

## **Financing ICTs in Basic Education**

*Maria Victoria D. Abcede*

In the last twenty years, the demand for quality basic education for all has geometrically increased. The burgeoning demand for quality education has swelled making the task vast and enormous. Chronic budgetary constraints and limited resources were roadblocks which have to be hurdled. As a consequence, schools which were only dependent on government allocation experienced shortages in teachers, classrooms, textbooks, desks and the latest learning facilities.

As government can not carry the whole burden of education by itself, there came a call for government to share governance in the enhancement of the public education system.

A landmark legislation which instituted a national policy on decentralization and shared governance was Republic Act 7160 otherwise known as the Philippine Local Government Code. The 1991 legislation was a response to the challenges for sustainable human development through the creation of self-reliant communities in the attainment of national goals.

Consistent with the aforesaid policy, the Department of Education hastened the decentralization of educational management through its school-based management program. However, it was only during the enactment in 2001 of Republic Act 9155 (An Act Instituting a Framework of Governance for Basic Education) that the legal mandate for the decentralization of governance in basic education was finally articulated.

Under the said law, school-based management (SBM) became an institutional expression of decentralization of basic education at the grassroot level. It involves the decentralization of decision-making authority from the central, regional and division levels to schools by uniting the school heads, teachers, learners, parents, local government units (LGUs) and the community in order that specific needs of learners will be served more effectively.

The basic element of the SBM is the development of school-community partnerships among the parent-teacher-community

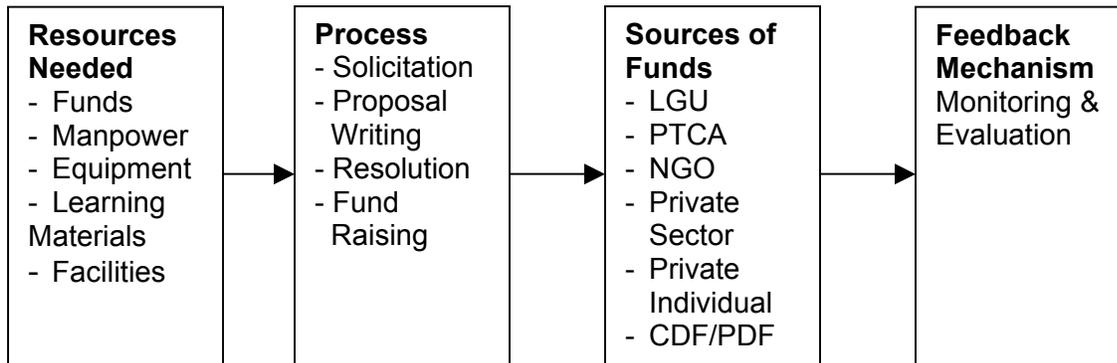
associations (PTCAs), local government units, learners, alumni and other stakeholders in order to improve education. The partnerships are formally organized into the School Governing Councils which are responsible for the development and implementation of School Improvement Plans (SIPs) as well as resource generation and fund management.

At present, budget allocation decisions are centralized and based on the school enrolments as reported by the Regional Offices (ROs). From these enrolments, a basic annual cost formula of P125/pupil and P350/student are used to compute the MOOE budget. From the computed amount, automatic allocations are provided for in-service training (5%), operation of Division Offices (30%) and schools under the Division Office (65%) without fiscal autonomy. While this formula is favorable to big Division Offices and schools, small Division Offices and schools are disadvantaged resulting to cutbacks on school Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOEs) to finance salaries and utility expenses.

Given this critical budget situation, resource generation and fund management becomes an essential component in school-based management. Under SBM, the school operating budget consists not only of the regular DepED MOOE but also includes the allocations and contributions in cash, kind and services generated by the school from other public and private sources. These other allocations and contributions include the Special Education Fund (SEF) from the local school board, Barangay Social Development Fund and Sangguniang Kabataan, PTCA contributions, donations from alumni and other private sources, Community Development Fund (CDF) and Priority Development Fund (PDF) and school-income generating projects.

Based on the preliminary results of a survey conducted under BESRA, principal-respondents revealed that an average P113,305 for elementary schools and P635,657 for high schools were secured from other sources. Augmentation funds which are generated through fund-raising activities, solicitations, proposals and resolutions came from the Special Education Fund (44.1%) followed by the voluntary contributions of parents (25.6%), contributions from NGOs/private sector (5.3%), donations from elected officials (4.6%), community contributions (0.8%), proceeds from canteen operations and other income generating projects (0.1%) and others ( 19.5%).

The resource generation process is summarized below.



Many good practices/models in financing ICT in basic education have emerged. One good practice to address the financial gap in providing ICTs in basic education is tapping the resources of the Local Government Units through its Special Education Fund. Although results of interviews with selected school heads unequivocally pointed to the dependence of schools on the LGUs in meeting payments for the costs of utilities and repair/construction of school buildings, the feasibility of using the SEF to provide support to schools in the operation of computer laboratories have been explored under the DepED Computerization Program and the PCs for Public Schools Project. The DepED Representative to the Local School Board (LSB) need to come up with proposals/resolutions on the prioritization of the SEF utilization for greater and more efficient investment in ICT-based initiatives to meet locally defined strategic goals for ICTs in basic education.

Another model is the partnership with the Parent-Teacher-Community Associations. The parents through the PTCA share in the cost for putting their children in school by providing some of the monetary requirements as well as labor in various school improvement projects. The present practice of “unofficially” levying charges through the PTCA is usually dictated by a standard of the minimum and legally tenable assessment of what the school needs to provide better learning facilities for the learners.

Another good practice is to work within the parameters of the Adopt-a-School Program (ASP). Legally instituted by the passage of RA 8525 in 1998, the ASP is an innovative program that gives private institutions and individuals the opportunity to become partners in education by providing assistance in the upgrading and

modernization of public high schools. The Adopt-a-School Program provides a mechanism for private companies and enterprises to help in the development of the public school system. Under the Program, schools enter into agreements for at least two years with stakeholders to provide assistance in the form of cash, kind or service in the construction/establishment and operation of classrooms, library, science and computer laboratories. Under the Program, expenses incurred by the adopting entity are given additional deduction from the gross income equivalent to fifty percent (50%) of such expenses. In case of donations in kind or service, valuation of assistance shall be based on the acquisition/market cost of the property or service.

So what key insights have been learned as various practices in financing ICTs in basic education are set in place? A major learning in financing ICTs in education is that stakeholders should be empowered by ensuring their direct participation during conceptualization, planning and implementation. This, however, can only be achieved if the roles of the partners in ICT development are defined as follows:

1. Schools as catalyst to provide the enabling environment;
2. Local government as facilitator of the members of the beneficiary community;
3. Private sector/individual as the provider of investment, capital and other resources; and
4. Civil society as the major partner for technical assistance.

Second, transparency is critical. Stating clearly at what point in the process and to what extent of involvement the partners will be involved and accountability for the legal and optimal utilization of funds have to be made clear at the very start. Third, there has to be a mechanism for feedback and response in the collaboration process to ensure engagement and greater efficiency. And lastly, match the competencies and resources of the stakeholders with their responsibilities in the project in order to develop a greater sense of ownership among stakeholders.