IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY LINKAGES: BRIDGING THE GAPS

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The Philippines is known for the historical contexts of such schools built during the long years of conquest. These academies were bound to the leadership of the high authorities specifically the government. Little by little, our country established more and more schools from small to large-scale units. We are known for public elementary and secondary schools per barangay and per municipality, each leading to a partnership with the community. Schools survive with the help of sponsors and stakeholders. Moreover, teachers and school leaders spend their personal money for the beautification of the school. There is nothing wrong with it if we are putting the lives of our learners for their own betterment.

Over the years, we have been doing the annual Brigada Eskwela (School Brigade) program. The schools invite parents, students, and stakeholders to be one in conducting classified programs like cleanup drives, free seminars and trainings, free checkups, donation drives, classroom fixation and embellishments, and fire/earthquake drills.

The importance of doing this is crucial for the sustainability of school and community partnerships. Partnerships can be used to enhance, encourage and even transform individual partners, resulting in improved efficiency of the program, more effective use of resources and greater alignment of priorities and curricula (Harvard Family Research Project, 2010).

Communities can provide a type of context and atmosphere that strengthens the core values and that practices the mission, vision, goals, and objectives the school
ideally teach to the learners. They become the model of showing the young people what camaraderie is all about. Most stakeholders and parents return the favor to the schools since those are their alma maters.

Community linkages also promote social and financial supports, family relationships, and cultural values needed for the survival of the contemporary society. Vocational projects such as providing free trainings for cooking, agriculture, business, and the like open many doors to job opportunities since not all the learners are not academically serious.

In turn, schools offer communities a focal point for children’s educational services. Symbolically, in many cultures, schools are seen by many as the only enduring public institutions. In addition to acculturation into conventional values and ethics, instruction usually involves lessons in social and cultural skills – especially in elementary grades.

An academe is a place where children grow up as well-educated citizens ready to perform various duties and responsibilities and become the future providers of their families and the country. Seeing that the outside forces participate in the in-service programs and vice versa, students are equipped with the “Bayanihan” values of the Filipinos.

It is true that public schools receive Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) from the government yearly to be utilized in purchasing materials, paying electric and water bills, sustaining the classroom’s foundation, and providing students and teachers needed equipment for learning as part of the contingency plan. However, although it is properly budgeted, challenges on expenses arise and schools call for support from different sponsors. Fortunately, political leaders also implement projects where they utilize their funds to support the educational institutions. One of the known
school-community partnership programs aside from Brigada Eskwela is the distribution of school supplies to the learners especially those who are residing in remote areas.

This is regardless of the social status of the student as long as he or she is enrolled in the local public school. In addition, there are series of activities sponsored by the universities and colleges, i.e., competitions that promote the intellectual and physical talents and skills of the young people. The competition generally starts as a school level. Those who win represent their schools in the division level, eventually leading to regional, national, and international levels. These endeavors are considered community linkages which transform schools as catalysts of good sportsmanship and positive change.

Meanwhile, teachers and school leaders also involve the students in conducting action researches by identifying some problems in the community and implementing appropriate solutions that are beneficial. Coastal cleanups are regarded activities with huge impacts. Students further campaign environmental programs such as “Save the Turtles” and “No to Single-use Plastics” to immobilize these harmful items. They also advocate mental health, physical fitness, and social well-being.

Imagine this continuous and precious moments where our students take part. This is a fruit of our labor. This is a result of our relentless patience. This is the outcome of our tireless teachings. They carry the core values of being Maka-Diyos, Makakalikasan, Makatao, and Makabansa. Our learners are not confined only with the walls of the classrooms, libraries, computer rooms, audio-visual halls, etc. Schools and communities do not sever their ties as they share their visions for learning and developmental outcomes, apply diverse communication mechanisms in multiple levels, promote an understanding of the relevancy of volunteerism and leadership, and mutually agree with the support system they need to reciprocate.
As time flies, there will be a regular birth of new models and pedagogies that can be adapted/modified by both parties. The old and traditional are mixed with the contemporary avenues of tie-ups. It is important that all efforts performed establish a stronger base of partnerships to reach the optimum level of social cooperation.

We are the prime movers of the educational society and we continue to invent platforms and see their effectiveness and efficiency through application and implementation. Schools, families, and neighborhoods will plan for a more prosperous future by working together. We have already seen how we work hand in hand in these pandemic times. We have been doing our best to provide the needs of the learners, but this time, we became in dire need of the parents and the stakeholders, holding hands more for the sake of the entirety. This situation has taught us to be more visible and to beat the atrocity of this malediction.

Together, we are one.

References: