadian Central's classroom is big enough for two classes, so half of area is used for play, feeding and brushing. The other half has the tables and chairs for practice writing, drawing and the like.

Tables and Chairs. Some kindergarten pupils are required to bring their own chairs. Parents buy chairs for their children then get them at the end of the school year. Instead of short tables and chairs, Balugan ES Preschool uses desks. Besao ES preschool uses monobloc tables and chairs from UNICEF, similar to those given to day care centers.

Toilet and Dental Trough. Some kindergarten classes that were established five years ago or even earlier have toilets and dental trough inside their classroom. Some of the new ones have only makeshift toilets outside.

Class Size

A kindergarten class has to have at least 15 children to be considered for subsidy. However, there are classes with fewer than 10 children being supported by DepEd. A class of 25 children could be split into two sections, with some children attending the morning session and the rest, the afternoon session. Doing so would increase the chances of the kindergarten teacher getting permanent status. There are classes, however, that have children as high as 50.

Curriculum

With the big push from national government, the bulk of the children are attending the regular year-long kindergarten program. There is also the kindergarten summer program, which is offered in schools that do not have existing regular kindergarten classes. There is also the 8-week kindergarten program which happens during the first two months of Grade-I.

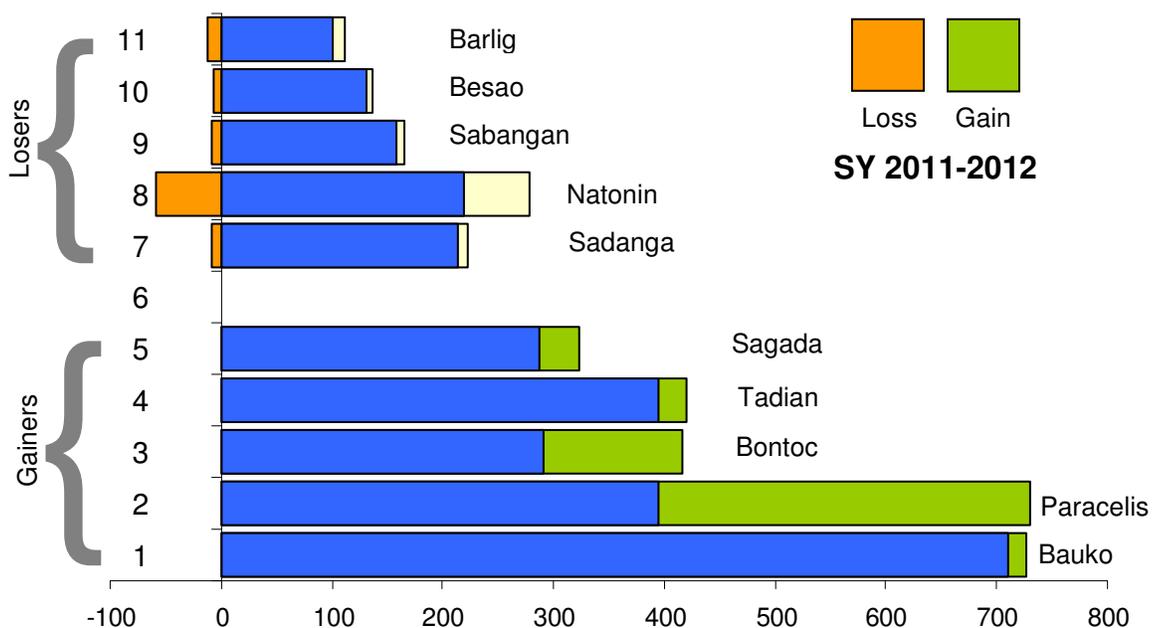
Problems regarding afternoon classes

Afternoon sessions help in the creation of permanent positions for government preschool teachers. Since teachers are required to render a minimum of as six hours daily, handling just a 3-hour morning session would mean they would remain under volunteer status. Thus, handling double sessions -- even if it means having to travel from one school to another during the lunch break -- is beneficial to the teacher.

However, for some children, afternoon is sleeping time. They get tired after playing the whole morning and lack energy to attend class after lunch. Because of this, some parents in Otucan, Bauko have been sending their children to the private kindergarten in the morning then government pre-school in the afternoon. Some parents in the same area are also considering sending their kids back to the day care center at least in the morning.

Preschool Enrolment

School year 2011-2012 saw a decrease in enrolment in five municipalities and an increase in five others. The smaller towns (in terms of population) currently have a smaller number of pre-schoolers compared to last year. Natonin had the biggest decrease, probably due to migration to Paracelis. Note that Sadanga was supposed to have a bigger enrolment than Natonin (due to a bigger 5-year-old population). This means Sadanga has a comparatively lower participation rate, as will be discussed later.



The five bigger towns, on the other hand, accepted more enrollees this year. Paracelis and Bontoc showed a dramatic increase because of the opening of new preschools. To a smaller part, the increase in Paracelis is also probably because of migration from Natonin. Note that Paracelis has now more enrollees than Bauko, indicating that its 5-year-old population is growing faster than projected.

Comparative Three-School-Year Pre-School Enrolment

Municipality	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Western			
Bauko	654	711	726
Bauko 1	375	370	381
Bauko 2	279	341	345
Besao	98	137	131
Sabangan	131	166	158
Sagada	258	287	324
Tadian	386	395	420
Tadian 1	232	257	276
Tadian 2	154	138	144
	<u>1,527</u>	<u>1,696</u>	<u>1,759</u>
Eastern			
Barlig	117	112	100
Bontoc	298	291	417
Natonin	230	279	220
Paracelis	188	395	730
Sadanga	235	222	213
	<u>1,068</u>	<u>1,299</u>	<u>1,680</u>
Total	<u>2,595</u>	<u>2,995</u>	<u>3,439</u>

Source: DepEd, Division of Mountain Province.

The table above shows the changes in enrolment for the last three school years. Bear in mind that this pertains only to the year-long classes and does not include the summer kindergarten enrolment. Besao, Sabangan and Natonin had a higher enrolment in school year 2010-11 than the previous year, indicating that the drop in enrolment discussed earlier may only be a regular fluctuation.

Effect of Kindergarten on Day Care Service

The big push for government funded pre-school education affected the DSWD supervised day care program in three ways:

- loss of 5-year-old clients,
- loss of LET eligible day care workers, and
- for some day care centers that use DepEd classrooms, having to find a new place to conduct their classes as the classroom would now be used exclusively by the preschool pupils.

The day care service helped make acceptance of kindergarten classes easier by:

- allowing use of some day care centers for kindergarten classes,
- demonstrating to parents the benefits of early education, and
- establishing community acceptance then turning over the service to DepEd.

In introducing the kindergarten program, DepEd drew inspiration from its learnings on the establishment of national high schools: First it had to get the willingness of parents to support the program. When there were enough enrollees in one school, the next move was to get support from the DepEd national office for the honorarium of the volunteer teachers or the salary of the new permanent pre-school teacher. Lastly, should there be no available classroom for the program, temporary structures could be built by parents or the local government while waiting for the permanent structure to be built by DepEd. DepEd meanwhile developed the one-classroom prefab building for easier deployment.

Grade-I

Grade One Enrolment

Grade One enrolment in Mountain Province for the last three years shows a gradual decline. This could be a result of adjustments with the introduction of the preschool program. Or it could be because of any or a combination of the following: normal fluctuation in the population distribution, late submission of data (2011 is still preliminary) for some schools, multi-grade enrolment fluctuations (this year: Grade 1 only, next year: Grade 2 only), lower participation rate, or decreasing population as a result of successful family planning.

Three-Year Grade-I Enrolment, Mountain Province

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Barlig	138	120	100
Bauko	905	900	820
Bauko I	476	491	458
Bauko II	429	409	362
Besao	312	262	251
Bontoc	559	515	458
Natonin	323	296	278
Paracelis	997	1,039	971
Sabangan	235	275	231
Sadanga	238	232	224
Sagada	402	400	369
Tadian	618	523	496
Tadian I	455	370	328
Tadian II	163	153	168
	4,727	4,562	4,198

Source: DepEd, Division of Mountain Province.

REAP

REAP is a reading program where grade one pupils are grouped according to reading proficiency. During a reading activity, the whole class initially reads the passage. The independent readers are then called to read aloud in front of the class. Members of the second group are then called to read the same passage afterwards, and when they show difficulty in reading the material, some of the independent readers are called to assist them. The second group then reads along aloud. Meanwhile, the teacher gives her attention to the third group composed of pupils who are only beginning to understand the basics of reading.

Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MLE)

Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education is a program that encourages pupils to use the vernacular or their first language to understand other subject areas and languages like Filipino and English up to the third grade. The program intends to develop lifelong learners who are proficient in the use of their first language (L1), the national language (L2) and other languages (L3 and L4) and who take pride of their heritage and culture. Earlier similar programs were able to improve schools' performance indicators: dropout, repetition, retention and completion rates among elementary pupils; increase pupils' academic performance through acquisition of oral fluency, reading and writing skills in their first language that provide them a bridge to learning Filipino and English enabling them to become more competent in all areas of study; and, demonstrate self-confidence and pride in one's culture, tradition and values.

Two important DepEd orders emphasize the importance of MLE in early learning. DepED Order No. 60, s. 2008 states thus: The use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction beginning grade one is now recognized as the most effective way to improve student learning and shall also serve as a strong bridge language to learn a second language better and faster. All Bureau Directors are hereby directed to provide the field offices through the regional offices successful models of language of learning that have been developed and have resulted in the students'/learners' higher cognitive development and faster acquisition of basic literacy. The utilization of MOOE, School Board Funds and other funds is hereby authorized for expenditures that may be required during the planning and implementation phases of using the mother tongue as a language of instruction. DepED Order No. 74, s. 2009 institutionalized Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in the Philippines.

On the field, in one instance, English was being used to teach Filipino. This may have been effective for older generations who had little or no exposure to the Filipino language. But the pupils of the current generation are now exposed to national television that use Filipino extensively. Some teachers are clinging to the idea that English is the only way to go.

Multi-Grade

In areas with very few enrollees, multi-grade classes are implemented. The classroom is divided by a bookshelf and pupils belonging to one grade level stay on one side while those belonging to the next grade stay on the other. In some instances, three grade levels share one room, but all in all the pupils in a classroom does not usually exceed 20.

Other multi-grade schools employ a different strategy. For this school year, they would accept only enrollees for grades one, three and five. Next year, they would only accept enrollees for two, four and six. This means some students would start schooling early, while others are one year delayed.

Multi-grade schools rely heavily on learning modules as the teachers have to give their pupils seatwork before shifting their attention to the other side of the room. However, teachers worry that using the available workbooks would mean they won't have anything to use next school year. So instead of using the workbooks directly, pupils have to write their answers on their paper.

Museum in the Classroom

Children have the right to be immersed in their local culture and setting up a school museum in a corner of a grade one classroom as they did in Bauko CS is one way of imparting the value of their shared identity with the rest of the community. It is a learning experience that does not necessarily make use of language, although it could also be used as a tool for tackling culture in the classroom.

Gulayan sa Paaralan (School-Based Organic Farming)

Vegetable gardening has been taught for a while now to older grades in elementary schools of Mountain Province under home economics or practical arts. This time around, a monitoring team from outside the school visits the gardens and checks the status as well as the yield of the school-based farms.

Brigada Eskwela

At the start of the school year, parents go to the school where they enrolled their children to do some cleaning and repairs. Some schools got funding from UNICEF, a form of food for work program. Yet even without incentives, parents willingly participate to do their part in making the school of their children more conducive for learning and playing.

Alternative Learning System (ALS)

ALS is intended for those aged 13 years and above who have stopped schooling for at least one year and would want to resume their studies without having to attend

regular classes. It is also for adults who have never attended school. ALS is seen by some health and social welfare practitioners as an entry point to community-based health and social welfare education. In Sagada, their Reproductive Health Code states that RH and other health related topics shall be integrated into the ALS curriculum of the municipality.

Essential Health Care Package (EHCP)

ECHP promotes combined tooth brushing, hand washing and bi-annual de-worming in schools. Mountain Province's efforts for this practice earned recognition. Aside from the toothpaste, soap and de-worming tablets, the provincial government, together with the DOH regional office and Colgate-Palmolive Philippines distributed tooth brushes to preschool and grade one pupils. This project encouraged schools to put up their own water tanks, dental troughs and better toilets. This move was facilitated by funding from the municipal special education fund (SEF), the downloading of Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) to elementary schools -- 10% of which should be allocated for health related spending, the Sanitation, Water System, Electric Fund Assistance Program (SWEFAP), the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Fund, and the Parents, Teachers and Community Association (PTCA), among others.

Dental carries is one big problem among elementary kids, and school-based tooth brushing could be considered as the immunization equivalent for teeth protection. Division dentists visit schools once a year or once every two years, but it could be more frequent than that if the school/parents are willing to shoulder the cost of anesthesia, needles and dental filling. By focusing on the children's brushing of teeth, parents and school heads can worry less about costs related to pulling of teeth.

Feeding Program

Bethesda in partnership with DepEd has a feeding program for preschoolers and Grade-I pupils. Schools have to opt-in to join the program, and some schools in western Mountain Province chose to do so.

Late Entry

The succeeding pages will show tables on the number of persons aged five to nine who never attended school. If we take into consideration all ages, Besao and Barlig have the lowest figures, meaning their schools are most successful in getting the most of the population to attend school. But if we zero in on the five- and six-year-old children, the towns' performance was middling in 1995 before improving in 2000. Meanwhile, Sadanga, the poorest performing municipality if all ages are considered, got the best percentage for age 5 in 1995. This, even if the worst case scenario is considered: In 1995 there were a lot of respondents who did not indicate whether they attended school or not. Sadanga's performance for early entry into formal schooling turned bad in 2000. Bontoc, the next poorest performer, has been doing

its best to attract the five and six year-old children to attend school. Meanwhile, Sabangan, like Sadanga that has the lowest municipal IRA in the province, is doing poorly in terms of early education entry.

