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Paper Presentation on Mobilizing Community Support for ICT- based Innovations

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Mobilizing Community Support for ICT-based Innovations

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Abstract

Anything external is crucial.

While the Department of Education is into massive campaign for institutionalization of the new curriculum (Basic Education Curriculum) in the light of technology integration, the immediate communities where schools are located have no active involvement in the assessment of needs on technology and its related concerns. Much so in the decisions on school improvement plans with particular reference to ICT programs and projects.

This paper believes in school-community partnership principles. Schools being the sub-system of the bigger system which is the larger community (or the global village or the new society/republic) are expectedly getting feedbacks from the community or society as to how schools are being managed or operated by school heads, teachers and personnel.

This paper further contends that parents or the community, in general, should not be assigned as commentators or auxiliaries of the schools. Meaning, the community must be a dynamic partner in keeping up with the technological demands in schools so that ICT as a significant tool for students' improvement of competencies where technology is a vital aspect of learning would be expedient and realistic.

World declaration on EFA, article 7 supports the contention of this paper on strengthening partnerships between schools and communities.

In a nutshell, to establish a working paradigm for the mobilization of community support for ICT innovations is to consider the following essential components: community, communication and technology. These important components serve as inseparable machineries to better the position of ICT programs and projects as suggested by Day (2004).

It is therefore the desire of this paper to look into the dynamism of community-driven approach to proliferate the technological developments via community support through the imperatives of information dissemination, communication, active participation, collaboration and balance of power relationships between schools and communities.

Anything external is crucial. That is a fact. The community as an external constituent of schools' improvement plans in the light of technological development must be maximized in order to optimize support for ICT innovations.

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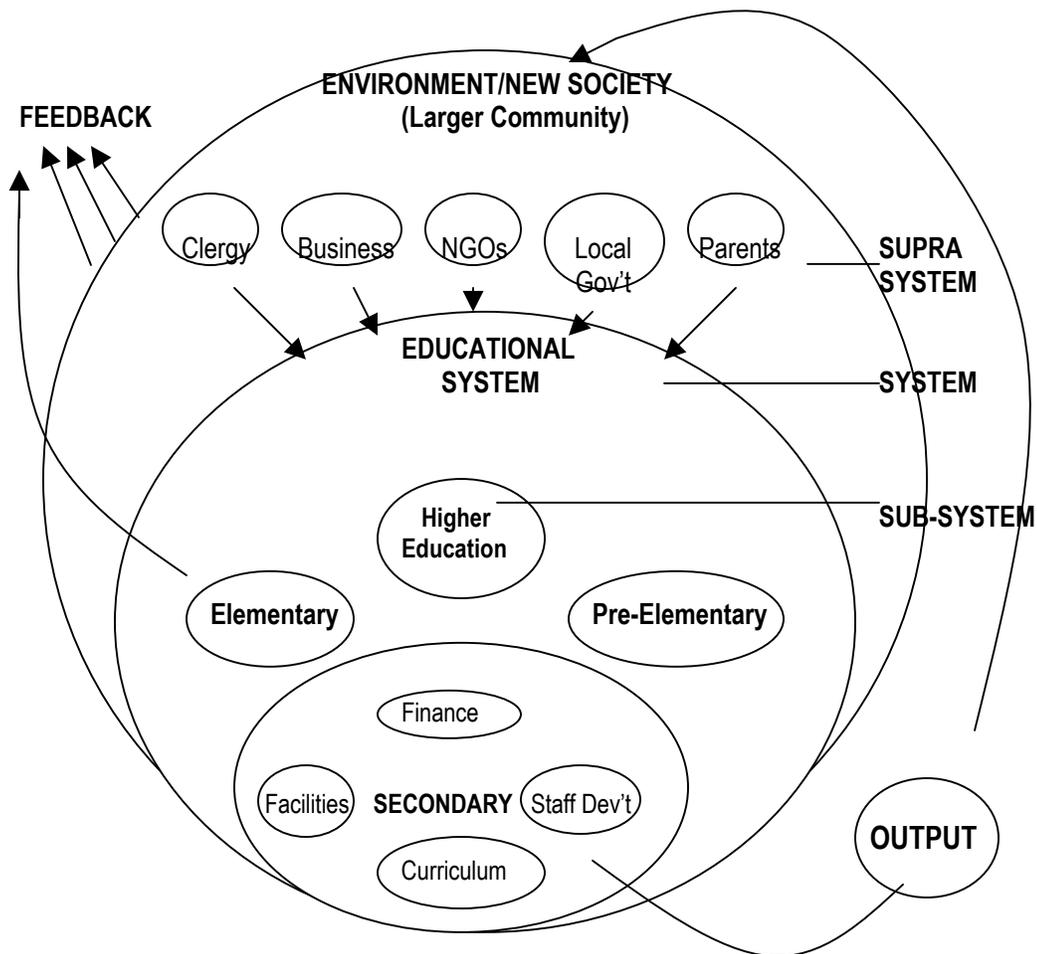
Introduction

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While the Department of Education is into massive campaign for institutionalization of the new curriculum (Basic Education Curriculum) in the light of technology integration, the immediate communities where schools are located have no active involvement in the assessment of needs on technology and its related concerns. Much so in the decisions on school improvement plans with particular reference to ICT programs and projects.

This paper believes in school–community partnership principles. Schools being the sub–system of the bigger system which is the larger community (or the global village or the new society/republic) are expectedly getting feedbacks from the community or society as to how schools are being managed or operated by school heads, teachers and personnel.

To illustrate that perspective, Guerrero (1974) has a graphic presentation of the nature of the system. It will appear thus:



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The World Declaration on Education for All (EFA), article 7 on strengthening partnerships states that

“National, regional, and local educational authorities have a unique obligation to provide basic education for all, but they cannot be expected to supply every human, financial, or organizational requirement for this task. New and revitalized partnerships at all levels will be necessary: partnerships among the role of teachers and that of administrators and other educational personnel; partnerships between education and other government departments including planning, finance, labor, communications, and other social sectors; partnerships between government and NGOs, the private sectors, local communities, religious groups and families. The recognition of the vital role of both families and teachers is particularly important...Genuine partnerships contribute to the planning, managing, and evaluating of basic education programs.”

Clearly, the community when mobilized can deliver the anticipated benefits. It is important that it has a sense of ownership in decision-making process regardless of the schools' changing priorities that internal or external events may require.

Kemmis (1983 cited in Schratz, 1993) says that

“We must create...communities able to act – empowered to act – and able to reflect openly on the consequences of their actions. By subjecting our experience to joint self-reflection, we may incorporate wider group understandings and create a shared language and a shared identity – an identity formed in cooperative action and cooperative self-reflection.”

The community composed of parents, professionals other than teachers, non-government organizations and private or business sectors must thrive in schools in order to improve public presence, successfully implementing strategic plans that will require putting in place effective ICT innovations to insure the optimum use of the schools' overall ICT resources.

In a nutshell, to establish a working paradigm for the mobilization of community support for ICT innovations is to consider the following essential components: community, communication and technology. These important components serve as inseparable machineries to better the position of ICT programs and projects as suggested by Day (2004).

It is therefore the desire of this paper to look into the dynamism of community-driven approach to proliferate the technological developments via community support through the imperatives of

information dissemination, communication, active participation, collaboration and balance of power relationships between schools and communities.

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Background and Rationale

The Philippines is in the midst of tremendous change in education and in the verge of still greater ones. Education today is different from what it was ten or fifteen years ago, and it will be more difficult as we carry on our tasks in providing the culture of learning and quality education. At some point we succeeded and in many instances we failed to accommodate the problems.

To some extent, these experiences made us realize that we could do more with what we actually have, despite the shortages and shortcomings. In effect, all these have ushered us into the challenging and technological world of the 21st century. Such changes have brought

about social, economic, and cultural problems which have strong implications to education in particular and to national development in general.

For one thing, the heavy demands on education of all these concomitant problems like population growth, pollution related and social related diseases have made the schools incapable of coping with all these problems in relation to their mandate of providing quality education to all.

Likewise, these heavy demands and pressures brought about by the socialized occupational changes and decline in the economy of the country as well as the rapidly changing technologies and rising demands and expectations are not only glaringly felt in education, but they have also given impetus for alternatives in administering educational system.

Manifestations of these are seen in the activism in and out of campus, the poor quality of graduates and mismatch of graduates and needs of industries. To be sure, while these technological demands have brought dilemmas and crises in all aspects of living, they have likewise brought in new vistas, new horizons, and new perspectives in education.

As a consequence, fresh approaches must be taken in the educational system in order that the schools may be relevant to the needs of the times and in the process be able to cope with the demands and pressures of the environment in which the school operates.

As we analyze the educational system against the tradition of the past, we realize the magnitude of the task ahead of us. If these advances continue as fast as we see them, we say we need a fresh approach to the management of schools and possibly a new kind of teacher who while being a 'diagnostician' prescribing tailor-made programs from a well stocked pharmacy of tested alternatives as Goodlad (1966) has alleged, will not forget "to come to terms with the essentials of humanity of students" only as suggested by Frost (1969), but most of all, will be able to operate within the needs, demands and the cherished tradition and culture of the place in which his/her services are required.

It is upon this need that the significance of this paper is relatively anchored. It is also upon these realities that the proposal finds its justification and rationale.

Framework

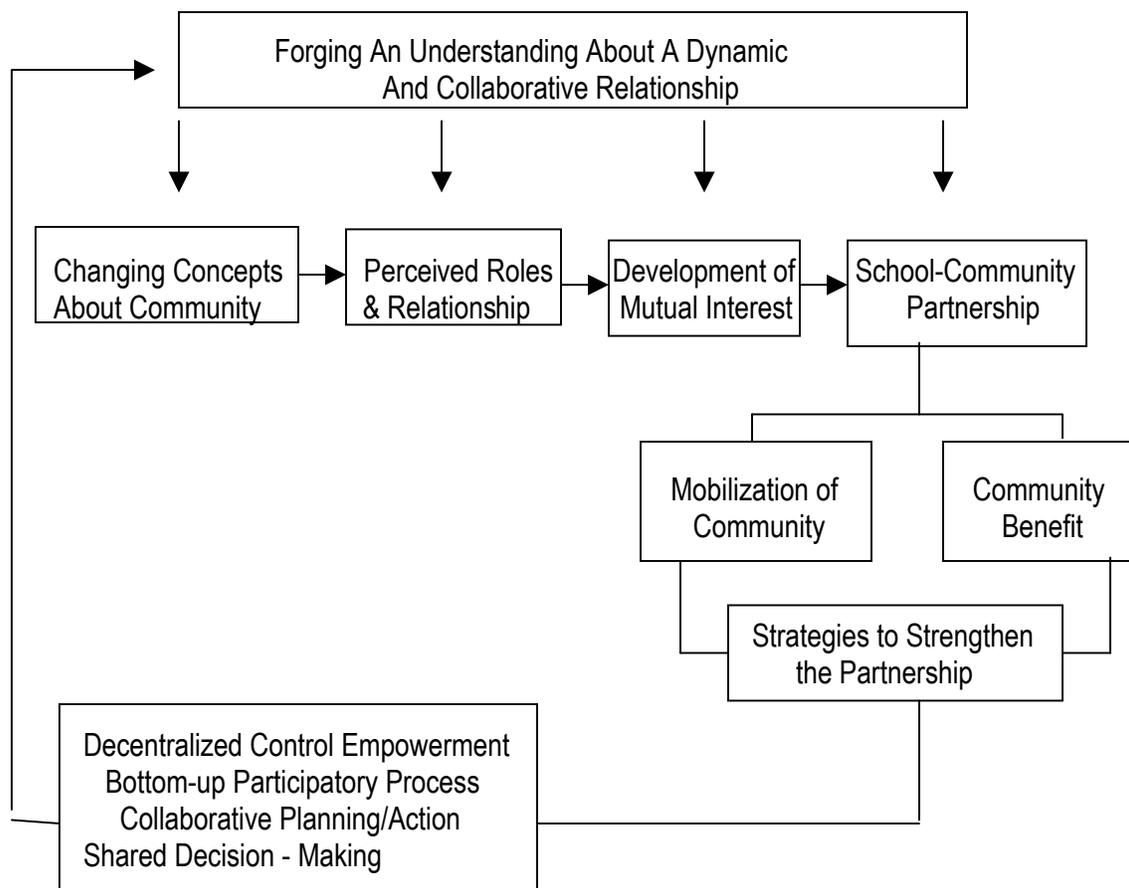
Schools and communities represent groups of people with common interests, shared beliefs, and even differences. Unity and diversity are accommodated in both of these communities. It is logical therefore to say that both are communities in and within their wider communities; hence, it is possible to enhance or create the link and discuss shared beliefs, interests and differences to improve education and effect development for mutual benefit.

The school, in particular, operates in the home-school-school relationship. Developing more effective community relation is not merely a 'nice' public relation gesture. The cooperation, involvement and participation of the community should be achieved since they (community members) themselves are stakeholders of education.

Partnerships promote links between institutions that make each stronger than it is on its own (Chapman, 1991). Daresh (1986) emphasized that in partnerships, the trend is toward decentralized control, to a mode of sharing decision-making opportunities which may lead to the development of 'mutual interest'.

If an effective school–community partnership is developed, the community may support in various areas such as curriculum development, physical facilities development, staff development, ICT programs and projects, special education programs, networking and resources strategies, manpower pooling for needed expertise and professions in areas such as arts, career development and occupational preferences, technology–related advocacy and the like.

Based on that, this conceptual framework is developed:



Components

The community and school should share common ground to operate a dynamic approach in technology development meant for the school with consideration to the unique environment, needs and situation the school has.

The major components pointed out here are seen important to establish a clear perspective on how to go through the mobilization process.

The major component of this proposal is the **community**. Community refers to varied relationships and interactions between and among people. The community should be formed not only as an association of parents and guardians attending to the discipline and academic problems of their children but also as a technology advisory group or committee that carries intensely the responsibility of providing technological support to improve scholastic performance of students and upgrade the instructional skills of the teachers. The school head, acting as collaborator and mediator, transacts and presents the interests, needs and welfare of her/his constituents.

The second component is **communication**. The school should recognize that the community is composed of a multitude of personality, beliefs and motives. As such, the school should be able to understand the language and definitions they will use to convey the need for support in technology programs and projects. The dynamism in the communication of the community entails greater understanding of the accurate interpretations and meanings. It is therefore imperative on the part of the school to uphold clarity of ideas for easy and fast decoding process. In other words, the school should be able to explain to the community the relevance of ICT in the lives of the students and the community itself in general, and the effects and benefits of community's support for any ICT innovation.

The communication approach must intend to make parents and stakeholders understand what the school is doing for their children particularly in ICT integration in the different subject tools. Recognizing the community means that there is an effort to encourage involvement, promotion of active leadership, identification of areas for improvement.

The third component is **technology**. Borrowing Day's explanation (2006), he said that technology is often assumed to be value-free, detached, and an external factor supplied without interference or affect by well-intentioned specialists. He suggested that for the community to support the ICT innovations in schools there is a need to understand the issues on cost, access and control, privacy and distribution, and many others. These, he added, have to be considered during the organization of a community-centered technical advisory or committee.

Strategies

Proper collaboration requires a good action plan that sets out clear guidelines. It is imperative that the criteria for infrastructure, resources and the overall technological innovations are set out. A communication plan will need to be developed before the partnership initiatives will be fully implemented and sustained.

The following recommendations shall be adopted to initiate the mobilization of community support for ICT innovations:

- ✓ Continue a local public relations program focused on students, parents, and the general public

- ✓ Communicate the impact of media and technology programs on teaching and learning
- ✓ Establish on-going technology committees through the PTA/PTCA
- ✓ Develop a plan for collaboration with outside resources such as ICT-oriented organizations (Gilas, FitEd, DTI, DOST, etcetera) where sources of support will be identified
- ✓ Continue existing partnerships and seek additional business partnerships
- ✓ Provide opportunities for the community to use school technologies and media resources including computer labs and media centers
- ✓ Plan development activities for the community that focus on ICT
- ✓ Use varied means of communication for contact between home and school, community and school
- ✓ Provide recommendation and guidance on use of technology funds
- ✓ Submit or present yearly detailed technology budgets as well as long range plans for technology efforts

In order to gauge the success or failure of the strategic plans for mobilization of community support, the following mandates shall be observed:

- Evaluate the progress of the technology plan using feedback from the groups responsible for implementation
- Accomplish checklist or survey on evaluation and assessment of the community
- Continuously monitor the ICT related programs

Areas of Benefit

The most obvious gain in this particular endeavor is the achievement of the desired ICT programs and goals of the schools, but this gain can only be realized if the process of mobilization is genuinely inclined to equity in control and responsibility.

Potential Obstacles and Risks

The problem or issue may arise in terms of the technical aspect. Meaning, the community may not be able to produce needed resources and finances that would support ICT innovations proposed by the schools.

Communication, intricate and complex as it is, may pose another problem. Shades of meanings and interpretations may be placed in different contexts especially on issues like power-sharing, control, ownership of decisions made, clarity of duties and responsibilities.

The community is diverse. Cliché would say that there is unity in diversity, but eventually the multitude of behavior, orientation and beliefs may trigger disunity, chaos, arguments; worse, failure to do what is best for the youth and education in general.

Conclusion

The concept of community and community schools for that matter has long been perceived to be very beneficial especially in the implementation of programs and projects through shared work and responsibilities. We could imagine how schools and community members work together to prepare our youth to a more productive teaching and learning environment. In the 1950s, many schools both in the rural and urban areas of the country are classed as community schools (Bernardino & Fresnoza, 1954). In the learning activities of the pupils, community resources, both human and material, are being utilized.

Focusing the community into ICT goals and innovations is paramount in order for schools to respond to technological and educational thrusts of the Department of Education and other stakeholders such as the local government units, non-government organizations, private institutions and individuals. The community must be taken as active part in the school leadership in areas where they are most needed. ICT concerns, in this age and time, have to be included in the list of school priorities. As such, the community serves as vital and potent entity that can catapult the schools' improvement plans in relation to ICT programs.

Readings

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