

Towards Achieving EFA Goals by 2015: The Philippine Scenario

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The formal education system in the Philippines is a sequential progression of academic schooling in three levels: elementary or primary, secondary and tertiary or higher education. Basic education (primary and secondary) is centrally governed by the Department of Education (DepED). DepED administers, supervises and regulates the activities of both public and private primary and secondary schools.

The first level, elementary or primary education, consists of six compulsory grades (Grades 1-6) for public or state-run schools and in seven grades for some private schools. This level includes an optional preschool education that consists of kindergarten schooling and other preparatory courses. Children should enter Grade 1 at age 6. The second level, secondary education (for children aged 12-15), consists of four years of high school for those who have successfully completed primary education.

The Philippine EFA 2015 Plan

The Philippine EFA 2015 Plan is a vision and a holistic program of reforms of the country to achieve an improved quality of basic education for every Filipino by 2015. The central goal of the Philippine EFA 2015 Plan is **basic competencies for all** that will bring about **functional literacy for all**. Ensuring that every Filipino has the **basic competencies** is equivalent to providing all Filipinos with the basic learning needs or enabling all Filipinos to be **functionally literate** which means having the complete range of skills and competencies – cognitive, affective and behavioral which enables individuals to: live and work as human persons; develop their potentials; make critical and informed decisions; and function effectively in society within the context of their environment and that of the wider community (local, regional, national and global) in order to improve the quality of their lives and that of the society.

Where are we right now in so far as the overall EFA goals are concerned?

Based on the latest education figures for SY 2008-2009, the main story for about 85.1% of school-age Filipinos (age 6-11 years old; estimated to be around 13 million) who get into the country's schools is along the following lines:

- For every typical 100 entrants (2,677,529 for SY 2008-2009) to Grade 1, only 60 would have some sort of organized early childhood education program. Only around 40 of them would be at the right age of 6. The other 60 would either be age 7 or older. With a Net Intake Ratio of 48.41% for 2008-2009, it appears that majority (52%) of the country's six years old population are not in Grade 1.
- Thirteen (13) of these 100 entrants will not finish Grade 1; a total of 24 would have left by the fourth grade; and while 75 will reach Grade 6, only 73 will finish the sixth grade, taking an average of 7.3 years to finish.
- The mean percentage score (MPS)¹ of these primary level graduates is only 65; with scores in English at 61.6 MPS, Mathematics at 63.9 and Science at 57.9.
- For every typical 100 entrants (1,979,337) to first year high school, 80 will reach the fourth year, but only 75 will complete high school, taking an average of 5.6 years to finish.

¹ Quality of education is reflected through the results of the National Achievement Test (NAT). Satisfactory achievement level translates to a mean percentage score (MPS) of 75.

- The mean percentage score of these secondary level passers is only 50% out of a passing score of 75. MPS in English is 53.5, Mathematics in 42.9 and 46.7 in Science.

The Critical Tasks at Hand:

The country's National EFA Committee (NEC) proposes nine tasks considered to be the most strategic among many other important possible actions to address the urgent task of at least coming close to achieving EFA by 2015. These nine main tasks may be categorized into two general classes. Successful execution of six "production tasks" will yield the desired educational outcomes and an adequate foundation and supportive environment created by the three "enabling tasks" will be necessary to sustain effective implementation of the production tasks.

The six production tasks are:

1. ***Better Schools: Make every school continuously perform better.*** Focus is on improving nationwide school-level performance on the reasonable assumption that improving performance of every school will improve aggregate performance of the whole system of schools. Needed action is the development, introduction, propagation and adoption of instruments for every school to assess its capabilities and performance in attaining EFA goals and to define cost effective quality assurance standards.
2. ***ECCD: Make expansion of ECCD coverage yield more EFA benefits.*** The Philippines has a steady increase of new entrants to Grade 1 who have attended some form of organized ECE Program from 2002 (54%) to 2007 (65%) but still fell short of its target of 67% in 2005 (65%) and far behind the 2010 target of 100. House Bill 5387 passed by the House of Representatives and Senate Bill 2542 ("An Act Institutionalizing the Preschool Education Into the Basic Education System and Appropriating Funds Thereof) are intended to institutionalize preschool and offer it for free for all which will enable all five year old children to begin early education.
3. ***Teachers: Get all teachers to continuously improve their teaching practices.*** This supports the premise that improving teachers' practice of teaching is an important component of improving basic education outcomes. Teacher proficiency and performance is a major determinant of student achievement in school as well as in any other learning setting. Action needed is the adoption of measures to enhance capacity for quality teaching practice among those eligible for admission into the teaching profession, as well as the development of better policies, standards and procedures for selecting, hiring, deploying and utilizing teachers who are more capable of continuously improving their teaching practice.
4. ***Longer Cycle: Adopt a 12-year cycle for formal basic education.*** Compared with other Asian countries, basic education in the Philippines only lasts 10 years as opposed to 12 years in other countries. Action needed is to add two or more years to the existing ten-year basic education schooling that every Filipino child should get. Such longer duration can be feasible in the Philippines considering that at present the average elementary school graduate already takes 7.3 years to finish and the average high school graduate takes 5.6 years to finish, or a total of 12.9 years for the average current graduate to finish the existing ten year cycle.
5. ***Curriculum Development: Continue enrichment of curriculum development in the context of pillars of new functional literacy.*** Curriculum and instruction will continue to require research and development as knowledge expands, social demands change, educational practices evolve, and people's goals and aspirations rise. Action needed is to expand scope of institutional participation in curriculum development for basic education to include private schools, non-government organizations, teacher training institutions, individual professional educators and education scientists, and other organizations such as media, advertising and cultural entities.
6. ***Alternative Learning Systems: Transform non-formal and informal interventions into an alternative learning***

system yielding more EFA benefits. Adult literacy programs might be delivered more effectively (i.e., reaches more of those with greatest needs for learning enhanced literacy skills and engages much more those learners actually reached), if such literacy programs were integrated in all existing socio-economic programs addressing adult concerns. Needed action is to define and propagate cost-effective alternative learning options for achieving adult functional literacy in regional languages, Filipino and English and for government to finance the integration of these alternative learning options for the effective acquisition of functional literacy.

The three enabling tasks are:

7. **Financing: Provide adequate public funding for country-wide attainment of EFA goals.** Action needed is for the national government to adopt a new public funding framework for basic education that coherently combines national and local government funding to support the most cost-effective local efforts to attain quality basic education outcomes in every locality across the whole country.
8. **Governance: Create network of community-based groups for local attainment of EFA goals.** Action needed is to form a nationwide network of multi-sectoral groups advocating, supporting and monitoring attainment of EFA goals in their respective localities. Organized community-based EFA groups can become influential champions supporting attainment of goals through various community institutions that include schools, media, local government, local business, local culture and sports, and other potential resources for quality education in the community.
9. **Monitoring: Monitor progress in effort towards attainment of EFA goals.** Efforts need to be informed by results. Reliable, scientific and objective measurements of educational outcomes and of instructional and learning effort are crucial to all stakeholders. Action needed is to ensure that ample supply of objective information about level of effort expended and extent of progress attained keeps the nation's (and each community's) attention focused on these results.

Collective Action by All to Achieve Education for All

The road towards the attainment of universal basic education for all in the Philippines is indeed paved with good intentions. But as we all know, these are not enough. All intentions to do better than the past must be borne by well meaning individuals who must take definite steps to bring us closer to our targeted goals. Such actions should include the following:

- National political leaders, in the executive and legislative, to harness their collective ability to take the tough decisions in public finance to effectively and equitably allocate limited public resources that can be efficiently used to adequately meet the needs of good quality basic education for all.
- Professional educators who manage and operate our schools to collectively facing up to the stark reality that the vast majority of our schools are failing to teach and as a result many students are failing to learn.
- The best educated and most articulate leaders in society, who are working in media, government, business, academe and civil society, to take consistent and unified attention to getting the whole society committed to breaking the back of growing mass incompetence of Filipinos through adequate basic education for all.
- The community leaders (government officials, business leaders, and professionals active in their localities) to demand support and action for the attainment of quality basic education for everyone in their communities, not just for their own children.
- The education reform advocates to maintain their constancy of purpose, to have clear vision and strategies, to strengthen, direct and drive the process to improve basic education for all.

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**“Five Years Left until 2015: What Should be Our Priority?”
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Structure of the entire education system

- ❖ Basic Education (Department of Education)
 - 6-7 years of elementary school (6-12 years old)
 - 4 years of secondary school (13-16 years old)
- ❖ Tertiary Education (Commission on Higher Education)
- ❖ Technical/Vocational Education (TESDA)

Basic Education Sector

- ❖ Public school system
 - National government runs 41,388 schools
 - ❑ 36,759 elementary
 - ❑ 4,629 secondary
 - Organized around 2,260 School Districts under 193 Divisions in 17 Regions
 - National teacher force of around 456,317 teachers (337,082 elementary; 119,235 secondary)
- ❖ Private School System
 - 4,529 elementary schools
 - 3,261 secondary schools

The Philippine EFA 2015 Plan

basic competencies for all . . .
 . . . functional literacy for all

Having a complete range of skills and competencies--
 cognitive, affective and behavioral

- ❖ Live and work as human persons
- ❖ Develop potentials
- ❖ Make critical and informed decisions
- ❖ Function effectively in society

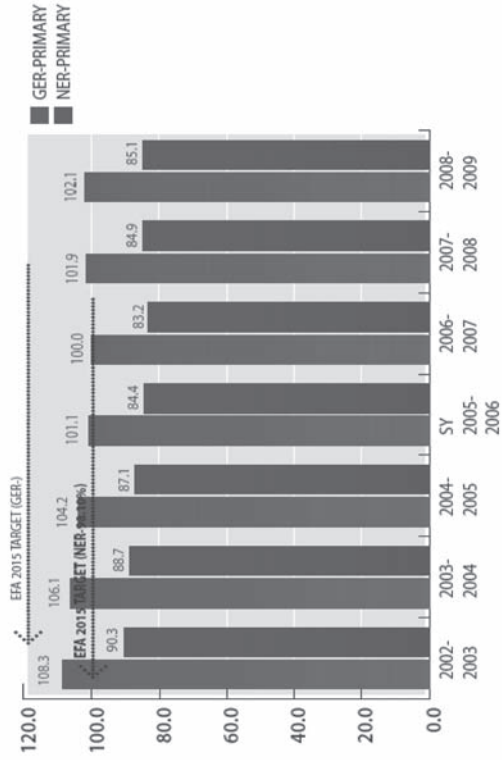
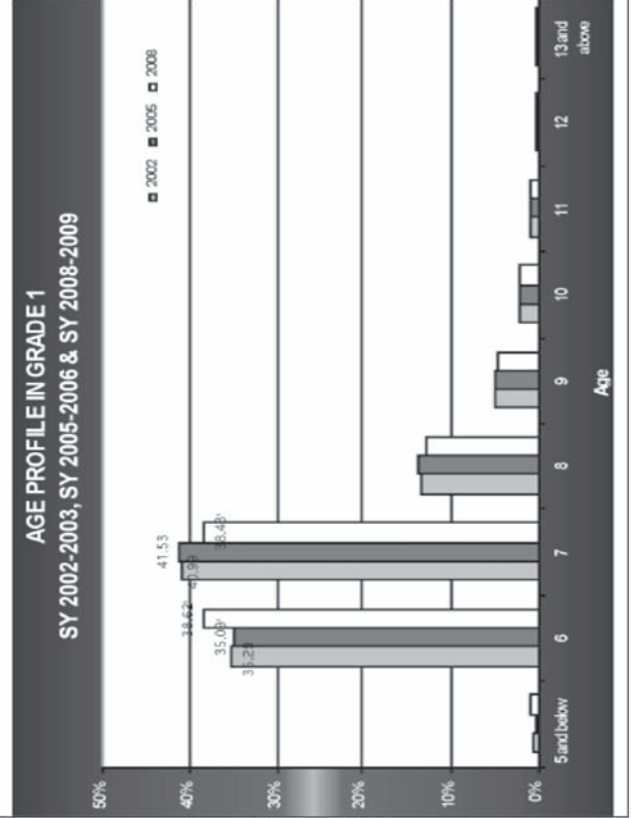
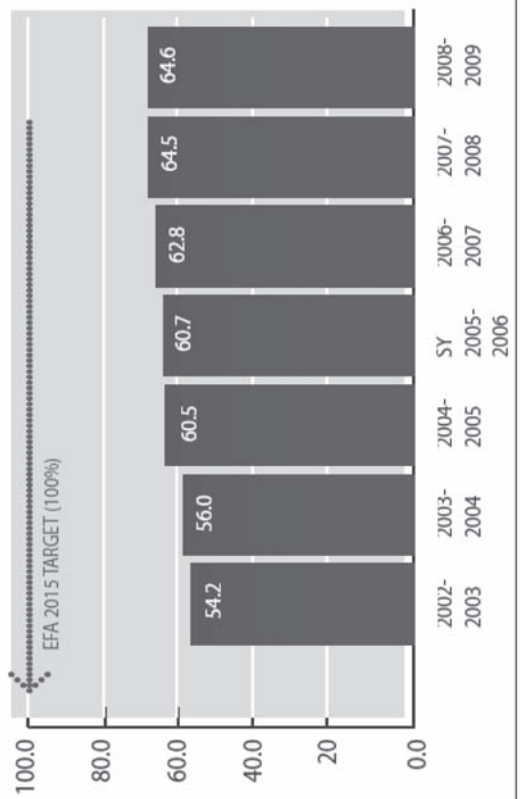
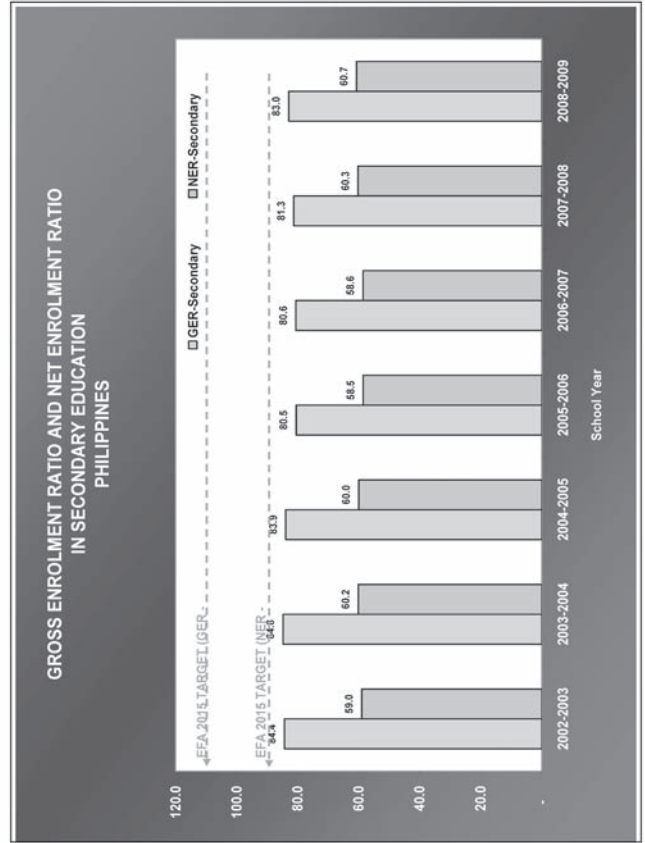
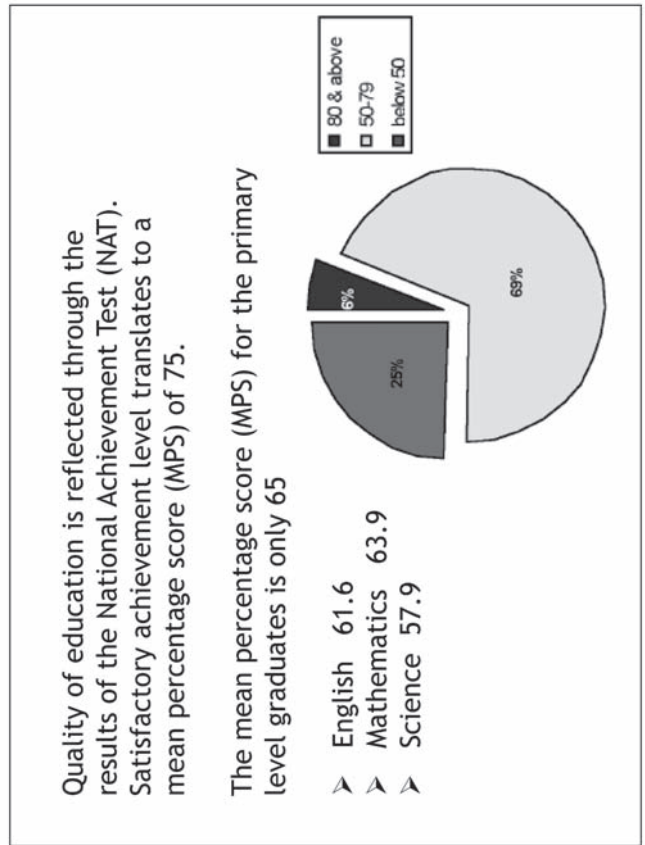
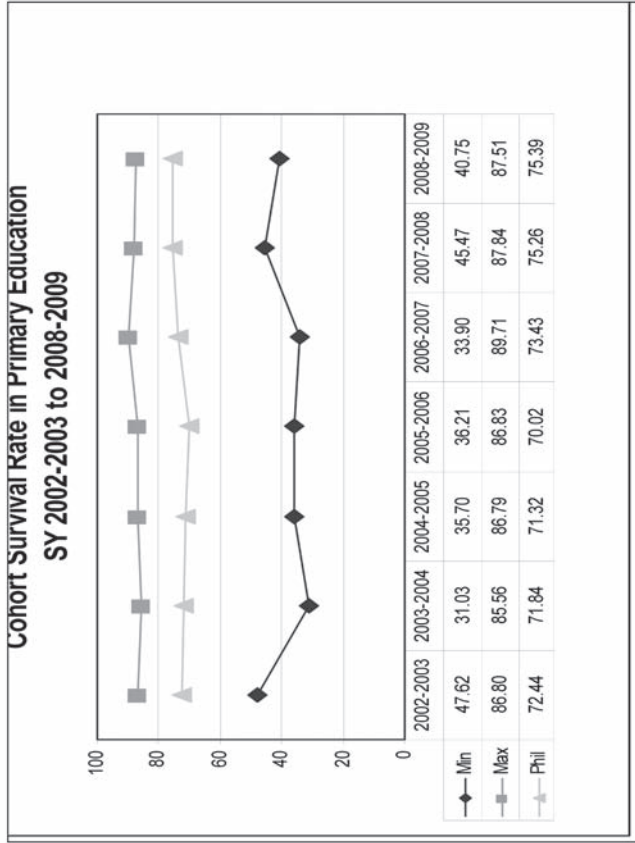
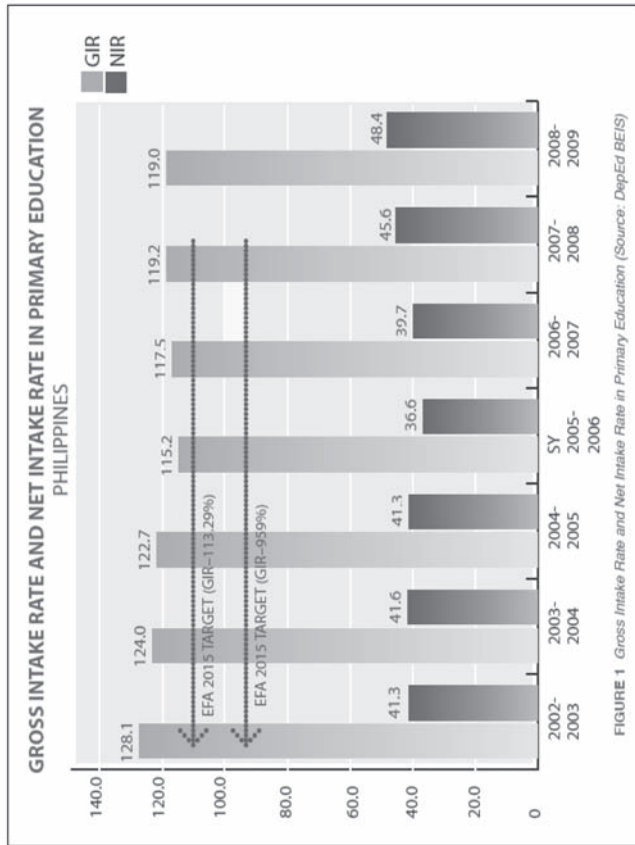
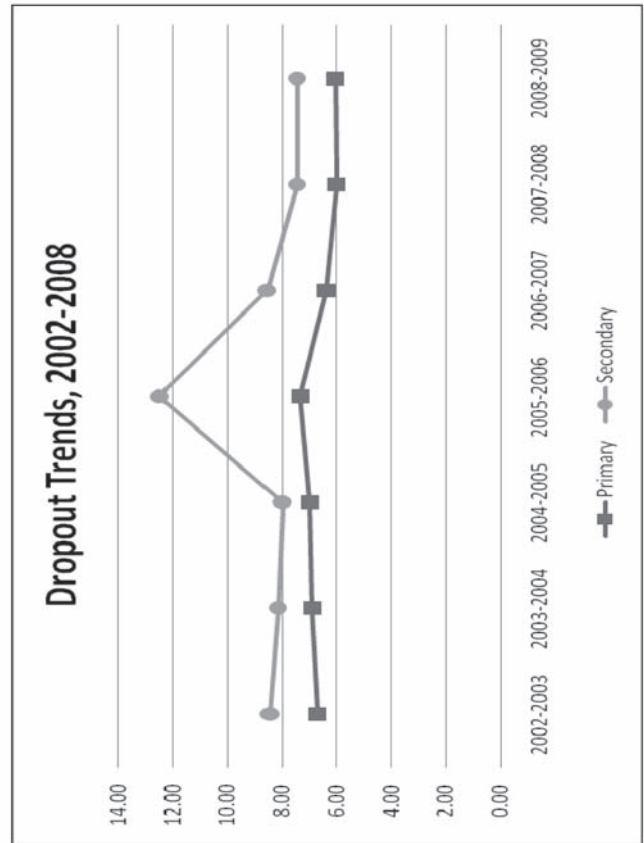
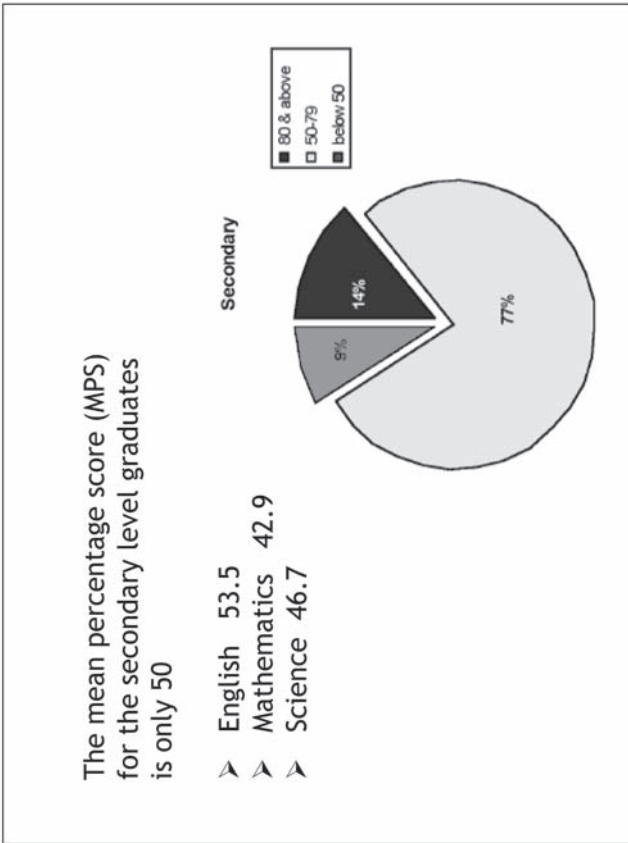
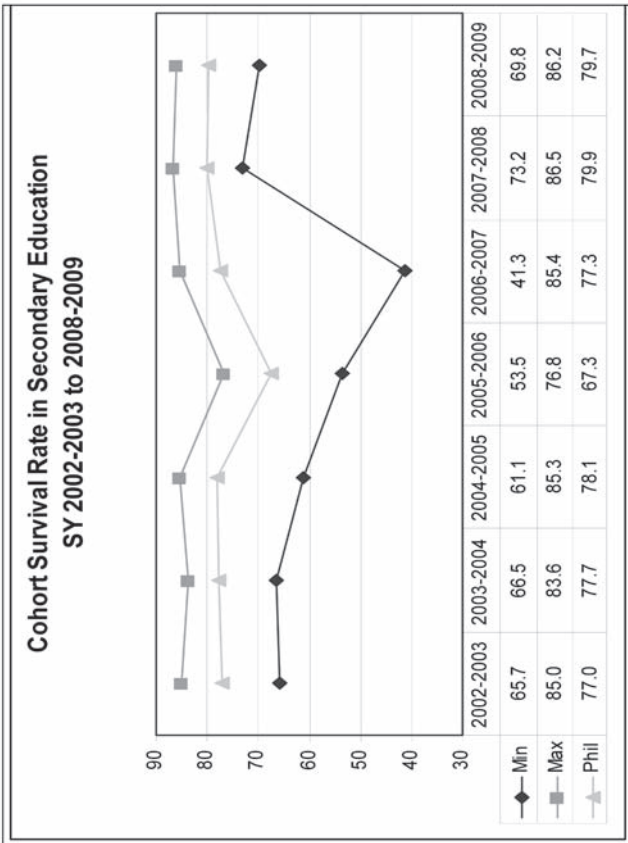


FIGURE 2 .Gross Enrolment Ratio and Net Enrolment Ratio in Primary Education (SY 2002-2003 to 2008-2009)

PERCENT OF NEW ENTRANTS TO PRIMARY GRADE 1
 WHO HAVE ATTENDED SOME FORM OF ORGANISED ECE PROGRAM
 PHILIPPINES







- ### Critical tasks at hand
- ❖ 6 Production Tasks: yield the desired educational outcomes
 - Better Schools
 - Expand ECCD
 - Improve teaching practices
 - Adopt longer cycle
 - Curriculum enrichment
 - Alternative learning systems

Critical tasks at hand

- ❖ **3 Enabling Tasks:** create an adequate and supporting environment necessary to sustain effective implementation of the production tasks
 - Provide adequate public funding
 - Create network of community-based groups
 - Monitor progress in effort towards attainment of EFA Goals

Collective Action by All to Achieve Education for All

- National political leaders to make tough decisions in public finance
- Professional educators to better manage and operate schools
- Leaders in government, business, academe, civil society and media to provide consistent and unified attention toward adequate basic EFA
- Community leaders to demand support and action for the attainment of EFA
- Education reform advocates to drive the process to improve basic EFA

Thank you!