

School's Community-Based Activities: Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative-phenomenological study explores the opportunities and challenges of school-community-based activities in a medium-sized division in Northern Negros during the 2023-2024 School Year. The study identifies key themes through thematic analysis, including prioritizing learner welfare and emphasizing communication and collaboration for opportunities, limited resource allocation, negative community support, and non-participative parents for challenges. The findings reveal that schools can leverage parental support, community collaborations, and teacher teamwork to enhance educational impact, but face significant challenges. The study concludes that while school-community partnerships are valuable, addressing challenges is crucial for success. Recommendations include increasing resource allocation, improving community engagement, enhancing parental involvement, fostering teacher collaboration, and monitoring project effectiveness. These insights provide practical strategies for educators, policymakers, and community stakeholders to strengthen school-community partnerships and improve educational outcomes.

Keywords: School-community partnerships, Community-based activities

INTRODUCTION

Education is a shared responsibility between schools and the communities they serve. In the Philippines, school-community partnerships are crucial in enhancing student learning, fostering social development, and promoting inclusive education. These collaborations provide opportunities for educators, parents, local organizations, and government agencies to work together to strengthen education quality through resource-sharing, alternative learning systems, and technology-driven approaches (Sereño, 2023).

School-community partnerships create a supportive learning environment that benefits students, educators, and the broader community. Community involvement provides additional resources, mentorship, and experiential learning opportunities, helping students develop real-world skills. In return, schools can integrate local expertise into lessons, making education more relevant and engaging (Ahasu, 2024).

According to Caron (2022), the head of the school must encourage community members to participate in school and maintain good relationships with them, in addition to having leadership skills and interpersonal qualities. In addition, the school head must inform and share the school's vision and plans with community members, listen to their different perspectives, and encourage them to collaborate in the school.

However, recently, some schools may have forgotten the importance of the said partnership. Consistent collaboration between schools and communities requires strong leadership, clear policies, and active participation. While the role of the immediate local communities is openly recognized in a positive light, some schools are selective in involving barangays and LGUs. The opportunity for a meaningful partnership is lost outright.

This study is anchored on Kenneth Bruffee's collaborative theory (1972), which emphasizes the importance of mutual collaboration and social interaction in learning. The theory highlights the potential for schools and communities to work together to improve educational outcomes.

The community's involvement in education implies enhancing the resources for education and defining and guiding educational programs at the community level. Parents and family members can work with teachers to help guide children. Community organizations can encourage all potential learners to participate in learning activities. Communities can help learning activities work in a mutually supportive way, responding to the total learning needs of the community. Schools and universities can recognize and value the funds of knowledge found within the family and community (Rodriguez, 2023).

When schools and community organizations work together to support learning, everyone benefits. Partnerships can strengthen, support, and even transform individual partners, resulting in improved program quality, more efficient use of resources, and better alignment of goals and curricula. First and foremost, learning partnerships can support student outcomes. For example, the Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study found that afterschool programs with stronger relationships with school teachers and principals were more successful at improving students' homework completion, homework effort, positive behavior, and initiative. Positive relationships with schools can foster high-quality, engaging, and challenging activities and promote staff engagement (Little, 2019).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to identify the opportunities and challenges in school community-based activities in one of the districts of medium-sized divisions in Northern Negros for the School Year 2023-2024. The study sought to answer the following questions: First, what types of community-based activities are implemented by the school? Second, what opportunities do community-based activities provide to students, the school, and the communities? Third, what challenges does the school face in organizing and maintaining the community-based initiatives? Lastly, what are the best practices of the school to enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a Qualitative-phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of experiences within a particular group. The fundamental goal of the approach is to describe the nature of the particular phenomenon. Typically, interviews are conducted with individuals with first-hand knowledge of an event, situation, or experience (Creswell, 2015).

Phenomenology is deemed the most appropriate approach to describing the opportunities and challenges of schools in implementing school-community-based activities. Furthermore, Wertz (2017) described it as methodical, systematic, critical, self-correcting, and progressive in its development and scope (Saldaña, 2016).

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study, also known as the informants, are five school heads who have been actively employed as heads within the said district for the past 10 years. The participants must currently hold a school head position within the district and must serve in that role for at least 10 consecutive years. The exclusion criteria include school heads who are newly appointed or have served for less than 10 years, and those currently on extended leave or not actively performing their duties.

The researcher used a purposive sampling method, also known as judgmental or selective sampling. In this method, the researcher purposely chooses subjects relevant to the research topic (Laerd, 2018).

Data Gathering Tools

The researcher used a self-made 11-item questionnaire guide divided into three parts. The first section focused on identifying current school community-based projects being implemented. This part will have three main open-ended and probing questions. The second section is about available school opportunities to craft and implement school-community-based activities. There will be five main open-ended questions with probing questions. The third section will focus on schools' challenges in implementing school-community-based activities. This section will have three main open-ended questions with probing questions.

Validity of the Instrument

The researcher-made semi-structured interview guide undergoes content validation before being administered to the participants. The Lawshe Content Validity Tool was used to validate the interview questionnaires. Nine experts examined and rated whether each item in the questionnaire is essential, essential but not necessary, or not essential. The research instrument for this study received a 0.93 overall CVR, suggesting that it has strong content validity and that the evaluated items are highly relevant to the intended construct.

Reliability

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is achieved by credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Inter-rater reliability is important as it assesses the degree of agreement between multiple raters analysing the same material. The instrument was subjected to an inter-rater reliability test and obtained a result of 0.80, which indicates substantial agreement among raters, suggesting that the coding or analysis is reliable.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher ensured that there was proper documentation as to the conduct of the study, such as sending a letter and securing approval from the District Supervisor. Upon approval of the request, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview with the selected respondents February 12, 2025 to March 05, 2025. A face-to-face interview was conducted with the chosen participant. An audio and video recording of the interview was secured with the participants' consent. After the interview, the researcher's notes were presented to each participant to confirm the responses. The transcriptions became the basis for analysis to generate relevant themes. This study used an informal one-on-one recorded interview. The participants were given copies of the interview guide to save time during the interview, which also allowed spontaneity in the conversational exchange. The researcher prepared 11 open-ended key questions and used them as a guide for a questionnaire. The interview started with

general and personal or specific questions, and later probed to identify opportunities and challenges in implementing the school-community projects. Interviews were conducted individually with participants at their most comfortable and available period. This study needed follow-up questions and additional information. The use of a field note starts with contacting the conversational partners. Data were recorded from the start of the observation up to the last interview. Data saturation was reached after interviewing the five participants, indicating that no new themes, insights, or perspectives emerged from the additional interviews. This confirmed that sufficient data had been collected to address the research objectives comprehensively. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2018), an interview is a conversation whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the "life-world" of the interviewee concerning the interpretation of the meanings of the described phenomena.

Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded in audio and video formats and transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were loaded into an application for coding and analysis. Given the emergent nature of the data and the importance of letting participant voices be heard, a data-driven inductive thematic analysis method was used, allowing themes to develop directly from the data without any pre-existing model or framework.

Data analysis in qualitative research is a creative process. For this study, Clarke and Braun's six-step thematic analysis, described in Willig & Stainton (2017), was adopted. This analytical scheme includes the following steps: The researchers read and re-read the data to familiarize themselves with the participants' statements. The researcher examined each statement closely and ensured each had a complete thought or could be given meaning. After the researcher became familiar with the data, coding each statement started using "units of meaning" and converted them into codes. After coding, the researcher used a spreadsheet and text analytics software to identify the cluster of meanings and initial themes, and began to cluster codes with similar meanings or a relationship to one another. The researcher noted the emerging themes and reviewed them against the data. The researchers defined and further refined the themes and sub-themes identified in the analysis and ensured the themes capture the meaningful aspects of the data without missing any important details. After the themes were defined and named, the researcher started writing the final manuscript.

Ethical Considerations

In this research, ethical standards were strictly observed to ensure all participants' dignity, safety, rights, and well-being. The following measures were taken during the data collection, analysis, and reporting phases: Participation in the study was strictly voluntary. All respondents were informed they had the right to refuse or withdraw from the study without facing any penalty or consequences. No coercion or pressure was used to gain consent. Before data collection, the researcher provided a clear and comprehensive explanation of the study's purpose, scope, potential benefits, and any risks involved. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they fully understood their role and the voluntary nature of their involvement. All personal identifiers were removed or coded to maintain respondent anonymity. Data were handled with strict confidentiality, and findings were reported in aggregate form to prevent the identification of individual participants. Audio recordings and transcripts were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. The research tools were designed to respect participants' privacy and cultural sensitivities. During interviews and FGDs, participants were treated respectfully and allowed to skip questions. All data were stored in password-protected files and backed up in a secure location.

Upon completion of the study, the data will be appropriately disposed of to avoid unauthorized access or misuse. During analysis, the researcher ensured objectivity and transparency. Participants' responses were faithfully represented, and interpretation was conducted carefully to preserve their words' meaning and context. The researcher committed to honest and transparent reporting of all results, favorable or not. All secondary sources, including literature and theories, were properly paraphrased and cited following the APA 7th edition citation format to uphold academic integrity and avoid plagiarism. Before data collection, the Office of the District Supervisor obtained permission to conduct the study. All ethical procedures were communicated, and proper endorsement from authorities was secured.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the gathered data. Certain procedures made these steps possible. The analyses and interpretation of gathered data relative to the lived experiences of School Heads assigned to far-flung areas in Sagay City and the corresponding thematic presentations were all based on an in-depth, one-on-one interview by the researcher with the informants.

The Participants

There were 5 School Heads assigned to this district where the study was conducted. 2 out of 5 informants were Male and the other 3 were female. Their age ranges from 40 years old and above. Complete anonymity of the participants' names was established. For the protection of the participants, their names were coded as SH1, SH2, SH3, SH4, and SH5. The order of presentation of participants is based in the order of the interview presented above. In terms of civil status, five out of five informants were married. In terms of age, two participants were below 50 years old; the other three were 51 years old and above. In terms of their tenure as educators, two of

the participants were in the teaching profession for less than 15 years, while the other half served as teachers for 16 years or more. Socioeconomic Status (SES) is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation. It is commonly conceptualized as the social standing or class of an individual or group. When viewed through a social class lens, privilege, power, and control are emphasized. Low SES and its correlates, such as lower education, poverty, and poor health, ultimately affect society (American Psychological Association, 2016).

SUMMARY OF THEMES

Themes	Responses	Participants
PRIORITY: LEARNERS' WELFARE	SH1 provided information on reproductive health, teenage pregnancy, and child protection, with speakers invited to discuss these topics. A Career Guidance program is also in place for junior high school students, helping them choose career paths for senior high school. SH2 enumerated some of the ongoing programs, such as the private sector feeding program, school supplies from the private sector, and school supplies from the LGU. The researcher, in passing, asked how SH3 could rate the school-community-based projects implemented for the past five years, and he replied, "I think our projects made the recipients (Parents and Students) smile in joy because they benefited from it." SH4 claimed that one of the primary benefits of their school-community projects is to uplift learners' performance to another level. Successful projects like Project Star and Best cater to malnourished learners and those with special needs. Key factors for success include sustainability, transparency, and community involvement.	SH1 SH2 SH3 SH4
EMPHASIS ON COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION	SH4 confirmed that they will conduct a comprehensive assessment of the existing school community-based activities and their impact. They will also develop a plan to strengthen community collaboration and involvement in the planning and implementation of future activities. According to SH1, effective communication and transparency are crucial for community engagement and project success. These two may spell the success or cause the failure of school community projects. According to her, some challenges in keeping the school community activities high include limited parents' low literacy level and budget constraints. SH2 believed that key success factors included community support, cooperation, and a well-managed schedule. The school follows a profiling process to identify community needs and formulate projects. Despite budget constraints, the school adapts by implementing phases. SH5 also confirmed how important the presence and support of every stakeholder are in terms of engagement, physical involvement, and collaboration. He confirmed that the school collaborates with various stakeholders, including community leaders, teachers, and the PTA, to ensure successful project execution. For the current school year, SH3 stressed the importance of a collaborative project to keep learners safe in school from Dengue-infected mosquitoes.	SH4 SH1 SH2 SH5 SH3
BUILDING RESILIENCE	In addressing issues and concerns, SH5 said that the school faced challenges with teacher participation and community support, which are managed through training and early planning. He said that the impact of resource constraints on project implementation is crucial, and the school's efforts to secure additional resources are continuous. The school acknowledges the importance of mapping and identifying community needs to tailor activities effectively. SH1 also confirmed that the school's resources are indeed	SH5 SH1

	low, but there is a private individual to help provide the school's needs, particularly with school-community projects. Regarding the school's available resources and their allocation to community-based activities, SH2 explained that since there are projects that could not be completed with a one-time budget allocation, the school, under her leadership, adapted the phasing of implementation to ensure that projects, no matter how lengthy they are, finish in full. According to her, the Budget is a significant challenge in implementing school-community-based projects.	SH2
TRANSPARENCY IN LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	Some key factors contributing to the success of their school-community-based projects include transparency, community involvement, the project's sustainability, funding, and other resource issues. The school ensures transparency by informing teachers, learners, parents, and the community about upcoming activities. Transparency and stakeholder engagement are emphasized to secure community support. She also summarized some issues as "challenges include resource allocation and occasional negative feedback, which are managed by maintaining a positive outlook and strategic planning". SH2 attributed success to community participation, support, and transparency on the part of school leadership. She explained the involvement of PTA officers and the importance of observations and surveys. She also stressed the importance of a well-defined timeline for project implementation, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.	SH4 SH2
THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING AND BACKUP PLANS	Regarding the planning of school-community activities, SH3 verified that most of the time, the teachers are involved in the early planning stages, and their ideas and suggestions are well taken. Instead of using surveys to map out the community's needs, they are using some sort of immersion to observe the community's needs. They are also taking the suggestions of barangay officials because they are the ones who understand the real needs. In identifying what projects to implement, SH4 replied, "careful planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and revisions" prior to implementation. She clarified that revisions and enhancements are made to sustain the project's effectiveness. Assessment of success over the past five years is based on learners' performance improvements. SH5 emphasized the importance of early planning and stakeholder involvement in ensuring successful project execution.	SH3 SH4 SH5

Thematic Analysis

The data showed school heads' opportunities and challenges in implementing school-community-based projects.

Themes on Opportunities

PRIORITY: LEARNERS' WELFARE

DepEd (2020) emphasizes that learners' welfare is a prime priority, especially during crises, ensuring that students receive continuous support and protection. Ensuring learners' welfare is a fundamental priority in education, directly impacting academic success, personal development, and overall well-being. Schools and educational institutions must create safe, inclusive, and supportive environments that foster holistic growth among students. The key aspects of learners' welfare include physical and mental well-being, inclusivity and accessibility, student engagement and support, among others.

Based on the interview results, School Head 1 verified that Project I-share intends to provide remedial reading support to non-readers and those within the frustration level of reading fluency and comprehension. She added that these programs ensure that learners are socially up while academically engaged. JS Proms are held annually. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts are trained to assist during community emergencies. Also, Child Protection Policy (CPP) discussions are held during PTA meetings. When asked about the community benefits from school

activities, she quipped, "happiness of parents seeing their children become readers and the community's efforts in supporting the school".

For her part, SH4 verified that the school's main activities include national and regional programs, monthly celebrations, and the Banner Program, which emphasizes reading and numeracy. Successful projects like Project Star and Best cater to malnourished learners and those with special needs. Key factors for success include sustainability, transparency, and community involvement. All these are meant to improve learners' welfare in school.

Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000) discuss learner well-being as a multidimensional concept, highlighting the importance of positive emotions, engagement, and personal development in education.

EMPHASIS ON COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

Effective communication and collaboration are essential for the success of school-community partnerships, as they foster shared goals, resource optimization, and sustainable engagement. Schools and communities must work together to enhance student learning, promote social development, and address local educational challenges.

Hausburg (2020) emphasizes that school-community collaboration enhances student learning by integrating academic and community-based knowledge. Additionally, Quiñones & Bumatay (2022) discuss how structured communication schemes between schools and communities facilitate long-term partnerships. Harvard Family Research Project (2020) found that schools with effective collaboration models experience better-aligned goals and curricula.

In this study, 100% of the interviewees (SHs) attested to the importance of communication and collaboration among and between stakeholders. SH4 reiterated the significance of community involvement and collaboration in achieving the school's goals. The school's focus on sustainability, transparency, and community engagement has led to the successful implementation of various activities. SH4 highlights the continuous efforts to improve and enhance existing programs to benefit learners and the community. According to SH1, effective communication and transparency are crucial for community engagement and project success. These two may spell the success or cause the failure of school community projects. According to her, some challenges in keeping the school community activities high include limited parents' low literacy level and budget constraints. SH2 believed that key success factors included community support, cooperation, and a well-managed schedule.

Themes on Challenges

BUILDING RESILIENCE TRANSPARENCY IN LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Resilient leadership ensures that school-community projects remain sustainable despite funding limitations, policy shifts, and stakeholder engagement issues. According to a systematic review on local governance, effective leadership in community-based initiatives requires adaptability, proactive decision-making, and stakeholder collaboration. Leaders who anticipate risks and implement contingency plans strengthen the long-term success of educational programs.

Transparency fosters trust and accountability in school-community partnerships. Research on local governance transparency highlights that open communication, accessible financial records, and participatory decision-making improve stakeholder engagement. Schools that regularly disclose project progress, budget allocations, and impact assessments encourage community involvement and long-term support.

School Heads showed resilience in implementing various school community projects in the midst of low budgetary allocations. Through various connections, like tapping individual donors and private benefactors or the PTA and alumni, some school heads opted to strategize by implementing various projects in phases so that the Budget could extend from one cycle to another.

Regarding the school's available resources and their allocation to community-based activities, SH2 explained that since there are projects that could not be completed with a one-time budget allocation, the school, under her leadership, adapted the phasing of implementation to ensure that projects, no matter how lengthy they are, finish in full. According to her, the Budget is a significant challenge in implementing school-community-based projects.

With regard to funding, SH3 mentioned that the school's alumni association has been supporting their school-community and other projects, but there are issues at times raising the needed amount for certain projects. They are always following the timeline, which should fall within a school year.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING AND BACKUP PLANS

Effective planning and contingency strategies are essential for the success of school-community projects, ensuring sustainability, adaptability, and long-term impact. Schools and communities must anticipate challenges and develop structured frameworks to address uncertainties.

Hausburg (2020) emphasizes that school-community collaboration requires structured planning to integrate academic and community-based knowledge. Teachers Institute (2023) highlights that strategic planning helps schools adapt to technological advances, demographic shifts, and evolving educational standards. Urban Education Journal (2020) argues that schools must anticipate risks and develop alternative solutions to maintain project continuity.

In this study, SHs emphasized the need to have a backup plan. According to SH3, she clarified that the school has strategies to address any challenge by having multiple backup plans and securing resources in advance. She also emphasized the importance of realistic planning to ensure sustainability and success. For SH5, he also mentioned the importance of having a Project Team and School Planning Team in conducting studies and surveys to inform project decisions.

Summary of Findings

Opportunities

The study found several areas where opportunities are high and could bring positivity in implementing school-community-based projects.

Parental Support and Community Collaborations. Parents and community leaders provide support through PTA associations, with some private benefactors offering financial assistance.

Learners' Welfare is focused on. Schools prioritize learners' Welfare through projects like literacy and reading programs, feeding programs, and child welfare campaigns.

Teacher Collaboration. Teachers work together, enhancing educational impact, resource-sharing, and student engagement.

Challenges

Low Resource Allocation. Limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to technology hinder project implementation and sustainability.

Negative Support from Community. Some community members resist or oppose projects due to misunderstandings or misinformation.

Non-participative Parents. Some parents are non-participative due to a lack awareness, work constraints, socioeconomic barriers, or limited communication channels.

Implications

The study's findings suggest that schools can leverage opportunities for collaboration and prioritize learners' Welfare while addressing challenges related to resource allocation, community support, and parental involvement. By understanding these factors, schools can develop more effective strategies for implementing successful school-community-based projects.

Best Practices Identified from the experiences of the five principals/School Heads

Best Practices Identified from the experiences of the five principals/School Heads are; Comprehensive Student Support Programs: Remedial Learning Initiatives, Holistic Development Activities, and Health & Nutrition Support, Strong Parent and Community Collaborations: Active PTA involvement, Community-Based Support System, and Transparent and Inclusive Engagement, and Communication and Collaboration for Sustainability: structured Dialogue Between schools and Communities, sustainable and transparent Program Implementation and Alignment with educational and Social Development Goals.

Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn based on the findings: (1) Collaboration between schools, parents, and community members can enhance educational outcomes and student welfare. (2) Limited funding, infrastructure, and technology hinder the implementation and sustainability of school-community projects. (3) Negative support from community members can limit project effectiveness, while active engagement and awareness can foster success. (4) Encouraging parental participation can improve student development, project effectiveness, and community collaboration.

Recommendations

To address these challenges and leverage opportunities, schools can develop strategic partnerships, foster strong relationships with parents, community leaders, and local organizations, prioritize resource allocation: Advocate for increased funding, infrastructure, and technology to support educational initiatives, enhance community engagement: Educate community members about project goals, objectives, and benefits, encourage parental involvement: Implement effective communication channels and outreach programs to engage parents. Recommendations for Future Research Directions, Conduct a longitudinal study to track the long-term impact of school-community partnerships on student outcomes and community development, Conduct in-depth case studies of successful school-community partnerships to identify key factors contributing to their success, Perform quantitative analysis to examine the relationship between school-community partnerships and student outcomes, such as academic achievement and attendance, Investigate the challenges faced by schools in implementing school-community partnerships and identify practical solutions. By addressing these challenges and leveraging opportunities, schools can create more effective and sustainable school-community partnerships that benefit students, parents, and the broader community.

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