

stars, Baldo smelling the fragrance of papayas in bloom, Badoy Montiya listening to the midnight call of a watchman, Miss Mijares's flesh leaping as she turns to the man in the cold rain. The aesthetic of the ineffable is itself a hard thing to master and we

continue to write, tradition or no tradition, in the hope that we would come by these moments of grace. In this way, writing, for us, is more an act of faith than a pass-the-torch relay of tradition.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This is Luis Katigbak's description of Anakin in my Star Wars analogy.

<sup>2</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Literary Criticism and The Greeks to the Present*, ed. by Robert Con Davis and Laurie Finke, Longman, p.588.

<sup>3</sup> Eliot, p.589, emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> Bienvenido Lumbera, "Young Writing and the Subversion of the Academy: Stoking the Fire: The First Iligan National Writers Workshop and Literature Conference," ed. by Jaime An Lim and Christine Godinez-Ortega, *MSU-Iligan Journal of Technology*, 1995, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Like Luis Katigbak, I think there is no such thing as a Canon. What we have is a pluralistic hodge-podge of "best of" selections chosen by textbook writers and Philippine literature who assemble course outlines from pirated materials.

<sup>6</sup> If modern Russian fiction came out of Gogol's overcoat, the modern short story in our country came from the light of this story.

<sup>7</sup> The reprinting of this book by UP Press is a cause for celebration.

<sup>8</sup> Gemino H. Abad has done a similar commendable effort to anthologize Philippine poetry in English. Three volumes have come out: *Man of Earth*, *A Native of Mindanao*, and *A Habit of Shores*.

<sup>9</sup> Butch Dalisay, Foreword to *Dream Noises: A Generation Writes*, ed. by M. Go, Anvil, 1999, vi-vii.

<sup>10</sup> Lumbera, pp. 6-7

<sup>11</sup> A graduate of the creative writing program of Silliman University, Jenny U.P. Mindanao.

<sup>12</sup> Gad is a Fil-Chinese who is currently working on his masteral thesis in creative writing. He teaches at Ateneo de Manila University.

<sup>13</sup> Luis Katigbak is the most recent recipient of the CCP grant for young artists. He studied creative writing in U.P. Diliman.

## FORCED ALTERNATIVE: MAKING MULTIGRADE SCHOOLS WORK FOR CHILDREN IN NEED IN RURAL AREAS

Betty C. Abregana, Enrique G. Oracion,  
and Rolando V. Mascuñana

### ABSTRACT

*This case study was conducted in two elementary schools of Negros Oriental to examine the situation of multigrade schools assisted by the Unicef. In particular, it aims to assess the opportunities offered by the program as well as identify the challenges associated with the teaching of multigrade classes.*

*A multigrade school assigns to one teacher two or three grade levels as a way of meeting the educational needs of schoolchildren in far-flung communities where there are not enough teachers because of budgetary constraints. Through this mechanism, the government's thrust of "education for all" is operationalized. In Negros Oriental, almost one half (48%) of elementary schools are combined or multigrade schools. Even among the combined or multigrade schools, more than half (57%) are incomplete schools. Yet, without the multigrade schools, basic education would have remained beyond the reach of a big number of elementary school age children in the province, especially in remote barangays.*

*Among other observations, this case study shows that the proper administration of multigrade schools can be a workable alternative to providing the educational needs of children in the uplands and the countryside. Teacher training, improved school facilities and equipment, administrative assistance, LGU support, and community participation contribute to making multigrade schools work for children in need. The application of innovative teaching strategies enables teachers to be effective in handling multigrade classes and sustains children's interest to learn. However, the study also shows that there is a continuing need for re-tooling our elementary school teachers to provide them skills to respond to the realities of a school setting in outlying communities.*

## Introduction

Consider the following case:

Mary Jane belongs to a family of three girls and five boys, all unmarried. At 14 years, she attends grades 6 and is the brightest in her class in which her 13 year-old sister also belongs. She has a 19 year old sister who finished only grade 3. All the girls help their mother plant corn and peanut in the family-owned farm as well as take care of the family's several heads of chicken, a pig, a calf, and a carabao that is used for plowing the field.

Her eldest brother takes care of plowing the field and works closely with his father in the farm. While her second brother is a work student at a polytechnic college taking up a course in elementary education, the third and fourth brothers attend adult literacy classes in a nearby *barangay* and hope to qualify as grade 6 graduates at the end of the school year. The youngest among her brothers finished grade 4 and, like the rest of the family, he works in the farm.

Mary Jane believes that without a grade 6 school in their upland *barangay*, she would not finish elementary schooling. Even with the prospect of finishing first in her class, she doubts if she could continue with higher studies. Her dream is to finish a college education and become a teacher so that she can help her family as well as the children in her own upland community to have

the opportunity to finish at least the basic education.

In a country where more than half of its population live below poverty line, the struggle to build social capital for poor children represents one of the most pressing challenges. Education is allotted a measly 30 percent of the

1998 Philippine budget. Although they constitute the majority of the Philippine population, children between the ages of 7-12 are deprived of their right to a decent education because resources available are barely able to meet the requirements of compulsory basic education.

Of the 628 elementary schools in Negros Oriental, 300 (48%) are multigrade schools. Of these multigrade schools, 130 (43%) are complete elementary schools and 170 (57%) schools are classified as incomplete or not having all the grade levels from 1 to 6.

A multigrade school assigns to one teacher two or three grade levels as the educational system's way of meeting the needs of schoolchildren in far-flung communities where there are not enough teachers because of budgetary constraints. Through this mechanism, the government's thrust of "education for all" is operationalized. A complete multigrade school is one where all grade levels (1 to 6) are taught. An incomplete multigrade school does not have all the grade levels and has only up to either grade 2 or grade 4 level. Still other schools have a combination of monograde and multigrade levels, that is, one teacher handles grade 1, another handles grade 2, and another teacher takes care of both grades 3 and 4 levels. There are few cases

where one teacher handles grade 1, another handles grade levels 2, 3 and 4, and a third teacher takes care of grade levels 5 and 6.

The primary factor that influences the decision to resort to multigrade schools is the availability of budget item for additional teachers and facilities as well as the number of pupils who enroll per grade level. In determining which classes are to be monograde or multigrade in schools that adopt a combination of these strategies, the number of pupils in a given level is the key factor. Due to a bigger number of enrollees in lower levels, grades 1 and 2 are usually monograde classes.

In effect, multigrade schools come about because of budget constraint, lack of teachers, poor or inadequate facilities, and low enrolment. In a number of instances, multigrade schools are forced by circumstances such as the slow process of replacing teachers who have retired or are on maternity leave or sick leave, or the lack of public funds to open a new school in remote

communities. Among local education administrators, the widespread perception is that "the government is not in a hurry" to respond to the educational needs of a growing number of children. To many of them, therefore, a multigrade school is better than not having a school at all.

The elementary schools covered by this case study are two of the 300 multigrade schools in the province. Both are the beneficiaries of the Multigrade Schools Project of the United Nations International Children Fund (Unicef). The selection of these two schools as Unicef program beneficiaries, from among the many multigrade schools in the province, is based on the following parameters:

- based on estimates and available community information, the school population is not expected to grow within the next five years and, as such, will not likely have a monograde class within the same period of time;
- there are several other multigrade schools in the district

where the beneficiary school is located;

- the local government unit (LGU) is willing to put in a counterpart fund to the Unicef assistance; and,
- the supervisors of the district where the schools belong are willing to administer the project.

#### The Methodology and Sites of the Case Study

This case study was conducted to examine the performance of Unicef-assisted multigrade schools in the province of Negros Oriental, assess the opportunities offered by the program, and outline challenges associated with the teaching of multigrade classes. Four groups of stakeholders served as sources of information for this study: the school administrators (district supervisor and designated head of the multigrade school), all the teachers in the school, the representatives of the parents and community members, and samples of pupils from all grade levels.

Two sets of questions were asked of all the informants: (a) the general questions

which pertain to their views about the positive and negative aspects of multigrade classes and (b) the specific questions which look into their participation and perception about the implementation of multigrade schools in their respective communities. Panel interviews were conducted among the school officials and the teachers. The parents and community members as well as pupils participated in separate focus group discussions. English was the language used in the interviews of school officials and teachers while the focus group discussions among parents and community members and pupils were conducted in Cebuano in order for them to understand the issues at hand and freely express their ideas.

The gathering of data was done simultaneously in different classrooms by three faculty researchers of the Interdisciplinary Research Group (IRG) of Silliman University. They were responsible for gathering data from among the school officials, teachers, parents and community members and pupils of grades 5 and 6. Meanwhile, two graduate students also

conducted the focus group discussion among pupils from grades 1 and 2 and 3 and 4.

Each of the schools was given one day for the data gathering. The dates were scheduled in advance and the corresponding schools to be visited were informed through the coordinator of the multigrade schools of the provincial division of DECS of Negros Oriental. Additional statistical data relevant to the narrative presentation of the report were derived from the district and provincial division offices of DECS. Data collection was done in November 1998.

The multigrade elementary school studied in Manjuyod is located in San Isidro, an upland barangay which is about 3 kilometers of rocky road from the *poblacion*. On rainy days the road becomes slippery and can only be traversed by a four-wheel drive. During good weather, *habal-habal* (big motorbikes used as passenger vehicles) are the common mode of public transportation. As a complete

multigrade school, this school has all the grade levels required of an elementary school in this country. There are three teachers who each handle two combined grade levels (grades 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6).

The teacher who takes charge of grade levels 3 and 4 is designated as the teacher in-charge (TIC) of the elementary school. As TIC, he oversees the day-to-day routine function of the school and reports directly to the head teacher. The head teacher in an adjacent elementary school, concurrently supervises the operation of San Isidro multi-

grade school. The district supervisor of Manjuyod oversees the general implementation of the multigrade program of activities in this school.

The distribution of pupils across grade levels and teachers is seen in Table 1.

In general, multigrade classes in Manjuyod are found in 11 out of 25 schools. In other multigrade schools in the district, only one is a regular teacher and others are teacher aides. The latter are remunerated from local funds as recommended by the local school board. There are 10

Table 1. Number of pupils per teacher and grade level

Grade Levels	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3
I	18		
II	24		
III		22	
IV		11	
V			17
VI			15
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>3</b>

teacher aides in the district financed by the local municipal fund. The other six teacher aides are paid out of provincial funds. Of the multigrade schools in the district of Manjuyod, eight have combination classes *i.e.*, two grade levels in one class, two have monograde and combination classes, and one school has three grade levels in one class.

Meanwhile, the multigrade elementary school studied in Tayasan is in Nabilog, a *sitio* of Barangay Tambulan, about 18 kilometers from the national highway. Barangay Tambulan already has a complete elementary school. Before this multigrade school was opened, the children in Nabilog studied either in Tambulan or in Tambo in another municipality where complete elementary and high schools are in place.

When the multigrade school in Nabilog was newly opened, a good number of parents continued to send their children to the complete elementary schools in adjoining barangays despite the distance. Parents felt that it was better

for their children to start and finish elementary education in the same school than have them moved to another school. At that time, Nabilog was just offering primary education, that is, grades 1 to 4. But when Nabilog started getting support from Unicef and receiving special attention from the Department of Education, Culture and Sports in May 1997, notable improvements were observed which motivated some parents to transfer their children there.

At present, there are only three female teachers handling combined classes of 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6. One teacher is a resident of Nabilog while the other two are from Tanjay, a coastal town of the province south of Tayasan. One of them also acts as a teacher-in-charge. Similar to San Isidro, the district supervisor of Tayasan oversees the implementation of multigrade program of Nabilog. The principal of Tayasan Central School concurrently supervises Nabilog Elementary School.

Table 2. Number of pupils per teacher and grade level

Grade Levels	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3
I	38		
II	23		
III		16	
IV		22	
V			25
VI			11
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>

Table 2 shows the distribution of pupils across teachers and grade levels.

Nabilog is just one of the 18 multigrade elementary schools in Tayasan district. Eleven of these multigrade schools have combination classes, six have both monograde and combination classes, and one has classes with three grade levels under one teacher.

### General Views on Multigrade Classes

#### *Views of administrators*

To the local administrators, multigrade schools came about not of their own deliberate or willful choice but because of circumstances which pushed them to take this alternative. Under the existing educational system, there are not

enough teachers for an increasing Filipino population. While this lack may be due in part to fewer qualified or certified basic education teachers, the main factor is the inadequate budget allocation to support the hiring of new teachers, construction of new buildings, and provision of equipment and facilities to ensure quality elementary education across the country. The school districts of Manjuyod and Tayasan have experienced a shortfall of teachers when retired teachers were not immediately replaced or when teachers on maternity leave or sick leave were not readily substituted. These instances result in fusion of classes. The teachers charged to handle combined classes take the additional responsibility without the corresponding increase in pay. In some cases, new schools are opened as petitioned by residents and local officials but funds are not always adequate to hire a teacher for each grade level. This and fewer stu-

dents in each grade level often result in combined classes. In most cases, however, merging of grade levels increases the number of pupils to more than 30 in a combined class.

The value of having a multigrade school is in assuring the rights of children to basic education despite meager resource allocation. Under the system, children in distant barangays can be in school and finish elementary education in spite of some constraints. With Unicef assistance, two multigrade schools receive grants for the improvement of school buildings and facilities. With counterpart from the LGU and DECS, the schools are able to acquire books and equipment and train teachers to make them more adept at handling combined grade levels. Moreover, the memorandum of agreement with Unicef stipulates that the DECS division of schools must assure the maintenance of equipment and facilities as a counterpart of the local government unit through the local School Board. Another positive outcome of Unicef assistance is that these multigrade schools tend to be highly motivated by the regular visits of local authorities, school administrators, and guests.

From the perspec-

tive of administrators, however, the level of quality of teaching and learning in multigrade schools is generally low. It is widely perceived that few multigrade teachers are adequately equipped to handle multilevel classes. Among teachers who are trained, some had no prior experience in elementary school teaching and are immediately assigned to multigrade schools. For instance, in a big class of learners from combined grade levels, teachers face horrendous challenges in providing individual attention to pupils. The realities of the situation and the magnitude of work expected of them overwhelm teachers who have no prior exposure. Compounding this already dismal situation is the fact that despite special funds to some multigrade schools, resources remain insufficient to provide decent facilities and equipment for classrooms, library, science laboratory, and co-curricular activities. For these reasons, local school administrators, when given a choice, prefer a monograde to a multigrade school.

### *Views of teachers*

In San Isidro, the three teachers understand the multigrade approach in teaching to be the handling of more than one grade level per teacher who has to teach all the subjects in a day. The activity usually takes place in one classroom setting. Teachers consider this arrangement advantageous to learners in the lower grade levels for they are given exposure to content areas designed for a higher grade level at an early stage. Furthermore, this arrangement provides pupils the opportunity to listen to the discussions of combined class levels. To facilitate the teaching-learning process in this context while at the same time easing their additional burden, teachers employ techniques and strategies such as ability-grouping and peer-teaching. Pupils are grouped according to their learning ability. Fast learners are directly involved or tapped by the teachers to help their classmates who are considered slow learners.

As identified by the teachers themselves, the main weakness of the multigrade approach involves time management. In addition to preparing

two sets of lesson plans for both grade levels, teachers consider the shifting from one class to another as an extra burden on their part. They strongly agree that this situation leads them to the problem of divided time and attention for their pupils. Another weakness they have identified is the forced shortening of contact time with one group which happens when the other class level requires additional time because of the level of difficulty of a particular learning task. A demotivating factor identified by teachers is that despite the extra work and the additional time and effort on their part, they receive exactly the same salary and allowance that public school teachers generally received.

The classroom for grades 5 and 6 in San Isidro Elementary School is much smaller than the classrooms for the lower grade levels and teachers and pupils feel that this situation is not conducive to learning. Apart from the inadequacy of its size, the room has no ceiling and is very hot at noon while the roof leaks

when it rains. In a separate building, the classroom for Grades 3 and 4 is a renovated Marcos-type structure and is found to be a much more pleasant learning environment.

The multigrade approach in teaching is implemented in San Isidro Elementary School mainly because there are only few children in the area who go to school. The teacher-pupil ratio (1 teacher to 45 pupils) for one grade level (in a monograde class) is not met. Such a small enrollment does not justify the provision of additional teachers and classrooms. Because of the small population of the school, the head teacher of Sacsac Elementary School also handles the administration of the San Isidro multigrade school.

The teachers of Nabilog Elementary School describe the multigrade approach as the handling of two or more grades by the teacher. To them, the advantages of this approach are the integration or fusion of lessons or subject matter, the use of Multi-Level Materials (MLMs) for the vari-

ous grade levels, the introduction of some educational games related to the subject, and the use of the strategy of grouping pupils according to their ability level.

Spelled out by teachers as a major disadvantage is the preparation of lesson plans. They feel that this activity takes so much of their time when in actual teaching, time is never enough to cover all the details in subject areas like English, Arithmetic, or Science in combined classes.

Considered as another disadvantage of multigrade approach is the problem with contamination in learning as evidenced by the answers to a test in a particular grade level. For example, while doing seatwork, pupils of one level can also listen to the lesson discussed by the teacher for the other level. When test comes, some of the answers given are those of the lesson that the teacher took up with the other grade level.

Teachers in the multigrade set-up express anxiety that they cannot individually attend to their pupils'

needs despite their concern for the latter's learning process. Remedial lessons intended for the slow learners are rarely possible because the time intended for this purpose is used in continuing the lesson. Teachers consider the multigrade learning activities as tiring for these leave them no time to rest. Like their grades 5 and 6 counterparts in San Isidro, teachers in Nabilog are unanimous in pointing out the size of their classrooms as inadequate for multigrade classes.

In Nabilog, the multigrade approach in teaching is implemented because the pupil ratio of 1 teacher to 45 pupils, which is a requirement for a monograde class, is not met. The Nabilog Elementary School is located in an area that has access to three big monograde schools in the area: Tambo Elementary School and Tibyawan Elementary School, both of Ayungon; and, Tambulan Elementary School of Tayasan. Many schoolchildren go to any of these schools. Worth noting is that the principal of Tayasan Central School, a trained in multigrade teacher, concur-

rently supervises Nabilog Multigrade School. The teacher of grades 3 and 4 in Nabilog is designated as the teacher-in-charge of the school.

#### *Views of learners*

To the schoolchildren, a multigrade school is one that assigns a teacher to two grade levels in one classroom. The children are quick to say though that each grade level in the room is given one blackboard each. According to the children, the teacher gives seatwork to the other while she discusses a lesson in one grade level.

According to the learners, being in this particular multigrade school allows them to benefit from donations given to the school such as textbooks, tables, and chairs. They are happy to read storybooks, use a dictionary, or refer to a globe. They also point out that their school has a mimeographing machine. They say their parents helped in the renovation of their school building and their classroom has a toilet.

With the available learning materials, equipment, and facilities, they feel they are more blessed than the regular monograde schools in adjacent communities. Besides, their school is much nearer to their homes than the complete elementary school in the next barangay.

Pupils consider their teachers in multigrade classes to be good at explaining the lessons, ready with learning materials, and solicitous in following up the progress of their activities and the quality of their performance. At the same time, they claim to like the company of other pupils in the room. Those in the lower grade level feel they can approach those in the higher grade for assistance in their school work while those in the higher level gain satisfaction in being of help to others. In addition to reading, writing, computing and other subject requirements, learners appreciate being exposed to singing, dancing, and acting.

The pupils, however, complain about noise and distraction created by those who

are already done with their seatwork. Pupils point out that when the teacher is busy with the other grade level, those taking tests or doing seatwork can cheat or copy their seatmate's work. Others feel that distractions caused by other pupils affect their concentration and leave them little time to finish their class activities. There are others who wish their teachers can give them as much time as their more assertive classmates.

The pupils remark that their school is a multigrade school because of a lack of teachers, few classrooms, and not enough space to build additional rooms. Not one of the pupils mentioned budgetary constraints on the part of the government or that enrolment size is small in their locality.

#### *Views of parents and community residents*

For parents and community members, managing two grade levels in the same room at the same time is a most demanding job for a teacher in a multigrade school. From their observation, the teacher

begins by arranging the seats in a way that both grade levels would be given instruction alternately. Within this arrangement, the teacher is able to attend to one grade level while the pupils in the other level are doing their seatwork. Parents and community members observe that this strategy of classroom management maximizes the time and expertise of the teacher and often leaves her exhausted at the end of the day.

Parents and community members are happy to observe that because of the special setup of multigrade schools, teachers are often on time for flag ceremony and to begin their classes promptly. They pointed out that in the past, the usual practice by teachers of starting classes at 9 o'clock in the morning and ending at 3 o'clock in the afternoon shortened the time for actual classroom instruction and deprived the children of valuable opportunities to finish their lessons or review them. One of the heartening developments parents and community members note about the multigrade school in

their area is that teachers now take the children's education more seriously. This attitude, according to parents, likewise inspires their children to give serious attention to their studies. These positive manifestations of behavior demonstrated by teachers and pupils are acknowledged by parents and community members as a direct result of the multigrade program. To the parents, these changes could be attributed to the training of teachers in the implementation of the multigrade approach.

Parents and community members especially appreciate the various forms of assistance provided by the Unicef, benefits that are not enjoyed by other schools in the same municipalities. Every pupil in this school is provided with a table and chair and there is funding for the acquisition of various reading materials, for the upkeep of classrooms, and for the construction of comfort rooms in every classroom. For these reasons, parents are grateful for the Unicef assistance on their school in their respective communities.

The parents in Nabilog have a specific reason for considering the multigrade program as being of value to them. Having a school within their locality has assured them of the safety of their children since learners do not have to travel a far distance to study. For them, even if their school is multigrade, the kind of instruction their children receive is much better than the other schools in the upland barangays. They report that at a district contest in oral reading, their children could very well compete with children of other schools, including the monograde schools in Tambo and Tambulan.

Parents and community members of the two communities visited differ in their views regarding the deficiencies of multigrade classes. Those in Nabilog cite the lack of teachers who can attend closely to the increasing pupil population and the lack of classrooms particularly in grades 1 and 2 as a major concern. On the other hand, their counterparts in San Isidro single out the behavior of pupils



as a disadvantage of a multi-grade school. According to them, pupils who finish their seatwork ahead of others usually make noise and disturb the other grade level. San Isidro parents and community members believe that having to attend to two groups at the same time must demand so much from the teacher. They are convinced that one could not serve two functions at the same time without affecting one's efficiency and the quality of either task.

Nevertheless, to them, having a multigrade school is better than having no school at all. Besides, a multigrade school is accessible to the children in the area. The parents and community members are also aware of the low pupil population in their locality as well as the budgetary constraints as major reasons for not being able to put up complete elementary schools.

#### Role, Practices, and Experiences of Administrators

##### *Skills and practices in managing multigrade schools*

Administrators agree that their education and previous training have not oriented them to the practice and management of combined classes. They acknowledge that teachers assigned to multigrade programs are usually left without a choice and at the outset often hesitate or feel inadequate in accepting the responsibility. To encourage them, local administrators challenge the teachers to do their best despite some constraints such as the teachers' lack of experience, more students to handle, and multiple subject assignments. In the event that teachers make comments or observations that are somewhat inimical to quality teaching, administrators tend to show consideration and understanding of the teachers' feelings.

In most cases, multigrade teachers are pretty much on their own in handling everyday teaching-learning concerns and in managing classroom affairs. Since local administrators practice delegation of responsibility in the matter of school and commu-

nity relations, teachers have a free hand in eliciting the parents' participation in the school's learning activities. In managing multigrade schools, administrators are one in considering that the skill that works best is the superior's ability to motivate teachers to carry on and assure them that they always have the school officials' support.

##### *Extent of teamwork with teachers and supervising personnel*

The head teacher and/or supervising principal, together with the district supervisor, see to the effective implementation of the multigrade school project with full consideration of the complex and multiple roles played by the classroom teacher. When the teachers request assistance for repair or maintenance of school facilities, immediate supervisors usually strive to facilitate the granting of the request.

In discussing the strategies or approaches that work best for them, teachers find teamwork an effective process

to reach a consensus. In a number of instances, teachers help one another in designing the instructional materials for classroom use or visual aids to facilitate pupils' learning. Each one is open to making the necessary revisions in the assignment, implementation, and assessment of subjects. As a means of achieving the objectives of the multigrade program, teamwork is rated by administrators as excellent.

##### *New skills acquired*

The implementation of multigrade schools develops new skills which otherwise would not have been honed under the monograde system. Administrators report that they have learned the principles and concepts for multigrade schools from the Unicef-assisted training. With this exposure, they acquire the ability to assess modules developed for specific subject areas for different grade levels. They have a better sense of classroom structures appropriate to a particular classroom activity. With the multigrade schools, they

have come to appreciate various classroom management styles and teaching strategies.

Administrators rate themselves above average in their skill to assess lesson plans designed for combined classes (Grades 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6). Their rating generally shows that at present teachers' skills in lesson planning and time management have improved. Before the Unicef training, teachers usually complained about the demands of their work. For instance, lesson plans had objectives that did not have the corresponding strategies appropriate for multigrade teaching. Presently, teachers are more confident, more adept in handling classroom activities, and are able to share their experiences with other teachers in the province who handle multigrade levels.

#### *Perception about other stakeholders*

Administrators per-

ceive the quality of pupils learning to be above average. This is so because learners in Unicef-assisted multigrade schools are exposed to trained teachers and enjoy the benefits of the grant. Students who are assertive and achievement-oriented are likely to benefit most. However, slow learners in multigrade schools cannot be given enough attention and time for remedial instruction.

Parents and community members are actively involved in school affairs. They regularly attend meetings and participate in the school's activities. Parents are directly involved in the renovation of buildings and construction of toilets through the system of unpaid collective labor, locally called *dagyaw*. They also contribute money and materials like bamboo for the construction.

Administrators rate their teachers in multigrade schools above average in their dealings with parents and local residents. The re-

lationship between teachers and community members is described as open and very good.

#### *Role, Practices and Experiences of Teachers*

##### *As classroom learning facilitators*

Teaching under the multigrade approach, according to the San Isidro Elementary School teachers, needs a lot of patience and understanding. All find it difficult to manage two different classes at the same time. One method that the teachers employ as a working strategy in lesson planning is to combine the same topics for discussion for each grade level. This method is called lesson integration of similar subjects. This is done to meet the class objective in the Weekly Plan that the teachers have prepared. For instance, if the lesson is on values, the lesson plan reflects the content and strategies about the topic for the two grade levels. It is like hitting two birds with one stone. As learning facilitators, teachers

often apply or use the skills and techniques learned from the seminars attended as well as from sharing or conferring with other multigrade teachers in their school during meetings. The teachers mention that they regularly attend multigrade classes in other schools and observe their colleagues' techniques in classroom management. On one occasion, the school of San Isidro hosted a teaching demonstration.

Among those strategies learned and applied in classroom setting are group work and group discussion or seatwork and discussion. These particular classroom activities are usually facilitated or led by pupil leaders or "little teachers" in class. Of course, the teacher does not entirely relegate the task to the "little teachers" but does a follow-up every now and then. In this way, the teacher is able to attend to the other class. When the teacher shifts or attends to the other class, say from Grade 6 to Grade 5, the pupils in the other level are given seatwork or educational games in support of the lesson for the day.

One activity that usually involves mental exercise is the use of available multi-level materials (MLMs). These multi-level materials are learning devices that encourage self-learning among the pupils. In Science class, pupils learn through experiments. In other classes, pupils learn through group work or group discussion and their ideas or opinions are processed afterwards by the teacher-facilitator. The teacher here supervises, facilitates, and monitors each group by taking note of their progress as well as problems. According to the teachers during the interview, an effective learning strategy is one in which the teacher does not spend much time giving lecture but instead allows the pupils to perform some activities through educational games or experiments. Teachers have observed that pupils are challenged to think better and learn more through these methods.

The teachers consider allocation and management of time as a major problem in teaching a multigrade class. They feel that time is never

enough to do many of the schoolwork assigned to them. In particular, they consider the preparation of lesson plans for two grade levels as a time-consuming activity. Likewise, they find the making of self-learning activities like modules and activity sheets as well as filling out school forms as both time and labor-intensive chores.

To cope with the problem of time management, the teachers integrate the lessons by combining objectives and using the "TTh-MWF Scheme" weekly plan for the combined grade levels. They also train "little teachers", pupils who are fast learners, as group leaders and moderators to assist them in a variety of classroom activities. Teachers train their fast learners to help in "peer-teaching".

Although the classroom for grades 1 and 2 and the one for 3 and 4 are big enough, another problem reiterated by the respondents is the size of the classroom for grades 5 and 6 in San Isidro Elementary School. The problem of leaking roofs during rainy season has already been reported

to the local school board and the district supervisor and proper action is expected in due time.

Another problem mentioned involves the pupils' absences, seemingly a perennial problem faced by the teachers. As teachers are very much concerned about class attendance and absences, they always ask parents to notify the school when the latter's children are absent from class. For tardiness, the attention of the pupil is called. In some cases, teachers personally make home visits to find out why their pupils are often absent from class.

Multigrade teachers in Nabilog and San Isidro often share the same experiences in managing their pupils. Teachers from these two multigrade schools regularly attend the same seminars that prepare them for the job and consequently use the same strategies they have learned in managing their classrooms. Both groups rely on the use of seatwork in one grade level and a discussion activity in the other as a strategy to make the pupils in both levels attend to their re-

spective lessons. When subject matters are related, the teacher's presentation is made to the two group levels to save time. This is reflected in the Budget of Work or in planning the lesson for the week. Other teaching strategies teachers employ include instructional materials and educational games, the involvement of "little teachers" to handle the class to which they belong, and the utilization of para-teachers to assist the teachers in the making of instructional materials. Para-teachers are mothers who volunteer as unpaid assistants. In this kind of learning process, the teachers act as facilitators of learning with the help of various "ready-to-use" techniques.

Both Nabilog and San Isidro teachers also encounter similar problems in the teaching of a multigrade class. Some of the problems they have identified include the making of the lesson plan and the production of instructional materials, two major tasks requiring plenty of time. The teachers also mention class management and the poor study habits of pupils as

additional challenge. Discipline problems are a frequent cause of distraction in the classroom. Most often when the teacher is attending to the other class level, some pupils do not do their seatwork but rather make noise, play, or sneak out of the room without the teacher's permission.

As in San Isidro, pupil absences constitute an issue in Nabilog. During harvest time and every Friday, the teachers note poor class attendance. This is because Friday is *tabu* or market day in Nabilog proper and school children miss classes to attend the various activities there. As a result, teachers are challenged to come up with strategies that will entice or force students to stay in this classroom during the weekly event.

#### *Involvement in community affairs*

Teachers of both San Isidro and Nabilog rate their involvement in community affairs as Above Average, which is to say that they are involved in some, but not all, community affairs. According to them,

they are usually the ones who initiate the involvement of the community in their school activities rather than the community involving them. The involvement of teachers of San Isidro and Nabilog in community affairs varies and includes activities such as collecting the entrance fee for the barangay dance during the fiesta, serving as master of ceremonies in community programs, acting as judge in the local singing or dancing contest, decorating the stage, and sitting as member of the *Lupong Tagapagtataya* (barangay justice). Occasionally, the teachers take part in fund raising, coordinating the Non-Formal Education (NFE) intended for parents, and in teaching parents some action songs. At least once a month, they teach parents how to play educational games so that the latter could participate in teaching their children at home.

#### *Relationship with superiors*

The teachers in general feel that the successful implementation of the multigrade project is mainly due to their good working relationship with their superiors. They point out that their superi-

ors have given moral and financial support. They can talk to the administrators freely and openly about whatever problems they have. For their part, the superiors closely supervise them and encourage good teamwork to achieve their goals in teaching, but allow them freedom to select from among the several learning strategies those they think will make their teaching more effective. The teachers agree that there is always proper coordination between them and their superiors. During the regular monthly school visit of their superiors, the teachers use the occasion to discuss with them the problems they face in school.

Multigrade teachers feel that their role allows them to contribute something to improve the community where they are presently teaching. For instance, they encourage parents to help children with their studies and monitor the learning process of their children as well as urge them to be aware of the lessons taught in the classroom and related school activities. To do this, teachers introduce parents to instructional materials needed in class and encourage them to make

instructional materials at home using indigenous materials. Teachers often involve parents as facilitators in educational games aimed at improving the learning of their children. Underlying the practice of involving parents in the teaching-learning process is the belief of teachers that to educate the children, they also have to educate the parents.

For their part, children are constantly encouraged by their teachers to be always present and to come to school on time. Even more so, they are always encouraged to do better than the learners in the regular monograde class.

#### *Perception about learners and other stakeholders*

The quality of learning of pupils under the multigrade approach is rated Average by the teachers. When the study was conducted on November 1998, teachers estimated that only few pupils in Grade 1 remained unable to read, write, and count while there was no longer any non-reader in Grade 2. Having no pupil retained in

any of the grade level is perhaps indicative of the quality of learning in these multigrade schools. That the Nabilog Elementary School ranked third place in the recent English Quiz Show in the whole District of Tayasan is also a good indication. The results of the National Elementary Aptitude Test (NEAT) administered last school year were also encouraging to the teachers of both multigrade schools. It was reported that four of the graduates of Nabilog Elementary School are presently doing well in high school.

A manifestation of improvement among pupils in the multigrade approach is seen in the learners' reading ability. Teachers have observed that pupils actively participate in the class discussion, cooperate with each other during group work, and relate well with each other. Likewise, teachers have noticed that pupils are no longer shy perhaps because they are exposed to more children from other grade levels. Furthermore, pupils are able to make their own educational games similar to the ones in-

roduced by the teacher with little supervision and guidance from the teachers. With real objects they could manually manipulate, pupils learn while also having fun. As a result, pupils look forward to participatory learning approaches such as the educational games and multi-level materials. Class attendance has considerably improved, estimated at 95% per day. The teachers admit that pupils easily get bored with lectures or copying notes from the board. Under this condition, the result most often is a poor class attendance.

The extent of involvement of parents and community members in school affairs is rated Above Average. Parents and community members are supportive of such school affairs as DECS sa Barangay, Christmas program, tree planting, PTCA meeting, and *dagyaw* (parents themselves participate in cleaning the school premises or surrounding, and in performing minor school improvement such as repair or construction of "dirty

kitchen," or water tank).

#### *Description about the implementation of multigrade classes*

The quality of management of school administration (division superintendent, division supervisor, district supervisors, principal or head teacher) is rated by the teachers Above Average. However, the Division Superintendent is rated Average by the teachers because the superintendent has not personally visited San Isidro and Nabilog. Teachers rated the supervisor on the basis of his support of requests for funds for seminars or training intended for multigrade teachers. The rest of the administrators, on the other hand, are rated Above Average for having made personal contact with teachers and pupils in their area. On the whole, the rating given to the multigrade approach in teaching is Above Average. The teachers justify this rating on the basis of their performance in class. According to them, they are

still adjusting to the new setup and experimenting with new strategies that will help them teach a multigrade class effectively. They feel that they still have a lot of things to learn about handling multigrade school. The teachers believe that they could still benefit from additional training through seminars or workshops.

The teachers suggested that para-teachers (or the parent-volunteers who help the teachers in handling class, assisting pupils during seatwork and other classroom activities) be given honoraria. The teachers also suggested that there should be a complete revision of the weekly plan. They stressed that available books should be maximally used to suit the Weekly Plan.

All things considered, teachers still prefer monograde teaching over the multigrade program. This reaction is understandable since with only one grade level to attend to, teachers feel that they would be able to apply most effec-

tively the various teaching strategies they have learned as teachers of multigrade classes. Most importantly, teachers believe that having a class consisting of one grade level will allow teachers to give all the pupils the attention they truly deserve.

### Role, Practices, and Experiences of Parents and Community Members

#### *Involvement and participation in school programs and activities*

The parents of San Isidro rated the extent of their involvement in school programs and activities Average while Nabilog parents rated themselves Above Average. Both groups of parents describe how they formed themselves into work groups (*dagyaw*) in order to clean the school's surroundings, plant trees, construct the toilet for each classroom, and set up a rainwater collector. Members of both communities often help prepare food for visitors during school programs and other meetings. They also bring ad-

ditional kitchen utensils to be used on these occasions. In the community of San Isidro, parents donate bamboo and wooden poles for the fence of the school.

According to the parents in Nabilog, they help in cleaning the school surroundings because they do not want their children to miss some classes when they are pulled out to do general cleaning. They also contribute a minimal amount to partly finance the labor cost for the construction of toilets. In these projects, the grant from Unicef funds the cost of materials while the municipal government shoulders the cost of labor.

The parents in San Isidro go as far as helping teachers in preparing learning materials for their children. The mothers report that they help cut out materials for the show cards to be used in reading and solving exercises. They also help put covers on textbooks acquired by the school.

Parents and community members rated Average their participation in debates and discussion on matters rel-

tant to the school. For example, both school communities participated in the Parents-Teachers-Community Association (PTCA) deliberations when deciding where to construct the rainwater collector. At this meeting, they discussed about organizing a work group (*bagay*), when to do the task, and what to contribute.

San Isidro parents and community members have also involved themselves in the decision to renovate an old school building to accommodate another grade level. They also agreed that the barangay should allot an amount as a counterpart fund for the construction work in school. Together with the teachers, the parents of San Isidro raised funds to buy among other equipment, a cassette player for classroom instruction, plates, and cooking pots for use during school affairs, a wall clock, an extension wire. In planning school programs like Christmas and commencement ceremonies, the parents help in decorating the stage, in choosing the speaker and

the master of ceremonies for the occasion.

#### *Promotion and appreciation of cultural values, proper health, sanitation and nutrition*

Parents and community members express satisfaction with the way the school promotes cultural values among their children. San Isidro parents and community members rated this aspect Excellent while those in Nabilog gave a rating of Above Average. They described their respective roles in promoting cultural values as supportive of the teachers' endeavors in school. According to them, they reinforce the teaching of good values in school by letting their children practice at home values such as *pagtabod* (respect), right conduct, and other forms of good behavior. During school programs, parents willingly participate and perform cultural dances for their children to see. According to the parents, they also teach their children these dances for school presentation.

Their role in promot-

ing proper health, sanitation, and nutrition is rated by both groups of parents as Above Average. They all reported that they encourage their children to eat vegetables for good health. They also tend a vegetable garden in their yard and raise domestic animals like chicken as a source of meat or, as in the case of parents in Nabilog, buy them from traders who come to the barangay. Moreover, according to the parents in Nabilog, since the school solicits less financial contribution from them now, they are able to spend more on food for their children.

All parents claim that they regularly check if their children are neat and clean all the time by requiring them to take daily baths. They keep their home surroundings clean by building a garbage pit or recycling waste materials, thus helping prevent the spread of diseases caused by a dirty environment.

When asked about their reaction when their children inform them about health practices learned in school (like taking a bath daily, eating veg-

etables, washing hands before eating or after using the toilet), parents generally say that they apply whatever is possible at home with the cooperation of their children. They claim that most health practices are familiar to them. But one parent admitted that she has learned something from her child that she did not know before.

#### *Perception about learners and other stakeholders*

Parents and community members of San Isidro rated the quality of learning of their children at present as Average while parents of Nabilog rated the same as Above Average. San Isidro parents and community members explained that they could not give a higher rating because even their brightest pupil in school is not likely to outdo pupils of monograde schools in the district. However, they said that their pupils do not fall far below the rest in the competition, so an Average rating is appropriate.

Nabilog parents and community members justified

their rating with the improvement in the study behavior of their children. For example, a father narrated that when his children were still studying in Pandulan Elementary School, they were not motivated to study and to go to school. According to him, it was his own children who requested to be transferred to Nabilog. Parents report that their children are eager to study and do their homework, behavior not common before. According to Nabilog and San Isidro parents, their children prefer to study than to watch television programs or do housework. To further justify the improved quality of learning among their children, the parents of Nabilog pointed out that the total of grade 6 pupils currently in school perform better in the national examination than those who graduated last school year.

San Isidro parents also mentioned that mature-age pupils go back to school. They considered this an indication of the pupils' own strong motivation. Those in school right now, according to the parents,

are said to be trying their best to perform well and live up to their teachers' expectation. It is widely perceived that pupils do not want to fail and be retained in the same grade level while their friends already move to the next level. Aside from the improvement in the study behavior of their children, San Isidro parents have also noted that their children are more obedient, respectful, and disciplined than before.

The Above Average rating given by Nabilog parents to the quality of teaching is consistent with their rating of the quality of learning of their children. San Isidro parents gave an Above Average rating for the quality of teaching but Average for the quality of learning of their children. Worth noting is that while the two groups of parents gave the same high rating for the quality of teaching, they were not similarly inclined to give the same rating to the area of teachers' involvement in the community. San Isidro parents and community members gave a rating of Average while their Nabilog counterparts gave an

Above Average rating.

The Above Average rating given by parents to the quality of teaching in their respective schools is justified by their perception that the multigrade teachers are all active and committed to their tasks. Parents have observed that teachers come to school regularly and make an effort to follow up the learning activities of their children. This change in teachers' performance maybe attributed in part to the close monitoring of school officials and the special attention that they give on the program. Parents in Nabilog continue to observe that the teachers do extra work at night to prepare their classrooms for instructional activities the following day. As two of the three teachers assigned in Nabilog come from Tanjay, they use their classrooms as their living quarters and go home only in the lowland during weekends.

Generally, the parents and community members of both communities attest to the good relationship the teachers maintain with them. They reciprocate this gesture by in-

volving themselves in the various activities of the schools. According to them, before the Unicef-assisted multigrade program was formally introduced in their communities, the teachers did not show much willingness to get involved in community affairs nor in getting the parents to participate in the activities of the school.

At present, however, there is an open line of communication between the teachers and community members. Parents claim that the teachers are willing to talk to them about the academic problems of their children and do things in school with them in a friendly manner. For example, the school in San Isidro allows the community to initiate barangay projects on its premises, something unheard of in the past when enmity marred the relationship between the school and the barangay captain. According to parents, the present group of teachers do not just absent themselves from class without advising parents in advance. The usual reason for their ab-

sence is participation in district meetings or training activities. This allows the parents to take over temporarily and supervise their children's lessons and assignments. By involving parents in every aspect of the teaching-learning process, the teachers acknowledge the important role parents play as stakeholders of the school.

#### *Perception about quality of implementation of the multigrade classes*

The parents and community members were asked to assess the quality of school management. This included their perception of the conduct of visitation of school officials, the processes of consultation and supervision, and the provisions that are made for teacher training.

In general, the parents and community members of both schools gave a rating of Above Average to all these parameters of school management. They are convinced that the quality of teaching and the performance of pupils are

enough evidence to support the rating given. In their view, the visible improvement in the study habits of their children and their positive attitude towards education more than imply that the management of the school is effective.

As to the implementation of multigrade education in their community, the parents and community members of San Isidro gave a rating of Excellent while Nabilog gave a rating of Above Average. Parents say that the Unicef assistance in their school has benefited them and their children in various ways. It made possible, among others, a collection of new books in their small library, learning devices and office materials, and a refurbished building with a toilet in each classroom. Thus, it is possible to speculate that the excellent rating given in San Isidro is a reflection of the parents' sense of gratitude for the physical improvement of their school.

On the other hand, parents and community members in Nabilog made special mention of the improvements in the teachers' teaching methods, including the quality of the visual materials they pro-



duce for classroom instruction, and the personal touch teachers put into teaching their children. Parents and community members of Nabilog also feel proud of the new features of their school which they claim to be missing in other elementary schools in surrounding communities.

Nevertheless, despite these developments, the parents and community members of both communities continue to wish for more than what their schools have at present. Common wishes are the provision of additional classrooms and teachers to cope with the increasing pupil population and the construction of a concrete fence around the school campus to ensure the safety of their children and school property.

Compared to San Isidro parents, however, Nabilog parents and community members, have other things to ask. They suggested that the school should provide a facility for drinking water, a janitor to clean the campus in order to spare their children from being asked to sweep the yard or mop the floor, and a

Home Economics building.

Although both communities are pleased with the results of the multigrade education in their respective schools, they still express preference for a monograde type of classroom instruction, despite their awareness of budgetary constraints. According to them, time will come when the pupil population in their communities will increase and that will make multigrade teaching impractical. In anticipation of this development, they suggested that one teacher should be assigned to each grade level. This way the teacher could provide more attention to each child in the classroom. If monograde classes are to be implemented in these schools, three additional teachers and classrooms will have to be allocated in each school.

It is noteworthy to mention that the parents and community members are very much in favor of the way multigrade teaching is presently done by teachers

Parents comment that although they prefer a monograde school, the kind of teaching must follow the multigrade approach. This suggests that parents in these communities associate improved instruction with the benefits of multigrade teaching brought about by the Unicef assistance in teacher training and school infrastructure which are not enjoyed by schools in the surrounding barangays.

#### *Experiences of Learners*

##### *Participation in teaching-learning process*

Pupils in both San Isidro and Nabilog Elementary Schools expressed appreciation for the opportunity to attend classes in their respective communities. Aside from being able to write, read, count and draw, learners reported that they also enjoy the games, dances, and songs introduced by their teachers. According to them, they are encouraged by their teachers to work on their assignments at home and to

raise questions in class. In the classroom, they have to be prepared to answer questions and to take examinations. When they fail to answer the questions asked by their teacher, San Isidro pupils said they are asked to stand in front of the class. When asked what they think about standing in front of the class, learners viewed this practice as a way of encouraging them to try harder in their studies.

Pupils reported that they are active participants in the process of learning. They are asked to report on assigned topics, act as tutor to some slow learners, monitor class attendance, and check on the performance of their classmates during seatwork. Learners believed that cleaning around and within the school premises is part of the learning process.

##### *Impact on thinking-behaving dimensions*

Learners observed that their multigrade teachers engage them in varied teaching strategies like drawing, dramatization, and oral reporting. In science, they conduct experi-

ments and are taught to see interrelationships between animals and plants. They prefer teaching activities that allow them to be actively involved in the process of learning.

According to the learners, they are discouraged from rote memorization and are encouraged to attend to their assignments, be good stewards of school or home properties, and to pray for God's help as well as in thanksgiving. Pupils claimed that they are able to learn about values and apply these values in their day-to-day interaction with family members and schoolmates. Being in school makes them feel optimistic that their ambition in life can be realized.

To the Grades 1 and 2 pupils, the multigrade schools allow them to acquire skills in reading and writing. Pupils in the lower level think that being combined with a higher level grade enables them to have a preview of the lessons to be taken up when they advance to the next grade.

When asked some examples of knowledge applica-

tions in real-life situations, pupils mentioned a number of practical activities such as cleaning their surroundings to prevent diseases, asexual reproduction (marcotting) of plants, sewing torn clothes, reading the label of medicines, displaying good manners and proper conduct, obeying parents and helping in household chores, studying hard, and performing good deeds for the benefit of others.

#### *Improvement of self-esteem*

According to the pupils, learner-centered teaching strategies develop among them confidence in their ability to learn while peer learning facilitated by their teachers establishes closer relationships among classmates. Having a new or improved school building with new tables and chairs as well as reading materials gave pupils a sense of pride for their school. Having school administrators and guests frequently visiting them make pupils and teachers feel that they are important. Being

asked their opinion by teachers, administrators, and visitors make pupils think that they are important. In effect, frequent visits by and interaction with important personalities boost learners' ego. In addition, fast learners feel that being asked to tutor some classmates is a recognition of their capabilities and this leads to a better sense of self.

Multigrade schools are perceived to implement a cooperative and democratic approach to learning. When some learners experience difficulty in their lessons, others in the class are willing to help out. Role plays, experiments, oral reports, and other pupil-oriented teaching strategies are found to foster cooperation and participation among or between learners.

#### *Development of basic learning skills*

Learners in San Isidro generally rated their reading, writing and arithmetic skills to be between Average to Above Average. Nabilog learners, on the other hand, generally rated their basic

skills as Average. San Isidro learners compare themselves with learners in an adjacent barangay who attend a school perceived to have less facilities and equipment than their own multigrade school. Nabilog pupils compare themselves with learners in bigger and better equipped schools in adjacent municipalities.

Pupils report that they have acquired healthful habits from lessons learned in school. Most habits mentioned have something to do with cleanliness which includes personal cleanliness such as taking daily baths, brushing teeth regularly, cutting nails, cleaning nose and ears, changing clothes everyday, combing or grooming the hair, wearing clean clothes, washing hands before and after eating as well as after using the toilet. Others include habits of washing dishes, cleaning the yard, and cleaning the toilet. Some pupils also mention developing the habit of eating a balanced diet with fruits and vegetables and planting vegetables in the home garden.

#### *Perception of other stakeholders*

San Isidro pupils rate the quality of teaching of their men-

tors as definitely between Above Average and Excellent. Pupils in Nabilog generally rate their teachers Above Average. What accounts for this difference in rating seems to be that San Isidro learners compare themselves with a school in a nearby upland barangay that is less-equipped than theirs and has teachers who are not as effective as their own. They consider themselves as having teachers who are more skilled and school facilities that are much better than what others in an adjoining community have. Nabilog pupils for their part compare themselves with those from bigger schools in the adjacent municipalities and thus tend to downplay the benefits gained from their own school.

On teachers' involvement in the community, both groups of learners rated their teachers between Above Average to Excellent. Pupils in both schools appreciate seeing their teachers actively involve themselves in the affairs of the community.

### *Insights and Lessons Learned*

1. In a province where almost one half (48%) of elementary schools are combined or

multigrade schools, multigrade schools embody the concept of Education for All (EFA) adopted by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. Without the multigrade schools, a big number of our elementary school children, especially in far-flung *barangays*, would have been deprived of basic education. Yet, even among the combined or multigrade schools, more than half (57%) are incomplete schools.

2. The examples of San Isidro and Nabilog schools show that proper administration of multigrade schools can be a workable alternative in providing the educational needs of children in the uplands and the countryside. Teacher training, improved school facilities and equipment, administrative assistance, LGU support, and community participation contribute to making multigrade schools work for children in need.

3. The application of innovative teaching strategies enables teachers to be effective in

handling multigrade classes and sustains children's interest to learn. Nonetheless, there is a continuing need for re-tooling our elementary school teachers to provide them skills to respond to the realities of a school setting in outlying communities.

4. Pupil centered approaches to teaching introduced in the multigrade schools under study require learners to take an active role in the teaching-learning process. Children's exposure to such strategies develops in them a sense of personal responsibility and allows them to be directly involved in their own learning. As an outcome of the ownership of responsibility, pupils manifest willingness to extend learning beyond their classroom.

5. Bringing the lessons from the classroom to one's home encourages parents to be involved in the learning process. In the schools under study, parents serve as para-teachers. They assist the teachers in various aspects of learning such as production of educational materials, conduct of games, and monitoring children's school-

work at home.

6. Human relations play a major role in teachers' level of motivation. The regular presence of supervisors as well as visits of observers and other personalities promote among teachers industry as well as pride, and among pupils a positive attitude towards learning.

7. Since parents usually serve as volunteer workers when supervisors and guests visit the school, they are able to interact with the teachers and develop good working relations with them. Such occasions bring not only parents and teachers together but also foster good relations among parents by bringing them closer together.

8. Being residents of communities with Unicef-assisted schools gives parents a sense of pride and motivates them to work harder to live up to the expectations of the donor agency.

9. When asked to choose between monograde and multigrade schools, all sample groups favor monograde classes. However, learners, par-