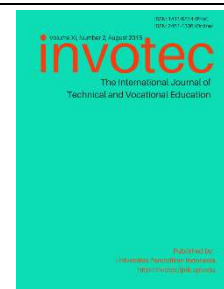




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USC-Basic Education Department's Collaborative SHS Program (A Hybrid Grades 11 and 12 Model)

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ABSTRACT

When President Benigno Aquino III signed into law Republic Act 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, this signals an insistent educational reform that will make academic stakeholders conscious of the quality of graduates they produce. This goes to show that the government is assertive in improving the quality of our educational system to be at par with international standards. Thus, Education was significantly prioritized and given importance. One of the most challenging features of K to 12 is the establishment of the Senior High School program. It is then the purpose of this paper is to present the Grade 11 and 12 model of the University of San Carlos Basic Education Department under the Technical Vocational (Tech-Voc) Track. The project is collaboration between two institutions with distinct orientation. Tech-Voc Track is one of the four identified tracks of the K to 12 Program under Senior High School with Academic Track, Sports Track and Arts and Design completing the list. This collaborative technical vocational track is also rooted in the country's education strategy which is anchored on the National Education for All (EFA) 2015 Plan and attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) which aim to provide an overarching policy framework for basic education with a vision that all Filipinos will acquire basic competencies. Significantly it is also pegged in the objectives of the K to 12 Program specifically the items that state – "be adequately prepared for the world of work or entrepreneurship or higher education and "be legally employable with potential for better earnings.

1. Introduction

The philosophy of education discusses its issues not only in terms of substance but also of process. This explains the debates of whether learners are to be seen from the classical view of liberal education or from the modern view of functionalist training. K to 12 and Philippine Main Education Highway (PMEH) clearly state that the main aim of education is to contribute to the nation's need for a critical mass of highly skilled professional workforce, presumably an army of scientists and researchers, technicians and technologists, teachers and educational providers. Advocates of liberal education will find their humanist and aesthetic concerns amply addressed at BED, and even heightened with higher education – a position congenial to the Catholic educator's concern for ethics, spirituality and evangelization.

The K to 12 Program was one of the centerpieces of President Benigno Aquino's campaign platform when he was anointed by his political party to run the highest office of the country. After his victory and took oath as President of the Republic of the Philippines, he laid out his political agenda where Education was significantly given utmost priority and importance.

Since then, this educational reform has been signed into law dubbed as RA 10533 otherwise known as the Educational Reform Act of 2013. This brings good tidings to the nation where the understanding of basic education is primarily "preparatory" in nature which means that a student goes through six years of elementary school training and an additional four years of junior high school diploma with the singular expectation to jump on board to college. With this Basic Education reform, additional two years is added calling it Grade 11 and 12 or plainly Senior High School (SHS). Much more there is now a shift from "preparatory" to "terminal" understanding of basic education. This means that a high school student, who graduates from Grade 12 or SHS, is presented with options to be employed, to put up his or her own business as entrepreneur or proceed to higher education or college.

The purpose of this paper is to present the Grade 11 and 12 model of University of San Carlos Basic Education Department under the Vocational Technical Education (VocTec) Track. The project is collaboration between two institutions with distinct orientation. TechVoc Track is one of the four identified tracks of the K to 12 Program under Senior High School with Academic Track, Sports Track and Arts and Design completing the list.

This collaborative technical vocational track is also rooted in the country's education strategy which is anchored on the National Education for All (EFA) 2015 Plan and attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) which aim to provide an overarching policy framework for basic education with a vision that all Filipinos will acquire basic competencies. Significantly it is also pegged in the objectives of the K to 12 Program specifically the items that state – "be adequately prepared for the world of work or entrepreneurship or higher education and "be legally employable with potential for better earnings.

Likewise it stems in the Philippine Main Education Highway's document that says:

National Career Assessment Examination (NCAE) assesses the competencies of the student to guide them in their career choices after high school – whether to proceed to post-secondary education under TESDA or to higher education under CHED or simply join the world of work.

2. What is Collaborative Learning?

Generally defined, an Educational Collaborative Partnerships is ongoing involvement between schools and business/industry, unions, governments and community organizations. Educational Collaborative Partnerships are established by mutual agreement between two or more parties to work together on projects and activities that will enhance the quality of education for students while improving skills critical to success in the workplace. Collaboration in Education- two or more co-equal individual voluntarily brings their knowledge and experience together by interacting toward a common goal in the best interest of students for the betterment of their education success. Students achieve team building and communication skills meeting many curricular standards. Students have the ability to practice real-world communication experiences. Students gain leadership through collaboration and empowers peer to peer learning.

Last June 2013, AFOS Foundation facilitated the participation of the Philippines in a seminar workshop in Nanyang Polytechnic in Singapore sponsored by Regional Cooperation Platform (RCP). This is an organization composed of several ASEAN countries committed to promote and further vocational teacher education programs through their respective universities. The week-long event expected every participating

country to showcase an output related to the topic. USC-BED and Center for Industrial and Technical Enterprise (CITE) decided on a collaborative program that will pre-implement the Grade 11 and 12 program which is time lined by Department of Education come 2016.

While this collaborative VocTech program is novel in its form, it is not the first in terms of institutions forging a commitment to come to terms for a viable program to take off and benefit the identified stakeholders. The educative process is obviously collaborative in nature such as the pro-active collaboration among school administrators, faculty, support administrative staff, parents, guardians, community, alumni, industry and the like. It is primarily a collective success with the student as the center of the education process.

This is one indicator that collaboration is an organic trend that eventually developed into a culture within the educational system. During a seminar overseas in Nanyang Polytechnic, one of the prominent officials of the school walked our group through a research laboratory for a showcase of their flagship endeavors. But the most significant learning that he conveyed to all the participants was when he highlighted the collaborative efforts of varied units within the institution resulting to a product and output that immediately was within the standards of industry demands and expectations.

The point is simple, a successful collaborative program is a collective effort coming from different groups that share the same vision, common interest and focus towards one goal. "This means that educators should develop a willingness to collaborate among themselves. Teachers, both religious and lay, together with parents and school-board members are to work as a team from the school's common good." Their communion fosters appreciation of the various charisms and vocations that build up a genuine school community and strengthen scholastic solidarity. Educators, administrators, parents, and bishops guide the school to make choices that promote overcoming individualistic self-promotion, solidarity instead of competition, assisting the weak instead of competition, assisting the weak instead of marginalization, responsible participation instead of indifference. In a word, collaborative program within the context of this paper is not simply limited to a designed course ready to be launched but it encompasses other features and concepts much more the human cooperation to achieve a common purpose.

The first key result thrust of Basic Education Sectoral Reform Agenda (BESRA) states that the best people to improve the quality of schools are the people most directly affected by the school's operations – namely the school heads, the teachers, the students' parents and others in the community. This indirectly points to the encouragement of the Department of Education to actively participate in the ongoing implementation of the K to 12 program by undertaking new initiatives that will pave the way to a more creative and interesting approach to achieve the goal of a more concrete reform in education. Thus, it can also be said that:

Collaboration is working with each other to do a task and to achieve shared goals. It is a recursive process where two or more people or organizations work together to realize shared goals, (this is more than the intersection of common goals seen in co-operative ventures, but a deep, collective, determination to reach an identical objective - for example, an endeavor that is creative in nature by sharing knowledge, learning and building consensus. Most collaboration requires leadership, although the form of leadership can be social within a decentralized and egalitarian group. In particular, teams that work collaboratively can obtain greater resources, recognition and reward when facing competition for finite resources. Collaboration is also present in opposing goals exhibiting the notion of adversarial collaboration, though this is not a common case for using the word.

The agreement in principle by two institutions in the implementation of the collaborative model is to impart its respective expertise. CITE being a very credible technical school shares such know how to a focused group of students while USC-Basic Education Department ensure the delivery of general education subjects or courses within a given time frame.

How will this fare upon its launching is an interesting question but it is seen more of an investment rather than quickly adhering to revenue. Since the challenge of the K to 12 implementation is on how to come up with a convincing "buy in" to the parents, it is believed that one of the strategic answers is this model because it is geared towards a terminal spirit of the educational reform. Obviously, this is not a new concept as narrated by the literature and much more it is one of the best options that will catapult K to 12 to a promising level of success.

3. USC-BED-CITE Collaborative Project

The nature of the collaboration of these two institutions is grounded on the expectations of expertise. CITE being an established Technical school is to take charge of the competency based aspect of the program while USC-BED is to handle the General Education Courses (GEC). This will be formalized through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) where sets of parameters will be defined until the completion of the program. Since this is a VocTech track, the output is industry integration where the graduates are expected to be employed after the course.

This is one way of creating awareness to all stakeholders that K to 12 Program works. It is likewise a tool to break the mentality of some parents that the additional 2 years being implemented is an economic burden when in fact it is not.

Besides, the Department of Education is soliciting help from educational sector by inviting them to propose “models” for Senior High School. This is to say that the success of K to 12 program is collective in nature and this collaborative program is one of the ways to assist the department to decide on a model that will be used come the 2016 deadline wherein the first batch of Grade 11 and 12 students will troop to different schools.

Most importantly, the collaborative program is deemed to be continuous because upon completion of the program, the graduate while integrated into the industry can return to the University and continue an allied course leading to a degree program. It is a win win situation for any student who will avail the program because he or she has the dream of a college degree in tow with certainty.

4. Challenges

Academic Stereotyping. In a country that maintained a long history of K10 (6 years elementary and 4 years of high school education) basic educational system, it automatically developed a label that a degree course is always a passport to a better life. Yet, looking closely about this scenario, it is obvious that every student who finishes K10 has no other option but to jump to college. Whether he or she is prepared to embark into a higher form of education i.e. college education is to be gauged on areas like adjustment to college life, juggling curricular and co-curricular activities and the like. Why most students prefer to finish a 4 or 5 year degree is a kind of stereotyping that frowns short courses such as two year diploma program simply because there is no other way to go after K10 but to college.

Cultural Conditioning. Parents have the tendency to decide on what is good for their son or daughter who just graduated from K10. Thus, it is likely that they will suggest that a college degree in trend is to be considered by their children. This is not mind boggling but rather a result of a cultural pass over from one generation to another simply stipulating that a degree course is a family tradition period.

Buy in. Despite a very promising package, collaborative VocTech program will experience the challenge of “buy in”. This means that while the program is terminal or employment driven, still the stakeholders will favor a degree course regardless of whether it will result to a promising career path or not.

5. Conclusion

Collaborative learning is one way of acknowledging that education doesn't operate in a vacuum or in isolation. The crucial point of such a program is the result it will present to the stakeholders that will serve as an impact and a strong message that K to 12 program is not only ideal but real, that it is terminal and not simply preparatory. Finland drives a very inspiring perspective about collaborative learning. Regional development and networking: Today the most important component of providing good education is the management and leadership skills of local political authorities, experts and school principals (carefully selected for their understanding of education development, their experience in teacher- education and their solid proven management skills). The key in the educational reforms was ‘how to find ways to help schools and teachers come together and share what they have learned about productive teaching techniques and effective schools’. The result was the creation of multi-level, professional learning communities of schools sharing locally tested practices and enriching ideas, and matching the needs for local economic development.

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Philippine Main Education Highway Document <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collaboration>

Fundacion AFOS (Assistance for the Fortification of Social Organizations) is a small non profit, non religious, non political organization, which since 2007 has facilitated that more than 330 volunteers and interns from all over the world have been able to collaborate with social projects and organizations. (<http://www.fundacionafos.org.ar/Ingles/QuienesSomos.htm>)

Nanyang Polytechnic (abbreviation: NYP; Simplified Chinese: 南洋理工学院; Traditional Chinese: 南洋理學院; Malay: Politeknik Nanyang) is a Singapore polytechnic located in Ang Mo Kio next to Yio Chu Kang MRT Station, Singapore. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nanyang_Polytechnic)

The RCP is a network with managed membership that serves mainly universities involved in Vocational Teacher Education (VTE) in the ASEAN region and China. Founded in 2009, at the present the platform incorporates VTE and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the region through the exchange of experiences, the development of programs and conducting common research projects.

The Center for Industrial Technology and Enterprise (CITE) is an institution committed to provide training in technical skills and entrepreneurship, values formation, and social services to the less privileged youth, their families, the local community and the industrial sector of Visayas and Mindanao. We aim to develop in them a high sense of professionalism and a deep Christian and social-oriented spirit. (<http://www.cite.edu.ph/>)

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