

Tales from an Island School: Stakeholders' Partnership on Spotlight

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Abstract:- This study delved into teachers' experiences at an island school in their collaboration with stakeholders. It aimed to capture the accounts of teachers regarding the involvement of stakeholders in the island school. The study had ten (10) participants, and it employed in-depth interviews to gather information from them. Through thematic analysis, the following themes were identified regarding stakeholders' participation: Planning and decision-making and Program implementation. These findings align with the principles of shared governance and empowerment of school heads as outlined in RA9155's mandate. Additionally, the study identified challenges in stakeholders' partnership, resulting in themes such as Weak commitment of stakeholders to participate and Financial and material deficiency. From the experiences and challenges shared by the teacher-participants, the following insights were developed: Encouraging stakeholders' participation and increasing the school budget. These insights further reinforce the importance of stakeholders' participation in school planning, decision-making, and all school programs and activities. The study recommends that, to recognize the efforts of stakeholders in crafting the school plan and participating in school activities, incentives should be provided as a practical expression of gratitude. This will motivate stakeholders to consistently participate in school activities, including monitoring project implementation to ensure that the school plan is diligently executed according to the set target date.

Keywords:- *Tales, Island School, Stakeholders' Partnership, Spotlight*

I. INTRODUCTION

The collaboration of stakeholders in schools has become a prominent trend in the educational system. Research supports the significance and advantages of stakeholder partnerships in schools. Studies have verified that the engagement of multiple stakeholders contributes to more effective school management (Bruns, Filmer & Patrinos, 2011). In Olguin and Keim's (2009) study, they emphasize the crucial role of active participation by students, parents, community members, and administrators in planning and executing school processes. Smith and Goodwin (2014) also argue that involving stakeholders in creating improvement plans significantly enhances the likelihood of successful plan execution.

Stakeholders in education represent a diverse range of individuals and groups invested in the welfare and success of schools and students. This includes administrators, teachers, staff members, students, parents, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials at various levels of government. Additionally, collective entities such as local businesses, organizations, advocacy groups, committees, media outlets, and cultural institutions also play a crucial role. These stakeholders have a strong personal, professional, civic, or financial interest in the well-being and achievement of the school and its students.

Moreover, the Department of Education has established a strong partnership with stakeholders through the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM). SBM, as defined by Caldwell (2005), empowers individual schools by transferring decision-making authority from the central administration to the school level. This decentralization of control allows school constituents - including principals, teachers, parents, community members, and even students in some cases - to have a greater influence over school operations. Through SBM, decision-making authority is directly delegated to the schools, enabling school heads, teachers, and students to collaborate with community leaders, local government officials, and other stakeholders to drive improvements in school performance. The decentralization of responsibility for school improvement, resource allocation, and management from higher administrative levels to the school sites is a key tenet of SBM (DepED Order NO. 230, series 1999).

In particular, the department involves stakeholders in creating the School Improvement Plan (SIP) according to DepEd Order No. 44 series 2015, also known as Guidelines on the Enhanced School Improvement Planning (SIP) Process and the School Report Card (SRC). The School Improvement Plan (SIP) is described as a roadmap outlining specific actions that a school, along with the community and other stakeholders, will take over three consecutive school years. It highlights the importance of collaboration and stakeholder participation in creating the school improvement plan and developing the School Report Card, which serves as a tool for presenting the school's achievements, needs, and goals to school stakeholders.

The collaboration with stakeholders in School-Based Management (SBM) highlights the importance of empowering key stakeholders within school communities to actively participate in enhancing schools for the betterment of pupil/student learning outcomes. The vision of SBM in the education system is clearly focused on making a significant

impact on student learning, rather than just transferring authority and responsibility to the school level. It is clear that in the Philippine educational system, the roles and participation of stakeholders are crucial in school governance. Partnership with stakeholders is key to achieving school goals

Unfortunately, Khong, Chew, and Goh (2004) voiced worries regarding the viability of stakeholder alliances. They observed that key leaders, like as principals and deputies, are usually rotated every 4 to 5 years. This frequent turnover at the leadership level may impede the long-term process of developing and maintaining strong collaborative community networks, hurting the continuity and improvement of students, teachers, and other stakeholders. Short-term efforts aimed at achieving immediate results may jeopardize the partnership's long-term viability.

In the same vein, Beach and Lindahl (2004) linked to some stakeholders' lack of confidence in the planning process, claiming that this is due in large part to plan non-implementation and hence the absence of any actual progress caused by the planning process. It recommended that until a school's planning framework incorporates the three phases of planning, implementation, and institutionalization, the improvement objective will not be realized. Meanwhile, Marzano (2003) highlighted several problems, including a lack of material resources, insufficient capacity of educational leaders, low participation, and a lack of a safe institutional environment. This presents a hurdle for stakeholders' engagement in the development of a school improvement plan.

The collaboration of stakeholders in an island school presents a significant difficulty. Several aspects must be addressed when motivating people and organizations to participate in school governance. This study focuses on identifying barriers to stakeholder collaboration in an island school. Furthermore, the effort prioritizes gathering insights to improve stakeholder partnerships in an island school.

II. METHOD

This study used a qualitative, phenomenological research design. Phenomenological techniques, as described by Smith et al. (2009) and cited in Gill (2020), seek to clearly convey experiences through the eyes of the individual experiencing them. Phenomenology confidently holds that humans actively seek meaning from their experiences and that their accounts accurately communicate this meaning. Thus, effectively articulating this meaning requires adopting the language of the research participants to produce a polished and real account that directly connects the researcher's findings to the participants' experiences.

The informants in qualitative phenomenology discussed their observations and experiences with a phenomenon that was being studied. It is significant to remember that the researcher may use focus groups or in-depth interviews to acquire information during the information-gathering process. Based on their personal experiences, the participants

provide their subjective and objective opinions. The common experiences and concepts that participants bring up often should be the researchers' main areas of concentration while assessing the information acquired. The categorization of significant statements of the participants as reflected in the verbal transcriptions forms is an important part of data analysis. This process requires the researcher's ability to interpret and analyze the data with adequacy.

There were ten (10) participants in this study. Participants were members of the School Governing Council (SGC). Five (5) participants are instructors, and another five (5) are parents. The selection of participants ensures that a diverse range of stakeholders' perspectives on the topic are represented. The participants were purposefully chosen. According to Palinkas, et al. (2015), purposive sampling is a widely used and popular method in qualitative research for identifying and selecting data-rich cases that are relevant to the phenomenon of interest. This approach is particularly suitable when examining a specific family background with experts. Therefore, participant selection is crucial for this research as individuals are consistently sought out for their expertise and insight.

Throughout this study, I meticulously adhered to ethical principles including respect for all individuals, promoting well-being, ensuring fairness, obtaining consent, and safeguarding confidentiality. As the researcher, it was my duty to produce trustworthy research findings. By utilizing thought-provoking questions and phrases, I conducted interviews and discussions. Additionally, I personally handled the analysis and transcription of the data. Through thematic analysis, we derived categories, codes, and themes from the spoken transcriptions, delving deep into the study's investigation.

In the course of my research, I extensively elucidated the phenomenon through the firsthand experiences of the participants. I engaged in thorough discussions, integration of findings, and the imbuing of depth and significance into the phenomenological inquiry process. Furthermore, prior to conducting in-depth interviews, this phenomenological study effectively obtained explicit consent from the participants. Ensuring their comprehension that queries for elucidation were welcome, I obtained their approval for recording the discussions. Additionally, participants were assured of the utmost confidentiality of their information and its exclusive use for academic purposes.

Throughout the study process, I performed an extensive review to confirm the accuracy of the data. To measure consistency, observations and interviews are contrasted with questionnaire data and participant insights provided during interviews. Furthermore, participants actively reviewed the transcriptions of each interview session. According to Patton (2002), involving participants in confirming findings is essential for ensuring the correctness, completeness, fairness, and validity of the data analysis.

Ultimately, this study used qualitative phenomenology as a methodological strategy. When gathering information from participants, the data collecting process followed tight guidelines. The subsequent analysis and categorization of transcriptions produced thematic findings that captured the essence of the investigation.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Using thematic analysis of the acquired information data, the following themes emerged relating to stakeholder participation in school governance in an island school:

➤ *Planning and Decision Making.*

The stakeholders in the island school actively participate in identifying the priority improvement requirements of the institution and play a key role in the planning and decision-making processes. This aligns with DepEd Order No. 44 series 2015, which outlines the Guidelines on the Enhanced School Improvement Planning Process and underscores the significance of involving stakeholders in the planning of school programs, including the development of the school's milestone plan.

➤ *Program Implementation.*

Stakeholders actively participate in the implementation of school programs, as seen by their collaboration to identify and address the school's top priorities. The involvement of stakeholders has clearly aided the school in implementing its programs. According to Nicdao and Ancho (2019), the high ratings for stakeholder involvement during the planning stage of the School Improvement Plan resulted in collaborative brainstorming to develop practical solutions for identified improvement areas.

Meanwhile, the participants went over the challenges that they have in their engaging cooperation at school. The challenges prevent stakeholders from fully participating in the school's governance. The following are the emerging topics on the issues in school partnership:

➤ *Weak Commitment of Stakeholders to Participate.*

Based on the participants' statements, it's clear that some stakeholders show weak commitment to their involvement in school activities, particularly in developing the School Improvement Plan and making decisions. Some reasons, like those of parents and external stakeholders, are understandable as they have family responsibilities to prioritize on a daily basis. Their daily work and family needs make it difficult for them to engage in the planning process. The lack of stakeholder commitment in crafting the school improvement plan is a significant challenge. According to Gosling and Mintzberg (2004), the crucial question is not whether school principals have the skills and patience to involve stakeholders in the planning, but rather whether there is stakeholder support and commitment at all levels to make the planning process effective.

➤ *Financial and Material Deficiency.*

The stories shared by the participants clearly point out that the lack of money and materials is a big issue that hinders people from getting involved in school affairs. Kalayou (2011) argues that the effective implementation of school plans to meet the needs of learners has been significantly hindered by factors such as the lack of financial and material resources, inadequate follow-up and support from education officials, insufficient commitment from the school community to support students, and poor collaboration and support from parents and partner organizations.

Similarly, In addition, According to Frew (2010), the key issues affecting stakeholder participation include insufficient funding and school facilities, limited community support, and a lack of necessary awareness and practical involvement of students in the program. The absence of financial and material resources, combined with other issues, provide hurdles to the endeavor of engaging stakeholders' support for school management, particularly for school programs and priority projects.

Finally, this study has gathered insights from the experiences and challenges of stakeholders' participation in schools. Based on the experiences and challenges of teacher-participants, the following themes have been developed as insights: Encouraging stakeholder participation and increasing school budget. The insights from this study aim to enhance stakeholder participation in school planning, decision-making, and all programs and activities.

In light of the findings of this study, the researcher believes that despite efforts to involve stakeholders in managing schools, if the gaps and shortcomings are not properly addressed, stakeholder involvement is limited. Additionally, this study suggests that school planning, decision-making, and program implementation can only be effective if the plans have sufficient budget. It is also recommended that, given the hard work of stakeholders in crafting school plans and participating in school activities, incentives are the most direct and practical way to express gratitude and motivate stakeholders to consistently participate, including monitoring the effectiveness of project implementation to ensure that the school plan is diligently carried out within the set target date.

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