



Outsourcing Funds for the Preparation of School Opening: The Experiences and Best Practices of Rural Public Schools

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Abstract

Outsourcing of fund is a strategy that has become important management tool for most public schools. It is considered to be one of the most feasible solutions in preventing school programs and services to die down. School leaders are faced with difficult decisions associated with budget expenses due to a diminishing level of available funds. An area which is gaining popularity in reducing expenditures is outsourcing and many public schools have turned to outside companies and individuals soliciting for help to provide them with a more efficient and economical services. Brigada Eskwela (School Brigade) in the Philippine public schools is one of the programs of the Department of Education (DepEd) that enables public schools to exercise outsourcing in preparation for the opening of classes. The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of four school leaders in the province and identify the best practices they employ in outsourcing fund. This study used qualitative method through semi-structured interviews. The results and findings of the gathered data on 7 best practices in outsourcing fund provide requisite information among school leaders in making better decisions on how to deal with the complexities of outsourcing. Best practices of concerned school leaders in rural schools could serve as guide not just to those in the city but the entire country as well when it comes to developing and managing successful school programs.

Keywords: Best Practices, Outsourcing Funds, Philippine School System, Rural Schools

Introduction

Philippine public education in the 21st century is confronted with many profound challenges; one of the most common concerns is related to finance. The problem on budget that the government is allocating every department is based from the dire need in relation to country's demand at present. In 2017, DepEd has received Php 543.2 billion coming from the 2017 national budget to benefit the 21.2 million learners all over the country that funded teachers' salaries, improve basic educational facilities, purchase instructional materials, and give financial assistance to students. The amount appears to be huge but taking into consideration the total number of public elementary and secondary schools, the budget can hardly cover its purpose. With public school budgetary gaps, private sources of funding have been relied upon (Posey-Maddox, 2016).

In 2012-2013 alone, based on the DEPED Research and Statistics Education, Office of Planning and Service, there are 38,659 elementary public schools with a total enrolment of 13,259,489 and there are 7,748 public secondary schools with 5,681,898 students. These are the figure five years ago, the present number of schools and enrollees have definitely gone up. Rivera (2009), in his dissertation on effects of outsourcing, noted, "as the economy continues to worsen, school districts are forced to find new revenue streams while at the same time reducing expenditures." The idea of cutting down expenditures is best answered by outsourcing.

Outsourcing in public schools is not new; in fact, this is one program that gains rapid popularity in reducing expenditures. Outsourcing can be attributed to aiding institutions toward becoming more efficient. Ballou (1995) supports this idea that the purpose of outsourcing is to offer services to schools for the improvement of students' performance and also an effective method in increasing accountability, thus, improving education.



As school leaders examine the success of outsourcing experienced by their corporate counterparts, they have developed a keen interest in the area of privatizing numerous services. Consequently, many schools have turned to outside companies to provide a wide array of services in a more economical way than the schools can provide using internal personnel.

Outsourcing in schools has historically been controversial and faced intense opposition. As the use of outsourcing continues to rise, it is rapidly becoming a regular part of the management tools utilized in schools. As these “outsiders” enter schools, there are repercussions that school leaders need to be aware of before proceeding to decision-making process of whether, when, and what services should be outsourcing.

Brigada Eskwela (DepEd Memorandum No. 12, s. 2006) (DepEd Complex, 2006) is one best program of the government under the “Adopt a School Program” that is considered to be legitimate in outsourcing school funds. This 14-year old program of the Department of Education brings people together to prepare public facilities for the opening of classes, draw-out volunteers from different sectors of the government, a true spirit of volunteerism among Filipinos. This Brigada Eskwela is a weeklong community service and stakeholders’ participation were the highlights. Undersecretary for Finance Victoria Maria Catibog during the kick-off ceremony of Brigada Eskwela last May 15 emphasized:

“Brigada Eskwela has come a long way from its simple beginnings. It focussed mainly on preparing the physical facilities of the school for the opening of classes, including minor repairing of school buildings, repainting, cleaning up, refurbishing of furniture and fixtures, and similar activities. At the onset, it aimed to drum up awareness and support of school stakeholders that they are part and parcel of the school and are equally responsible with school officials to ensure that the learners are ensured safe and healthy surroundings conducive to teaching and learning.”

Few years back, it has been a struggle among public schools on how to raise the program successful due to the funding that dictates the mobility of the program. Where will the source of fund come from? Who will be involved for the outsourcing of funds? Who will take charge of the outsourcing of funds? The Department of Education does not rest into its lap, with the shortage of budget, the agency has been creative in making schools become resourceful in outsourcing funds. Through school heads and the strong influence of teachers, active participation of stakeholders draw positive feedbacks in supporting the Brigada Eskwela by giving their cash, in kind, volunteerism during the weeklong schedule.

Due to the success of the program, the Department of Education has issued regional memorandum No. 165, s. 2015 urging a Brigada Eskwela Evaluation for Best Implementing Schools, which became successful up to this time. The said memorandum has pushed all schools to actively participate utilizing all the arsenals to win the competition. The evaluation has set criteria served as guidelines for the schools to conduct the program. One of the criteria is accumulating monetary donations coming from private individuals, sectors, and companies with the corresponding documents for legal purposes. Region XI last year has top the record of more than half a million volunteers and about Php 200 million resources generated and increase the number of best implementing schools Hall of Fame awardees.

What lies in the success of the implementation of Brigada Eskwela are the best practices employed in the outsourcing of funds financing all the programs lined-up.



Objectives

This study will find out the best practices employed by school heads, principals, and Brigada Eskwela chairpersons in the province in outsourcing funds. While there is insufficient literature on fundraising revenues, (Turney, Mullen, & Safaii-Waite, 2016), this study attempts to highlight transformative practices of concerned school officials in the province as a spring board of discussion as guidance for those assigned not only in city school but the entire country as well. Arnold (2004) has stated that reforms have been stemmed from the narratives of urban and suburban leaders. This study is an attempt that education leaders can also benefit from the best practices of those from rural schools.

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature using semi-structured interviews with current school heads and Brigada Eskwela chairpersons. Research instrument was validated by four experts, as comments and suggestions contributed to the finalization of the official interview script. Five guide questions were developed, as main questions were scripted and inquired into the presence of connection. Follow-up questions were also scripted, but the question asked depended on the response of the interviewee. Probing questions were asked to gain depth and detail. Generally, each interview session lasted for two hours.

Four participants were involved in the study: Teacher III, Master Teacher II, Head Teacher III, and a Principal I. They were purposively chosen because of their involvement in the Brigada Eskwela programs of their respective schools. The researchers selected participants whose experience in public schools is ten years and above with the complete knowledge and experience in the Brigada Eskwela activities.

The researchers administered a one-on-one interview with the participants on separate dates. Every participant was contacted through a phone call informing of the intension for the interview. One main question was asked followed by some supporting questions to probe the answer. Participants were interviewed in their respective schools in Region 6, specifically in the Province of Iloilo. The responses of the participants were recorded through a tape recorder and note taking.

Results and Discussion

This study was designed to identify the best practices of Brigada Eskwela chairpersons in outsourcing funds to finance the program and activities in preparation for the opening of classes. Along with the best practices are the experiences that help substantiate the implementation of the best practices.

Interview was conducted face-to-face and the responses were recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researchers. Results were gathered based from the questions asked:

- a. What were the best practices you have employed in outsourcing funds during the Brigada Eskwela in your school?
- b. In what ways each practice has reached the stakeholders?
- c. Why do you consider each practice effective in outsourcing funds?

Respondent A

Respondent A is a Master Teacher II and currently the head of the Music, Arts and Physical Education Department of his school. He was the over-all chairman of the Brigada Eskwela of his school in SY 2015–



2016. His efforts in initiating projects had made the school qualified in the Regional Level Brigada Eskwela Assessment and won 5th place in the regional secondary big school category.

During the face-to-face interview, Respondent A was asked a question about his experiences in ways on how to reach out to stakeholders the information concerning Brigada Eskwela.

“I tapped all the possible stakeholders whom I know can play a big part in implementing the different programs and projects lined up for the Brigada. I called for a special meeting involving the following persons: school principal, selected faculty members, department heads, presidents of the school’s student organizations, PTA officials, faculty officers, barangay council, maintenance personnel representative, and alumni representatives to take part in the planning.”

According to him, the initial planned programs, activities, and projects were presented and approved by the stakeholders. It was also a challenge among stakeholders to plan and come up with outsourcing activities concerning their organization. He also added;

“Every stakeholder’s organization planned and consolidated their fund raising projects in such a way that it will not duplicate with others planned activities. Everybody took part actively with one goal – to raise fund for the school’s projects and program assistance.”

The entire process of Brigada Eskwela, from its planning, implementation, and post evaluation, stakeholders were very active in giving their share. The respondents noted that the experience of rendering service to the school wholeheartedly without expecting for a return is a feeling of contentment.

Another important question was asked as regards to best practices employed in the success of Brigada Eskwela, Respondent A shared several best activities which he considered very effective in outsourcing Brigada fund. Among those practices were: (a) the involvement of stakeholders in the planning, (b) fund raising projects, (c) involvement of local barangay officials and local groups, and (d) school projects.

On the very first stage of planning, stakeholders were involved through a meeting which consolidation of ideas on projects and programs to be implemented took place. Suggestions on outsourcing activities were raised and most of them were approved by all. Most of the approved activities were fund raising activities which include: express your share, solicitations and donations, parents-tap-parents program, and involve politician campaign.

“These fund raising activities intended to raise money and as well solicit in-kind as a standing fund for Brigada Eskwela activities. I have to initiate more contacts from private companies, in fact, my team went to different business companies present in the vicinity. We personally talk to the company heads/managers to express our intention and discussing to them the main objectives of the said cause. We thank God because all our efforts were paid off due to positive response of the companies.”

Another big help for the implementation is the support coming from the barangay officials and local school board.



“Annually, barangays around the school never failed to participate, they brought with them full force of human volunteers; policemen, barangay officials, resident volunteers, among others who voluntarily work for the beautification of the school with all expenses shouldered by them. Aside from that each barangay donated cash for minor school repairs.”

The presence of local support made the voluntary work more engaging. Available cash at hand after Brigada Eskwela will be allotted to prioritized project such as: construction of butterfly sanctuary and vertical garden. The above stated practices made a big impact in the effective implementation of Brigada Eskwela.

Respondent B

Respondent B is a Teacher III of one of the elementary schools in Iloilo City. She has been taking charge of the Brigada Eskwela since it was launched. She belongs to a poor barangay which according to her;

“Houses are located distantly and are separated by a river, rice fields, and sugarcane plantation. The place is hard-up; students are thirsty of education, parents are very supportive, and the spirit of volunteerism is very evident.”

Respondent B was very positive when we had a one-on-one interview. When asked about her personal experiences from the time she spearheaded the Brigada Eskwela and how she cascaded the program to the stakeholders, she simply nodded her head and said “great”. Her experience in almost 8 years as chairperson of Brigada Eskwela has made her very resourceful in outsourcing fund, she exclaimed;

“At first, I was so blank on what to do, no budget to generate the expenses from, so many invited volunteers but no food to offer, so many minor repairs to do but no budget to buy paint and other construction materials. Hearing from other school leaders their strategies and practices in outsourcing funds, I got some ideas which I eventually adopted in my own school and thought of other unique ways to involve the whole community with less expenses and generate more funds both in-cash and in-kind.”

She added, “the school caters students with less in life; parents who rely their everyday living from farming and contractual jobs, it’s hard to generate fund.” But experience made her resourceful in bringing the community one in mission for Brigada Eskwela.

When asked about the best practices she and her team employed during the Brigada Eskwela, she narrated four (4): (a) house to house campaign, (b) meeting with the stakeholders, (c) fund raising activities, (d) involvement of local and barangay school board. She also explained how each practice was successfully implemented.

Respondent B was very religious if a task is given to her. One (1) month before the kick-off of Brigada Eskwela, she and her team went on for a house to house campaign. The campaign has a purpose of orienting every household family and as well inviting them to take part in the Brigada Eskwela program. She finds this practice topmost effective because according to her;



“Every family takes all the information seriously because it is no less than a teacher present in the house, I mean they pay high regard to teachers so it is not hard for us to get their yes if we invite them to attend the Brigada Eskwela program. And also our way in tapping potential parents who can assist us in our cause of fund raising.”

Stakeholders are also met to discuss matters about Brigada Eskwela and at the same time propose income-generating activities. Among the attendees are: school principal, PTA officers, Student Council officers, religious sector representatives, vendors, faculty members, and barangay council officials. During the meeting Respondent B always emphasizes the concern of raising funds because the school has no budget allocated for Brigada Eskwela program.

Among the fund raising activities which made an impact in outsourcing of fund are watch a movie project among primary pupils, intermediate pupils, and adult. The price of admission is very minimal and the proceeds go to the program. Solicitations and donations, another project wherein families are given solicitation letter for any amount they can give. Private businesses small or big were also given solicitations, politicians were also given, and the result turned out to be positive because amount collected were more than enough in sustaining projects allotted for the school year.

They also involve the local and barangay school board. The local school board otherwise known as the municipal school board is very supportive in donating funds for big projects in school. “Local school board is very generous in donating cash amount as much as Php 50,000 depending on the level of need. The town leader is very open in giving assistance as long as the assessment favors the project, the money will be handed-down in check” she quipped. Barangay school board on the other hand, headed by the barangay captain, religiously attends the Brigada Eskwela donating paints and other repair materials.

The above practices effectively brought the organization into the top five rank of best Brigada Eskwela implementers during the assessment in the elementary level.

Respondent C

Respondent C is a Head Teacher III in one of the elementary schools in Iloilo. As an OIC principal, he takes charge of the Brigada Eskwela every year. Brigada Eskwela according to him, *“is one activity being looked forward to by the school because it brings people together for a common cause.”* He emphasized the importance of fund and fund raising activities to help sustain the activities for Brigada Eskwela.

During the interview, his experiences being the head of the Brigada Eskwela for several years have made him become visionary and critical thinker. He made sure that every step of the plan is implemented well. He narrated that;

“The success of the implementation of Brigada Eskwela drew barangay folks closer to one another as they bring free service to the school. Even if fund is limited, their creativity in outsourcing helps the program become lighter and purposeful. I always hold meeting as much as possible a month prior to the opening of classes. The meeting was an avenue for me to bring into their awareness the important aspects of Brigada Eskwela and how their participation takes role in the implementation.”

He coined best activities which gained popularity in the barangay and eventually became an annual practice in outsourcing funds. (1) the practice of solicitation and donation, (2) beauty for a cause (Little Mr. and Little



Ms. Brigada), (3) tapping small scale businesses in the barangay. When asked why he considered those activities as best practice, he said;

“Our Brigada activities are very limited as compared to other schools, this is the only way I know very easy to tap them, in fact I do house to house campaign also to give solicitation letters to ask from them any help they can offer, in kind or in cash. As a result, many responded.”

He pointed out the idea of Beauty for a Cause, this is the kind of activity where barangay folks love to watch. Each grade level selects a pair representative for Little Mr. and Little Ms Brigada wherein each level competes for a high solicited amount. Through series of canvassing, amount collected per level is revealed. A certain amount collected through canvassing becomes the fund of the school. This activity has accumulated almost the fund of the school. Another practice is tapping small-scale businesses in the barangay.

“This practice becomes an annual activity, in our barangay, small businesses include: bakery, rice mill industry, sari-sari stores, and the like. Bakeries sponsored the snacks of the volunteers and others donated cash. This practice has become a deal yearly.”

The school has lots to improve, according to Respondent C, but he is very confident that the stakeholders behind him are one with him in mission. After the Brigada Eskwela, the core group has found out a standard focus on variety of activities that would raise more funds.

Respondent D

Respondent D is a Principal I in one of the barangay schools in Iloilo. The location of her school is very rural and the residents' lives are very simple. Respondent D values the essence of Brigada Eskwela, in fact, in four (4) consecutive years, her school ranked 1 in the Brigada Eskwela Division Assessment. The reason for being in the top is the consistency of the implementation of the Brigada Eskwela outsourcing practices.

During the interview, she stressed three (3) key points as the best practices she remained to be faithful during the implementation of Brigada. One main reason why the people are abreast of the Brigada Eskwela program in her vicinity is because of the effort she does in doing the house-to-house campaign. According to her;

“Brigada Eskwela is one of my advocacies; I am very motivated to visit every house and family to inform the program of Brigada Eskwela every year. If there would be 300 families, I spend several afternoons to visit very family to bring the program into their awareness and invite them as well to take part in the program.”

Her experiences in dealing with people are one best strategy that drew them to cooperate and share in whatever way they can contribute. According to her;

“I can't imagine that this school can accumulate big amount of collection during the Brigada Eskwela, when few programs I had, cash-in is so fast. During the house-to-house campaign, Respondent C is very active already of offering donations and solicitations to families as part of pledges. It was not in a manner of compulsory, but of service. As a result, many offered pledges in a form of cash and in-kind or even both which help sustain the 5-day run for Brigada implementation.”



Respondent D also made her appearance to the Municipal School Board and Barangay School Board to ask and request budget for school improvement.

“This is one best strategy I consider in outsourcing fund. I usually bring the awareness to the Municipal School Board and Barangay School Board the urgent need of the school in terms of facilities and maintenance. I have always with me the resolution and the supporting documents that would convince them to extend their help. Every year, the municipal school board releases big amount for construction and purchase of school equipment which is usually awarded to us during the Brigada. Look at our school now – we have structures that we can be proud of.”

Another goal she wants to set is bringing all stakeholders to a one great mission of service.

“This is what I usually emphasized to all the members of the school. Let us all work together to a common mission! I let them move according to what is legal and beneficial. In fact solicitation was initiated by the PTA officials which turned out to be positive. Feeding program was sponsored by the teachers and alumni, and many came for the clean-up drive. I was very happy and contented of the result especially last year when we ended the Brigada Eskwela with a culminating activity. People love transparency that is why all amount accumulated and generated were presented to them plus the expenses.”

Conclusion

All four participants were chairpersons of the Brigada Eskwela and all came from public elementary and secondary schools in the province. This study found seven best practices that were identified according to the responses of the five Brigada Eskwela Chairpersons. Common themes were identified and put as one making up for one best practice:

1. Involving the stakeholders of the school in planning and organizing of the program
2. Conducting fund raising projects
3. Giving out solicitation and donation letters.
4. Tapping the municipal school board and the barangay school board for sponsorship
5. Involving of private and non-government organizations for help
6. Doing house-to-house campaign
7. Networking

Findings above could serve as inputs to policy formulation in relation to the preparation of school opening. Stakeholders may be consulted during the planning stage, highlighting each sector's contribution. Focal persons may be assigned to lead and manage the programs. Based from the responses of the participants, information dissemination has reached the Brigada Eskwela awareness of the stakeholders through house-to-house campaign, caravans, and communication sent to them. The above best practices identified are the key factors in the success of the Brigada Eskwela implementation in various schools.

Overall, this study showcased effective attempts of school leaders in the province that could serve as guide not only for those assigned in schools in the city, but the entire country as well. For further research attempts, as Turney et al. (2016) put it, it is suggested that future studies involve students as key stake holder group in



studies of fundraising practices. While it can be noted that as rural school districts are “not able to offer learners the same resources offered in suburban or urban schools (Oakes & Maday, 2009),” transformative school leaders in rural schools have shown evident practices worthy of emulating in the rural and urban school contexts.

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