

***Mutual Efforts Restoring Growth in Education for Public-Private Sectors
Partnership: Basis for a Proposed Action Plan***

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Abstract

This study aimed to describe the responses of the participants to the Public-Private Sectors Partnerships (PPP) in Education in DepEd Ibaan District, Province of Batangas, Philippines in order to achieve the schools' goals and sustain public-private sectors partnership engagement with schools in the district. This study employed the descriptive –qualitative research in which responses of eighteen school heads of DepEd Ibaan District who were the respondents were coded, analyzed and interpreted. School Administrators, community stakeholders, future administrators and researchers may use the proposed plan of action as a guide in providing future directions for a Public-Private Sectors Partnerships (PPP) in Education.

Keywords: Private Sectors Partnerships (PPP) in Education, partnership engagement, DepEd, Ibaan District

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INTRODUCTION

Public –Private Partnerships (PPP) in Education enormously gained support particularly on the construction of school buildings, improvement of school facilities, professional learning and development of teachers, feeding programs of poor schoolchildren, upgrading classroom instructions through provisions for instructional equipment and application of modern technology, all of which have goals in bringing all the children to schools and outcomes for quality instructions. PPP can be defined as a contractual relationship between government and private sector for a specific project, with simultaneous involvement of government and private sectors in education, with an understanding to share the costs and benefits and risks and rewards. Under PPP, public sector agencies (central, state, or local) join with private sector entities (companies, foundations, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions or citizens) and enter into a ‘business’ relationship to attain a commonly shared goal that also achieves objectives of the individual partners. Both parties agree to work together in implementing a program, and that each party has a clear role and say in how that implementation happens (Blagescu and Young, 2005).

As such, Brigada Eskwela is one of the Department of Education’s program to mobilize private organizations and companies as well as the public agencies to come together and be involved in the preparation of public schools facilities. There are activities such as Jingle-Making and Poster-Making Contests to attract more volunteers for public-private sectors partnerships engagement with schools in the country. Encouraging more partnerships engagement helps our schools acquired the needed resources for a child-friendly environment. Other forms of assistance are also offered like professional services and other goods and services needed by the schools.

But in most cases public schools administrators and teachers had been placed to some challenges particularly political pressures as they engaged with local government units for partnerships with non-government organizations (NGOs) in the community. Mutual agreement was set initially between those in the local government and the target non-government organizations partners for this purpose in order to achieve schools’ goals to sustain partnerships engagement between and among the Local Government Unit (LGU) and Non-Government Organization (NGO) and other stakeholders in the community. With this, those in the public schools are not put into situations which could undermine their non-partisan mandate by Civil Service Commission.

Hence, this study aimed at proposing a plan of action for the encouragement of public-private sectors partnership which aimed at helping public elementary schools attain quality education. Through this developed output, the efforts of restoring the growth of education in Ibaan District will be a mutual understanding and partnerships of the concerned public-private organizations and not just left to the government agencies without the fear of being biased to political organizations or party.

Research Questions

This study was conducted to describe the responses of the participants to the Public-Private Sectors Partnerships (PPP) engagement in order to propose a plan of action for mutual efforts restoring growth in public school education.

Specifically, the following were the questions answered in the conduct of the study.

1. What comprises the public-private sectors partnerships?
2. How do the participants respond to the mutual efforts in restoring growth in education?
3. What action plan maybe proposed to establish partnerships between Local Government Unit and Non-Government Organization for a mutual effort to quality public education?

Scope and Limitation

This study covered the status of the public-private sectors partnership in DepEd Ibaan District as to the goals of schools to sustain partnerships engagement. The variables measured in the status of partnerships engagement are sectors that comprise the public-private sectors partnerships and the responses of DepEd administrators specifically the eighteen (18) school heads in the Ibaan District, Division of Batangas.

Significance of the Study

The importance of the study is signified by the individuals or groups who will be benefitting from the output of the study such as the school administrators, community stakeholders, educational planners, and the future researchers.

METHODOLOGY

The following are the methods used in the conduct of the study.

Research Design

This study employed the descriptive and qualitative research. Descriptive research aims to describe a phenomena or occurrence wherein the status of the partnerships of public and private sectors in Ibaan District in the delivery of quality education in public elementary schools.

Subjects of the Study

The participants to this study were the eighteen (18) school heads from the public elementary schools in Ibaan District, Division of Batangas. The purposive sampling method was used since the subjects were the intended participants who can give the needed data for the completion of the study.

Instrument Used

Interview notes were prepared by the researcher in order to gather pertinent data. They were based on the objectives of the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher made an appointment with the participants for a face-to-face interview. For some participants who can be grouped, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted.

Data Analysis

Data gathered through face-to-face interview and FGD were analyzed through coding and thematic analysis. They were then interpreted and presented.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following are the findings of the study.

1. What Comprises the Public-Private Sectors Partnerships

Public-Private Sectors Partnerships (PPP) is a government initiative to invite the private sector to join in its efforts towards education development through a specific project or it could be the initiative of the private sector to convince or compel the government to accept a new method of operation in which the private sector and the government jointly deliver a service/activity. Generally various models of PPP involve a formal contract between the government and the private sector to carry on some specific pre-defined activities in education, such as to set up new institutions, and/or to run the institutions, or carry on a particular activity in education – all financed by the state and/or through self-generated resources.

There are two models of PPP that implies the private sector providing infrastructure and service delivery, designing, financing, building and “operating” and it recovers its investment through lump-sum or annualized payments from the governments and through user chargers. With this partnership scheme, it shares risks with the state. Another model is wherein the government invests in infrastructure and the private sector operates, with government paying recurring costs to the private partner on per student basis; or the private sector provides infrastructure and government runs the institutions, government paying annualized/lump-sum payments to the private sector for capital investment; or private actors build infrastructure and run the institution, government paying for all costs, or government paying for the government sponsored students only and the private players recovering other costs from other students.

In recent years several hybrid partnerships have also evolved, involving new combinations and permutations of state and non-state sectors engaged in a range of activities in education. Different forms of PPP include public institutions with private financing, private institutions with public funding, public institutions under private management, government setting up institutions and outsourcing their running to private bodies, and private sector setting up institutions and government taking over their management and funding. Most partnerships of the recent period are based on market-oriented logic, while many models prevalent during earlier periods were not so, and they were also not described as PPP models. There is a main difference between the earlier models and the recent ones. The government was interested in PPP, when it proposed, say for example, university-industry collaborations, essentially for academic reasons, to improve the relevance of curriculum, increase employability of graduates etc. Nowadays, the main objective of proposing PPP is to

raise private funds and save public resources. The current widespread discourse on university-industry linkages is also found to be rooted in the same neo-liberal ideology (Evans and Packham, 2003)

The advocates of PPP advance three kinds of arguments. One, as the government does not have money, it is necessary to opt for PPP. It is claimed that PPP will ease financial constraints, as the private sector makes huge investments on its own under PPP. As the private and public sectors complement each other, it is claimed, the total resource base will increase. The PPP is projected as a major strategy to tap untapped private financial and human resources, including specialized skills that may not be available in government and to encourage active participation of the private sector in national development. With the increased resource base, there will be improved access to education and improvement in quality of education. In the absence of PPP, with limited public resources, education system might severely suffer. Under such circumstances, PPP is viewed as a major, if not the only, option for education development. As Pritha Gopalan (2013) observed, paradoxically, public education, which is an essential service, to remain public “needs partners outside the government to keep it up-to-date, efficient, transparent and engaging.” Secondly, PPP is advocated to overcome the weaknesses of the public system: it is claimed that the public system is inefficient; it is rigid and inflexible; it does not respond to market needs; it is not autonomous and so on.

On the other hand, it is argued that PPP will provide flexibility in relaxing restrictions associated with the public sector, such as in the salary structure, recruitment policies, fees and resource mobilization and management and development rules (e.g., civil works). It promptly responds to changing market signals in academic and other aspects; it even promotes innovativeness; and increases transparency. It is considered as a model that embraces market-based ‘efficient’ solutions and logics with state sector, and is free of the rigidities associated with state sector. Thirdly, it is argued that PPP increases competition, brings in efficiency associated with the private sector, improves accountability, reduces costs, improves cost-effectiveness, and thereby reduces prices or fees in education. For example, the Planning Commission (2008) argued that private finance initiative and public private partnership in “designing, developing, financing and operation is critical not only for meeting wide resource gaps but also for bringing about internal and external resource-use efficiency, improvement in quality service delivery and promotion of excellence.”

Further, the proponents of PPP assume that under PPP private partners will be philanthropic, with no commercial motives; or even if they are profit-motivated, it is ok. What is wrong with profit? -- they would ask. Secondly, public bodies will be able to effectively regulate the private actors to play a positive role in the development of education for national progress; or both public and private players will be self-regulatory and that there is no need for regulation at all by any outside body or the government. Thirdly, it is assumed that PPP will improve, at least will not worsen, inequalities in education. Fourthly, it is argued that PPP will allow allocation of scarce public resources exclusively for the benefit of the poor, and the private efforts will take care of the interests of the rich; and thus under PPP both the rich and the poor will be taken care.

Lastly, it is also assumed that the government will be able to protect and nurture the public good nature of education and/or the private players themselves will be interested in ensuring the public good character of education. It is also assured by the government, to silence the critics that the major responsibility of providing education finally rests with the government, that the government continues to remain accountable to the people for educating its citizens. Governments further assure the people that PPP does not mean lesser provisioning of government resources; it does not mean abdication of government responsibility; it is not a transfer of responsibility; it is certainly not privatization of the sector; but is a tool for augmenting the public resource base (Venkatraman and Bjorkman 2004).

Such is the case of the Department of Education (DepEd) Brigada Eskwela Program. It capitalizes on the partnerships with the private agencies or companies and individuals to help ready the infrastructure or facilities of the public school in time with the opening of the classes. With this in mind, the school is able to provide quality education to the youth through its clean, safe and conducive ambience for studying as well as through its technologically supported delivery of teaching and learning process.

2. Responses of the Participants to the Mutual Efforts in Restoring Growth in Education

As responses to the mutual efforts in restoring growth in education by the participants, the following are the themes that emerged. They are the expression of gratitude, dissemination of stakeholders' support or being part of the school operation, making affiliations or linkages, collaborating with the stakeholders, and campaigning stakeholders about the project.

In terms of the expression of gratitude, the participants said they gave out letters of gratitude to those from the private sectors who helped carry out the objectives of the Brigada Eskwela program. They were also recognized during the stakeholders' day by giving them certificates.

“As a school head, I respond to the mutual effort of public-private sectors by acknowledging them during the program in the school. Thank you letters were sent to them. We publish their support in our school paper. Pictures were uploaded in the social media.”

Another way the participants respond to the mutual efforts in restoring growth in education is through their taking part in the management of the school since the school's area is situated in not a well-off barangay. As a school head, there are needs of the school which could be addressed through the concerted efforts of the school and all its stakeholders. With this, being affiliated with DepEd gives the stakeholders a sense of ownership of the school. And when there is a sense of ownership or belongingness, they work towards a common goal to the betterment of the quality of education.

With this, collaboration of all stakeholders of the school is achieved.

“Through these initiatives, Tulay Elementary School work hand-in-hand with the stakeholders in all the programs being implemented in restoring growth in education.”

It could be gleaned from the responses of the participants that the mutual efforts in restoring growth in education could be achieved through Public-Private Sectors Partnerships (PPP) through the initiatives of the school heads.

3. Proposed Action Plan to Establish Partnerships Between Local Government Units and Non-Government Organization for a Mutual Effort to Quality Public Education

Based on the data gathered, the following is the proposed action plan to establish partnerships between local government units and non-government organizations for a mutual effort to quality public education.

Table 1
Proposed Plan of Action to Establish Partnerships Between Local Government Units and Non-Government Organization for a Mutual Effort to Quality Public Education

Key Result Area	Suggested Activity/ Project	Duration/ Resources Needed / Persons Involved	Expected Outcome
Private sector providing infrastructure and service delivery, designing, financing, building and “operating”	Establishing a partnership on Adopt-a-School through construction of school classroom	Whole year round/ Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/ All responsible stakeholders	Classroom built for the benefit of the learners
Tap untapped private financial and human resources, including specialized skills	Having private sectors to finance school computer laboratory equipment and the like	Whole year round/ Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/ All responsible stakeholders	Learners to be technologically adept for 21 st century learning
Private sector providing faculty development and professional growth for teachers in the public school	Continuing education and professional development of public school teachers through scholarships from partner universities	Whole year round/ Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/ All responsible stakeholders	Public school teachers to be abreast with the latest trends in education

The suggested activities and projects are based on the partnerships afforded to the public sectors by the private partnerships whether financing school classrooms or buildings, as well as equipment for school laboratories specifically computer laboratories. With this in mind, the learners’ welfare is at end. It will pave the way for

learning 21st century skills needed to be at par with other students from the private sectors. In addition, continuing professional growth of public school teachers thru scholarships from private university partners will enable our teachers to be abreast with the latest in education, research and development.

CONCLUSIONS

The following are the conclusions arrived at from the findings of the study.

1. The Public-Private Sectors Partnerships (PPP) is comprised of government initiative to invite the private sector to join in its efforts towards education development through a specific project or it could be the initiative of the private sector to convince or compel the government to accept a new method of operation in which the private sector and the government jointly deliver a service/activity. Either way, it benefits the public sector in terms of achieving quality education for learners in the public schools.
2. The participants who are the school heads of public elementary schools respond to the mutual efforts in restoring growth in education through expressing gratitude to stakeholders, campaigning them for a partnership, and having them participate or collaborate with them in the management and maintenance of the school.
3. The proposed plan of action will benefit the learners to acquire quality education for the 21st century world of work.

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