

ISSUES AND PROBLEMS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED ACCREDITATION IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Accreditation of public elementary schools is a quality assurance method. Through the accreditation process, schools are monitored and checked if they are meeting required quality standards in all areas of their work: academic programs, teacher support, student services and more. The study aimed to determine the issues and problems encountered by school heads and teachers in the implementation of institutionalized accreditation in public elementary schools in CALABARZON (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) with the end view of proposing strategic intervention measures to accelerate its implementation for continuous school reforms and improvements. The descriptive method of research was utilized in the study with the use of a questionnaire as main data gathering instrument supplemented by interview. Respondents of the study were 56 school heads and 333 teachers from public elementary schools. The statistical tools used were frequency and weighted mean. Results of the study revealed that the common issues and problems met by school heads and teachers in the implementation of institutionalized accreditation were insufficient budget allocation and inadequate facilities and materials, insufficient supporting documents submitted by fellow teachers, lack of time to prepare the documents and lack of educational facilities such as library, classroom and laboratories. Based on the analysis of the findings the study, strategic intervention measures were prepared to qualify public elementary schools in institutionalized accreditation systems. The study recommended that the proposed measures be presented to school administrators for refinement, if feasible, for implementation; that sufficient budget be allocated; and that teachers be encouraged to work with extra efforts to increase the likelihood of success in any accreditation endeavors.

Keywords: Institutionalized Accreditation; Issues and Problems in Accreditation; Strategic Intervention Measures

1. Introduction

Institutionalizing the evaluation of public school performance brings new challenges to the current policy and systems management, and the responses to which must be compatible with the new demands of time. Evaluating the performance of public schools may show the new demands of the current period and how the present system brings effective and continuous improvement of the educational system. With evaluation there will be common criteria to be used. Evaluation may also monitor the outcomes of education system and maximize the use of evaluation information.

School head handles the offering educational programs, projects and services which provide equitable opportunities for all learners in the community; introducing new and innovative modes of instruction to achieve higher learning outcomes; administering and managing all personnel, physical and fiscal resources of the school, recommending the staffing complement of the school based on its needs; encouraging staff development.

Part of the school heads' responsibilities are establishing school and community networks and encouraging the active participation to teachers' organization, non-academic personnel of public school, and parents-teachers community associations; accepting donations, gifts, bequests, and grants for the purpose of upgrading and expanding school facilitators' competencies, improving and explaining school facilities and providing instructional materials and equipment.

According to Chaffee^[1] one of the ways by which accountability of public schools is made evident is within the effectiveness of district systems for school support and intervention – districts have systems and processes for anticipating and addressing school staffing, instructional, and operational needs in timely, efficient, and effective ways, especially for the lowest performing schools.

It is crucial in the accountability of schools to delve into the professional development and structures for collaboration: professional development for school staff which includes individually pursued activities and school-based and job-embedded approaches such as instructional coaching. It also includes content-oriented learning. The school has structures for regular, frequent collaboration to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice. Professional development and structures for collaboration are evaluated for their effect on raising student achievement.

Another accountability is to find ways to improve student learning, independent of financial resources even the problems of poverty. Potential solutions to this problem would involve helping schools improve the quality and accountability of their standard operating practices, or increasing the instructional capacity of staff in these schools through professional development or more selective hiring. The problem among schools is however, identifying the optimal policy response to the mix of problems that plagues the public schools is complicated by the possibility that these problems might interact with each other. Education policy needs to be guided by rigorous evaluation evidence and accountability about what actually works in practice. This means reviewing educational policies for their effectiveness or in some cases have strong empirical evidence for their ineffectiveness.

The appropriate standard of success for policy interventions is that schools generate net benefits through the accountability of public schools. Accountability of public schools would

redound to education policies that are capable of improving poor children's schooling outcomes justify that the costs of these policies are worth doing. Improving the ways in which schools are organized, including the way they deliver accountability in instruction, could improve student achievement with few additional resources.

King ^[2] mentioned guide to school leaders in their efforts to improve educational accountability and ensure learning for all. These include determining the status of the school,, the vision and mission, strategies on how to determine status and how to keep growth sustainable.. This having said, schools' accountability efforts are guided by three fundamental premises: all children could learn; all children had the right to attend schools in which they could progress and learn; and all children should have a real opportunity to learn equally rigorous content. King also cited need for guidelines that will serve as framework to assess schools. This framework of educational assessment includes a vital core of student achievements which can be measured and applicable to all.

In like manner, Ball^[3] shared that to the elementary principals are given the realization of accountability expectations while also honoring aspects of moral accountability specific to the needs of the respective schools context. It was further mentioned that there's an amount of demands placed on elementary principals by various forms of accountability including mandated government policies, school board initiatives, and what principals believe to be important based on the needs of their respective schools. These are intensifying and changing the expectations of principals' work wherein the nonnegotiable forms of accountability being imposed by the Department of Education (Deped) are increasing both in number and the amount of time that accompanies adhering to each mandate.

The Department of Education (DepEd) installed a quality assurance system to ensure delivery of quality basic education. It is a system of processes and tools applied so that the desired knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of the students can be attained at some expected level. This system requires coordinated and shared responsibility of all stakeholders of basic schooling to deliberately bring about quality education. The installation is brought about by the introduction of policy reforms embodied in the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda.

Strategic Intervention is all about helping people to understand each other better and to work as a team towards a common goal. For Nag et al. ^[4], strategic management involves two key stages, each with various steps. These two stages are strategy formulation and strategy implementation. Strategy formulation involves the development of the business mission and involves what is to be done and what to achieve. An analysis of the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are done for planning strategies that the organization will take to achieve its goals.

Strategy implementation, the second stage of strategic management, is the process of putting the formulate strategies into action. Leaders communicate staff in order to execute activities that will yield results. Execution of strategies involves setting up a framework for implementation, establishing ethics, organizational structures and cultures as well as setting up controls to monitor progress and correct any issues. Because strategic management is a process that involves leaders from all parts of the organization, planning covers not only strategic planning but also tactical planning. The benefits of the planning are fourfold:

planning helps check progress, coordinate activities, helps to think ahead and cope with uncertainty.

According to Emerson^[5] Strategic Intervention is all about helping people to understand each other better and to work as a team towards a common goal. The power of strategic intervention lies in having an objective, trusted other person standing outside of the situation, enabling one to see where he is going right, and maybe where he is going wrong. Strategic intervention is beneficial as it makes people work together and enables them to create a feedback culture. It makes members of the organization empowered and positive.

In essence, it helps people and teams to communicate more effectively with each other, to establish a mutual or shared goal and to identify how they are going to work together towards that goal. Different people prefer to be communicated with in different ways, and understanding how to effectively share message with different individuals will enable the organization to work more productively as a team. Strategic Intervention also helps in conflict resolution as it aims to give people a chance to be heard, to lay out their differences in a safe place and iron out disagreements. From here, clear boundaries can then be set in order to move forward more freely.

Thus, Strategic Intervention Measures focus on several perspectives and offer suggestions as well as solutions specifically on concerns plaguing the public school performance. Among noted problems are the growing expectations of students on educational system, the performance of the public schools per se and their vision for their future. Alongside the strengths and weaknesses of these educational policies, there is always a need to revisit these policies in order to improve performance. This is especially true among public schools which often face challenges of reforms. They are constantly in need of evaluation as they are the beginning foundations of learning. Outmost efforts are extended by way of serious study of curriculum, teaching strategies and activities so that desired outcomes are met. This explains the huge allocation for schools.

Despite efforts for improvement, problems in public school performance are many. Proliferation of programs, personnel and administrative structures in public education without adequate design, coordination, implementation, evaluation, or adaptation to meet basic educational needs and the complex problems implicit in the delivery of public educational services. With these problems, some solutions are focused on the concept of social innovation and the role of the government as an agent of educational change. Solutions on the tension between structure and process in educational policy and evaluation as an instrument for educational change were also conceptualized and planned for implementation.

The researcher is also fully aware that accelerating institutionalized accreditation is not that easy to do as there are many factors to hurdle in this endeavour. These factors include the poor participation of parents in different programs and projects of the school. Most public schools are also having problems in high drop-out rate as well as low performance in National Achievement Test. Also, there are teachers who seem to have poor commitment to their duties. Further, which based on the experience of the researcher are really pressing problems in establishing stronger linkages with the community and insufficient budget to support programs and projects of the school.

These fortified the desire of the researcher to be a humble partner to enhance the quality of public schools through an institutionalized accreditation. It is for these motivations that this study was conducted.

2. Materials and Methods

The study made use of descriptive research design with the use of questionnaire as the main data gathering instrument complemented by interview to gather more information pertinent to the study. The respondents of the study were the 56 school heads and 333 teachers from public elementary schools. Purposive sampling was used to determine the number of respondents for school heads. Meanwhile, scientific sampling using Slovin's formula at five percent margin of error was utilized to determine the teacher-respondents. Weighted mean was the statistical tools utilized in the study.

3. Results and Discussions

2.1 Issues and Problems in the Implementation of Institutionalized Accreditation

Accreditation, being an integral part of any educational institution, brings members of the school community different learning experiences. Inherent with these experiences are constraints. Tables 1 and 2 present the assessment of school heads and teachers on the issues and problems met in the implementation of institutionalized accreditation.

As shown in Table 1, school heads in public elementary schools often met insufficient budget allocation for accreditation which obtained the highest weighted mean of 2.82. It can be said that school heads find it hard to achieve their desired outcomes with insufficient budget. After all, sufficient budget is needed to address the needs of educational institutions and help improve the quality of education through the provision of updated and upgraded learning materials and resources; otherwise, it will result to low relevance and poor education system.

Garnering a weighted mean of 2.63 is the inadequacy of facilities, materials and supplies often met by school heads. This implies that school heads often find this problem as a hindrance in facilitating teachers in transmitting knowledge and skills to the learners. Oftentimes, elementary teachers spend money out of their own pocket to buy materials and supplies such as glue, construction papers, paint and more because they do a lot of hands-on activities in class. Equally important is the provision of digital learning tools such as computers, e-classrooms, updated books, interactive whiteboards, manipulatives, etc. because they accelerate and motivate learning. Effective teaching as well as learning takes place with the use of suitable instructional materials and the utilization of facilities and all available materials.

Table 1: Issues and Problems Met by School Heads in the Implementation of Institutionalized Accreditation

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Insufficient budget allocation for accreditation.	2.82	Often Met
2. Inadequate facilities, materials and supplies.	2.63	Often Met

3. Insufficient time allotment in the preparation of documents needed for accreditation.	2.61	Often Met
4. Lack of educational facilities such as library, classroom and laboratories.	2.52	Often Met
5. Limited financial and material support by government agencies and NGO's to administrative program such as faculty/staff, student development and facilities improvement.	2.52	Often Met
6. Lack of technical experts to ensure compliance of the necessary documents needed in accreditation program.	2.48	Sometimes Met
7. Lack of manpower to prepare the needed documents.	2.45	Sometimes Met
8. Lack of team work among faculty/staff in the preparation for accreditation.	2.39	Sometimes Met
9. Late submission of documents required from faculty and staff.	2.39	Sometimes Met
10. Improper planning of resource allocation and utilization to optimize accreditation resource/service support.	2.38	Sometimes Met
11. Indifference of faculty staff towards accreditation.	2.38	Sometimes Met
12. Limited academic and administrative projects and programs to be documented	2.36	Sometimes Met
Composite Mean	2.49	Sometimes Met

Insufficient time allotment in the preparation of documents needed for accreditation is also often met by school heads as reflected in a weighted mean of 2.61. Preparing necessary reports and documentations such as checklists, in-reach and outreach activities, acquisitions, and so much more require time, but with the heavy workload of teachers assigned in each area, it is almost impossible to make things done on time for accreditation. School heads, with their more flexible time and schedule, are usually not acquainted enough with all the details of each department, thus, they cannot handle everything without the help of their teachers. Time constraints hinder the best possible outcome of preparation to meet the established standards of accreditation.

Obtaining the same weighted mean of 2.52 were the lack of educational facilities such as library, classroom and laboratories and the limited financial and material support by government agencies and NGO's to administrative programs such as faculty/staff, student development, and facilities improvement as often met by school heads. Most schools have been found to be lacking of 21st century facilities such as functional laboratories, instructional space and infrastructure. Without adequate facilities and resources, it is extremely difficult to cater to the complex needs of the students resulting to low relevance and poor educational quality of schools. Moreover, school heads in public elementary schools seek to provide quality education but with the limited financial and material support by government agencies and NGO's, it is nearly impossible to provide good quality textbooks, learning materials, and facilities that act as barriers to get the best education that students deserve.

Lastly, garnering the lowest weighted mean of 2.36 was the limited academic and administrative projects and programs to be documented which is sometimes met by school heads. Evaluating academic institutions' programs on the basis of their own stated objectives requires the need of showcasing the institution's academic and administrative projects and programs. These projects and programs are designed to promote academic excellence. However, school heads in public elementary schools feel that there are insufficient documentations for these probably because their hands are already full with management problems and so they cannot perform any more than they could with all the pressures and stress of their job. Further, resources and budget could also be obstacles in the accomplishment of such expensive undertakings.

Overall, in school heads' assessment of public elementary schools regarding the constraints in the implementation of institutionalized accreditation system, it can be said that the constraints were sometimes met as revealed in the composite mean of 2.49. This implies that school heads are able to address the majority of their problems encountered in accreditation. They are faced with challenges but they remain focused on achieving quality education despite the numerous variables that threaten to overwhelm them and nullify the quality of programs and services they provide. They work hard to make their academic institutions as competitive and relevant to the 21st century learners, seeking to provide them with up-to-date resources and facilities to enhance learning.

Moving on to the issues and problems met by teachers in the implementation of institutionalized accreditation shown in Table 2, insufficient supporting documents submitted by fellow teachers was sometimes met by teachers as expressed in the highest weighted mean of 2.35. This shows that it is difficult to come together as one when fellow teachers are not working hard to achieve a common goal. Teachers are assigned to specific departments to work on specific tasks. If the members of a department do not submit necessary documents that may include qualifications of teachers, inventories, policies, procedures, teaching standards, and a lot more, the area concerned would be lacking, thus, may not be able to measure up to the standards of the accrediting body. To meet the established standards of accreditation, all teachers must play a significant role in the accomplishment of tasks assigned to them. All too often, teachers who assume responsibilities feel that their other colleagues do not take such great lengths as to complete their assigned tasks especially those that require documentations and revisions. Thus, most of the burden fall on the shoulders of those who care enough to get their jobs done.

The weighted mean of 2.29 suggests teachers sometimes met lack of specific budget to support the accreditation process. For teachers to be able to work effectively on their delegated task for accreditation, they need a specific budget for each area of accreditation. Oftentimes, teachers need to update and upgrade their resources and instructional materials such as textbooks, cd's, computers, television sets and more to be able to address the learner's needs and keep up with the sophisticated world of learning. All of these require not just attention but budget as well. Consequently, the lack of specific budget to support the accreditation process may have a profound effect when financial capabilities, classroom procedures and physical settings are carefully reviewed and measured against the standards of accreditation.

Table 2: Issues and Problems Met by Teachers in the Implementation of Institutionalized Accreditation

Items	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Insufficient supporting documents submitted by fellow teachers	2.35	Sometimes Met
2. Lack of specific budget to support the accreditation process	2.29	Sometimes Met
3. Lack of time to meet fellow teachers for the required reports for submission	2.25	Sometimes Met
4. Lack of incentive like honorarium given to the faculty /personnel involved in accreditation	2.24	Sometimes Met
5. Insufficient time to prepare needed documents	2.18	Sometimes Met
6. Lack of clear guidelines on how to prepare and organization of documents	2.15	Sometimes Met
7. Poor implementation of guidelines/office memorandum on updating and submission of documents/records	2.14	Sometimes Met
8. Lack of documentation paraphernalia such as camera and office supplies	2.13	Sometimes Met
9. Indifference of other fellow teachers toward accreditation process	2.13	Sometimes Met
10. Lack of skills in computer necessary to prepare documents for accreditation process	2.11	Sometimes Met
11. Lack of cooperation among team members in providing needed documents	2.09	Sometimes Met
12. Unsystematic gathering of documents and document filing	2.05	Sometimes Met
Composite Mean	2.18	Sometimes Met

Obtaining a weighted mean of 2.25, lack of time to meet fellow teachers for the required reports for submission was a constraint that is sometimes met by the teachers. It can be said that time plays a key role in coordination. With no time to meet as a body, the needed reports to be submitted may be lacking, and even important reminders and suggestions for improvement may be missed. Lack of time is a constant problem among faculty and staff as a result of varying schedules and activities done all at the same time, resulting to delayed and missed submissions of reports.

Following closely was the lack of incentive like honorarium given to the faculty/personnel involved in the accreditation cited to sometimes met by teachers, garnering a weighted mean of 2.24. Teachers, with their hectic schedules and overwhelming responsibilities in and out of school, may wish to be compensated for doing additional tasks especially when preparing for accreditation. That is, they believe that some honorarium should be given for them to feel that their work and service are valued. Indeed, it is not so bad to compensate teachers for their hard work and commitment. To support this finding, Sass and Harris ^[6] drew a conclusion that majority of their teacher respondents despite of continuous improvement in the quality of

their work received no recognition, and the same proportion for being innovative in their teaching strategies.

Teachers shared that insufficient time to prepare needed documents is sometimes met as a problem in the implementation of institutionalized accreditation system which obtained a weighted mean of 2.18. It can be said that teachers are the people who do not have all the time in the world. Time is needed to prepare, collate, edit, and revise documents for accreditation, but with the bulk of load and responsibilities thrown at them in school, with responsibilities at home and as they aim for higher learning and upgrade, insufficient time is a common denominator of the teaching staff. With this constraint, they may run late in the submission or preparation of the needed documents. They feel that a lot of work is needed to be accomplished in such a short period of time, when time in fact does not permit them to do everything at once.

Lack of cooperation among team members in providing needed documents was sometimes met by teachers as reflected in a weighted mean of 2.09. This implies that collaboration and cooperation are needed to accomplish the desired outcome of a particular group in the accreditation process and without which, the realization of a goal could be unattainable. Faculty role and involvement in the accreditation requires the provision and revision of needed documents such as permits, inventories, files to be completed and so on and these should be equally delegated to each member. However, not all teachers feel the need to get involved and prefer to remain inactive while the visionary others remain driven and goal-oriented, thus, conflicts arise and manpower is shorthanded.

Lastly, unsystematic gathering of documents and document filing was a constraint sometimes met by teachers, shown in the lowest weighted mean of 2.05. This could be a problem when the accreditors ask for some files or documents to back up some information and find out that the required documents are misplaced or missing. With the number of students in public elementary schools, it is important that teachers can file, store and find documents in a quick and effective way.

Evident in composite mean of 2.18, it can be said that the issues and problems regarding the implementation of institutionalized accreditation system were sometimes met by teachers. This implies that teachers do most of their jobs efficiently in being partners with school improvement. In the accreditation process, teachers look into every aspect and deal with most of the constraints effectively. They consider accreditation not only as a way of improving the quality and standard of the school but upholding the principle that the students are people with important work to do, thus, they work hard to making their schools premier and relevant learning institutions.

2.2 Strategic Intervention Measures to Accelerate the Institutionalized Accreditation

Institutionalized accreditation is indeed one of the major activities in any education institution. Through such, a school is able to improve its practices for the benefit of not only the learners but also of all the members and stakeholders of the school community. However, accreditation is never an easy process; it requires a lot of preparation and collaborative efforts from all the stakeholders to be able to successfully pass an accreditation.

In view of the findings, the strategic intervention measures are hereby proposed:

1. R.E.P.A.I.R- Remedial Education Program for Academic Improvement and Reinforcement. Unlike remedial classes commonly employed by teachers, this is quite different since it involves different strategies to not just only focus on the teacher as the dispenser of information. This program includes schedule for collaborative learning time, peer- backing strategy, individualized learning strategy and online developmental classes.

2. Establishment of “TEACHnovation Corners”. A combination of traditional and modern way of updating teachers’ knowledge and pedagogical skills brought by setting up a “TEACHnovation Corners”. The strategy will enable teachers to view and consider the latest trends in the field of teaching. It aims to upgrade the pedagogical skills and teaching strategies of the teachers.

3. ECoLab (Educational – Community Laboratory) Partnership Program. Communities and its members are considered as one of the educational stakeholders which can provide rich culture, modes of living, ideas, issues, resources, real people, places, and the things that can help teachers relate concepts to real ideas. Community therefore is the most vibrant teaching – learning laboratory. It serves as a laboratory which can help bridge the gap between what taught and what is done in education. Utilizing the community and its resources expands classroom of the pupils. The school and the society must learn to work together for the achievement of successful school programs.

4. THINK AND SHARE APPROACH. It is just simply a coffee-break meeting or conference with the members of Parent-Teacher Association, the School Governing Council and others in which everyone has a chance to share insights or ideas which they think necessary and have an impact on the projects or programs being discussed. In this method, everyone’s opinion is valued and appreciated. Like for instance in the crafting of School Improvement Plan, a 3-year plan which can’t be done by the school administrator alone, the presence of all stakeholders is very much important as they are going to affix signature on the documents included in this plan as a proof of collaborative effort.

5. ADVERTISING DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM (ADS). Selling the school to public is one best way to encourage different stakeholders to invest time, money and effort to school improvement. This can be done in many ways like having SOSA (State of the School Address) wherein the school head will report the school’s progress and accomplishment to the parents and other partners, distribution of leaflets and flyers, posting tarpaulin online communication and text messaging are all informative measures to introduce the school to public.

The strategic intervention measures proposed by the researcher were based on the inputs offered by the findings of the study. These intervention measures contain descriptions, specific objectives and strategies to address that concerns identified in the study. Through these intervention measures, it is expected that the performance of public elementary schools will improve, thus, making them more prepared for any quality assurance

4. Conclusions

Based on the foregoing, the following conclusions were deduced from the findings.

1. The common issues and problems met by school heads and teachers in the implementation of institutionalized accreditation were insufficient budget allocation and inadequate facilities and materials, insufficient supporting documents submitted by fellow teachers, lack of time to prepare the documents and lack of educational facilities such as library, classroom and laboratories.
2. The strategic intervention measures contained brief description and specific objectives to accelerate the institutionalized accreditation among public elementary schools.

5. Recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusions from the study, the following recommendations are hereby endorsed:

1. The proposed strategic intervention measures may be presented to school administrators for refinement, and if feasible its implementation to accelerate institutionalized accreditation.
2. Sufficient budget may be allocated to support institutionalized accreditation and that teachers be encouraged to work with extra efforts to increase the likelihood of success in any institutionalized accreditation.
3. Parallel studies may be conducted to validate the findings of this study.

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