

The State of Education in the Bikol Region

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Profile of Bikol Region

The Bikol Region is situated in the southern tip of Luzon. It lies in the mid-section of the country, occupying a land area of 1.76 million hectares or 5.78% of the country's total land area. In it is found the majestic although sometimes furious Mount Mayon. Its terrain is comprised of rolling hills, mountains, and vast plains bordered by coastlines. Blessed with a good climate and abundant rain throughout the year, Bikol boasts of the lush growth of its abaca plants, coconut trees, rice and many varieties of orchids as well as other indigenous fauna. It has rich forest resources and extensive deposits of iron, mercury, gold, silver, chromite, marble, white clay, limestone and pertile. Its geothermal energy makes it one of the main sources of electric power for Luzon grid while its majestic Mount Mayon earns for its reputation of being one of the most noted tourist spots in the country.

While Bikol has been endowed with so much of these resources, its socio-economic development is much slower compared to that of other leading regions. This slow growth can be attributed to factors like calamities such as typhoons and volcano eruptions, the disturbing peace-and-order situation in some parts of the region, an oversized population, and prevailing poverty. These factors adversely affected various aspects of development in the region, including education.

The region is composed of six provinces and a total of seven cities, four these newly-declared namely, Sorsogon, Masbate, Tabaco and Ligao. It also has 115 municipalities grouped into 14 congressional districts.

Status of Basic Education in the Bikol Region

Education has been treasured by the Filipino people as basic to the strength and survival of the nation. This is evidenced by the interest shown to it by our government and multi-sectoral leaders in education. Numerous researches have been devoted to the assessment of our school system. These reports do not hesitate to identify the flaws of the public school system and call for widespread reforms.

Admittedly, our educational system leaves much to be desired. Quality basic education continues to be a formidable challenge to the Department of Education. This paper then is an

honest assessment of the state of basic education, particularly in the Bikol region, aimed to facilitate an understanding of and response to the basic educational concerns.

Basically, there are three major issues confronting basic education in the Bikol region namely, access, progress, and quality. Access deals with the question of whether all children of school age can be accommodated or gain entry to the schools in the region. Progress deals with the problem of whether those who enter Grade One finish at least the first six years of basic education, which is free and compulsory. Quality deals with the level of performance of our elementary students measured mostly by achievement tests and reported as Mean Percentage Scores (MPS).

Access and Progress. Bikol is divided into 13 school divisions, 166 school districts with 3,144 public elementary schools, and 196 private elementary schools. Elementary education is the vanguard of access to basic education. Yet of the 3,455 barangays in the region, 125 qualified barangays do not have an elementary school. Also, some 358 schools are incomplete or are schools which do not offer the complete six years of elementary grades. On the other hand, there are only 467 public, 88 extension schools and 170 private schools that offer secondary education. There were 7,693,17 and 25,988 children enrolled in public and private elementary schools respectively. At the secondary level, 3,336,15 and 57,220 students were enrolled in the public and secondary high schools.

There are 2,169 multi-grade classes in the elementary schools in the Region. These multi-grade classes come in a variety of types of grade clusters. This situation results into an elementary participation rate of about 85.074%, which varies from 72.45% in Legaspi City, the lowest and 119.13% in Sorsogon City, the highest. On the other hand, the secondary participation rate is 43.44% with Sorsogon City having 67.67%%; Legaspi City with 30.52%% is the lowest among the thirteen divisions. Participation rate is the ratio between the enrollment in school-age range to the total population of that age range. The participation rate in Legaspi City means that many cannot go to school because of several reasons, most probably the schools are not accessible or due to economic conditions of the families. Below is a graphic illustration of the participation rate of the nine school divisions during the academic year, 2004-2005.

Table 1: *Participation Rate in Bikol*

Division	Elementary	Secondary
Albay	83.83	45.41
Camarines Norte	84.75	47.83

Camarines Sur	83.98	39.76
Catanduanes	86.64	54.94
Masbate	90.30	31.09
Sorsogon	82.74	48.43
Iriga City	72.51	47.91
Legaspi City	72.45	30.52
Naga City	79.75	51.75
Ligao City	87.35	41.28
Masbate City	90.13	54.85
Sorsogon City	119.13	67.67
Tabaco City	83.77	58.99
Regional	85.074	43.44

A high participation rate means that many of the elementary children are enrolled in several schools. However, the low participation rate in the the secondary education may indicate that after children graduated in elementary schools, they looked for jobs to help their families.

Progress is very much related to access. Children who enter our school system should remain and finish their schooling. Three indicators are considered measures of progress. These are one, the Retention Rate, Dropout Rate and three, Cohort Survival Rate (CSR). Retention Rate is the proportion of students who are retained in the same grade level after completion of one academic year. Cohort Survival Rate is the proportion of enrollees who begin in a grade or year vis-a-vis those who actually reach the end of the required number of years of study. Or simply, it refers to the number of children who do complete the elementary grades, and eventually finish the secondary level. In year 2004, only 79.45% or 79 out of 100 pupils who enter Grade One in a particular school year were expected to reach Grade Six. For the secondary education, 70.50% of those who enter first year were predicted to be able to finish four-year secondary education.

Table 2: *Cohort Survival Rate*

Division	Elementary	Secondary
Albay	81.97	73.70
Camarines Norte	91.21	54.64
Camarines Sur	75.38	69.37
Catanduanes	90.98	81.17
Masbate	70.53	66.34
Sorsogon	82.54	71.54
Iriga City	82.99	81.15
Legaspi City	84.01	73.44
Naga City	76.95	81.03
Ligao City	86.51	74.32
Masbate City	73.74	78.32
Sorsogon City	80.75	73.56
Tabaco City	80.83	84.28
Regional	79.45	70.50

The Dropout Rate, on the other hand, is the number of or percentage of children who entered a particular grade vis-a-vis the number of children who finished the grade and were either promoted or retained, but did not enroll for the next or the same grade the following school year. The regional dropout rate in the elementary level is 1.19% and 5.85% for the secondary level. This seems to indicate that the government has done its assignment regarding protecting the capacity of students to continue studying in the elementary level; however, there seems to be a substantial loss in the secondary education that is caused for some worry. Table 3 reflects the dropout rates.

Table 3: *Dropout Rate*

Division	Elementary	Secondary
Albay	0.48	4.37
Camarines Norte	0.44	9.97

Division	Elementary	Secondary
Camarines Sur	1.79	5.74
Catanduanes	0.68	5.84
Masbate	1.83	6.23
Sorsogon	1.07	6.22
Iriga City	1.05	4.33
Legaspi City	0.78	4.53
Naga City	0.74	3.70
Ligao City	0.39	3.45
Masbate City	0.95	5.70
Sorsogon City	1.45	5.88
Tabaco City	0.57	2.91
Regional	1.19	5.85

Retention Rate determines the number of students who remained in the same grade or year level due to varied reasons like very poor academic achievement or by dropouts. Table 4 shows the retention rate of the 13 divisions.

Table 4: *Retention Rate*

Division	Elementary	Secondary
Albay	94.35	88.08
Camarines Norte	98.83	79.45
Camarines Sur	91.81	84.99
Catanduanes	96.02	90.28
Masbate	87.22	81.41
Sorsogon	92.84	85.76
Iriga City	96.17	92.65
Legaspi City	94.83	90.28

Division	Elementary	Secondary
Naga City	95.07	93.34
Ligao City	93.46	87.92
Masbate City	89.95	89.53
Sorsogon City	94.50	88.91
Tabaco City	97.39	91.30
Regional	92.76	85.88

Completion Rate, on the other hand, manifests that percentage of children who have completed one year course of study or one grade level. Below is the completion rate in the Region.

Table 5: *Completion Rate*

Division	Elementary	Secondary
Albay	73.38	73.70
Camarines Norte	85.30	54.64
Camarines Sur	61.40	69.37
Catanduanes	80.41	81.17
Masbate	53.72	66.34
Sorsogon	71.67	71.54
Iriga City	69.71	81.15
Legaspi City	74.88	73.44
Naga City	66.62	81.03
Ligao City	70.77	74.32
Masbate City	55.90	78.32
Sorsogon City	72.87	61.09
Tabaco City	74.94	71.66
Regional	66.96	55.30

Quality. The quest for quality education is a non-ending quest. Through the years, achievement test results have shown a mean percentage scores (MPS) of 40.42% against a target of 75%. These show that our pupils seem to have learned less than one-half of the competencies expected of them based on a standard curriculum. This curriculum comes in the form of a list of basic or minimum and desired learning competencies of a child at a particular level. Below are the comparative results of public and private secondary schools in the Regional Achievement Test. Included in the tests were 59 public and 26 private schools randomly selected.

Table 6. *Regional Achievement Test Results*

Subjects	Regional MPS	
	Public	Private
Filipino	54.14	50.19
English	44.86	40.92
Araling Panlipunan	42.13	37.16
MAPEH	41.78	37.30
Mathematics	41.36	34.44
Values Education	40.41	35.80
Technology and Livelihood Education	39.14	37.19
Science	35.35	31.20
Regional MPS	42.80	38.03
Over-all Regional MPS	40.42	

Status of Higher Education

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) renews its commitment to providing the Bicolano youth with quality and excellent education, i.e. Higher education that is relevant and responsive, effective and efficient, and accessible and equitable. Higher education in the Region is very extensive, consisting of about 137 colleges and universities, 42 public and 95 private, with a total of 106,032 students. The enrollment of college students in the private institutions is higher (63,448) than that of state universities and colleges (42,584). A total of eight state universities and colleges exist in the Bikol region, and they are chartered, operate

out of their own budget, and virtually independent of each other and of CHED. In the eleven different disciplines, enrollment is concentrated on three fields as shown below:

Table 7: *Enrollment Figures by Discipline*

Disciplines	No. of Students Enrolled
Arts and Sciences	9,244
Teacher Education	21,567
Engineering and Architecture	8,093
Health Related Programs	15,615
Business Management	19,381
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	3,619
Law and Criminology	5,617
Information Technology	8,473
Maritime Education	2,770
Graduate Education	4,010
Trades, Crafts and Industrial Technology	7,643
TOTAL	106,032

It can be gleaned from the data on Table 7 that teacher education, business management and health related programs were the most populous courses in the Region.

Table 8 reflects the enrollment in public and private tertiary schools by province/city in the year of 2005.

Province/City	ENROLLMENT		
	Public	Private	Total
Albay	7,217	3,432	10,649
Camarines Norte	3,121	3,726	6,847
Camarines Sur	11,773	3,242	15,015
Catanduanes	7,286	679	7,965

Province/City	ENROLLMENT		
	Public	Private	Total
Masbate	915	1,665	2,580
Sorsogon	1,445	1,692	3,137
Iriga City		5,490	5,490
Legaspi City	8,369	12,570	20,939
Masbate City		4,103	4,103
Naga City	1,589	17,960	19,549
Sorsogon City	4,412	2,239	6,651
Tabaco City	1,541	1,469	3,010
TOTAL	48,470	5,320	106,790

Performance in the Board Examinations

Graduates of professional courses are required to pass professional board examinations before they are allowed to practice their profession. The performance of the higher education institutions is almost invariably taken as the worth of colleges and universities in the program concerned. Performance in the board examinations serves as a key indicator of the quality of its education.

In the Bikol Region, the average passing rate in all the professional examinations in the year 2000 was only 28.13%. It can be gleaned from the data in the given (see Table 8) that the region has registered a passing rate about that of the national average only in the Social Worker Board Examination. Below is the regional average passing rate in the various Professional Board Examinations (PBE) given by the Professional Regulation Commission during 2000.

Table 8: *Regional Average Passing Rate in PBE*

Professional Board Examinations	National Average Passing Rate	Regional Average Passing Rate
Mechanical Engineering	47.66	30.92
Electrical Engineering	40.98	36.43
Nurse Licensure Examination	49.55	47.50

Professional Board Examinations	National Average Passing Rate	Regional Average Passing Rate
Civil Engineering	29.05	7.54
CPA Board Examination	18.63	12.92
Forester Licensure Examination	29.00	12.7
Social Worker Licensure Examination	58.2	64.45
Customs Broker Examination	9.00	.08
Physical Therapist Licensure	25.00	.07
Licensure for Teachers	35.70	33.57
Agricultural Engineering	52.30	42.80
Criminology Licensure	51.00	47.61
TOTAL	37.17	28.13

Accreditation. Accreditation is viewed as a mechanism through which institutions voluntarily pursue educational quality through self-evaluation and peer visitation. It conveys some information on the quality of programs being offered by the higher learning institutions. A school's accredited status is valuable information to students and their prospective employers as it establishes it as an institution of reputable academic standard. However, only a few colleges and universities in the region have taken advantage of the accreditation. As of 2004, there were 9 programs and 14 institutions out of a hundred and 137 institutions have been accredited. Of these 14 schools, only one have been awarded Level III, 10 have been accredited status II while two are accredited level I and two are acquiring accreditation for the first time. Liberal Arts, Commerce and Education are the commonly accredited programs, which are offered by private sectarian schools. This represents only 10.22% of the total number of institutions.

Table 9. *FAAP Accredited Programs in Region V*

Institution	Program	Level	Valid Until	Accrediting Agency
Ateneo de Naga University	Liberal Arts Commerce Education	III	November 2008	PAASCU

Institution	Program	Level	Valid Until	Accrediting Agency
Aquinas University	Arts and Sciences Business Administration Education	II	May 2008	PAASCU
Ateneo de Naga University	Computer Sciences Information Management	II	May 2008	PAASCU
Bicol College	Criminology Liberal Arts Commerce	II	May 2007 June 2009 June 2009	PACUCOA
Divine Word College	Liberal Arts Commerce Accountancy Education	II	November 2006	PAASCU
Naga College Foundation	Liberal Arts Commerce Criminology	II	June 2006 June 2006 March 2008	PACUCOA
St. Louise de Marillac College	Liberal Arts Business Administration Education	II	November 2006	PAASCU
Universidad de Sta. Isabel	Liberal Arts Commerce Education Nursing Social Work	II	May 2007	PAASCU
University of Northeastern Philippines	Liberal Arts Commerce Education	II	October 2006	PACUCOA
University of Nueva Caceres	Business Administration Education	II	June 2008 April 2009	PACUCOA

Institution	Program	Level	Valid Until	Accrediting Agency
	Liberal Arts		December 2008	
University of Saint Anthony	Commerce Education Liberal Arts	II	November 2005 November 2005 July 2006	PACUCOA
Bicol College	Education	I	March 2006	PACUCOA
Naga College Foundation	BEED	I	September 2006	PACUCOA
Aquinas University	Nursing Civil Eng'g Industrial Eng'g ECE Computer Engineering	Candidate Status	May 2007	PAASCU
Ateneo de Naga University	ECE Computer Engineering	Candidate Status	May 2007	PAASCU

Interfacing the Higher Education with Basic Education

The status of education in the Region calls for a collaboration between the basic education and that of higher education particularly of the teacher training institutions to address the gaps so as to truly achieve the kind of quality education that is responsive and relevant to the needs and call of the region. We cannot raise the level of quality basic education until we raise the quality of teacher education, and in general the higher education. Therefore, the interfacing of school professionals from both sectors should be given importance and urgency. To bridge the gaps between basic and higher education, the following are suggested:

1. regular dialogue between the practitioners of the Department of Education and of the Commission on Higher Education to update each other on the new trends and development, and emerging problems on education.

2. Harmonize DepEd policies and thrusts with CHED and PRC.
3. Sharing of current best practices.
4. Rationalized exposure and immersion of students in the higher education and vice versa, if needed.
5. Twinning arrangement between the two sectors; and
6. Link-up with professional organizations and practitioners.

Conclusion

The aforementioned exposition of the problems that beset the state of education in Bikol region is not a statement of hopelessness in solving them but an indication that the concerns, well-defined as they are, require appropriate measures in order to be addressed. A partnership between the two sectors that is marked by some sense of synergy is necessary to the existence of quality education. Furthermore, a convergence of the visions of the Department of Education and of the Commission on Higher Education with that of the Regional Development Council specifically as to what kind of region it would like to become would go a long way toward benefitting the region.

In closing, the educational issues and problems have to be addressed by both the basic and higher education sectors now. The overwhelming task of educating future generations of Bikolanos requires sustained cooperative effort and cannot be derailed by either hesitancy or indecision over inconsequential differences of opinions among the various sectors involved in the task. In short, they must cooperate and bring about a concerted effort to meet its own challenges. Without a common will towards the state of Bikol Education, we will forever be engaged in fruitless debates over what is wrong with our education, to the detriment of the future of our Bikol Region.

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