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School-based Management in the Philippines: Fostering Innovations in the Public Education System

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Abstract - This paper is a case study of the Philippines' Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP), a loan-funded project once considered to be the biggest social laboratory on education reform in the history of the Department of Education (DepEd) and was also hailed a success. A decade after the project closed, it is instructive to revisit the TEEP story and investigate how different it was from previous reform projects. It is worth noting that the winning strategy of using school-based management (SBM) as an integrative and developmental management framework fostered innovations in critical aspects of the project, thus contributing to long-term governance reforms in the basic education sector. This paper is broadly a literature-based study with primary sources culled mainly from project reports, evaluation studies and policy issuances generated during and after TEEP implementation. Findings were further enriched by interviews with consultants and experts who were involved in the project. The analysis is anchored on two discourses: a) innovative leadership roles and b) employee-driven innovation, with the main focus on the role of teachers and school heads (the Department of Education's employees on the ground) in fostering innovations in the public education system. Findings suggest that TEEP's success was a confluence of factors but SBM is recognized as the key lever. By fostering transparency, enhancing collaborative practices and ensuring stakeholders' participation in almost all levels of decision-making, SBM cultivated the culture of innovation in DepEd schools.

Keywords - Philippines, school-based management, decentralization, TEEP, social innovation

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Philippines' Third Elementary Education Project[1] (TEEP) was hailed as the biggest social laboratory for education reform in the history of the Department of Education and it was highly successful. To quote the external evaluation team's report by project end,

> it produced leaders at all levels of the organization and across functions with the capacity to manage change by providing them a positive, nurturing and liberating environment that allowed for mistakes while innovations bloomed. By the time TEEP closed, these leaders had proven capacity to plan, organize, and direct components/units with the necessary zeal and flexibility of mind to carry out a gradualist but nevertheless radical approach to education reform. (Nuqui et al., 2006, p. 108)

In this context, this paper focuses on the innovations generated by the institutionalization of school-based approach in the management of the project.[2]

Obviously, the TEEP had two (2) predecessors with their own respective stories of success and best practice. Documentation of these previous initiatives highlights similar reform thrusts and objectives to TEEP. However, the penchant to always "reinvent the wheel" to solve perennial problems of the education system swept off many innovations from old reform projects to the dustbins of history. So what makes the TEEP different from the previous reform projects? How did its strategies and innovations bring forth lasting change in the basic education sector of the country? Why is school-based management, its integrative and developmental management framework successful in fostering

[1] The Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP) was a nine-year public investment program (1998 – 2006) of the Department of Education with external financing from the World Bank and Japan Bank for International Cooperation. The project supported the goal of improving the quality of elementary education through decentralization. Specifically, it aimed to 1) improve learning achievement, completion rates, and access to quality elementary education in 23 of the poorest provinces; 2) build the institutional capacity of DepEd to manage change through teacher effectiveness and better management at all levels; and 3) actively involve the community and the local government in a large-scale effort to attain quality education.

[2] School-based management is highly credited as the main engine that generated a lot of innovative practices in the course of TEEP implementation.

innovations in the project? As there are multiple explanations to these queries especially with a huge and complex project such as TEEP, this paper is delimited to selected innovative ideas and practices which were incubated in the project.

This paper focuses on the crucial period of restructuring of TEEP in 2001, the time when the heads of the Department of Education (DepEd) deliberated over returning the loan money to the World Bank (WB) and the Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC), the Philippine government's major creditors. The argument here is that the revolutionary changes in project management instituted during this critical period engendered many innovations which will be discussed in the succeeding analysis. Noteworthy is the entry of individuals from the business sector (i.e. manufacturing and retail industry); academe and "organic" members (Department of Education officials) in the revamped project management team. This was a big shift from the previous pure consultancy-based management approach wherein external 'experts' (under private contracts) almost had absolute control over the project. In the case of TEEP, it was belatedly realized that most of these highly paid consultants were inexperienced in handling such a huge and complex project. This was exacerbated by the fact that they shunned active collaboration with DepEd insiders and veterans (of previous reform projects). Hence, in writing this paper, it is interesting to look into the dynamics of paradigm change and the ensuing interaction of new key players with DepEd top management. Additionally, the culture of reporting and documentation instituted during the restructuring period produced material evidence on claims of innovations especially from the ground (i.e. school and communities).

Objectives

With the project milieu described in the previous section as the point of departure, the following discussion elaborates how this paper aims to generate a more nuanced understanding of the innovations introduced and scaled up in TEEP using the theoretical discourse espoused by Lotte Darsø (2001, 2007), specifically the "diamond of innovation" (Figure 1). This investigation is further enriched by the "employee-driven innovation" discourse (Pedersen, 2008) by looking into the role of teachers and school heads (the Department of Education's employees on the ground) in fostering innovations in a reform project like Third Elementary Education Project. Specifically, this paper explores multiple narratives as to why school-based management (SBM) was successful in fostering innovations in the Philippines' Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP).

METHODOLOGY

Material evidence for this paper was sourced out mainly from data collected (raw and processed) and findings generated by researches conducted by institutions and organizations in the Philippines[3] on the project. The author, a former senior project officer and team member of the external evaluation team for the TEEP was both privies to the dynamics of top management players and a participant-observer at ground level. He thus further enriches this paper through his direct participation in different phases of the project.

This paper is divided into seven (7) sections. The first part (1) provides a general overview of basic education reforms in the country under TEEP. The second part (2) covers the paper's methodology and discussion on data gathering, discussion, and analysis (including its scope and limitations). The third part (3) presents a focused review of literature on SMB, its features, tools, and processes from existing documentation and experience of other countries that employed SBM in their basic education systems. Part four (4) of the paper elucidates the theoretical underpinnings of the discussion and analysis of the themes covered. As mentioned above, in generating informed explanations on the effectiveness of SBM in fostering innovation in a reform project such as TEEP, Lotte Darsø's (2001, 2007) concept of the diamond of innovation and four innovative leadership roles as further discussed in part five (5) will be utilized. Furthermore, the theoretical explanations under the "employee-driven innovation" framework (Høyrup, 2008) will be applied where appropriate, throughout this paper. Parts six (6) and seven (7) answer the research question/s and discuss the conclusion and recommendations made.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND SOME CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

Education Managed as a Public Enterprise

There is a need to properly contextualize how TEEP was implemented. At the onset, it was a social project in terms of scope and aims but managed like a public 'enterprise.' Similar to most countries, education is part of the constellation of social services to be delivered

[3] Particularly the Department of Education-Third Elementary Education Project, World Bank and Japan Bank of International Cooperation and consultants from the University of the Philippines Education Research Program-Education Research Program

by the state and its agencies. In the Philippines, it is enshrined in the nation's constitution that education is a public good that must be supplied for free. Various lexical definitions for an enterprise[4] highlight the following features: 1) a company, business, organization, or other purposeful endeavors; 2) an undertaking or project, especially a daring and courageous one; 3) a willingness to undertake new or risky projects; and 4) an active participation in projects. These descriptors were applicable to TEEP as elucidated below.

On hindsight, TEEP was really ran like a company, replete with organizational structure- with project managers at different levels, set targets, budgetary allocations, etc. These are typical features of a business enterprise (Table 1). Most importantly, it was undertaken with a concrete purpose: to address what was then identified as poverty in education (Nuqui et al., 2006) plaguing the basic education sector, and to wit;

> with about 28% to 34% of the population not completing Grade 6 or reaching Grade 6 but failing to graduate. Pupil performance in standardized examinations was dismal, with only about one out of ten elementary schools achieving a mastery level of 75% in the national achievement test. Textbooks and instructional materials were inadequate. Classrooms were short or in a state of utter disrepair. In an educational system where teachers still play a central role, their grasp of the subject matter and pedagogies left much to be desired. (UNDP, 2000)

[4] Collins Dictionary (Online) https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/enterprise. Accessed last 22 June 2015 and Merriam and Webster (Online) https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/enterprise. Accessed last 10 August 2015. Use of lexical or dictionary definitions are mainly due to the more encompassing description it renders to the concepts used in this paper.

Table 1. TEEP Project Components and Sub-Components

Civil Works	Education Development	Finance and Administration
➢ School Building Program ▪ New Construction ▪ Repair ➢ Division Offices	➢ Student Assessment ➢ Curriculum, Instructional Materials, and Textbooks (CIMTEX) ➢ In-Service Training (INSET) ➢ School Improvement and Innovation Facility (SIIF) ➢ Policy Research and Strategic Planning (PRSP) ➢ School-Based Management (SBM)	➢ Accounting, Budget, and Finance ➢ Procurement ➢ Information, Education, Communication and Advocacy (IECA) ➢ Monitoring and Evaluation and Management Information System (MIS)

Source: TEEP Draft Project Completion Report.

TEEP was also replete with stories of leaps of faith and tremendous risk-taking among its top managers in wringing out of the mud midway of its project cycle. This was the time when returning unspent loan money was seriously considered due to severe delays and missed targets under previous management teams before its restructuring.[5] A most endearing anecdote was the Philippine Congress incident wherein TEEP's project manager, the then Department of Education Secretary Raul Roco[6] retorted, "If we cannot trust even our school principals who else can we trust in running the affairs of this country?"[7] He was rebuking the politicians' refusal to the idea of handing over the reins of managing some crucial components of TEEP, like the school-building project, to the "inexperienced" school-heads. The good Secretary prevailed in the end and SBM saw the light of day.

A final highlight is the biggest risk TEEP is known to have

[5] TEEP was restructured in 2001, four years after it was launched in 1997

[6] The late Senator Raul Roco was a highly respected Philippine statesman known for his integrity, fortitude and anti-corruption stance. Most of young Filipinos fondly remembers him as the "best Filipino president the country never had."

[7] Secretary Roco later elaborated that his mother was a retired principal and was very effective in managing all the affairs of her school, from curriculum and instruction to feeding program, and even school building repairs. Likewise, his statement was a veiled reference to bureaucratic malaise afflicting government and loan-funded projects like TEEP.

taken: the expansion of its coverage: deviating from its usual piloting of schools by the hundreds and scaled up the experiment to cover about 8,600 schools, 52,300 national and 3,400 local teachers, and about 1.7 million[8] Filipino schoolchildren in 375 municipalities. Thus earning its reputation (previously mentioned in the introduction) as the biggest social laboratory for education reform in the history of the Department of Education (Nuqui et al., 2005).

School-based Management in Basic Education Governance

School-based management is the institutional expression of decentralization of education at the grassroots level. In the Philippines, it is based on the national policy of decentralization originally set in the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act 7160), complemented by Republic Act 9155 (An Act Instituting a Framework of Governance for Basic Education) as a response to the new challenges for sustainable human development by enabling local communities to become self-reliant and more effective partners in the attainment of national goals (TEEP-DepEd, 2004).

It was modeled under the TEEP, which was designed as a process project that involved planning by all stakeholders, decentralization, consistent focus on schools and student outcomes, and information-based decision-making. By mid-2005, TEEP had defined SBM as,

> the decentralization of decision-making authority from central, regional, and division levels to individual school sites, uniting school heads, teachers, students as well as parents, the local government units and the community in promoting effective schools. Its main goal is to improve school performance and student achievement, where decision-making is made by all those who are closely involved with resolving the challenges of the individual schools so that the specific needs of the students will be served more effectively. Its objectives were to empower the school heads to provide leadership; and 2) to mobilize the community as well as local government units to invest time, money and effort in making the school a better place to learn, thus improving the educational achievement of the children. (UNDP, 2000)

Decentralization models of educational administration vary across nations that had implemented systemic changes (Rondinelli and Cheema,

[8] Ibid.

1983; Ibtisam Abu-Duhou, 1999; Hanson, 2006). In an interview, the late eminent educationist and SBM expert, Dr. Maria Luisa Doronila[9] elaborated that, "the experience of other countries in implementing SBM emphasizes the distinction between SBM as a governance mechanism through which decisions are made, and the process of using this governance mechanism to generate innovative practices to improve the quality of education. Under rapidly changing environments, this requires new and different approaches to improve performance and meet environmental demands and constraints, the effectiveness of SBM rests on its ability to guide the school through a *change process* (italics by the author) that includes new patterns of decision-making and the introduction of new approaches to improve teaching and learning."

SBM models developed in various countries which have decentralized their education systems have devolved leadership in governance and management to local councils, or professional teachers' organizations or exclusively to local school officials (Gropello, 2006). In the Philippines, the current SBM model evolved into a hybrid form of school head empowerment in tandem with parent-teachers-community association (PTCA) and re-branded as a 'school governing council' (World Bank, 2016). This new governing body is expected to perform the functions of similar entities prevalent in developed countries. Looking closely at the current paradigm of SBM in the Philippines, this study argues that it had now deviated far off the original conceptualization under TEEP as reviewed below.

The Philippine model based on a careful study of existing practices and institutions in the field, has evolved a model of school-community participation (SCP), led by the school head but involving the Parents-Teachers-Community Association (PTCA), the local government units, teachers, parents, students, non-government, and civic organizations (TEEP-DepEd, 2004). This model takes into account long-standing relations of the school with the PTCA as well as new forms of cooperation with local government units (LGUs) and non-government organizations (NGOs) which are themselves evolving as part of the general decentralization process under the Local Government Code of 1991. It likewise takes into account the traditional leadership role of the school head in the community where the school is one of its oldest and most important local institutions (Doronila, 2002). However, a decade after TEEP closed, the current SBM model tends to promote a bifurcated role between the traditional PTCA and a new body, the School Governing

[9] Author's interview with the late Dr. Maria Luisa Doronila†, Education Consultant for the TEEP last 22 June 2004

Council (World Bank, 2016). This requires further investigation which is beyond the remit of this study but is instructive in comparing how the original Philippine-model of SBM was able to capture the nuances of developmental terrain in the schools and communities where TEEP was implemented.

Social Innovation in Education

This author had initial reservations about the validity of this academic inquiry. First, because innovation has historically been identified with technological and business pursuits and traditionally measured in economic value. There was a need to clarify and answer the following questions: What constituted the distinguishing characteristics of innovation in social projects such as education? How was innovation to be quantified and qualified; and by which measures or parameters? Second, public enterprises in the Philippines were hardly considered innovative and were oftentimes characterized by inefficiency, bureaucratic red tape and a bastion of corruption. Lastly, education as already mentioned earlier has always been a public social good and was not expected to be analyzed using an economic lens (as most nationalist groups tend to argue).

Thus, it is deemed important for the purposes of this paper to look into the basic lexical definition[10] of innovation as 1) the act of introducing something new, 2) something newly introduced. For social projects like TEEP, it had definitely made innovations through the changes it introduced to the subsystem and the way it transformed the delivery and management of basic education service in the country.

Additionally, at the discursive level, this paper is also partly anchored on the conceptual definition of innovation, as *a new creation that generates economic value*, originally espoused by the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter in the 1930s (Darsø, 2003, 2007) and heavily influenced by economic discourse. But the main innovation discourse that this paper adopts is Peter Drucker's *social innovation* (ibid) that takes on a broader perspective, highlighting that valuing innovation is beyond economic terms: "Social innovation is based on social needs rather than technology. It is about new ways of organizing, new forms of interaction, new constellations and new work forms and functions" (Darsø, 2003, 2007, p.2).

[10] This definition from The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, 4th Ed. copyright © 2006 by Houghton Mifflin Company.was cited in at least 2 websites, http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/innovation and http://www.thefreedictionary.com/innovation (accessed on May 2, 2008)

This discourse will be woven into TEEP and SBM narratives below, supplying evidence affirming the applicability of social innovation as a discourse both in theory and practice.

Analytical Frameworks

Diamond of Innovation

The diamond of innovation model was initially conceptualized out of a Ph. D. study in 2001. The author's discussions with Dr. Lotte Darsø (the proponent), validated this paper's main assumption that the model is applicable in different phases and aspects of TEEP management, aside from the additional phase, the *preject*[11] (an original conceptualization of Dr. Darsø). The *preject* phase is likewise adopted in the foregoing analysis.

The model has four dynamic elements deemed crucial in the innovation process: knowledge, relations, ignorance, and concepts (Darsø, 2001; 2003, 2007: 5-6). *Knowledge* refers to the "mental programming" of the individual, that may hinder or enhance/facilitate the development of innovation. It is also characterized as multidimensional and not static and under constant development and change. *Relations* are what connect people and its quality has a great impact on whether the innovation processes yield the desired result: **the crystallization of something new** (emphasis by this author). *Ignorance* is considered the most important and most surprising dimension of the model. It deals with in part, what we know we do not know; and in part, what we do not know that we do not know; and finally, what we cannot fathom could be known. Likewise, *it is in the field of ignorance that the spark of something new is most often ignited*. Finally, *concepts* deal with the different methods and approaches in the conceptualization, development, and promotion of new concepts in a group or organization.

[11] Dr. Lotte Darsø's contribution to the expansion of concepts and language of innovation processes and management discourses that differentiates a *preject*, the early and often chaotic process, and a project, which arises after the goal has been identified (Darsø, 2003, 2007:3). She further elaborated the preject as goal seeking and divergent that requires an extended and open decision space, whereas the project by definition is goal-directed and convergent and is result-driven and requires quick decisions.

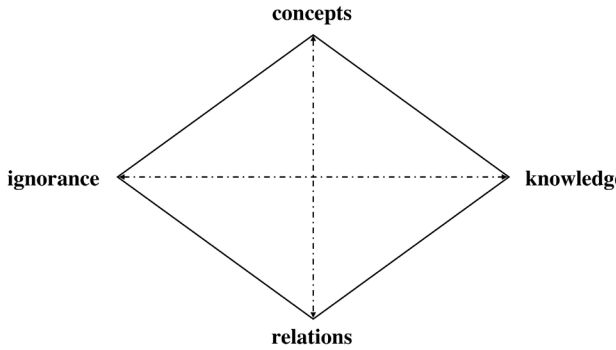

Figure 1. Diamond of innovation

Central to a more nuanced understanding of the diamond of innovation is the axes that connect its poles. The perpendicular axis represents communication and perspective setting. It deals with greater differentiation and nuancing of concepts for the purpose of deeper understanding and thereby better relations. While the horizontal axis is considered a knowledge and ignorance management axis, aimed at the creation of new knowledge.

So who are the actors interacting in the fields of the diamond of innovation? Darsø conceptualized four (4) roles in which the project leader can choose to perform all functions him/herself or choose to develop innovative competencies among the management group members. She briefly described the leadership roles as follows (2007: 8);

- The **innovation gardener** works to develop the relational competence in the group. He/She is concerned with the participants' well-being, which is connected with each individual person's motivation and opportunity to contribute. The gardener is also responsible for establishing and maintaining a group climate based on mutual trust. Most importantly, the gardener is deemed responsible for creating a common starting point for the group.

- The **innovation jester** helps the group explore what they do not know. This leader is responsible for stimulating the group to ask questions and propose ideas. There are five types of questions that are relevant for the innovation jester in working with the group: 1) the "stupid" questions, 2) the "crazy" questions (e.g. odd, surprising or annoying questions that provoke), 3) the "impossible" questions, 4) the "burning" questions, and 5) the "hypothetical" questions.

- The **innovation conceptualizer** tries to get the participants in the group to describe and illustrate information and knowledge in different ways. He/She is responsible for clarifying concepts and agreements/disagreements in the group. Partly, his or her role is to manage or moderate the creative field of tension that may arise within the group.

- The **innovation challenger** assists the group in building a solid knowledge base. This leader's main task is to challenge all the knowledge and information that will emerge as potential contributions to knowledge creation. This involves in part, screening the group's knowledge, and part posing "rude" questions to the established knowledge, whether it comes from an internal or an external source.

Employee-driven Innovation

As mentioned in the early part of this paper, it will attempt to capture the phenomenon of innovation fostered by SBM in the TEEP at the ground level through the lens of employee-driven innovation discourse. Its basic tenets complement the diamond of innovation by providing a basic framework in understanding the contribution of TEEP actors on the ground- the teachers and school heads and even community leaders and parents (of the 'employees').

As employees, it is significant to relate their contribution to the innovation discourse by exploring explanations of how workplace learning can lead to innovation. But if innovation is rooted to its basic definition that *it is the introduction of something new or change to the system*, then all learning in work is to some extent innovative in that it introduces change (Fenwick, 2003 in Høyrup, 2008). Conversely, innovative learning sparks transformational change: novel solutions that challenge existing practices (Ellström, 2001 in Høyrup, 2008).

Additionally, employee-driven innovation is part of the historical continuum called *third generation innovation*, which lists the following features: (Høyrup, 2008. Emphasis is made by this author due to their strong correlation to the nature of innovations generated by TEEP)

- Comparative research (many countries and companies use extensively non-R&D innovation)
- "Humanization" of research on innovation:
- **Innovation includes public sector**

- Increasing focus on innovation in low-tech sectors (e.g. Service)
- **Service innovation**
- **Organizational innovation**

The employee-driven innovation discourse is governed by the following assumptions: a) all employees are seen as potential innovative resources, b) all workplaces are arenas of learning and innovation, c) organizations need to foster, develop and use the innovative potential of their employees as a means to organizational success, d) workplace learning includes both reproductive learning and innovative learning: in the learning process something new is created, a new knowledge is developed, *and* e) innovative processes are part of everyday work processes: the recreation and development of work practice and work routines: but they have to be recognized and made visible (Høyrup, 2008).

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Leadership and Innovation in Education Management

Putting SBM at the heart of the reform process made all the difference in turning around a moribund project such as TEEP back in 2001. SBM as a key strategy was only adapted by the new project team midway when it was restructured in 2001. SBM evolved within the project and was successfully mainstreamed due to the advocacy and decisiveness of the new project management team (with members that can be characterized as activists and reformists). This author had the privilege of observing key players at close range and sometimes participated[12] in activities where they interacted. In this paper, four (4) key TEEP personalities will be discussed in relation to the diamond of innovation and the attendant leadership roles. They will be named anonymously through assigned initials.

SEN is a teacher/educator, a Special Education specialist, an organic employee of the Department of Education with a mid-level manager rank. She had risen from the ranks, from a classroom teacher to becoming a school head, district supervisor then schools division superintendent (province or city level) and eventually as the central office administrator. She is mild-mannered and soft-spoken and can be described generally as

[12] This author's involvement with TEEP was both as an insider and an outsider. One year after leaving the project as a senior development project officer, the consultancy team commissioned to conduct the external evaluation recruited him.

a people-person. She is the innovation gardener.

UPD is a Professor of Mathematics and was a former budget director at the national university and an experienced consultant to loan and foreign-funded projects such as TEEP. He is the finance and planning expert of the team. He studied management systems at Stanford University for his masteral degree. He is a jolly and unassuming person and capable of making fun of himself.[13] He is the innovation jester.

ERP† was the strict and stern member of the team, and also had the strongest personality among the four. She was the true-blooded academic, a Ph.D. holder in anthropology and sociology of education, although she also started as a classroom teacher. She considered herself an activist throughout her life; she went underground when the Philippines was under military rule and engaged in education and development work. After retiring from the national university she did research and consultancy work locally and internationally. At one point, she declared that she knew the Philippine education system like the "palm of her hand" and that her greatest asset was her "synthetic mind." She can be credited as the one who conceptualized and operationalized the Filipino version of SBM. She was the innovation conceptualizer.

SMB is the "outsider" in the group as he comes from the business sector, specifically, manufacturing and retail of beverages. He is a business person with limited exposure in running a social project like TEEP in a large government agency like DepEd. His limited claim to education sector engagement was lecturing at the business school of the national university decades ago. He is forthright, practical and results-oriented. He has sharp analytical skills and is a very critical thinker. He can be described as a gatekeeper of facts. He is the innovation challenger of the group.

In retrospect, it is interesting how these four actors in the TEEP hierarchy fit into the diamond of innovation conceptualization of leadership roles. SEN is the perfect innovation gardener as she always looked after the wellbeing of each member like a mother. Everyone respected and deferred to her authority, even ERP and SMB - group members with the strongest personality (the conceptualizer and challenger respectively). To echo the findings of the external evaluation team:

> Fortunately for TEEP, it found an effective organic leader. Deeply respected by the superintendents, she was their *primus inter*

[13] At some point, he earned the moniker, *Mr. Bean,* the outrageously funny character played by Rowan Atkinson in a famous British TV show that became popular in the Philippines.

> *pares*. With her competence, credentials, courage and unassuming leadership, she had the qualities and skills to balance strong personalities in and out of TEEP, unify the project, and bring it to fruition. She was helped by a significant number of like-minded Central Planning and Implementation Support Unit (CPISU) consultants, Technical Division Advisors (TDAs), division and district officials, school heads and teachers whose passion and sights focus on the needs of their primary clients---the children of this country. (Nuqui et al., 2006)

UPD was perfect in his role as a jester, always ready to break the ice in tension-filled situations. He always had a bagful of "silly questions" and was able to get away with almost anything even with the short-tempered ERP† (who, incidentally, was his high school English literature teacher). His contemporary and high school classmate SMB could only react with a chuckle, then an impish and knowing smile. The jester was even capable of cajoling the strict ERP† to side with him at times during intense management debates.

ERP† was the ultimate conceptualizer with an "integrative and synthetic mind." She accommodated UPD's out-of-the-box queries and propositions and wrestled with the challenging arguments of SMB - the challenger, or the quintessential "devil's advocate." Everything that she did (whether in a research project or otherwise) required a diagram with process flows. Every project conceptualization and planning exercise needed to be visualized. If SEN is the educator, ERP† was the acknowledged educationist of the team.

MSP was the maverick "education manager" who challenged the traditional ways of education service delivery by DepEd and even under the supposedly 'innovative' TEEP processes. One of his most notable ideas was a textbook delivery scheme he devised following the way soda and beer were delivered to the hinterlands of the country. He was also credited as the brains behind the drastic restructuring of the School Building Project (SBP) component, by coming up with a 90-day construction cycle[14] and putting the school head in charge instead of local politicians and bureaucrats.

The interplay of these personalities is mirrored in Darsø□s (2001, 2007) fields of innovation where the assigned roles and functions are evident. The push and pull on the fields of ignorance and knowledge was constant, and especially unceasing in the crucial periods of decision making. Members had their respective "blind spots" or blinkers as they

[14] Considered as one of the best innovations borne out of the TEEP

navigated these fields guided by the "pole strings" provided by the push and pull of the fields of relations and concepts. Fortunately, years and even decades of experience working in complex systems such as the university, education ministry and business conglomerates have gifted these individuals with the wisdom and highly developed relational competence.

Further, this no-holds-barred atmosphere of open spaces and unlimited interaction generated the most ingenious and maverick ideas required to turn the project around. These are what Darsø (2001:159) calls *creative sessions*, where emotions are at play tempered with conceptual and cognitive processes collectively referred to as *innovative processes*. These are crucial events in the process of innovation, wherein *creativity* is getting the idea, and *innovation* is making it happen (Gamache 1998 in Darsø, 2001).

Another interesting insight is that these innovative leadership roles can be performed interchangeably by different members of the management team as the need arises. **It is not a fixed role and not an immovable position**. Participatory leadership is right at the center of the group dynamics. Thus, leadership in innovation also takes a form of facilitative leadership (Bens, 2006) wherein a leader does not only share the burden of responsibility but also creates a rich source of leaders for the entire organization (p.15). Thus, in this context, one definition of a leader is someone who creates leaders.

Corollary to the aforementioned discussion is the evolution of the concept, processes, and elements of the *preject* to which these roles were originally created. This case study of TEEP's management team validates the assumption the *preject* stage mainly characterized as organized chaos as an effective decision-making modality[15] to which leaders, decision-makers and managers can always lapse into in critical periods of the project. According to Dr. Darsø,[16] *one can be both at the preject and project working modes at the same time* (2008). This was evident in the way the management team of TEEP arrived at crucial decisions, they always lapsed back towards "open space" working mode, less hierarchical in structure and collegial in ambiance.

[15] Personal communication with Dr. Lotte Darsø (April, May 2008)
[16] Ibid

Fostering Innovations from the Ground

TEEP was characteristically both a simple and complex project. It was simple in the sense that its singular objective was to improve basic education in some of the poorest provinces of the Philippines. In the end, it morphed into a complex (yet successful) project, which practically changed the landscape of basic education in areas it covered. How did it happen? What factors contributed to the revolutionary changes it engendered? Why did this project carry the tagline of "transforming basic education from the ground"? As mentioned earlier, the external review team that evaluated TEEP was impressed by the rich data found at the ground level, in schools and communities. This was the result of nurturing a culture of documentation, reporting and feedback that SBM cultivated and institutionalized. It also ensured that empirical evidence would be preserved for post-implementation claims on innovative ideas and practices especially from the lower rungs of the project.

This focus on ground-level innovations highlights three TEEP project components that had successes which were largely attributed to people or employees on the ground. These are the (1) school building project´s principal-led modality, (2) the socialized financial scheme for indigent pupils called *adopt-a-child trust fund* (ACTF), and (3) the ground-breaking mathematics teaching guide.

The original modality of school building construction was "LGU-led[17]" but one of the most successful innovations of TEEP was the "principal-led" construction mode. The idea was conceived out of urgency (under threat of loan cancellation, there was a need to accelerate construction and consequently loan draw-downs) but was received initially with much skepticism (Nuqui et al., 2006). But in a sense, the new TEEP management had no choice as SMB-(the innovation challenger) vividly remembered. TEEP was instructed to design a 90-day construction cycle (that included the bidding process) and committed itself publicly by announcing the target of 2,000 classrooms in one year. Given the track record of LGU-led construction in TEEP, the project managers entrusted the school heads with the task of supervising the allocation of PhPeso 500,000 (roughly US$ 12,000) per new classroom. Despite the initial skepticism that hounded this bold move, TEEP met its SBP targets in the first post-restructuring year. More important, none of the school heads who supervised construction was ever reported to have committed an anomaly. Moreover, classroom repair or construction was completed on

[17] Local government units (LGU) refer to municipal and provincial governments who were notorious for inefficiency and corrupt practices.

time (Nuqui et al., 2006). Further, this innovation spawned the equally successful school-based procurement of furniture.

The second innovation is the ACTF project under the School Innovation and Improvement Facility (SIIF)[18] component. As Senior Project Development Officer of TEEP, the author was part of the team that conceptualized and piloted the ACTF based on the vision and original idea of ERP† - the innovation conceptualizer. Like the principal-led school construction modality, ACTF was borne as part of TEEP's crisis management strategy. At that time, very few schools were accessing the SIIF facility and funding draw-down had stagnated, thus drastic measures had to be employed. The ACTF idea emanated from the project review missions and random school visits of ERP†, in the course of countless encounters with school and community leaders. ACTF was truly a demand and community-driven initiative. From project inception to implementation, its target clients were deeply involved, even the project manual and instruments were even pilot-tested and refined by its "users" in the schools and communities by the teachers, school heads, PTCA officers and parents. It had a strong semblance to a second-generation innovation, or the so-called *user-driven innovation*. By project closing, this intervention was hailed as an innovative and sustainable financing mechanism for very indigent pupils. It bequeathed the school and the community with a "perpetual fund."

ACTF was piloted in 2004 and was scaled up in 2005 with PhP 40 M funding from TEEP. By 2005, the combined efforts of all the school heads, division offices, PTCAs, and LGUs resulted in a counterpart fund of over P 7 M or 18% of P 40 M that was still expected to increase with fund-raising campaigns and donations from like-minded organizations. As a sustainability feature beyond TEEP project life, these campaigns and donations were expected to continually increase the initial investment in ACTF. Under the original ACTF concept, each beneficiary school-community partnership (SCP) applied for a Php 100,000 (maximum amount) seed money to start its own school perpetual fund. The SCP, in turn, raised a counterpart fund of at least 10% of the seed money, also in cash. ACTF was one of TEEP's legacies for the enhancement of school-community partnership and the improvement of education provision

[18] The SIIF was a facility for research-based interventions designed to address learning problems initiated by the school or by individual teachers. It highlighted the importance of exploring, testing and documenting innovations for improvement and possible replication in other schools throughout the country. However, from the point of view of community stakeholders who collaborated in preparing proposals to access the SIIF grant facility, it was less of a research and development facility but a special fund established to support concrete school-based innovations for improved learning (Nuqui et al., 2006).

for needy students. ACTF was sustainable because the school fund was deposited in a bank and only the annual interest was used to assist pupil beneficiaries.[19] It was innovative because the divisions' trust accounts were registered at the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) but with the approval of the Commission on Audit, and the DepEd Legal Office.

The 2006 external review TEEP confirmed ACTF as an innovative and sustainable school-based financing mechanism for very indigent pupils. The report also highlighted that the ACTF could easily be replicated as a model for demand-side financing in other countries. Initial results have also confirmed the ACTF projects' positive impact on pupil performance. For example, TEEP's report to the World Bank's August 2005 Mission estimated an 80% increase in participation rates, a 68% decrease in drop-out rates and a 51% increase in pupil performance in the 87 schools with ACTF projects[20].

The third TEEP innovation analyzed in this paper is the *Math Lesson Guide Series for Teachers*, not originally developed under TEEP but was adapted by the project. Using project funds, TEEP printed about 55,000 copies – enough for each teacher in the 8,600 schools covered by the project. The use of this teaching guide series is being credited for the success of TEEP schools in improving Math learning outcomes in TEEP divisions. As the external evaluation report highlighted, TEEP did not always start from the proverbial "square one" and instead built on what others in DepEd had already done (Nuqui et al., 2006).[21]

The teaching guide is being hailed for introducing pedagogical innovations in teaching elementary Mathematics. Meanwhile, the framework used in developing the material was an exemplar of employee-driven innovation discussed earlier. The pool of writers commissioned

[19] Noteworthy are stories of poor communities pooling resources just to access the Adopt-a-Child Trust Fund facility. In Romblon where poverty incidence is high, the teacher-in-charge (TIC) of a multigrade school in a remote island district was surprised when she was handed PhP9000 (US$ 200) in coins and small bills in a plastic container. It was for the required 10% cash equity required for the ACTF grant. Her community was so poor yet they were able to raise money through a house-to-house campaign for personal donations. Some community members volunteered in selling bananas and paper trees with proceeds added to the equity requirement.

[20] TEEP Draft Project Completion Report presented in Island Cove, Binakayan, Cavite, 24-29 July 2006.

[21] This was developed jointly by the Bureau of Elementary Education of the Department of Education and the Jesuit-run Ateneo de Manila University from another project but was shelved for a while and not disseminated nationwide due to lack of funds for reproduction and distribution.

to write this highly acclaimed teaching material was mostly made up of teachers and master teachers in public and private elementary schools — not the usual Ph.D. level university professors specializing in Mathematics education. The writers were therefore intimately familiar with the level of pupil skills and teacher skills in elementary schools – thus fully aware of "how it really is" in public schools more than "how it should be" (Nuqui et al., 2006). It was designed for teachers of math who need not be math education majors themselves. In fact, it was designed[22] for a teacher imagined to be alone in class or at home, with no other co-teacher, let alone a mathematics professor, to consult with. The series was also intended for self-study by a teacher trying to learn elementary mathematics for him/herself. This can be interpreted as a conscious effort of doing away with the usual practice of manual or textbook writing by the "experts" in an almost R&D modality (e.g. classroom situation in a laboratory school of a teacher education institute.) However, that often tends to neglect the fact that the condition of the teaching-learning environment is far removed from what is happening out there in the field.

In sum, this paper formally recognizes three (3) cases that exemplify employee-driven innovation, validating the claim that employees (school heads and teachers as building construction managers in the case of TEEP) are potential innovative resources. In addition, these cases prove that innovative processes are part of everyday work processes (i.e., the effective teaching of Mathematics).

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of innovation of any generation (i.e. first to third) and category (technical vis-à-vis social), especially in the stories of TEEP and SBM, tends to show elements of serendipity or be governed by serendipitous circumstances. ERP†-the innovation conceptualizer used to say she had never dreamt of having a direct hand in implementing the recommendations she made in the mid-term project evaluation of TEEP, especially in adapting SBM as the integrating mechanism of the project. Incidentally, that midterm evaluation report was rejected by the same DepEd Secretary who rehabilitated TEEP. In the end, the Secretary's right-hand man (SMB-the innovation challenger) would eventually reference the report as his "bible", vouching for both the validity and feasibility of its findings and recommendations.

[22] Fr. Bienvenido Nebres S.J., President and Professor of Mathematics, Ateneo de Manila University, in a June 9, 2006 interview as cited in Nuqui et. al, 2006.

Innovations generated in the context of SBM and TEEP can be categorized in the social innovation category (Drucker, 1985). The foregoing discussions clearly showed that it was a value-creating process, based on social needs in this context, i.e, education. Conversely, these innovations may also be valued using economic parameters originally espoused by Schumpeter (1934). The proxy measure that can be employed is **cost-efficiency (author's emphasis) vis-à-vis** innovations in school building modality, furniture procurement, pupil subsidy and maximizing usage of an effective teacher resource material. The external evaluation report highlights the savings generated and the value for money created by the innovations fostered by SBM in TEEP.

Although recognition of economic valuation of benefits from social innovations generated using SBM is covered by literature (c.f. Gropello, 2006; de Guzman, 2006) there is still that danger of marginalization or outright rejection. While it is widely documented, some quarters may find these pieces of evidences highly anecdotal and non-scientific. Nevertheless, these narratives will stand scrutiny and will attest how (1) through SBM, teaching-learning environment in TEEP schools has improved; and (2) SBM practice had awakened the community spirit to become active partners in education on the ground. SBM in many ways created an auspicious learning environment that enabled many stakeholders to participate in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Master teachers mentoring newly inducted teachers; government officials learning from school heads and teachers what "education performance indicators" are, and how to measure them and the like, are just some exemplars found in TEEP and SBM stories.

In closing, additional explanations as to why SBM succeeded in fostering innovations in TEEP are presented below. These are certainly not definitive but are nonetheless based on solid empirical evidence.

First, SBM practice under TEEP succeeded because it subscribed to the idea that development is open-ended, and that augured well with social innovation's process-centered approach; free from the rigid boundaries of time and space. This change process model allowed key players to be both in the *preject* and project modes[23] as defined by Darsø's innovation process model, at different phases of TEEP's project life. Adding a historical and developmental perspective to the TEEP story, Banzon-Bautista (2007) reflected on the iterative development of SBM in TEEP and hailed its success due to the confluence of the following strategies:

[23] Personal communication with Dr. Lotte Darsø.

- starting from where the schools are rather than where they ought to be;
- adapting SBM to the "terrain" or contexts of the schools, divisions, schools, and communities;
- allowing for the diffusion of ideas and innovations associated with SBM to schools outside the original targets;
- implementing school-based management even before its dimensions are fully defined, developed and codified;
- learning to institute and develop SBM "on the run" (for TEEP managers), and learning to manage schools by "doing" or by "dirtying one's hands" (for school heads and teachers)

Second, SBM embraced participatory practices in almost all levels of decision-making that greatly facilitated innovative practices. These social innovations were generated in the arena of "creative commons" wherein key players interacted on equal footing, validating the assumption that innovation is conceived in a collegial environment. As Darsø (2003, 2007) argued, "an intersection of contributions from all participants brought greater chances of achieving innovative crystallization," which she further defined as the result of a process involving a collective transformation of accumulated and integrated knowledge to a new concept or a new prototype.

Third, SBM clearly recognized employee-driven innovation facilitated through the project which allowed unprecedented access of employees to information in the organization. TEEP, through SBM, has given DepEd employees wide access to materials (e.g. school building design, project proposal templates, quality assurance framework, etc.) especially through the wide-scale effort to codify 'manualized' project processes and methods. This monumental effort greatly enhanced "participation" in the management processes and cultivated the culture of innovation. Stories of school heads not under TEEP borrowing the project's manuals and implementing SBM in their schools are widely documented (TEEP-DepEd, 2007). Hence, the potential of capturing employee-driven innovation lies partly in its methodology, which is rigorous documentation and participation in the innovation processes.

Finally, this paper echoes one of the final insights of the TEEP external evaluation team about the Wisdom of Crowds,[24] by New Yorker

[24] Surowieki, James. (2004) *Wisdom of Crowds.* New York: Random House in Nuqui et al. 2006.

columnist James Surowiecki which greatly resonates with the discourse of innovation under TEEP. He argued that large groups of people who can act collectively and solve problems are smarter than an elite few, no matter how brilliant. Accordingly, they were better at solving problems, fostering innovation, coming to wise decisions and predicting the future. To quote the report directly;

> The secret lies in the diversity of the "crowd", the different pieces of information they bring to meetings and their decentralized character. The TEEP story reflects the dynamism of numerous "crowds" and the wisdom of the consensually developed plans and activities they formulate. These "crowds" are not separate individuals moving on their own. Thankfully, they are brought together by the singular mission of providing a better future for Filipino children and this nation through basic education.

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