

# Utilization of the Special Education Fund in Brigada Eskwela Program in the Secondary Level Public School in Baguio City

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## Abstract

### Rationale/Background of the Study

This research examines the utilization of the Special Education Fund (SEF) within the Brigada Eskwela (BE) program in public secondary schools in Baguio City, Philippines. Brigada Eskwela is a nationwide initiative that promotes community involvement in school maintenance and preparation. The SEF, funded by a 1% tax on real property, is intended to support the improvement of school facilities and services. The study aims to evaluate how SEF funds are being used to enhance the Brigada Eskwela program, identify challenges in SEF utilization, and propose strategies for optimizing resource allocation to improve the learning environment.

### Summary

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Special Education Fund (SEF) Utilization in Brigada Eskwela program in public secondary schools in Baguio City.

1. What is the level of the Special Education Fund Utilization in Brigada Eskwela program in the secondary level public schools in Baguio City in terms of:
  - a. School Building; and
  - b. Learning Facilities
2. What is the perceived level of benefits in utilizing the Special Education Fund for Brigada Eskwela Program to the:
  - a. School Building; and
  - b. Learning Facilities
3. What challenges are encountered in utilizing the Special Education Fund for Brigada Eskwela in enhancing the learning environment?

This study primarily employed a quantitative research design to investigate the impact of SEF funding on the Brigada Eskwela program within Public Secondary Schools in Baguio City. While the primary focus is on quantitative data and statistical analysis, some descriptive qualitative data was used to provide context and support the quantitative findings. The population includes 154 participants from 22 secondary public schools in Baguio City with Special Education Fund (SEF) allocations. This group includes 22 school heads, 44 non-teaching staff, and 88 teachers.

### Major Findings

This study found that the Special Education Fund (SEF) within the Brigada Eskwela (BE) program in Baguio City schools primarily prioritized comfort rooms (weighted mean 3.21) and classrooms

(weighted mean 3.27) for improvements, with a strong agreement from respondents on their importance and benefit. Conversely, canteens (mean 2.37) and playgrounds (mean 2.38) received the lowest SEF utilization, with some schools lacking canteens entirely and playgrounds often managed externally.

Overall, there was a general agreement on SEF's use for essential facilities like faculty offices, comfort rooms, classrooms, and laboratories (overall weighted mean 2.85). Faculty offices (weighted mean 3.13) also significantly benefited school personnel.

However, significant challenges hinder the program. The most common issues were delayed procurement or delivery of resources (77% of respondents, F=118) and insufficient SEF allocation (72% of respondents, F=111). Difficulties in community engagement (F=101) and limited supervision of project implementation (50% reported yes) were also notable. Additionally, practical challenges such as finding and paying for skilled labor, along with time management, frequently led to delays in project execution.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings, this study concludes that Special Education Fund (SEF) use in the Brigada Eskwela (BE) program primarily focuses on comfort rooms and classrooms, as these are seen as crucial for educational quality and sanitation. While these facilities significantly benefit both students and staff, canteens and playgrounds receive less SEF support, highlighting a need for clearer guidelines on SEF scope for student well-being facilities. Project implementation faces significant hurdles, including land ownership issues, limited funding, delays in resource procurement, insufficient SEF allocation, challenges in community partnerships, and inadequate supervision. These factors collectively lead to inefficient project execution and reduced program effectiveness.

## Recommendations

Drawing upon the analysis and conclusions derived from this research, the subsequent recommendations are presented:

1. **Prioritize Essential Facilities:** The Department of Education (DepEd) should create a uniform plan for comfort rooms and classrooms, including needs assessments and a dedicated cash allocation to ensure timely construction and maintenance.
2. **Clarify SEF Guidelines:** The Schools Division of Baguio City should develop clear guidelines for SEF eligibility for facilities like canteens and playgrounds, ensuring funding aligns with student well-being and community needs through stakeholder consultations.
3. **Enhance Learning Environments:** Strategically invest in classrooms to create engaging learning spaces with interactive technologies. Also, maintain and upgrade faculty offices, comfort rooms, and clinics to support both students and staff.
4. **Optimize Resource Collaboration:** Implement a collaborative strategy involving a Land Use and Partnership Committee to minimize land acquisition through agreements. Schools should also engage local businesses and alumni in fundraising for specific projects to overcome funding constraints.
5. **Boost Transparency and Accountability:** Schools should establish transparent financial reporting, conduct regular stakeholder meetings, and use digital platforms to share SEF expenditure details and gather feedback.
6. **Strengthen Community Engagement and Monitoring:** Create a Community Engagement and Partnership Development Program with a dedicated officer to foster strong relationships with local

stakeholders. Implement a Project Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Framework with clear timelines, regular reports, site visits by Division personnel, and feedback mechanisms.

7. Address Operational Challenges: Schools should adopt a localized project optimization strategy, including realistic timelines and clear task assignments. To tackle labor concerns, a skills-sharing initiative and a transparent budget tracking system are recommended.
8. Promote Further Research: Local Government Units (LGUs) should collaborate on transparent project monitoring. Future research should investigate the long-term impact of SEF-funded projects on student learning, effective community involvement methods, and culturally relevant project plans for Baguio City.

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Problem**

#### **Background of the Study**

The Department of Education (DepEd), guided by its objective of protecting and advocating every Filipino's right to quality, equitable, culture-based, and comprehensive basic education, has been at the center of the country's educational reforms. Its vision of Filipinos who sincerely love their country and whose values and competencies enable them to reach their full potential and contribute effectively to the nation's development shows the department's dedication to developing proficient individuals (DepEd, n.d.). DepEd's vision aligns with the country's long-term goals, emphasizing education's role in human capital development (Symaco & Bustos, 2021).

The New Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, specifically in section 1 of Article XIV, explicitly states that, “the state shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all, since, the education of the people is not only a duty of the state, this task is necessary for its preservation and welfare”. Despite ongoing reforms, the education sector still faces challenges in achieving its goals of quality, accessibility, and inclusivity (Symaco & Bustos, 2021).

The DepEd Quality Policy outlines the department's commitment to providing high-quality education that meets the needs and expectations of all stakeholders. Stakeholder involvement is crucial for effective policy implementation and ensuring quality education (Yaro et al., 2017). This commitment is achieved through adherence to high standards, effective stakeholder engagement, and a focus on developing lifelong learners. The department aims to uphold the highest standards of conduct and performance, ensuring that its services meet the needs of students, parents, teachers, and communities. DepEd fosters collaboration, communication, and participation among stakeholders to ensure that the needs of learners are met and that the quality of education is continually improved. Sharma & Kumar (2023), argue that involving diverse stakeholders in policy development ensures a holistic view and better alignment with societal needs. Zahria (2024), emphasized the importance of participatory communication strategies employed by school principals to engage stakeholders in educational decision-making processes. Additionally, the department emphasizes the importance of developing lifelong learners, involving families, communities, and other stakeholders in the educational process.

Brigada Eskwela (BE), launched in 2003 by the Department of Education in the Philippines, is a national program aimed at promoting volunteerism and public-private partnerships in education (Requina, 2022). BE has been widely implemented across the country, with studies showing high levels of compliance and positive impacts on school facilities, community engagement, and student learning (Cano-Butlay et

al., 2024). It builds upon the Adopt-A-School Program established by Republic Act 8525, encouraging community involvement in school maintenance and preparation (Jimenez et al., 2011). A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) outlining the terms of the adoption must be signed by the adopting entity and the school principal, subject to approval by the Superintendent of Schools. The local school board conducts a review of the adoption process, following guidelines established by the Coordinating Council created under Section 7. Brigada Eskwela (BE), aims to prepare public schools for the academic year through community involvement (Requina, 2022).

“Pakikipagkapwa” or “Pakikiisa”, an intrinsic component of Filipino culture, is strongly engrained in Brigada Eskwela. This spirit of communal unity involves individuals coming together as a community to accomplish a task without expecting anything in return. Rooted in the country's traditions, particularly in rural areas, it was once essential for moving heavy structures like the traditional nipa hut. This act is also known as the “Bayanihan”. Able-bodied men would collectively lift and carry the house to its new location. Following the move, a celebratory gathering would be held to foster socialization and mark the successful completion of the task. Even in modern times, the communal spirit continues to manifest in countless ways, as Filipinos selflessly extend their aid to fellow countrymen during times of need. This enduring tradition exemplifies the Filipino people's innate compassion and willingness to support one another.

Studies show that BE is generally well-implemented across schools, with positive impacts on student participation, learning, and community engagement (Cano-Butlay et al., 2024). The program taps into the spirit of volunteerism and collaboration among various stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and local officials (Garcia, 2021). However, perceptions of BE's success can vary among different stakeholder groups and school sizes (Cano-Butlay et al., 2024).

Globally, there are various programs similar to the Brigada Eskwela or Adopt-a-School initiatives such as Indonesia's green school *adiwiyata* program, which promotes pro-environmental behavior and mutual assistance among students (Casmata et al., 2022). These initiatives, along with others like Eco Schools and Enviroschools, contribute to the worldwide green school's movement, focusing on education for sustainable development (Gough et al., 2020). Such programs play a crucial role in preparing students to become global citizens with heightened social and environmental awareness (Casmata et al., 2022). In New York, for instance, the National Electric Contractors Association (NECA) has established its Adopt-a-School Program in 2003. This program aims to give back to local communities by providing support to schools that require additional resources. NECA Chapters and members collaborate with schools in need, offering essential equipment, supplies, or volunteering their time to enhance the educational experience of students. By participating in this program, NECA promotes the electrical industry, strengthens its relationship with the school and community, and contributes to the overall well-being of local learners.

Community involvement in education is a global practice. In countries like India, Kenya, and Nigeria, communities actively participate in the development and management of schools. This involvement often includes providing resources, volunteering, and advocating for the needs of students. Child-friendly schools and learning spaces are a key component of this approach. These schools prioritize creating a healthy and supportive environment for children to learn. This includes ensuring access to safe drinking water, proper hygiene and sanitation facilities, and providing health and nutrition services. Additionally, school buildings must be free of hazards and the school environment must be kept clean and safe. Separate toilet facilities for girls and boys are essential to provide privacy and dignity. All of

these elements contribute to a safe and protective learning environment that promotes child development and well-being (United Nations Children's Fund, 2009).

In the past, the Department of Education (DepEd) faced significant challenges in providing adequate education resources to public schools in the Philippines. These challenges included a lack of resources, insufficient classrooms, overcrowded classes, and schools that were not ready for the upcoming school year. The start of the school year often involved pupils and teachers having to deal with uncleaned classrooms, damaged blackboards, broken chairs, and other facilities in need of repair and maintenance. This hindered the effective learning process as teachers and students were forced to prioritize cleaning and maintenance tasks over focusing on their lessons. Recent studies highlight persistent challenges in the Philippine education infrastructure. Despite progress in decongesting schools, spatial inequalities in classroom-student ratios remain, with some regions still facing overcrowding (Navarro, 2024). Major issues include overcrowded classrooms, teachers instructing subjects outside their expertise, and poor-quality instruction (Gumarang & Gumarang, 2021). Spatial analysis reveals disparities in school building conditions across provinces, with northern areas generally having higher quality facilities, while the eastern seaboard and southern regions struggle due to natural calamities and civil unrest (Figuerola et al., 2016). These challenges underscore the need for increased investment in school infrastructure and policy improvements to enhance the learning environment and, consequently, student outcomes and economic growth potential (Navarro, 2024). To address these issues, DepEd launched the Adopt-a-School Program (ASP) in 1998. This program aimed to foster partnerships with stakeholders who were willing to contribute resources to improve public school education. The Adopt-a-School Program quickly gained momentum, and the spirit of volunteerism reached a new height within communities. This led to the creation of Brigada Eskwela, a nationwide voluntary effort established in 2003. Brigada Eskwela, mobilizes thousands of parents, alumni, civic groups, local businesses, non-government organizations, teachers, students, and individuals to volunteer their time and skills for classroom repairs, maintenance work, and school clean-ups. The program aims to bridge the resource gaps faced by DepEd through strengthened partnerships with local communities.

Brigada Eskwela has been institutionalized as a permanent activity in the Philippine school calendar through Department of Education Order (DepEd Order No. 021, s. 2023). This order mandates all public and private schools nationwide to conduct Brigada Eskwela activities at least one week before the official opening of classes. The program is essential to school heads, teachers, and learners as it saves resources and provides a more conducive learning environment. BE coordinators play a crucial role in the program's execution, facing challenges while emphasizing partnerships and community outreach (Maghuyop, 2023).

The support and efforts of various stakeholders have resulted in significant improvements in school facilities nationwide. The program's success relies heavily on stakeholder participation, with teachers and community members often showing greater involvement than parents (Colonia et al., 2024). Each stakeholder plays a crucial role in ensuring that schools are safe, conducive to learning, and equipped with the necessary resources. This has allowed teachers to start their classroom instruction on the first day of classes and has enabled pupils to focus on their lessons without the distraction of cleaning and maintenance tasks. Brigada Eskwela has played a crucial role in creating a more positive and supportive learning environment for students and teachers across the Philippines.

On August 2022, Vice President and former Education Secretary Sara Z. Duterte emphasized in her address to DepEd partners and personnel during a BE Kick-off event that the collaboration between the



parents, the teachers, local governments, and the entire community on Brigada Eskwela opens a deeper and meaningful collaboration even until after the school year closes (DepEd, 2022).

Every year, a growing number of individuals and organizations are making significant contributions to the well-being of schools across the Philippines. Corporations are demonstrating their commitment to education by providing financial assistance, donating essential supplies, or sending their employees to volunteer their time which includes cleaning, minor repairs, repainting, beautification, landscaping, electrical works and installations, and other activities may still do before the opening. Additionally, a diverse range of volunteers, including members of the Philippine Army, Local Government Units, and private partners are actively involved in creating healthier and supportive learning environments for Filipino youth. However, the parameter levels of commitment, different objectives, and lack of execution can all impede building relationships efforts. Building a strong connection with prospective partners through efficient communication and collaboration is critical to acquiring consistent support. To build sustainable partnerships, schools need a strong leadership infrastructure, quality data usage, focus on results, and cross-sector professional development (Blank, 2015). Clear communication, effective collaboration, and involvement of all community sectors are essential for creating supportive learning environments and achieving better educational outcomes (Radiamoda et al., 2023; Tejada, 2023).

Various education sectors, including private institutions and universities, actively contribute to community development through outreach programs and community extension services. These initiatives often involve the dedicated participation of volunteers, faculty members, and students who work together to address specific needs and challenges within their communities. By collaborating with local organizations and residents, such efforts can provide important resources, skill training, and assistance to individuals in need. This collaborative approach promotes social responsibility and improves community relationships. Community engagement activities in higher education foster citizenship, service-mindedness, and social responsibility among students (Kumar, 2017). The experiences of volunteers and beneficiaries in community-academe partnerships, such as those of AGAK Foundation, Inc., highlight the importance of addressing sustainable development goals and identifying community needs for effective extension services (Deguma et al., 2020). These collaborative efforts contribute to social and economic sustainability in local communities.

The initiative to create a more conducive learning environment highlights the integral role of the community in shaping the success of schools. By fostering a clean, well-maintained, and visually appealing school environment, the initiative aims to inspire students to attend school regularly, engage in their studies, and strive towards their academic goals. A conducive learning environment, characterized by clean, well-maintained facilities and positive school culture, can significantly enhance student performance, behavior, and engagement (Nainggolan, 2024). A clean and organized classroom can significantly enhance the learning experience. When students are surrounded by a tidy and pleasant space, they are more likely to feel motivated and focused. A clean, organized classroom with well-maintained resources contributes to a positive learning atmosphere. Supportive teacher relationships, positive classroom climate, and access to diverse learning tools enhance student engagement (Firman et al., 2024). Students are more likely to take care of these resources when they see that the school values their upkeep. The condition of the classroom environment influences students' behavior, school attendance, and participation in academic activities (Asiyai, 2014). A well-organized classroom provides a safe space for students to develop good study habits and self-control, positively affecting their overall development (Cheng, 2022).

Additionally, attractive landscaping can create a welcoming and inviting school environment. Greenery, colorful plants, and well-maintained outdoor spaces can positively influence students' moods and overall well-being. Research indicates that school landscapes and environments play a crucial role in students' well-being, learning experiences, and sense of belonging. Well-designed school landscapes with natural elements can enhance students' mood, academic achievement, and overall well-being (Akande et al., 2023). When students feel comfortable and happy in their school surroundings, they are more likely to develop a sense of belonging and take pride in their school community. Creating a sense of community and belongingness within schools is crucial for students' psychological needs and influences their behavior and perception (Osterman, 2000). Nevertheless, in schools with limited resources and spaces, maintaining attractive landscaping can be challenging and may divert resources from other critical needs such as classrooms and facilities, rather than aesthetic landscaping. The study of Oco (2022) revealed that safe and adequate learning environment at school is a key player to one's performance and satisfaction.

Brigada Eskwela work plan is divided in three phases namely; Pre-implementation, Implementation, and Post-implementation. Before the implementation of Brigada Eskwela, the School Facilities Coordinator shall identify the needs for the upcoming school year's opening of classes and assess school facilities that require repair or replacement. Studies have shown that BE is highly implemented across all stages, with the implementation stage receiving the most emphasis (Cano-Butlay et al., 2024). The assistance of the Education Physical Facilities Division, School Watching Team (SWT), and Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) officers and members may be sought, if necessary. BE broadens community support for basic education, improves physical facilities, and promotes unity of purpose (Garcia, 2021). Stakeholder participation, particularly from teachers and community members, significantly influences the program's implementation (Colonia et al., 2024). Schools shall identify other requirements/activities necessary for school operations and teaching and learning.

School heads, teachers, and their school personnel are strictly prohibited from soliciting or collecting any form of contribution, including but not limited to Brigada Eskwela fees from parents or legal guardians, volunteers, partners, and stakeholders. While the program promotes collaboration between schools and communities, there are concerns about soliciting contributions from parents and stakeholders (Requina, 2022). The Brigada Eskwela activities shall focus on voluntary work and participation to ensure that schools are adequately prepared for the upcoming school year.

School Heads or Principals shall lead the creation of the working committees for the Brigada Eskwela as well as supervise its functions. School heads play a crucial role in implementing the Brigada Eskwela program, with their leadership practices significantly impacting its success (Abugho & Quirap, 2023). Together with the school head/principal, the working committees shall be composed of teachers and other non-teaching personnel. Further, parents, learners, community members, and external stakeholders may also be part of the task force if the nature of the involvement is voluntary.

During the implementation of the program, public schools are transformed into a venue where people had the rare opportunity to collaborate and be directly involved in an endeavor with the government in achieving one goal. As the DepEd explains, one of Brigada Eskwela's goals are to foster understanding among all sectors of society that the education of the Filipino people is the responsibility of everyone. The government that provides free education for the Filipino youth, the community where they grow, and the private sector who will eventually employ them are all stakeholders of education. Their cooperation is significant to the success of students' education. Overall, BE serves as an effective

platform for community-government collaboration in education (Colonia et al., 2024). Notably, this initiative has gained prominence within DepED, emerging as a cornerstone for community development, encouraging widespread community engagement and fostering collaboration to enhance the quality of basic education nationwide (Brigada Eskwela Manual, 2009). As a matter of policy, all work and tasks performed under Brigada Eskwela are voluntary in nature.

The post-implementation is the period after the conduct of the Brigada Eskwela week. The collected data shall be consolidated in preparation for the schools' accomplishment report. This would also bring forth idea necessary challenges, device innovative practices to improve the level of implementation, and gather feedback among stakeholders experienced during the whole Brigada cycle. However, perceptions of the program's success can differ among stakeholder groups, with parents and teachers viewing it more favorably than barangay officials (Cano-Butlay et al., 2024).

The Brigada Eskwela initiative in the Philippines is primarily sponsored by community donations, displaying a strong sense of ownership and engagement among local stakeholders. Members of the community willingly volunteer their time, resources, and finances to help the program achieve its goals of upgrading school infrastructure and improving the conditions for learning. BE coordinators play a crucial role in facilitating partnerships and community outreach, especially in the post-pandemic era (Maghuyop, 2023). However, challenges persist, including varying levels of participation among stakeholder groups and differences in implementation between small and medium-sized schools (Cano-Butlay et al., 2024). Despite these challenges, the BE program fosters a sense of unity and volunteerism among diverse stakeholders, contributing to improved school infrastructure and learning conditions (Colonia et al., 2024). While the Department of Education (DepEd) provides some monitoring and advice, the program's success is primarily due to the community's voluntary efforts.

The Brigada Eskwela program not only improves school infrastructure, but it also enhances community ties, promotes positive values, and fosters a more friendly educational atmosphere. It provides a platform for promoting more community involvement in education in addition to its tangible contributions to school maintenance. Improved communication amongst school stakeholders and a rise in parental involvement in their children's education are all potential outcomes of this interaction. Cultural variations in parental involvement are important to consider, as family plays a central role in Philippine society (Bartolome et al., 2017). Overall, the BE program serves as a platform for promoting community involvement in education, improving communication among school stakeholders, and increasing parental participation in their children's education (Eden et al., 2024). Casey (2023) said that, parents should join school activities. An engaged parent gets even more involved by helping make decisions at the school. It may also act as a spark for conversations about educational concerns, giving locals the ability to speak up for their schools' needs and support constructive educational improvements. Public schools in Baguio City, like many educational institutions, rely on a combination of government funding, private donations, and community support. However, securing consistent funding can be challenging especially to the Brigada Eskwela coordinator, school head, non-teaching personnel, and teachers. Jungay's (2019) study as cited by Colonia et al. (2024), revealed that volunteerism among stakeholders has always been at a high level but, in terms of financial matters, it is only on a moderate level, especially if the stakeholders in the area belong to low-income families. Baguio City also faces challenges in terms of resource accessibility and economic disparities. Many schools in the city, particularly those located in remote or low-income areas, struggle to obtain financial support. Despite



these limitations, the community often demonstrates a strong sense of volunteerism, contributing their time and labor to support the school.

In relation to this, the Brigada Eskwela initiative may get assistance from Local Government Units (LGUs), who provide finances or resources to improve school facilities in their area. The City Government of Baguio City has been a partner of DepEd for Brigada Eskwela for more than a decade. LGU provides support through local funds and mobilizing its employees to support the schools' improvement program by cleaning, repainting, landscaping and furnishing classrooms in Baguio City. Furthermore, the private sector, including firms and organizations, might offer in-kind contributions to the program, connecting their corporate social responsibility initiatives with the program's goals. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can also help by providing in-kind services like technical expertise or volunteer labor.

The Special Education Fund (SEF) in the Philippines was established under Republic Act No. 5447, also known as the "Special Education Fund Act," enacted on September 16, 1968. Financed by an additional 1% tax on real property, the SEF aims to improve school facilities, equipment, and services (Manasan et al., 2011). It aims to support the improvement and maintenance of public-school facilities, equipment, and services. However, challenges persist in SEF utilization, including underutilization in some areas (Castillo & Cay, 2024).

Republic Act No. 7160, the Local Government Code of 1991, further formalized the SEF, to exclusively support the enhancement and maintenance of public-school infrastructure and services. As mandated by subsequent DepEd-DBM-DILG Joint Circulars, the SEF is allocated for operational and maintenance expenditures including, but not limited to, the procurement and production of learning materials, communication costs, honoraria and allowances for personnel and stakeholders, salaries of support staff, compensation of locally hired teachers, health and sanitation measures, infrastructure, and provision of essential school equipment. Effective utilization of financial resources, including the SEF, has been shown to positively impact school facilities and services (Rico, 2021). Continued monitoring and optimization of SEF allocation are necessary to ensure equitable resource distribution and improved educational outcomes (Castillo & Cay, 2024).

Section 98, Title IV of Republic Act 7160, provides for the creation, composition and compensation of Local School Board shall be established in every province, city, or municipality. Whereas, the school board shall be composed of the City Mayor and the Schools Division Superintendent as co-chairmen; the Chairman of the education committee of the Sangguniang Panlungsod, the City treasurer, the representative of the "Pederasyon ng mga Sangguniang Kabataan" in the Sangguniang Panlungsod, the duly elected President of the City federation of Parents- Teachers Associations, the duly elected representative of the teachers' organizations in the city, and the duly elected representative of the non-academic personnel of public schools in the city, as members. LSB members are responsible for ensuring transparency, accountability, and addressing constituent needs in education governance (Sibug, 2023).

Section 99 of the Republic Act cites the functions of the Local School Board. The City board shall determine, in accordance with the criteria set by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, the annual supplementary budgetary needs for the operation and maintenance of public schools within the city, as the case may be, and the supplementary local cost of meeting such as needs, which shall be reflected in the form of an annual school board budget corresponding to its share of the proceeds of the special levy on real property constituting the Special Education Fund and such other sources of revenue

as this Code and other laws or ordinances may provide. The City treasurer, as the case may be, disburse funds from the Special Education Fund pursuant to the budget prepared and in accordance with existing rules and regulation.

In 2024, Baguio City Local School Board is hereby reconstituted and composed of the Chairperson, Hon. Benjamin B. Magalong, City Mayor; Co-Chairperson, Soraya T. Faculo, Schools Division Superintendent; Chairperson of the Committee on Education, Hon. Vladimir D. Cayabas, City Councilor; President of Sangguniang Kabataan Federation, Hon. John Rhey L. Mananeng; Alex B. Cabarrubias, City Treasurer; PTA Federation President, Pablo B. Gomuad; President-Non-Teaching Personnel Association, Samuel Bab-anga; Baguio City Teacher's Association, Nixon C. Elahe; and members from the Persons with Disability Affairs Office, Samuel Aquino; City Social Welfare and Development, Liza Bulayungan; and City Library, Easter Wahayna-Pablo.

The Board shall meet regularly on a monthly basis or often as deemed necessary to perform its function and duties as mandated by law. Special meetings shall be called by the Committee Chairperson as deemed necessary to tackle urgent concerns. A majority of the members of the board shall constitute a quorum, but the chairman or the vice-chairman must be present during meetings whee budgetary proposals are being prepared or considered. The affirmative vote of all the majority of the members shall be necessary to approve such proposals (Executive Order no. 122, series of 2022).

The American colonial period in the Philippines brought significant changes to the educational system, primarily aimed at increasing public school funding and establishing a widespread public education system (Chen Yao, 2021). Recognizing education as a cornerstone of national development, the government focused its investment in public schools. Prior to World War II, public education was the government's major project, accounting for roughly 20% of the annual budget. This provision demonstrates the commitment to delivering accessible and high-quality education to the Filipino people during this period.

In some other nations, the Special Education Fund is similar to the Special Autonomy Fund, as seen in Indonesia. Special autonomy in education is viewed as a significant blessing by the Papuans. They have strong hopes that the Special Autonomy monies provided for education will improve their living conditions, including school provisions and living standards (Agustinus, 2013). Special Autonomy funds, on the other hand, are allocated to finance regional development, which includes improving the quality of education and public health (Yulianti, et al., 2024).

Baguio City, boasts a robust educational system with a total of Sixty-seven (67) public schools wherein Twenty-two (22) are public secondary schools. While the city has made significant strides in providing educational opportunities for its residents, the increasing number of students has put a strain on its public secondary schools. Baguio City's public secondary schools are grappling with infrastructure challenge. The increasing student population coupled with aging school buildings and shortage of classrooms has resulted in overcrowded classrooms, dilapidated facilities, and inadequate learning environments. The overcrowding in classrooms has far-reaching implications for the quality of education. The quality of physical facilities and classroom environments strongly correlates with student satisfaction and academic outcomes (Qadeer et al., 2024). With limited space, it is difficult to create a conducive learning environment. Students may find it challenging to concentrate, and teachers may have trouble delivering effective instruction. Additionally, the lack of adequate facilities can hinder extracurricular activities and other essential components of a well-rounded education. As a result, many secondary schools are struggling to accommodate the influx of new students within their existing facilities. An innovative

cooperative learning framework is proposed, emphasizing the importance of school infrastructure, safe learning spaces, and pedagogical reform (Seherrie, 2023).

The city government and educational institutions have explored various solutions. One common approach has been to convert existing spaces, such as libraries, administrative offices, or even hallways, into makeshift classrooms. While this can provide temporary relief, it is not a sustainable solution in the long term. Converting existing spaces into makeshift classrooms has been explored as a temporary solution, but it can negatively affect academic performance (Reyes, 2024). Populated classrooms had become a challenge due to number of behavioral issues from students, difficulty in terms of teaching, organization, and management of instructional activities (Hubpages.com, n.d.).

The need for additional classrooms underscores the importance of investing in education infrastructure. The importance of education infrastructure in supporting effective learning is well-established (Yunita et al., 2023). Adequate facilities and environmental conditions contribute significantly to student achievement and overall educational quality. Building new schools or expanding existing ones is a crucial step in ensuring that all students have access to quality education. However, this requires significant financial resources and careful planning. Challenges in infrastructure management persist, including budget constraints, lack of routine maintenance, and inefficient management (Saputri & Fatmawati, 2024). The Special Education Fund (SEF) has been instrumental in financing some projects to upgrade classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and other essential school facilities.

Education Secretary Sonny Angara has highlighted the Department of Education's (DepEd) limited budget for addressing the nationwide classroom shortage. Despite a significant 2025 budget, a substantial portion is allocated to operational expenses, subsidies, and teacher positions. With only a small fraction dedicated to infrastructure development, including classroom construction, DepEd faces significant challenges in expanding its facilities to accommodate the growing student population (Philstar.com, 2024). This budgetary constraint poses a significant obstacle to improving the quality of education in the Philippines.

Bai (2023) said that the lack of resources and infrastructure in schools affects the quality of education that students receive. Without proper facilities, students may not be able to attend classes regularly, or they may be distracted by external factors, making it difficult for them to concentrate on their studies. Moreover, the lack of resources and infrastructure in schools is not only limited to the Philippines but is also a common problem in other developing countries. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, nearly 30 million children of primary school age are not in school, and many of those in school face similar challenges to those faced by students in the Philippines. These challenges include lack of access to basic amenities such as electricity, water, and adequate classrooms. Over 37 million young adolescents aged 10-14 in sub-Saharan Africa were estimated not to complete primary school in the early 2000s (Lloyd & Hewett, 2003). The infrastructure challenge in this region is significant, with constraints on scaling up at affordable costs (Theunynck, 2009). These issues highlight the need for increased investment in school infrastructure and policy improvements to enhance the learning environment and student outcomes in developing countries (Navarro, 2024).

The combination of factors, including Baguio's unique climate, heavy usage, and the age of the buildings, has led to a critical need for extensive repairs and upgrades. Baguio's weather condition and frequent rainfall create a challenging environment for school infrastructure. Baguio City schools face challenges due to frequent rainfall and typhoons, with significant damage reported in 2023 (Henderson Balanggoy, 2024). The constant exposure to moisture can lead to mold growth, structural

damage, and other issues. Nationwide, there are persistent issues with classroom congestion, inadequate WASH facilities, and limited access to electricity and ICT resources (Adoracion Navarro, 2024). In 2023, the Department of Education Baguio City Schools Division reported twenty-three (23) schools affected by typhoon “Egay” and placed the initial damage cost estimate at P1,114,050.00. In the Rapid Damage Assessment Report included in the situational report of the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office as of 5 p.m. of July 27, 2023, the division reported a total of forty-one (41) classrooms and thirty-nine (39) other facilities that incurred damages during the calamity. A total of 310 learning materials were also damaged. The City Mayor, Benjamin Magalong, said in an interview at City Hall that with the start of classes in all public schools slated on August 29, 2024 the critical problem of lack of classrooms and chairs has once again reared its ugly head. The mayor said he discussed the idea of donating some of the trees to the Department of Education (DepEd) for the said purpose with the City Environment and Parks Management Office (CEPMO). He stressed, however, that coordination must first be made with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on the possibility of turning these trees into classroom chairs or desks. The mayor wanted to make sure that all city schools, especially those damaged by the typhoon, are ready for the opening of classes for the school year 2023-2024 (Baguio City Public Information Office, 2024).

Consequently, the heavy usage of school facilities, from classrooms to playgrounds, puts strain on the buildings and equipment. Over time, this can result in worn-out floors, broken windows, and damaged furniture. The poor state of school infrastructure can have a significant negative impact on students' learning experience. Leaky roofs, inadequate ventilation, and uncomfortable seating can create distractions and make it difficult for students to focus. Deteriorating facilities, such as leaking roofs and lack of basic services, can lead to violence, discrimination, and limited learning opportunities (Barrett et al., 2019). Unsanitary conditions caused by malfunctioning toilets or lack of proper cleaning can pose health risks and contribute to absenteeism. Furthermore, the deteriorating state of schools in Baguio also has economic implications. If students are unable to attend school due to unsafe conditions, it can lead to a loss of educational opportunities and hinder their future prospects. Poorly maintained facilities negatively impact student and teacher performance, perpetuating inequality as poorer districts struggle to fund repairs (Filardo et al., 2019). Therefore, the need for constant repairs and maintenance can drain resources that could be better allocated to other educational priorities.

Inspired by the "Broken Windows" article by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, Brigada Eskwela recognizes the significance of a well-maintained physical environment in fostering a positive learning atmosphere. By addressing minor issues like broken windows, peeling paint, and overgrown vegetation, the program aims to prevent larger problems such as vandalism, crime, and a decline in academic performance.

On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly brought numerous challenges to the education system of the Philippines, affecting not only students but also teachers, parents, and educational institutions. In March 2020, the Philippine government ordered the closure of schools to curb the spread of the virus. As a result, millions of students had to shift to online or distance learning, which was a struggle for those without access to technology or reliable internet connection. The implementation of Brigada Eskwela has specific amendments due to the pandemic. The annual tradition of Brigada Eskwela, where students, teachers, and community members come together to clean and repair schools, has changed due to the pandemic. Social distancing measures and regulated gathering of people/volunteers in school shall be strictly implemented. This will ensure readiness not only of the



school facilities but also the learners, teaching and non-teaching personnel, school administrators, and the community. The maintenance week activities may still be done during the two weeks before the opening of classes in public schools but only in areas allowed by the local risk classification and applicable quarantine guidelines by that time. If allowed, schools shall strictly comply with protocols on social distancing and implement precautionary measures consistent with the Inter-agency Task Force (IATF) health protocols, Department of Health (DOH) protection protocols, local quarantine rules and all other relevant protocols outlined in DepEd and DepEd Task Force COVID-19 issuances. If Regional Offices and Schools Division Offices opt to hold their virtual kick-off, it shall be conducted as an online Brigada Eskwela Forum (DepEd Order No. 53, s. 2020). The virtual kick-off, a new addition to Brigada Eskwela, aimed to bridge the gap created by physical limitations. Schools conducted online forums, allowing for virtual discussions and planning. These changes have emphasized the importance of partnerships, community outreach, and holistic engagement in education, particularly in the post-pandemic era (Maghuyop, 2023). This innovative approach ensured that the spirit of community involvement and collaboration remained alive, even in the face of unprecedented challenges.

The pandemic significantly impacted the utilization of the Special Education fund as funds were diverted to support health and safety measures. Due to the shift in priorities in Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs), some school projects were delayed or cancelled. This affected the overall condition of school facilities and the quality of the learning environment. The pandemic disrupted supply chains, leading to delays in procuring materials and equipment for school maintenance and improvement, which resulted to unutilized funds for a period of time. To address these challenges, recommendations include involving stakeholders in budget planning, optimizing SEF allocation across various categories, and continuous monitoring of fund utilization (Castillo & Cay, 2024).

Brigada Eskwela took on greater importance in the school year 2021-2022 as priorities shifted to support health and safety measures (Lubis et al., 2021). The program moved its emphasis to safeguarding the health, safety, and well-being of students, teachers, and school personnel while simultaneously offering necessary learning opportunities.

The Schools Division of Baguio City recognized the critical role of health and sanitation in creating a conducive learning environment. Research indicates that a healthy school environment is crucial for optimal student learning and development (Maba, 2022). Through various health programs, including WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) and WinS (Water, sanitation, and hygiene education) activities, the division implemented several initiatives to improve school conditions.

These programs included the distribution of hygienic items such soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, sanitary pads, and cleaning materials. This provides that children and staff have access to the supplies required for proper hygiene. Furthermore, the division aimed to improve water supply by linking schools to barangay water networks, building water pumping systems, and installing rainwater catchments. This ensured a steady supply of clean water for drinking, sanitation, and handwashing. Factors contributing to WASH program success included having toilet operation and maintenance funds, which were associated with functional toilets (Karon et al., 2017). The division concluded projects such as adding toilets, constructing or improving individual and group handwashing facilities, and upgrading drainage systems. These efforts intended to provide a healthier and safer learning environment for everybody. In the Philippines, WASH implementation in schools faced challenges, but coordinators often employed mitigation strategies (Culang et al., 2021). In school year 2023-2024, with the issuances of Presidential Proclamation No. 297, dated July 21, 2023, lifting the State of Public Health Emergency throughout the



Philippines due to COVID-19, all prior orders, memoranda, and issuances that are effective only during the State of Public Health Emergency shall be deemed withdrawn, revoked, or cancelled and shall no longer be in effect. All COVID-19 restrictions including but not limited to wearing of face masks and distancing are lifted. As a result, recommendations for the execution of Brigada Eskwela were issued.

The annual Brigada Eskwela program has significantly benefited from SEF support. Through SEF-funded projects, the City Government of Baguio has been able to facilitate essential repairs, renovations, and improvements in public schools, ensuring a conducive learning environment. It can also support the construction of new classrooms, libraries, and laboratories.

According to data from the Special Education Fund Electronic Procurement System (EPS) and Learner Information System (LIS), the total number of learners and funding allocated to Brigada Eskwela for public schools in the city from SY 2019 to SY 2024 were as follows:

**Table 1**  
**Data from the EPS & LIS of Schools Division of Baguio City**

School Year	Amount Allocated to Brigada	Junior High School	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total Number of Learners
2019 - 2020	1,500,000.00	21,374	1,827	1,238	24,439
2020 - 2021	2,680,000.00	22,384	2,491	1,718	26,593
2021 - 2022	5,000,000.00	23,404	4,098	2,542	30,044
2022 - 2023	5,000,000.00	22,404	3,625	3,711	29,740
2023 - 2024	4,000,000.00	20,389	3,332	3,401	27,122
2024 - 2025	4,000,000.00	19,702	3,286	3,051	26,039

The Special Education Fund (SEF) in Baguio City has consistently demonstrated its unwavering support for the Brigada Eskwela program, a nationwide initiative aimed at improving the physical infrastructure of public schools. The table above provides a snapshot of the SEF allocations to the program from the school year 2019 to 2024.

In the pre-pandemic years, the SEF allocations to Brigada Eskwela in Baguio City steadily increased, reflecting a growing commitment to enhancing the learning environment for students. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 presented challenges for the education sector. Despite these disruptions, the SEF continued to allocate substantial funds to Brigada Eskwela, underscoring its resilience and dedication to supporting public schools.

The significant increase in SEF allocations for the school years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 likely reflects the need to address the physical and infrastructure challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. Schools have required additional funding to implement safety measures, repair damaged facilities, or provide essential resources for remote learning. During this period, the total number of enrollees steadily increased, indicating a direct relationship between the program's funding and its effectiveness in attracting students.

The slight decrease in the allocation for the school year 2023-2024 could be attributed to various factors, such as a decline in pandemic-related expenses or a shift in funding priorities. However, it's important to note that the overall allocation remains substantial, indicating continued support for Brigada Eskwela and its mission to improve public schools in Baguio City. Correspondingly, the total enrollment figure

experienced a slight decrease for the school year 2024-2025. This suggests that the program's impact is directly tied to the level of financial support it receives.

The positive correlation between SEF funding and enrollment can be attributed to several factors. Brigada Eskwela initiatives, funded by SEF, often involve the repair, renovation, or construction of school facilities. These improvements create a more conducive learning environment, attracting more students and their families. Effective utilization of Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) and SEF has been associated with very satisfactory development of school facilities and services (Rico, 2021). A safer school environment can alleviate concerns among parents and guardians, leading to increased enrollment.

Furthermore, Brigada Eskwela frequently involves community participation, fostering a sense of ownership and investment in the schools. This community engagement can contribute to a more positive school culture, attracting students and their families. The program's success is attributed to collaborative efforts, volunteerism, and unity of purpose among diverse stakeholders (Garcia, 2021; Maghuyop, 2023). Thus, by addressing infrastructure issues, Brigada Eskwela can improve accessibility to schools, especially for students from marginalized communities. This increased accessibility can lead to a wider pool of potential enrollees. By prioritizing investments in school infrastructure and accessibility, educational systems can take significant steps towards providing equitable, high-quality education for all students, particularly those from marginalized communities (Obioma, 2023; Damodaran, 2023).

The consistent allocation of SEF funds has enabled the program to make a tangible difference in the educational landscape of the city. The City Government through the Special Education Fund continues to maintain adequate funding and support to ensure its long-term success in providing quality education to the city's youth. Continuous monitoring and optimization of SEF utilization are crucial for ensuring equitable resource distribution and improved educational outcomes (Castillo & Cay, 2024).

At present, Baguio City's secondary schools are facing a significant challenge due to the overwhelming number of enrollees. Schools located in densely populated areas, such as Baguio City National Science High School (BCNHS) and Pines City National High School (PCNHS), are particularly impacted. The significant increase in student enrollment has led to overcrowded classrooms and insufficient facilities, prompting some schools to limit admissions, particularly for Senior High School students. The surge in enrollment can be attributed to several factors. The city's population has been steadily increasing, leading to a higher demand for educational services. Additionally, schools located in populated areas are more accessible to students, making them preferred choices. The limited number of secondary schools in Baguio City further contributes to the problem. The overflowing enrollment has several negative consequences. Overcrowded classrooms can negatively impact the quality of education, as students may struggle to concentrate and learn effectively. Schools may also face challenges in providing adequate resources, such as textbooks, materials, and facilities.

To accommodate the growing student population, schools like Lindawan National High School and Rizal National High School have resorted to using makeshift classrooms and require additional chairs. The situation is also true in other countries. In Los Angeles, California, the South Gate Middle School was designed to accommodate 800 students but it is serving 4,200 students. Therefore, to give solution to the problem, playground, gymnasiums, libraries, computer labs, and storage areas were converted into classrooms (Just Schools California, n.d.)

In an article, dated September 18, 2023, data shows that six hundred and thirty-three (633) chairs are needed in Baguio City public secondary schools. The rating is based on the school readiness form of the

DepEd where a 75 to 100 percent mark is tagged as “ready”; 50 to 74 percent “nearly ready”; and 49 percent and below “not ready.”

For classrooms, secondary levels also obtained the ready marks of 97.8 percent. At least 17 classrooms are needed in high school. The DepEd-Baguio welcomed the city government's plan to use lumber from felled trees during typhoons to make chairs for public school learners (Philippine News Agency, 2023).

The Brigada Eskwela Program in Baguio City is designed to ensure equitable resource allocation among the 67 public elementary and secondary schools. The Division Office's focal person can then strategize and implement the procedures for fair distribution, proactively anticipating potential challenges. This transparent approach fosters fairness and prevents discrepancies in resource distribution. Coordinators play a crucial role in planning, implementing, and monitoring the program, emphasizing partnerships and community outreach (Maghuyop, 2023).

Schools will be able to decide what their top priorities and urgent needs are after the allocation is made available. By allowing schools to customize their improvement initiatives to their specific circumstances, this maximizes the usefulness of the funds allotted. Schools can concentrate on important areas like infrastructure repairs, classroom improvements, or the purchase of instructional materials by setting priorities for their requirements. By entrusting schools with the power to determine their specific needs, the program empowers educators and administrators to prioritize projects that directly address the challenges they face. The program's emphasis on transparent procurement processes fosters accountability and prevents misuse of resources.

The identified needs of each school will be submitted to the Brigada Eskwela focal person for consolidation. This is where the leading concept becomes paramount, as the focal person must then guide the entire process from this point forward. The focal person leads the presentation of the consolidated needs in a well-structured project proposal for approval. Studies have shown that leadership practices significantly impact BE implementation, with democratic, transformational, and delegative styles being prevalent (Abugho & Quirap, 2023). Once approved, the proposal will be forwarded to the SEF Focal for procurement, influencing the efficient and organized execution of the process. By addressing the identified needs through an organized procurement process, this provides accountability and transparency in the allocation of funds.

The utilization of Special Education Fund (SEF) in support of the Brigada Eskwela program in public secondary schools in Baguio City is often hindered by the stringent procurement processes outlined in Republic Act 1984, the Government Procurement Reform Act. This is where the organizing becomes particularly relevant, as it deals with the structuring of resources and activities to achieve objectives. The mandated three-month timeframe for procurement activities from bid opening to contract award, while designed to ensure transparency and accountability, can inadvertently delay the implementation of Brigada Eskwela projects. Local government units consistently practice procurement procedures, but face significant challenges during the process (Iyog, 2024). This challenge directly impacts the organizing concept in management, as it dictates how schools can effectively structure their resources and activities to achieve the program's goals. This is particularly problematic when schools require urgent repairs or renovations, as project proposals must be submitted well in advance to meet the procurement timeline.

Moreover, the approval process can be iterative, with proposals often requiring revisions or additional information, further contributing to delays. Even after a successful bid and contract award, the delivery

of procured materials can be subject to unexpected delays, impacting the timely execution of Brigada Eskwela activities.

As Munson (2019) notes, controlling involves tracking, reviewing, and regulating project progress and performance against set objectives. The delays can have significant implications for the utilization of SEF funds, schools might find themselves unable to use allocated funds for their original, urgent Brigada Eskwela purposes simply because too much time has passed. In such situations, the absence of control can lead to schools being forced to seek alternative funding sources to address immediate needs, potentially diverting SEF Brigada Eskwela resources to other priorities.

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of Special Education Fund (SEF) Utilization in Brigada Eskwela program in public secondary schools in Baguio City through the following: First, to assess the level of utilization of the Special Education Fund in Brigada Eskwela program in the secondary level public schools in Baguio City; Second, to identify the challenges and benefits in optimizing SEF allocation for Brigada Eskwela to enhance learning environments.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research study is based on the use of Budget Control Theory to examine the financial management procedures surrounding the Special Education Fund in the Brigada Eskwela program in Baguio City's secondary public schools. It provides a structured framework for assessing the allocation and use of these resources.

Budget Control Theory emerged from the combination of management and accounting ideas, particularly those derived from scientific management and the creation of modern management accounting. Frederick Winslow Taylor pioneered the principles of scientific management, which created the groundwork for cost accounting and control systems that are essential to budgetary control. Taylor's emphasis on efficiency and standardization, as described in his fundamental work (Taylor, 1911), influenced the evolution of management accounting techniques. Furthermore, the formalization of budgetary control in organizational management, as advocated by leaders such as James O. McKinsey, highlighted the significance of combining planning and control systems for effective organizational performance. McKinsey's influential work (McKinsey, 1922) emphasized the importance of matching planning and control processes to improve organizational outcomes. It is also important to recognize the impact of public budgeting practices, and the subsequent application of budgeting theory to public money, on the current use of Budget Control Theory (Wildavsky, 1964).

Using Budget Control Theory, it allows for a systematic and evidence-based study of the Special Education Fund's use. This theoretical framework offers an organized method to data collecting and analysis, allowing for the development of relevant conclusions and actionable recommendations for improving planning and financial management.

Finally, through the application of Budget Control Theory, this research seeks to provide evidence-based insights that can inform policy and practice, leading to more efficient and effective financial management and planning within the Schools Division of Baguio City.

### **Definition of Terms**

#### **1. Budget Control Theory**

A conceptual framework that explains how the processes of planning, control, and budgeting influence financial management, ultimately impacting organizational outcomes such as efficiency, effectiveness,

and accountability.

**2. Planning**

The process of setting objectives and determining the actions needed to achieve them.

**3. Control**

The process of monitoring actual performance against planned performance and taking corrective actions when necessary.

**4. Budgeting**

The process of creating a financial plan that outlines expected revenues and expenditures for a specific period.

**5. Financial Management**

The strategic planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of financial undertakings in an organization or state. It involves decisions about resource allocation, investment, and funding.

**6. Efficiency**

The ability to accomplish something with the least waste of time, money, and effort or competence in performance.

**7. Effectiveness**

The degree to which something is successful in producing a desired or intended result.

**8. Accountability**

The obligation of an individual or organization to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose the results in a transparent manner.

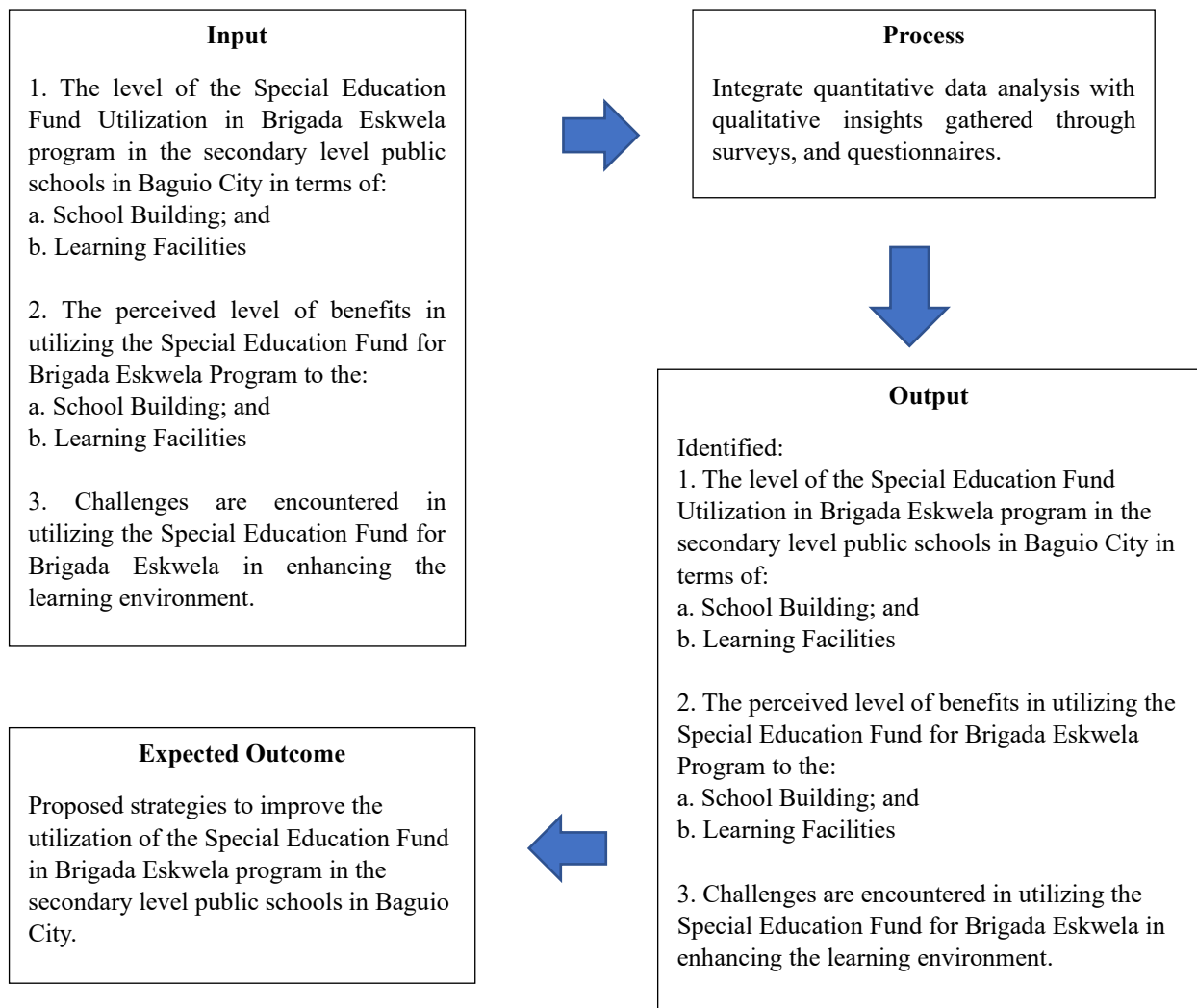
**Statement of the Problem**

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Special Education Fund (SEF) Utilization in Brigada Eskwela program in public secondary schools of Baguio City.

1. What is the level of the Special Education Fund Utilization in Brigada Eskwela program in the secondary level public schools in Baguio City in terms of:
  - a. School Building; and
  - b. Learning Facilities
2. What is the perceived level of benefits in utilizing the Special Education Fund for Brigada Eskwela Program to the:
  - a. School Building; and
  - b. Learning Facilities
3. What challenges are encountered in utilizing the Special Education Fund for Brigada Eskwela in enhancing the learning environment?



**Figure 1**  
**Research Paradigm**



## Chapter 2

### Design and Methodology

This chapter presented the research design and methodology that guided the study, outlined the procedures for data collection and analysis employed to examine the impact of Special Education Fund (SEF) Utilization in Brigada Eskwela Program in Public Secondary Schools in Baguio City.

This study primarily employed a quantitative research design to investigate the impact of SEF funding on the Brigada Eskwela program within Public Secondary Schools in Baguio City. While the primary focus is on quantitative data and statistical analysis, some descriptive qualitative data was used to provide context and support the quantitative findings.

Specifically, it measured the relationship between SEF funding levels and key program outcomes, such as improvements in school facilities, resource availability, and community participation. Data were collected through surveys administered to school heads, teachers, and non-teaching personnel, allowing for statistical analysis of the relationships between variables. The following sections was elaborated on the research design:

**Population and Sample**

The study includes 154 participants from 22 secondary public schools in Baguio City with Special Education Fund (SEF) allocations. This group includes 22 school heads, 44 non-teaching staff, and 88 teachers. A selective sample strategy was used to choose individuals who have relevant knowledge and prior experience. This strategy helped to ensure that the sample is representative of the target population and can provide valuable, insightful data for the study.

To guarantee that this research is conducted ethically, strict steps were implemented to preserve the confidentiality of participants and privacy. The school head was provided informed consent, and participants had the choice of staying anonymous or using pseudonyms. Data were collected via a secure online platform, Google Forms, with each participant provided a unique code to ensure confidentiality.

All participants, including school heads, non-teaching personnel, and teachers, have the absolute right to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Their participation is entirely voluntary. Should a participant choose to withdraw, their data will be immediately removed from this study.

Regardless of whether they choose to participate or not, participants were treated with the highest dignity and respect. Moreover, it is crucial to remember that participants in this study will not get any monetary compensation or other tangible advantages for taking part.

**Data Collection Methods**

To collect primary data, standardized questionnaires were distributed to chosen individuals. The questionnaires include a brief introduction explaining the study's purpose, clear instructions for completing the form, and assurances regarding confidentiality and privacy. Participants were informed that their participation is entirely voluntary.

Before distributing the questionnaire, a formal request for consent was submitted to the Division Office personally. Upon approval, a separate letter of consent was forwarded to the school head. After the school head gives his or her approval, the link to the questionnaire was distributed via Google Form. These questionnaires focused on three major areas: SEF allocation and utilization, the impact on Brigada Eskwela, and stakeholder perspectives and experiences.

The first section looks at the amount of SEF funding distributed to schools, the specific projects supported, and the decision-making processes involved. The second area evaluates how SEF contributions have contributed to Brigada Eskwela's achievement, including changes to school facilities, infrastructure, and learning environments. The third area investigates stakeholders' perspectives of the success of SEF utilization, obstacles encountered during the implementation process, and recommendations for improvement.

Raw data were restricted to the researcher, research adviser, and the University Ethics Committee, ensuring that sensitive material is only accessible to authorized personnel. To increase data security, encrypted communication methods were used, and sensitive data were not published on public platforms or unsafe channels. Data were kept safe on both physical and digital platforms. Physical copies were stored on secured hard drives which is password-protected, while digital versions were saved on Google Drive. Data will be kept for at least five years after publication to facilitate further study. Following the end of the research and distribution of findings, all data will be safely disposed of by permanently deleting it from both physical and digital storage media.

It is important to make clear that the information gathered for this study were handled with the highest confidentiality and won't be distributed to outside parties or organizations. Any conclusions or revelations will be disseminated while preserving participant and departmental privacy.

Stakeholders in education greatly benefits from the research's conclusions regarding Brigada Eskwela's efficient use of the SEF. This study's identification of strengths and weaknesses helps shape policies and guidelines that maximize the SEF's use and allocation, thereby improving the standard of instruction in Baguio City's secondary public schools. The research findings and their consequences will be discussed in a brief summary report that will be prepared and shared to participants.

## Treatment of Data

Data analysis employed the following statistical methods:

Weighted Mean were utilized to ascertain the level of agreement regarding the utilization of the Special Education Fund (SEF) in the Brigada Eskwela Program and to assess the advantages/benefits of the SEF for school building facilities. A Likert scale (1-4) quantified respondent opinions, with defined ranges used to interpret the weighted mean results.

Frequency and percentage were employed to determine the challenges encountered by school heads, teachers, and non-teaching personnel in utilizing the SEF within the Brigada Eskwela Program. Tabulated data was analyzed using frequency distribution and percentage.

To interpret the level of agreement on the utilization of the Special Education Fund in Brigada Eskwela Program, the following scale was utilized:

**Table 2**

### Level of agreement on the Utilization of the Special Education Fund in Brigada Eskwela Program

Degree	Textual Equivalent	Range	Interpretation
4	Strongly Agree	3.26 – 4.00	Very High: The respondents demonstrated a very high level of agreement on the utilization of the Special Education Fund in the Brigada Eskwela Program. This indicates a strong positive perception and confidence in how the funds are being used.
3	Agree	2.51 – 3.25	High: The respondents showed a high level of agreement on the utilization of the Special Education Fund in the Brigada Eskwela Program. This indicates a positive view, with some minor concerns or areas for potential improvement.
2	Disagree	1.76 – 2.50	Low: The respondents expressed low agreement on the utilization of the Special Education Fund in the Brigada Eskwela Program. This indicates some level of dissatisfaction or concern about how the funds are being used.
1	Strongly Disagree	1.00 – 1.75	<b>Very Low:</b> The respondents showed a very low level of agreement on the utilization of the Special Education Fund in the Brigada Eskwela

			Program. This suggests significant dissatisfaction and a strong perception that the funds are not being used effectively or appropriately.
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To determine the extent of the advantages/benefits of the Special Education Fund to the school building facilities, the following scale was used:

**Table 3**  
**Extent of the benefits of the Utilization of the Special Education Fund in Brigada Eskwela Program**

Degree	Textual Equivalent	Range	Interpretation
4	Fully beneficial	3.26 – 4.00	The Special Education Fund is fully beneficial in improving the school building and learning facilities through the Brigada Eskwela Program. This indicates that the funds are perceived to have had a positive impact.
3	Mostly beneficial	2.51 – 3.25	The Special Education Fund is seen as mostly beneficial in improving the school building and learning facilities through the Brigada Eskwela Program, with some areas for further improvement.
2	Partially beneficial	1.76 – 2.50	The Special Education Fund has been partially beneficial in improving the school building and learning facilities through the Brigada Eskwela Program. The impact is perceived as limited, with only minor improvements observed.
1	Not at all beneficial	1.00 – 1.75	The Special Education Fund is considered not beneficial in improving the school building and learning facilities through the Brigada Eskwela Program. The respondents perceive no positive impact or tangible improvements resulting from the utilization of the SEF.

The interval in this scale is computed as:

$$\frac{(4-1)}{4} \text{ here 4 is the highest and 1 is the lowest number in the Likert Scale used in this study.}$$

## Chapter 3

### Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation of Data

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the findings obtained from a questionnaire checklist administered to school heads, teachers, and non-teaching personnel in Public Secondary Schools within Baguio City.

This section presented the data on the following aspects: the level of agreement on the utilization of the Special Education Fund in Brigada Eskwela Program, the advantages/benefits of the Special Education Fund to the school building facilities, and the challenges encountered in the utilization of the Special Education Fund in Brigada Eskwela Program.

### Response Rate

The questionnaires were distributed to the Twenty-Two (22) public secondary schools in Baguio City. Of these, 20 schools participated in the study, yielding a response rate of 90.9%. The returned questionnaires represent the perspectives of three key stakeholder groups within these schools: school heads, teachers, and non-teaching personnel.

While all 20 participating schools contributed responses, the representation across stakeholder groups varied. Eight school heads completed the questionnaire, representing 36.4% of the total number of school heads across the 22 schools. This participation rate still provides valuable insight into the administrative perspective. The teacher response rate was significantly higher, with 102 teachers participating. This substantial representation from the teaching staff is particularly crucial to the study, as teachers are at the forefront of implementing educational practices and experiencing the daily challenges addressed by this research. Finally, 44 responses were received from non-teaching personnel, offering an important support staff perspective.

**Table 4**

### Level of Agreement on the Utilization of the Special Education Fund in Brigada Eskwela Program along School Building

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Description
School Building		
1. Faculty Office	3.16	Agree
2. Comfort rooms	3.21	Agree
3. Clinic	2.68	Agree
4. Canteen	2.37	Disagree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>2.85</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 4 demonstrates that comfort rooms received the highest weighted mean (3.21), indicating their prioritization in SEF utilization within the Brigada Eskwela program. Research indicates that repair, maintenance, and construction of school buildings are top priorities for SEF spending (Manasan et al., 2011). This aligns with findings that comfort rooms received the highest weighted mean in SEF



utilization within the Brigada Eskwela program (Castillo & Cay, 2024). This also corresponds with the core of budget-control theory from the book of James O. McKinsey, which emphasizes the strategic allocation of resources to achieve desired outcomes. 78 out of 154 respondents explicitly agreed on the allocation of SEF funds for comfort room improvements and limited cubicle as mentioned by one respondent. This consensus also suggests that the budget allocation is aligned with the perceived needs of the school community. It supports the proposed repairs and construction of comfort rooms in several public schools in Baguio City, as detailed in the 2023 Project, Programs, and Activities (PPAs) of the Special Education Fund. Canteens, with a mean score of 2.37, showed the lowest utilization of SEF funds. This suggests that SEF funds are not frequently used for canteen facilities. This is further corroborated by feedback from respondents, which revealed that some schools lack canteens altogether. This highlights a potential gap between planned and actual resource allocation.

Furthermore, DepEd Order (DO) 8, s. 2007, the Revised Implementing Guidelines on the Operation and Management of School Canteens in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, outlines two permissible canteen management models: School-Managed and Teachers' Cooperative-Managed. Budget-control theory recognizes the importance of adhering to regulations and policies to ensure responsible and compliant financial management. The findings suggest that schools are operating within the constraints of DO 8, which may explain the limited utilization of SEF funds for canteens.

**Table 5**

**Level of Agreement on the Utilization of the Special Education Fund in Brigada Eskwela Program along Learning Facilities**

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Description
Learning Facilities		
1. Classrooms	3.27	Strongly Agree
2. Laboratories (includes Computer lab, Science lab, Home Economics (HE) lab, etc.)	3.12	Agree
3. Library	2.63	Agree
4. Playground	2.38	Disagree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>2.85</b>	<b>Agree</b>

As shown in Table 5, classrooms emerged as another key area of focus, with a weighted mean of 3.27 and 68 respondents strongly agreeing on their importance. This emphasis on classrooms aligns with the observed increase in student enrollment, which leads to overcrowding and a heightened demand for adequate learning spaces. The significant increase in student enrollment has led to overcrowded classrooms and insufficient facilities, prompting some schools to limit admissions, particularly for Senior High School students, which highlights a significant budgetary challenge. The classroom environment emerges as a crucial determinant of student enrollment, with a strong positive relationship observed between school buildings and student enrollment (Ileuma, 2015). The findings directly relate to the budget-control theory, which proposes that effective resource allocation and control are essential for achieving organizational goals. Additionally, Education Secretary Sonny Angara has highlighted the Department of Education's (DepEd) limited budget for addressing the nationwide classroom shortage.

DepEd faces significant challenges in expanding its facilities to accommodate the growing student population (Philstar.com, 2024). The City Mayor, Benjamin Magalong, said in an interview at City Hall that with the start of classes in all public schools slated on August 29, 2024, the critical problem of lack of classrooms and chairs has once again reared its ugly head.

On the other hand, playgrounds exhibited a low mean score (2.38), indicating limited use of SEF funds. In some cases, playgrounds are managed by the local barangay rather than the school itself. This may explain why SEF funds are not perceived to be used for playground development or maintenance. The lower allocation to playgrounds, especially when managed by barangays, indicates a separation of control, where the school administration has less influence over playground development. This separation weakens the school's ability to direct funds towards playgrounds. Playgrounds, in particular, exhibit limited use of SEF due to playgrounds often being managed by local barangays rather than schools, leading to a separation of control and weakened school influence over playground development (Castillo & Cay, 2024). This strengthens the idea of budget-control theory, which asserts that funds are allocated to areas that those making decisions believe are most important.

The overall weighted mean of 2.85 indicates a general level of agreement among respondents regarding the utilization of SEF funds within the Brigada Eskwela program for essential facilities such as faculty offices, comfort rooms, classrooms, and laboratories. It suggests a shared understanding among respondents about what constitutes the "best" use of the Special Education fund. The focus on comfort rooms and classrooms highlights a preference for investments that directly support the core mission of the school, which is teaching and learning.

On the contrary, the disagreement observed regarding the use of SEF for canteens and playgrounds suggests that respondents may perceive these facilities as having alternative funding sources or as falling outside the primary scope of SEF utilization within the Brigada Eskwela program. This indicates that allocating SEF funds to these areas might not be seen as the most efficient use of resources from the perspective of those making decisions. This also reflects a decision-making process where stakeholders, exercising budgetary control, prioritize areas where SEF funds have a more direct and demonstrable impact on the school's primary functions.

**Table 6**  
**Extent of the Advantages/Benefits of the Special Education Fund to the School Building**

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Description
School Building		
1. Faculty Office	3.13	Mostly Beneficial
2. Comfort rooms	3.08	Mostly Beneficial
3. Clinic	2.62	Mostly beneficial
4. Canteen	2.23	Partially Beneficial
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>2.77</b>	<b>Mostly Beneficial</b>

Table 6 reveals that faculty offices (weighted mean: 3.13) were perceived as significantly benefiting school personnel through the utilization of SEF funds in the Brigada Eskwela program. The improvement of faculty offices through Brigada Eskwela is a tangible demonstration of the DepEd's commitment to teacher welfare, a critical element of quality education. The utilization of SEF funds improved the development of school facilities and services for students and teachers (Rico, 2021). From a budget-

control perspective, this allocation reflects a strategic choice to enhance working conditions, thereby fostering a conducive learning environment. The direct alignment of this investment with the DepEd Quality Policy, which emphasizes high-quality education, reinforces the theory's notion of rational resource allocation. By providing teachers with functional and comfortable workspaces, Brigada Eskwela contributes to creating conducive learning environments as envisioned by the program.

Conversely, limited funding was identified as a significant challenge, often proving insufficient for comprehensive school building facility improvements. The analysis also revealed a finding that some respondents expressed limited awareness of the utilization of SEF funds in the Brigada Eskwela program, which raises concerns about how transparent the decision-making process is. Limited funding is a significant obstacle for comprehensive facility improvements (Fernández et al., 2023). Furthermore, the respondents' limited awareness of SEF fund utilization points to a lack of transparency in the budget-control process. Transparency and accountability in managing school finances are crucial (Gaspar et al., 2022).

According to the theory, effective control requires clear communication and accountability (McKinsey, 2022). If stakeholders are unaware of how funds are being used, it suggests a breakdown in the control mechanisms, hindering their ability to influence or understand the allocation decisions. This lack of transparency can erode trust and potentially lead to misaligned priorities, as stakeholders are unable to effectively monitor how their resources are being managed, thus directly supporting the budget control theory's implications on resource allocation and transparent control.

In line with the principles of constitutional economics, as advanced by Buchanan & Tullock (1962), the importance of transparent and accountable budgetary processes is paramount. Buchanan's emphasis on the contractual and constitutional bases for economic and political decision-making underscores the need for clear rules and procedures governing the use of public funds.

**Table 7**

**Extent of the Advantages/Benefits of the Special Education Fund to the Learning Facilities**

Indicator	Weighted Mean	Description
Learning Facilities		
1. Classrooms	3.32	Fully Beneficial
2. Laboratories (includes Computer lab, Science lab, Home Economics (HE) lab, etc.)	3.07	Mostly Beneficial
3. Library	2.64	Mostly Beneficial
4. Playground	2.39	Partially Beneficial
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>Mostly Beneficial</b>

Table 7 highlights the substantial benefits of SEF-funded improvements to classrooms, with a mean average of 3.32 and 81 respondents strongly agreeing on their positive impact. Classroom enhancements funded by Special Education Funds (SEF) have shown substantial benefits, with strong agreement among respondents on their positive impact (Castillo & Cay, 2024). These improvements contribute to a more conducive learning environment, reducing overcrowding and enhancing student engagement (Mhaiki & Mramba, 2024). This is further reinforced by the allocation of resources towards classroom enhancements, a highly visible area that demonstrably benefits both teachers and students, thereby maximizing positive feedback and community support. However, respondent feedback also revealed

concerns regarding land ownership issues within the school premises, hindering the full benefit of certain improvements.

Challenges such as land ownership issues, limited funding, and inadequate government support can hinder the full benefits of improvements (Istakri et al., 2024). This reflects how the budget-control theory recognizes that control is not absolute and can be influenced by external constraints. The prioritization of classroom enhancements, a visible and directly beneficial area, also shows a conscious decision-making process aimed at maximizing positive perception and community support, consistent with the theory's focus on strategic resource allocation.

**Table 8**  
**Challenges Encountered in the Utilization of the Special Education Fund in Brigada Eskwela Program based on Percentage**

Challenges/Problems	P
1. Difficulty in establishing partnerships with stakeholders and the community	66%
2. Delayed procurement or delivery of resources	77%
3. Limited allocation of SEF Fund to Brigada Eskwela	72%
4. Limited supervision of the school project implementation	50%

The importance of community and stakeholder engagement in Brigada Eskwela, as emphasized by the former Education Secretary Sara Duterte in August 2022 (DepEd, 2022), is underscored by the challenges revealed in Table 8. The finding that 66% of respondents reported difficulties forging partnerships demonstrates a critical need for strategies and support systems to bridge this gap and realize the full potential of Brigada Eskwela's collaborative model. This data reinforces Secretary Duterte's message, not merely as an ideal but as a crucial area requiring focused attention and improvement. Maghuyop (2023) emphasizes the crucial role of partnerships and community engagement. Requina (2022) notes challenges in involving stakeholders in BE implementation, suggesting a need for improved strategies. These studies collectively underscore the critical need for effective partnership strategies in educational contexts, aligning with the reported difficulties in forging partnerships and the call for focused attention on improving collaborative models (Maghuyop, 2023).

Furthermore, 77% of respondents reported experiencing delays in the procurement or delivery of essential resources, thereby potentially impeding the timely execution of Brigada Eskwela activities. This issue significantly impacts the timely implementation of Brigada Eskwela activities and can hinder project progress. In addition, respondents specifically noted instances where requested materials arrived late, leading to delays in their utilization and potentially impacting the intended allocation. The significant challenge posed by strict government procurement standards (RA 9184) to Brigada Eskwela implementation in Baguio City schools is clearly reflected in the survey data.

Most respondents (72%) reported insufficient allocation of the Special Education Fund (SEF) for Brigada Eskwela activities. This financial constraint presents a significant obstacle, limiting the scope of projects

and hindering the school's ability to address critical needs effectively. One respondent specifically highlighted the limitation imposed by the SEF procurement process, which restricts the purchase of items in small quantities. Despite these challenges, the SEF fund plays a crucial role in supporting school improvement. Another respondent emphasized the fund's contribution to covering the costs of essential repairs, improvements, and resources, ultimately enhancing the school environment for learners. Respondents were equally divided on the issue of limited supervision of school project implementation, with 50% answering "yes" and 50% answering "no."

**Table 9**  
**Challenges Encountered in the Utilization of the Special Education Fund in Brigada Eskwela Program based on Frequency**

Challenges/Problems	F	Rank
1. Difficulty in establishing partnership with stakeholders and the community	101	3
2. Delayed procurement or delivery of resources	118	1
3. Limited allocation of SEF to Brigada Eskwela	111	2
4. Limited supervision of the school project implementation	77	4

Table 9 presents the challenges encountered in the utilization of the Special Education Fund (SEF) for the Brigada Eskwela Program, ranking them based on their frequency (F).

With a frequency of 118, the most encountered challenge/problem is the delayed procurement or delivery of resources. This suggests that one of the main challenges to the program's successful execution is the challenges related to resources associated with obtaining the required materials and supplies. The second most urgent concern is the restricted amount of SEF allotted to Brigada Eskwela (F=111), indicating that program effectiveness and scope are directly impacted by budgetary limitations. The significance of cooperative efforts and resource mobilization beyond the budgeted amount is underscored by the third problem, which is the difficulty in forming relationships with stakeholders and the community (F=101). Studies have shown that stakeholder participation significantly influences program implementation, with teachers and community members generally participating to a great extent (Colonia et al., 2024). The program broadens community support for basic education, particularly in improving physical facilities and fostering unity of purpose (Larry F. Garcia, 2021). Lastly, the Limited supervision of the school project implementation (F=77) ranks fourth, suggesting that better monitoring and oversight are required to guarantee effective and efficient use of funds. Effective supervision is crucial for identifying and addressing problems in schools (Kurnia lisdia, 2019).

Other feedback from respondents highlighted challenges related to project implementation. These included difficulties in finding laborers for manual or physical tasks, often leading to delays in fund utilization. Several respondents mentioned concerns about labor costs, such as 'Materials were delivered, but no funds were available to pay skilled workers for better results' and 'no funds were allocated for payment of specialized labor.' Time management in project implementation was also identified as a



challenge. A study by Colonia et al., (2024) showed that stakeholder participation, especially in terms of time and money, significantly influences the implementation of the Brigada Eskwela program in public schools.

According to the Budget-Control Theory, accomplishing organizational objectives depends on efficient budget management. It highlights how crucial it is to organize, distribute, and manage financial resources to guarantee efficiency and accountability. The challenges found in Table 10 have a clear connection to budget control problems. The delayed procurement raises questions about timely budget disbursement and expenditure control. The Brigada Eskwela Program's needs may not be sufficiently reflected by the restricted SEF funding, which suggests possible issues with budget planning and prioritization. Difficulty in establishing partnerships with stakeholders and the community can be hindered by ineffective relationship development. In the same way, limited supervision compromises the effective and proper use of funds by ignoring essential monitoring and assessment procedures, affecting budget control.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This chapter summarizes the study's main findings and presents clear conclusions about how the Brigada Eskwela program uses the Special Education Fund (SEF). It also offers feasible recommendations for enhancing program execution, improving resource allocation, and promoting sustainable school growth.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Comfort rooms and classrooms demonstrate a clear prioritization in the utilization of the Special Education Fund (SEF) within the Brigada Eskwela program. This prioritizing suggests that these facilities are thought to be directly related to the overall quality of education, which may be a reflection of concerns about essential environments for learning and sanitation.
2. Canteens and playgrounds received lower mean scores and showed less agreement among respondents regarding their suitability for SEF funding. This discrepancy highlights a need for clearer guidelines on the scope of SEF utilization, particularly regarding facilities that contribute to student well-being beyond core academic spaces.
3. Faculty offices, comfort rooms, and clinics were perceived as providing substantial benefits to school staff, while classrooms emerged as the area with the most significant positive impact on students.
4. Land ownership issues can obstruct the implementation of certain improvements, and limited funding often restricts the scope of projects.
5. Delays in resource procurement and insufficient SEF allocation were identified as the most encountered challenges, signifying issues in the program's logistical and financial management. These delays can lead to inefficient project implementation, reduced project scope, and overall program effectiveness.
6. Challenges in forging community partnerships and the perception of limited supervision of project implementation pose potential obstacles to the program's success.
7. Significant labor, financial, and time management issues were frequently brought up by respondents, suggesting a complicated structure of related factors influencing project execution.

## Recommendations

Drawing upon the analysis and conclusions derived from this research, the subsequent recommendations are presented.

**1.** Given the continuous and prioritized need for comfort rooms and classrooms, as shown by the Special Education Fund (SEF) allocation within the Brigada Eskwela program, it is recommended that the Department of Education (DepEd) develop a uniform infrastructure development plan that focuses on these essential facilities. This plan should include a needs assessment of all secondary public schools to determine the current shortages and project future needs.

In addition, a cash allocation should be established, separate from ordinary SEF use, to ensure that these facilities are built and maintained on time. This strategy will address the present infrastructure backlog and emphasize the connection between proper learning settings, cleanliness, and overall educational quality.

**2.** Based on the lower mean scores and different opinions regarding the use of Special Education Fund (SEF) for canteens and playgrounds, it is recommended that the Schools Division of Baguio City develops a clear and detailed set of guidelines addressing the eligibility of learning facilities for SEF allocation. These guidelines should outline the requirements for funding such facilities, highlighting their impact on student well-being, nutritional needs, and overall development.

Similarly, the Local School Boards should consult with stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and students, to assess their school communities' specific needs and ensure that SEF expenditures are aligned with these needs, providing a more equitable and effective use of resources.

**3.** Recognizing classrooms' importance in student learning, as evidenced by their perceived significant positive impact, strategic investment should prioritize the creation of learning spaces that are lively and engaging. This includes incorporating interactive technologies such as smart boards and collaborative software, as well as enhancing classroom environments to facilitate flexible grouping and project-based learning.

In light of the respondents' indicated high level of perceived benefit for faculty offices, comfort rooms, and clinics, it is important to have a plan in place to maintain and upgrade these areas. By focusing on both student and staff needs at the same time, schools can make the best use of their resources and create an effective learning environment.

**4.** The Schools Division of Baguio City should implement a collaborative resource optimization strategy. Firstly, a Land Use and Partnership Committee should be formed, comprising representatives from the Division, School, and Local barangay leaders. This committee will focus on identifying potential land use agreements with the School and Barangays, minimizing direct land acquisition through a Memorandum of Agreement, Memorandum of Understanding, or contract outlining how the facility will be shared, including schedules, responsibilities, and any costs.

Secondly, to mitigate funding constraints, the school must engage local businesses and alumni in fundraising efforts, potentially focusing on specific projects with tangible outcomes. By fostering collaboration and leveraging existing resources, the Schools Division of Baguio City can overcome land and funding obstacles to effectively implement school improvements.

**5.** Schools should implement financial reporting practices that include publishing reports detailing SEF expenditures, conducting regular stakeholder meetings to discuss budget allocations and address any concerns, and establishing clear, accessible channels for feedback and inquiries. Leveraging school

websites and social media platforms to disseminate information, share success stories, and engage the broader community will further enhance transparency and promote accountability in SEF management.

6. A Community Engagement and Partnership Development Program should be established. This will focus on building strong relationships with local barangays, NGOs, and businesses through regular consultations, project planning, and the creation of formal partnership agreements. A dedicated Community Partnership Officer should be assigned to facilitate these relationships and ensure effective communication. Also, to address the lack of supervision, a Project Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Framework must be implemented. This framework should include clear project timelines, regular progress reports, and site visits by Division Personnel such as the Schools Division Superintendent, Division Engineer and Architect, and the SEF Focal. Utilizing technology such as online project management tools can enhance transparency and streamline communication between project implementers and supervisors.

Moreover, establishing a system of feedback mechanisms, including regular or monthly meetings with community partners and stakeholders, will ensure that project implementation aligns with intended goals and addresses community needs.

7. Recognizing that labor, financial, and time management challenges are hindering project execution, the school should implement a localized project optimization strategy. The School Head, in collaboration with teachers and non-teaching project timelines and checklists tailored to the school's specific context, ensures realistic timeframes and clear task assignments/roles. Likewise, to address labor concerns, the school should implement a skills-sharing initiative. This involves creating a database of the personnel skills and expertise, facilitating internal mentorship, and cross-training opportunities to maximize existing resources and reduce reliance on external labor. Besides, to improve financial management, the school should implement a transparent project budget tracking system that consists of regular budget reviews with project stakeholders, detailed expense tracking, and clear documentation of all expenditures. By focusing on internal collaboration, clear communication, and simplified project management practices, the school can improve project execution within its available resources while working with the Division for larger-scale solutions.

### **Additional Recommendation**

Brigada Eskwela, mobilizes stakeholders to contribute to the maintenance and improvement of the Secondary level Public Schools in Baguio City. The program faces unique challenges that require targeted interventions from the LGU. This report proposes additional recommendations for enhanced LGU support. The LGU should collaborate with the Schools Division of Baguio City to establish a transparent project monitoring and evaluation framework, including regular site visits and progress reports, to ensure accountability and efficiency in SEF utilization.

Future research should focus on deepening the understanding of the factors influencing SEF utilization in the Brigada Eskwela program. Researchers should do studies that follow schools over time to see if projects paid for by SEF help students learn better and improve the school. They should check which ways of getting the community involved work best to make Brigada Eskwela successful. Studies should help create project plans that fit Baguio City's culture, so they work well for everyone in the community.

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