PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

A. Description of the Monitoring and Evaluation System

1. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in the Department of Education (DepEd) has undergone major enhancements since 2011. Previously limited to data collection and validation, M&E now supports decision-making and is a critical source of inputs to prepare school improvement plans, division education development plans, and regional basic education plans. The frequency of program implementation reviews by the central office, and quarterly reviews like the monitoring, evaluation, and plan adjustment (MEPA) process at schools, schools division offices (SDOs), and regional offices has increased. Currently, these reviews serve as a mechanism for providing real-time response to address operational bottlenecks in DepEd.

2. Monitoring and evaluation framework. The requisites for implementing a systemic M&E function are already in place. Foremost is the kindergarten to grade 12 (K to 12) M&E framework, a learner-centered framework supporting implementation of the government’s K to 12 Basic Education Program (K to 12 Program). It details the scope of M&E for DepEd, which serves as a road map in the preparation of education plans and the operationalization of the M&E function. The K to 12 M&E framework has evolved into the Basic Education M&E Framework.\(^1\) Necessary organizational structures are also in place such as dedicated M&E units in the central and regional offices, SDOs performing M&E functions, and the process for supporting the continuous improvement of these diverse information systems.

3. Monitoring and evaluation systems in every governance level. DepEd has a revised organizational structure with the implementation of its Rationalization Plan. New units have been established and designated as process owners of the M&E function. At the central office level, overall management of the M&E function resides with the Planning Service through the Policy and Research Division (PRD) and the Planning and Programming Division (PPD). The PRD is tasked with results-based M&E as a critical input to policy enhancements and development, while the PPD handles the progress M&E requirements of DepEd. The PRD has drafted the policy framework on basic education M&E and is preparing DepEd’s M&E manual. Since 2015, the PPD has been conducting quarterly program implementation reviews with units from central and regional offices. This interface focuses on physical accomplishments and funds utilization, and serves as a venue to discuss and resolve policy and operational issues affecting program delivery and operations.

4. At the regional office level, the Quality Assurance Division (QAD) is designated as the process owner for implementing the regional M&E system. The QAD is mandated to establish outcome-driven evidence-based M&E in the region to facilitate the regional office’s requirements to localize policies and make programs more aligned with the regional context. At the division level, the School Governance and Operations Division, through the senior education program specialist for M&E, is tasked with the management and implementation of a division level M&E system, which will allow division personnel to provide timely and needs-based technical assistance (TA) to schools and learning centers.

5. At the school level, an increasing number of schools are implementing the school MEPA technology. This participatory approach to M&E serves as a platform for discussing learners’ performance, participation, and access to quality basic education services. The MEPA is also

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used to quickly resolve issues affecting the teaching and learning process, bottlenecks in school operations, and to escalate issues that may require policy and resource-related solutions to the district and division. Results of the school MEPA are being used as inputs to the schools’ annual plans, in-service training, and action research; and for use in the teachers’ learning action cells. In some areas like Region 12, the school MEPA also serves as a mechanism for collaboration with the community and local government units.

6. **Capability building programs.** DepEd has been supported by development partners in undertaking capability building programs on M&E, mostly for regional and division level staff. In 2016 and 2017, regional and division units have been implementing a series of training programs on M&E for school heads, workshops on quarterly reviews (most commonly known as MEPA), and trainings on the evaluation of programs for their respective staff.

7. **Information systems.** DepEd’s M&E function is supported by six information systems: (i) the Enhanced Basic Education Information System (EBEIS), (ii) the Learner Information System (LIS), (iii) the Program Management Information System, (iv) the Enterprise Human Resource Information System, (v) the Learning Resource Management and Development System, and (vi) the School Building Information System. Details of the key management information systems are provided below:

(i) The EBEIS is a web-based system designed to enhance information management at all levels of the education system. It is a decision support system for policy enhancements, planning, and other decision-making activities. Managed by the Education Management Information Service Division, data and information are gathered by schools, and consolidated and validated by the regional offices and SDOs. The EBEIS will be used to collect data and verify the achievement of three disbursement-linked indicator (DLI) sub-indicators: for DLIs 3 and 4 in 2020, and DLIs 1 and 3 in 2022. Protocols have been identified for the development (program action plan output 2) on the EBEIS to provide necessary sex-disaggregated data collection on the teacher specializations for Filipino and for tracking information on the identification and training of secondary education teachers as career advocates.

(ii) The LIS uses a unique identifier to store information particular to a learner, including the name, date of birth, guardian, and sex. All students enrolled in public and private basic education schools are given a unique learner reference number. This allows DepEd to track learners in both formal and nonformal instruction and to monitor students who transfer from one school to another.

(iii) Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners are included in the LIS. Each ALS learner is assigned a unique learner reference number. The ALS LIS, managed by the SDO system administrator, can generate a Division Dashboard detailing critical information about the learner’s performance (completed and not completed), and the profile of Community Learning Centers and learning facilitators. The SDOs also regularly conduct area-based mapping of out-of-school youth.

(iv) The Program Management Information System is a web-based information system designed to facilitate tracking and monitoring of the physical and financial performance of different programs, projects, and activities of DepEd. The system is expected to provide real-time data and information on the progress of implementation and the achievements of programs and projects. It is being implemented at the regional office and SDO levels, but has yet to achieve full compliance. Once fully operational, the system is expected to complement the quarterly reviews and MEPAs being implemented by the Planning Service, regional offices, SDOs, and schools.
(v) The School Building Information System maintains and monitors information on school buildings. Maintained by the Education Facilities Division (EFD) of DepEd, it covers all physical facility activities undertaken by DepEd and the Department of Public Works and Highways. However, the database is not comprehensive because it does not capture school construction undertaken by other sources, such as local government units. The current system focuses on contract monitoring and information collection, analysis, and field verification to determine the progress of new construction and the repair of classrooms, workshops, and water and sanitation facilities. EFD still maintains this system in Microsoft Excel spreadsheet format. Annual construction needs are determined based on inventory and school enrollment information.

8. For the National Achievement Test (NAT), the Bureau of Education Assessment serves as the central repository for the test results, including language assessment for primary grades, and the NAT for grades 6, 10, and 12. Schools are provided with more detailed results, including the learners’ score and the least mastered competencies per subject. Results received by regional offices and SDOs are limited to mean scores per school.

9. Other monitoring programs. In addition to what has been described above, DepEd has the following monitoring arrangements: (i) the Education Program Monitoring Unit coordinates with the Planning and Finance Services on budget utilization to ensure timely availability and delivery of education inputs; (ii) the Program Management Service is designated to be the lead unit in monitoring capital-intensive and large-scale projects; (iii) program monitoring initiatives by line units, central office bureaus, and services independently perform M&E activities for their respective programs and projects; and (iv) regional and schools division offices conduct school monitoring visits.

10. Program evaluation. Programs implemented with official development assistance are evaluated by independent government agencies or third-party organizations, usually with the support of development partners. The Asian Development Bank will support DepEd in conducting an evaluation after program completion. It will also support assessing standard evaluation arrangements consistent with broader efforts to strengthen the agency’s capacity to measure results and undertake impact evaluations.

B. Assessment of the Monitoring and Evaluation System

11. Although significant improvements have been made in M&E work in DepEd, as evidenced by the presence of critical M&E structures (process owners and information systems), weaknesses still need to be addressed:

(i) Evidence-based decision making. A dedicated M&E system at each level of governance is being operationalized to support decision-making requirements according to their mandate. However, central office units, regional offices, and SDOs still struggle to access data and information that is of high quality and relevance, and many DepEd staff have limited understanding of education key performance indicators. Though there is an upsurge in M&E events, most are conducted without the use of these indicators and without the latest data and information that they can use to mine or analyze performance further.

(ii) Data on quality of education. Access to data and information is tilted toward access and governance indicators. Data on enrollment, dropouts, repeaters, classrooms, textbooks, and related concerns are collected regularly and systematically. However, the same cannot be said for indicators related to
curriculum and instruction. The regional offices and SDOs do not have full access to the NAT results, least mastered competencies, and other data. Systematic collection of data related to curriculum implementation and instructional supervision is still visibly absent. Important determinants of quality like curriculum coverage, contact time and disruptions, and teachers’ teaching practices, are not being used to address quality. Monitoring work is still largely focused on tracking program and project implementation.

(iii) **School data limited to learners who are enrolled.** Schools regularly provide reports and data, and this information is processed at the central office level into performance indicators. However, most of the data are focused on learners who are in school (i.e., enrollment, dropouts, school-leavers, and repeaters). There is a need to develop school level indicators on access that will allow each school to determine how may school-age children are not in school.

(iv) **Capability of monitoring and evaluation process owners.** Functional units have been designated to manage and promote M&E work in DepEd. These include the designation of the PRD to oversee the operationalization of the entire M&E system in DepEd, the creation of QAD in the region, and the designation of a senior education program specialist for M&E. However, many of the staff are new to this assignment and have not yet installed their respective processes.

(v) **Centralized management of data.** Although data are collected at the school level and validated and consolidated at the regional and division levels, overall management resides at the central office level. The information systems are handled by different units from the central office. Operationally, this means SDOs will have to request official data from different units before they can profile schools. The program management service, for instance, has to request data on enrollment from the Education Management Information System Division, and data on school building from the EFD to determine the classroom–student ratio under the Senior High School Support Program.²

(vi) **Database functionalities and breadth.** Functionalities for DepEd’s management information system databases were designed independently and narrowly, and are therefore limited in their capacity to provide the type of information needed for M&E of results-based programs. The narrow scope affects the architecture, variable codes, data collection methods, and analytics of each tool. This diversity of systems makes unification challenging both horizontally across the central office units, and vertically from the central office down to the school level. For M&E across the secondary education sector, TA will be required to help DepEd to integrate its systems with other agencies and their databases. This includes, for example, the local government systems, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority’s Education Management Information System, possibly the Department of Social Welfare and Development and its Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program database, and the Department of Labor and Employment’s online jobseeker database.

(vii) **Enhanced Basic Education Information System.** Since school year 2016/17, the EBEIS has been extended to cover grades 11 and 12. However, weaknesses still include (a) absence of information on the subject specialization of teachers in junior high school; (b) limited information collected from non-DepEd schools; (c) the need to achieve broader integration of the collected information with other databases; (d) the length of time that elapses between the collection and analysis

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² ADB, 2014. Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Results-Based Loan to the Republic of the Philippines for the Senior High School Support Program. Manila
of the EBEIS data and the publication of reports; and (e) the need for more independent validation to check data reliability from the regional offices and SDOs and schools back to the central office.

(viii) **Capacity to analyze information and prepare supporting documentation for reporting on disbursement-linked indicators.** Experience from the Asian Development Bank-supported Senior High School Support Program results-based lending program highlighted that TA was required to automate some DLI reporting requirements and to provide on-the-job capacity building for the focal unit to access and use disbursement-linked results that require analysis. For the Secondary Education Support Program and data on the Educational Service Contracting and the senior high school voucher program, data for DLI reporting are available from DepEd, but these data will require substantial processing, analysis, and interpretation to provide DLI results on access, quality, and choice.

(ix) **Use of Alternative Learning System data and information.** Although data on ALS learners and their performance are collected, the SDO uses them for tracking learners. These are rarely used for decision making and not discussed in the MEPA.

C. **Managing Risks and Improving Capacity**

12. **Decentralizing implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system, including data management.** With the designation of M&E process owners at different levels of governance, the decentralization of the M&E function should be further pursued. The regional offices and SDOs should have immediate access to school-level data and information, as this will allow them to localize education policies, programs, and systems; and provide demand-driven TA. Their access and use of data and information to perform their respective mandates should be enhanced. The central office should strengthen its role as quality assurance specialist to sustainably support the work of the regional offices, SDOs, and schools.

13. **Improving linkages across Department of Education information systems.** While DepEd already collects and maintains extensive data on schools and learners that generally satisfies planning and decision-making requirements, institutional capacity can be further improved to optimize the use of its data resources and to strengthen linkages across its various information systems. This will also require promoting a more cohesive M&E coordination across DepEd bureaus and units that perform their own M&E activities for their respective programs. Development partners, including the Asian Development Bank, can provide TA to the ongoing development of DepEd's management information systems, particularly across secondary education programs.