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**DECS ORDER**  
 No. 23, s. 1992

**PILOT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NONORMAL EDUCATION  
 ACCREDITATION AND EQUIVALENCY (NFE/A&E) SYSTEM**

For: Regional Directors  
 Bureau Directors  
 Schools Superintendents  
 Heads of Private Schools

The development of a nonnormal alternative learning system for out-of-school youth (OSY) and adults who are unable to gain the educational opportunities of the traditional formal school system, has been a dream of the Philippine Government for over two decades. The driving force behind this dream has been a commitment to break the cycle between illiteracy and poverty and provide opportunities to the educationally disadvantaged to upgrade their skills, knowledge and competencies in order to improve their social, political and economic well-being. The development of the Nonnormal Education Accreditation and Equivalency (NFE/A&E) System by the Bureau of Nonnormal Education (BNFE) made the implementation of this dream into a reality.

The NFE/A&E System was launched by His Excellency, President Joseph Estrada (Governor Arroyo, formerly Simeon Magsaysay), during Manila on 25 January 1992.

The National Education Accreditation and Equivalency System (NFE/A&E) was developed by the BNFE as a core component of the ATAD-assisted Philippine Nonnormal Education Project (PNNEP) - ADIC, contract No. 125-0111-91. It is envisioned to provide an alternative means of certification of equivalent to those Filipinos aged 15 years and above who are unable to avail of the formal school system, or who have dropped out of formal elementary or secondary school.

It aims to:

- (1) Provide a system for assessing levels of literacy and nonnormal learning achievement based on a National NFE/A&E Curriculum covering basic and functional occupation skills and competencies and designed to be compatible to the formal school system.

- a) offer an alternative pathway by which out-of-school youth and adults earn an educational qualification comparable to the formal elementary and secondary school system; and
- b) enable out-of-school youth and adults to gain reading, writing and numeracy skills, to meet their learning goals as they define them, and to gain the skills they need to improve their economic status and function more effectively in society.

The NFE A&E System is a pioneering effort to offer a uniquely nonformal learning system to formal schooling. It is built around a truly nonformal curriculum that utilizes a range of innovative nonformal learning strategies designed to break down traditional learning barriers of time, accessibility and resources. It allows flexible entry and exit points and aims to maximize learners' control of the learning process.

4. The target learners of the NFE A&E System are Filipinos aged 15 years and above who are:

- Out-of-School Youth (OSY) and Adults
- Functional Illiterates
- Functional Education and Literacy Program (FELP) completers
- Unemployed OSY and adults
- Elementary and secondary school drop-outs
- DECS qualifiers who choose not to return to the formal school system
- Industry-based workers

5. The NFE A&E System will be pilot-tested in five selected urban and rural sites in Regions V, VII, XI, XII and the National Capital Region from February - June 1999.

6. The first batch of NFE A&E enrollees will take the NFE equivalency tests for both Elementary and Secondary Levels on 30 May 1999 with results to be announced by June 1999. The target number of test-takers is 20,000 for the Elementary Level and 10,000 for the Secondary Level of a total of 30,000 examinees.

7. Non-government organizations, State Universities and Colleges, Private Schools with Extension Services, Local Government Units, People's Organizations, Church-Based Organizations, and DECS will undertake the Learning Support Delivery System.


8. The BNFE has developed a comprehensive NFE A&E Manual of Operations which details the policy framework, operating guidelines and implementing mechanism of the new NFE A&E System. The purpose of this Manual is to describe how the new alternative learning system works and provide DECS, NFE officials and other partners/stakeholders involved in the pilot implementation, a vital reference material to guide their efforts to successfully operationalize the NFE A&E System in the five pilot sites.

9. All members the DECS officials and DECS PNFEH-hired staff in the NFE A&E System target regions should support this innovative and laudable nonformal education initiative which blazes the trail towards a flexible, responsive Philippine educational system appropriate for the next millennium. Participation in advocacy and social mobilization activities, training, implementation of the NFE A&E Learning Support Delivery System (LSDS), monitoring and evaluation, and reporting and documentation are needed to efficiently and effectively operationalize the NFE A&E System."

10. Enclosure No. 1 details the salient features and guidelines relative to the NFE A&E System.

11. All prior DECS issuances inconsistent with the provisions of this Order are hereby rescinded.

12. Immediate and wide dissemination of this Order is enjoined.

  
**NILO L. ROSAS**  
Undersecretary  
Officer-in-Charge

Incl. As stated

Reference:

DECS Memorandum No. 204, s. 1998

Attachment 1—(DAO 50-97)

To be indicated in the Projectal Index  
under the following subjects:

**ACCREDITATION**  
**NONFORMAL EDUCATION**

(DECS) which is deemed as comparable to the elementary and secondary level certificates of the formal school system.

The national NFE A&E tests are being developed by the Center for Educational Measurement (CEM) and are normed on grade six graduates and fourth year high school students. The two tests are based on the skills and competencies detailed in the NFE A&E Curriculum Framework, as well as on the one hundred and thirty-seven (137) NFE A&E Learning modules of the NFE A&E Learning Support Delivery System. The first test will be administered on the 30 May 1999 by the Center for Educational Measurement (CEM) in collaboration with the DECS-BNFE and representatives from the National Educational Testing and Research Center (NETRC). Results of the tests will be available by June 1999.

#### **Options available to learners after they complete the NFE A&E System:**

Learners who successfully complete the NFE A&E Tests will have access to counseling for advice regarding their options and possible pathways after exiting from the NFE A&E System. Elementary Level NFE A&E graduates may desire to continue to upgrade their skills and competencies by enrolling in the Secondary Level NFE A&E Learning Support System.

NFE A&E Learners wishing to return to the formal school system will need to take the existing Philippine Educational Placement Test (PEPT) for an assessment of their specific grade/year levels for placement purposes.

Other learners may wish to seek to enter other formal training programs such as those offered by the Technical Education Skills and Development Authority (TESDA), or other nonformal training programs such as continuing education income-generating courses, vocational training, etc. The DECS-BNFE is in the process of seeking formal agreements with agencies, institutions and organizations offering post-elementary and post-secondary vocational training courses such as TESDA, CHED, etc., in order that the NFE System articulates with the training programs of these institutions. Once articulation agreements are in place, graduates of the NFE A&E System will thereby gain access to a range of vocational training opportunities once they exit the NFE A&E System. Ultimately, all learners will hopefully enter/enter the world of work with an improved capacity for generating an income and improving their own economic situation and that of their families.

#### **Curriculum of the NFE A&E System:**

The NFE A&E System is built around a truly nonformal education curriculum known as the Philippines Nonformal Education Accreditation and Equivalency (NFE A&E) Curriculum Framework based on the new national definition of functional literacy and its major indicators developed by the Literacy Coordinating Council. The indicators of functional literacy have been formulated into five interrelated learning strands:

- I. **Communication Skills** (including listening, speaking, reading and writing from print and electronic media)
- II. **Problem Solving and Critical Thinking** (including numeracy, and scientific thinking)
- III. **Sustainable Use of Resources/Productivity** (including ability to earn a living as an employed or self-employed person, sustainable resources, and productivity)

(Inclosure No. 1 to DECS Order No. 27, s. 1999)

### **Salient Features and Guidelines of the NFE Accreditation and Equivalency System**

#### **Four Components of the NFE A&E System:**

- i) **NFE A&E Curriculum Framework** - which contains a learning continuum of essential skills, knowledge, attitudes and values desired for nonformal basic education and which are designed to be comparable to the formal school system.
- ii) **NFE A&E Learning Materials** - which are based on the NFE A&E Curriculum Framework and designed to provide learning support for OSY and Adults who wish to continue learning outside of the formal school system, particularly as preparation for certification of learning achievement through successful accomplishment of a National NFE Accreditation and Equivalency test.
- iii) **NFE Accreditation and Equivalency Testing** - which is based on the NFE A&E Curriculum Framework and content of the NFE A&E learning materials, and designed to provide two levels of certification of learning achievement comparable to the formal elementary and secondary education system.
- iv) **NFE A & E Learning Support Delivery System** - designed to provide learners a range of alternative pathways in order that they may continue their learning outside of the formal system and upgrade their skills and competencies in preparation for taking the NFE A&E Tests. This includes utilization of the NFE learning materials and a range of learner support strategies, structures and delivery modes, (such as learning facilitators, learning group sessions, peer learning and learning centers) and an NFE A&E administrative support system.

#### **List of Pilot Sites for NFE A&E Implementation:**

Five Regions are involved in the Pilot Implementation Phase, namely:

- National Capital Region - All Schools Divisions
- Region V - Catanduanes, Masbate and Sorsogon
- Region VII - Cebu City, Lapulapu City and Mandaue City
- Region XI - Sultan Kudarat
- Region XII - North Cotabato

#### **Testing and Certification Process of NFE A&E System:**

The NFE A&E System offers opportunities for two levels of individual certification which are deemed as comparable qualifications to the Elementary Level certificate and Secondary Level certificate of the formal school system. Beginning in May 1999, OSY and Adults who believe they are sufficiently prepared may apply for certification of their learning level by undertaking a standardized National NFE Accreditation Test at either the elementary or secondary level. If they successfully complete the NFE A&E Tests, they will be issued a certificate signed by the Secretary of the Department of Education Culture and Sports

IV. Development of Self and a Sense of Community (including self-development, a sense of personal and national history and identity, cultural pride, and recognition and understanding of civil and political rights)

V. Expanding One's World Vision (including knowledge, respect and appreciation for diversity, peace and nonviolent resolution of conflicts, and global awareness and solidarity.)

#### The Learning Modules:

The five Learning Strands of the NFE A&E Curriculum form the framework for one hundred and thirty-seven (137) facilitator-aided and self-learning modules developed under contract by SEAMBO-INNOTECH. The learning modules contain lessons, learning activities and pre- and post-module assessment tests designed to help learners improve their basic education skills and help them prepare for taking the NFE A&E Test. The learning materials are designed to assist learners to take increasing responsibility for their own learning through the development of "learning to learn skills" and use of self-instruction and self-assessment learning strategies incorporating andragogical principles.

#### Comparability to Formal Learning:

The competencies and levels contained in the NFE A&E Curriculum Framework are comparable in a general way to that of the formal school system but not parallel in terms of specific content. In fact, there has deliberately been no attempt to make the nonformal curriculum a replica of the formal curriculum, or to make it equivalent to or parallel with grade or year levels in the formal system. Instead, attempts were made to make it responsive to adult (and young adult) learners' needs and goals as they see them.

The NFE A&E Curriculum Framework emphasizes "functionality" and does not conform to the traditional subject approach of the formal school system. It aims to develop the basic skills adult learners need to function successfully in their roles as parent, worker and community member. The learning materials which have been developed based on this curriculum, similarly reflect this functional focus drawing on the life experiences of typical NFE learners in order to equip them with skills and knowledge useful for solving problems of daily life. The emphasis of the curriculum and learning materials is on providing learners opportunities for practical application of new knowledge and skills gained in order to facilitate immediate improvements in the quality of their lives.

For this reason, some competencies which might be taught later in the formal system are included at an earlier level in the NFE A&E System, and some academic competencies needed to prepare for college (advanced math, science, and literature topics) are not included here. Learners in the nonformal system who want to enter college will need additional preparation beyond the scope of this curriculum. This does not mean that the NFE A&E System is inferior or of lower quality to the formal system, it is simply different and uniquely nonformal in character.

#### The Language of Instruction:

At the Basic Literacy level the language of instruction will be the learner's first language. At the Elementary Level, instruction will be in Filipino except for English language skills. For some learners this will be Filipino as a second (or other) language. At the Secondary Level, instruction will be in Filipino except for English language

Communication skills, science and mathematics related skills in the Learning Strand "Problem Solving and Critical Thinking" will be taught in English and Filipino, at the choice of the learner. The Elementary Level test will be in Filipino, except for the test of English language communication skills. The Secondary Level test will be in Filipino except for English communication skills; test items for mathematics and science-related competencies will be available in English if the learner chooses.

#### **The NFE A&E Learning Support Delivery System:**

The NFE A&E Learning Support Delivery System aims to help NFE learners progress along the learning continuum from functional literacy to autonomous learning through supporting the mastery of the skills and competencies necessary to take National NFE Accreditation and Equivalency Tests. Not all learners seeking certification through the NFE A&E System will avail of the learning interventions offered under the NFE A&E Learning Support Delivery System. After an initial assessment of their learning needs, some learners may feel that they are already sufficiently prepared to apply for certification of their prior learning by undertaking the National NFE Accreditation and Equivalency Tests. Such learners will simply register as candidates for the next Elementary or Secondary Level NFE A&E Test scheduled for their locality. There will be many learners, however, who, after undertaking an initial assessment and counseling session, clearly identify a need for upgrading their knowledge, skills and competencies before they would feel confident in seeking certification through undertaking either the elementary or secondary level NFE A&E Tests. The NFE A&E Learning Support Delivery System is designed to meet these needs. It will provide learners a range of learning interventions in order that they may develop the minimum requirements in terms of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills (KAVS) detailed in the NFE A&E Curriculum Framework.

The key features of the NFE A&E Learning Support Delivery System (LSDS) are as follows:

- A. **Flexible Learning System:** The NFE A&E System has been designed as a truly nonformal flexible learning system with possibilities of flexible entry and exit for learners, self-paced learning and use of alternative delivery modes (including self-instructional modules, audio tape-based instruction, learning group sessions and peer learning).
- B. **Multiple Delivery Modes:** The NFE A&E System is a major research and development effort of the BNFE. During its pilot implementation in the five (5) regional pilot sites, the BNFE is eager to pilot test various delivery strategies and modes of delivery, in order to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each, and identify areas requiring modification/improvement before expanding the scope of the program to nationwide implementation. The NFE A&E LSDS will, therefore, use three different delivery modes for the provision of learning support during the pilot implementation phase.

**Delivery Mode 1:** Contracting of capable individual organizations as NFE A&E LSDS service providers, e.g., individual NGOs, SUCs, private colleges with outreach programs, Church-Based Organizations, People's Organizations.

**Delivery Mode 2:** Contracting of capable umbrella organizations to implement NFE A&E LSDS through tapping their network members as service providers.

**Delivery Mode 3:** Using DECS-Employed NFE Implementors to perform the role of Instructional Managers/Facilitator, with DECS-NFE officials providing program implementation support services.

As part of the NFE A&E Manual of Operations, detailed operating guidelines for each of the three delivery modes have been developed. Delivery Modes 1 and 2 are an adaptation of the delivery mechanism of the PNFE Project Functional Education Literacy Program (FELP) Literacy Service Contracting Scheme. Delivery Mode 3, is new delivery mode using the direct hiring of Instructional Managers by the DECS. The Regional Directors and Schools Division Superintendents in each of the five pilot sites have a responsibility to strive to achieve an equal representation of each of the three delivery modes in terms of target number of learners served and Instructional Managers employed. This is to ensure that the BNFE can undertake a comparative assessment of the different Delivery Modes during the extensive evaluation to be conducted at the end of the pilot implementation phase.

**C. Project Proposal Review Process:** All three Delivery Modes require the submission of a NFE A&E LSDS Project Proposal prepared in accordance with project standards and requirements using a prescribed proforma. In order to fast track project implementation, all NFE A&E LSDS project proposals are reviewed for their technical merits by the BNFE Proposal Review Committee based on strict guidelines and criteria set for evaluation. The approval of funding and signing of Memorandums of Agreement with Service Providers will vary depending on the total cost of the project proposal as detailed in the following matrix.

Total Project Cost	Approving Authority
For Proposals less than (<) 300,000 pesos	Schools Division Superintendent
For Proposals 300,000 to 600,000 pesos	Regional Director
For Proposals more than 600,000 to 1,000,000 pesos	Undersecretary for Programs and Projects
For Proposals more than (>) 1,000,000 pesos	DECS Secretary

**D. Cost Structure:** As a flexible learning system the NFE A&E will be characterized by individual learners entering and exiting the system based on their individual learning needs. Not all learners will want to, or need to, study all the learning modules and some will be ready to take the NFE A&E Test in less than the allocated time frame. For this reason, it is not possible to base the costing of learning group sessions/classes on the formula of a cost per learner per hour formula such as used in the Literacy Service Contracting Scheme (LSCS). Instead, a fixed cost structure per learning group of 25 learners has been used. Service Providers will be paid a fixed fee of P13,500.00 for the provision of 400 hours of learning support utilizing the services of an Instructional Manager. The cost of delivery using Delivery Mode 3, i.e., DECS-Employed NFE Implementors, is lower - P24,500.00 due to exclusion of payment for



monitoring and evaluation and administrative costs, which are part of regular DECS operating expenses.

- E. *Printing of Learning Materials:* The fixed cost per learning group of 400 hours does not include any allocation for the reproduction of NFE A&E Learning Modules. Since NFE A&E is a flexible learning system, individual learners will have differing interests and needs for accessing learning materials. Service Providers will therefore reproduce modules in response to the specified learning needs of individual learners. They will be reimbursed for photocopy expenses as part of their regular release of funds under the conditions of their MOA with DECS.
- F. *Training of Instructional Managers:* Service Providers will also not receive any allocation of funds for training as this will be conducted directly by BNFE. This is necessary because of the highly complex role of the Instructional Manager at the higher levels of basic education, and for cost effectiveness.
- G. *MOOE for Non-PNFRP Sites:* In order that the DECS Offices in the non-PNFRP Project sites will be able to effectively support the pilot implementation of the NFE A&E System, they will receive an allocation of Maintenance and Other Operating Expenditures (MOOE) fund. This will be funded from the Government of the Philippines (GOP) counterpart of the PNFE Project.

#### **The Instructional Managers/Facilitators:**

The Instructional Managers/Facilitators may be drawn from a range of professions and backgrounds. Most likely, they are elementary or secondary school teachers or suitably qualified or experienced community development workers. They are graduates of four-year courses (preferably in education). If they are employed by DECS, they would be required to secure the approval of their school principal and other DECS officials.