

Collaborative school-community partnering situation in a central school: basis for the creation of a partnership initiative

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Abstract: This quantitative correlational descriptive study assessed the status of partnering and community development in a public elementary school in the Schools Division of Nueva Vizcaya. Employing purposive random sampling and total enumeration, one hundred seventy-two (172) school internal and external stakeholders were involved in answering an adopted survey questionnaire. Data revealed that the school-community partners comprise mainly of parents, representing the majority, followed by the combined barangay and municipal government personnel, business sector, and other units. Despite having a well-established linking, the school has to expand further its partnering efforts in initiating extensive programs and projects to acquire more donations, additional services, and wider linkages. Also, the school's partnering status is mainly influenced by the work affiliation and the length of time the partners have been collaborating the institution. As such, a well-planned, feasible school-partner development project was introduced to strengthen the partnership status in the school community.

Keywords: linkages, partnering, school community, stakeholders

Date Submitted: May 16, 2025

Date Accepted: May 28, 2025

Date Published: June 6, 2025

INTRODUCTION

The axiom no man is an island does not only apply to individual beings but also institutions. Institutions need other institutions in order to expand. For corporations to grow, they have to incorporate with others. Just like schools, for it to functionally operate and expand the delivery of quality education, they must establish strong partnership with stakeholders. For a learning institution to magnify its human, material, and financial resources, its workforce must extend its linking capacity in partnering and in associating with other potential benefactors and providers.

The same thing happens in business. The International Business School Barcelona advocates three key components which are vital for a successful collaborative business. These are: 1) a culture of collaboration, 2) the appropriate tools, and 3) well-defined objectives.

Also, according to Barbosa (2024), collaboration can move mountains but effective collaboration is not easy. It does not happen effortlessly but it is indispensable for any kind of business on its way toward success. As such, 1) access to new markets and customers; 2) increased innovation and creativity; 3) shared resources and risk mitigation; and 4) long-term growth opportunities are the ways Barbosa (2024) suggests on how to streamline effective collaboration. In addition, he also identified several types of collaboration and partnerships, as: 1) strategic alliances; 2) portfolio collaboration; 3) partner ecosystems; and 4) remote collaboration. Moreover, he also highlighted some tips for successful collaboration in business. First is to ensure open and transparent communication. Next is to respect the local workplace culture, and the third is to

explore networking opportunities. The fourth tip is not to neglect nor forget internal collaboration. Another one is to incorporate collaborative project management techniques; and finally, to set clear exit strategies.

In like manner, Simmons (2023) shared ways of partnership. These are: 1) connecting to a broader audience/more efficient outreach; 2) building capacity/sharing data; 3) expand programs; 4) celebrate wins together; and 5) testimonials.

Dax Grant, a Forbes Councils Member, has established in his article published in Forbes on May 12, 2023, points for setting up success. He stressed that in building a strategic partnership and have a balance of all the elements of success, such as: one should also build, share, and explore relationships at a strategic level; make sure that there is relevant influence within the partner organization; invest in relationships at all levels; invest time in the right partnerships and collaborations remains essential; and nurture key relationships with strategic insight and collaborative strategic understanding remains essential.

Meanwhile, in education, according to Neetu Luthra, a Global Schools Advocate in India, collaboration is a great term, but she prefers the term partnering. For her, collaboration seems to mean working with others, while partnering appears to be like a long-term investment in a mutual relationship which is also mutually beneficial to both, and all involved in such a relationship. She added that strong partnerships are grounded in shared values and common goals, mutual trust and deep respect, including the experience, sensibilities, and knowledge that each partner offers. It needs commitment of energy and extra time to listen and to heed, to learn and to understand, and presence in the other side's sphere of work. It takes portioning of successes and owning of shortcomings, openness to the changes and new things that come ahead, and a willingness to take the challenge and be challenged at uncertain times.

Indeed, partnership (and collaboration) can lighten the schools' operations or even expenditures because it balances out the costs between both partners, like transportation, staff development training, shared facilities and workspace, manual labor, skills and/or anything else related to the shared vision, mission, and objectives. The work environments nowadays are turning out to be more collaborative. The day-to-day trend constantly extends to the growing and expanding parts of the globe. Works is not anymore in isolation. Organizations, businesses, companies can train people on technical skills but want people who come, ready to partner with others.

Partnering also gives people the opportunities to constantly gain learnings and improve in many aspects. Everyone, especially the young ones and students, needs a mentor. People need mentors as guides which could be done through partnerships and projects. Problems are also easily resolved through partnering. The more institutions collaborate with one another, the more likely they can address global challenges on employment, economy, food, climate, health and wellness, and a lot more. Partnering is reciprocal. As organizations partner, they solve problems together. When partners effort a lot to solve problems, they apparently create work and learning opportunities for both. Partnering is an avenue if institutions aspire for meaningful educational experiences and relevant lifelong learning.

The challenge in the education sector is if there is the will to walk the talk. Leaders and administrators ask their subordinates to collaborate; in the same way as school heads encourage their teachers to partner with stakeholders. However, do leaders truly do it themselves?

In appraising the forms of school-community relationships, this article advances four interpretations, viz, the school as community, involving teachers and students; the contained school as community, including the parents of students; the school with community, involving the two-

way sharing of resources with community, business and government agencies; and the school and networks, comprising formal and informal expressions of networking with other schools.

Brady (2013) studied the challenges in fronting effective school-community relationships. He has identified problems of perception, pedagogy, and policy. He also offers recommendations for enhancing school community relations like reducing the culture of individualism in the institution to create a more 'inclusive' settings for learning, and that employees reconsider the supposed impact of pedagogy in diverse contexts.

For educators, he experienced and inexperienced alike, community engaged education can exhibit rare and at times arduous challenges for which many people are not equipped with countering strategies. However, when these challenges are disbaled and overcome, community engaged learning and teaching grants students, teachers, and communities to undergo profound growth and development (Bandy, 2011).

Time commitment, ensuring positive community impact, and ensuring student learning are the three crucial concerns Bandy (2011) has highlighted educators to articulate about community engaged teaching and research. Learning institutions have always manifested interest, apart from their mandate, to partner and to collaborate with the families of their learners and with their local communities, but many still find difficulty in an authentic engagement. What could best foster collaboration is by focusing on four (4) key areas: 1) strengthening collaborative decision-making; 2) building trust; 3) demonstrating a commitment to collaboration; and building capacity and infrastructure (Renbarger et al., 2024).

Apparently, organizations can grow complex and become too reliant on tactical relationships. Subsequently, a strategic enlivening of key collaborations and partnering is a vigorous element in developing the strategic plan of every organization. Choosing and strengthening partnerships is a strategic skill that requires the balance of looking into both market-leading partnerships to cause innovative changes while balancing with resiliency, and the stride of irresistible change. Afterall, the fine-tuning of strategic partnership is chunk of the expanding maturity of a certain organization (Grant, 2023).

In the context of Pingkian Central School, in the past five (5) years, the school has been struggling in optimizing partnership with its stakeholders, despite trying initiatives. It has not sustained any functional partnership project nor extension program as indicated by a negative record of any MOA/MOU with any legitimate partner institution; absence of a sustainable development project initiated by stakeholders; and there are no existing financial support groups apart from the Special Education Fund (SEF) from the Municipal Local Government Unit of Kayapa, and some sort of donations collected only when solicitation drives are initiated.

Moreover, Pingkian Central School falls under level II (maturing) in the School Based Management (SBM) level of practice wherein networking and linkaging rated low and has not sustained partnerships for improving resource management.

Consequently, infra-projects are not coming. Typical expenditures are solely charged against school funds. Petty activity expenses are shouldered by the school staff, most of the time, from their personal pockets. Also, outside the school community activities are not backed up by partner institutions. There may be minimal support, but mostly are from parents and benevolent donors who have been tapped on particular period of time only. Generally, the school community is not working at an extraordinary level in terms of partnership and in collaboration despite Department of Education's (DepEd) mandate to schools to broaden their linkaging capacities in order to augment the meager fundings and resources coming from the higher governments. With these, Republic Act 8525, or otherwise known as Adopt-a-School Program (ASP) Act of 1998 was

created to help generate investments and to support education outside the mainstream funding and the national budget. Under the program, legally instituted by the passage of RA 8525, private entities, either local or overseas are given the opportunity to become partners in education through their assistance in the upgrading and modernization of public elementary and high schools. In return, they are to enjoy additional tax incentives as they implement their project. Meanwhile, one of the goals of the K to 12 Education Program is to develop students who have the relevant knowledge, competencies and values to pursue further education and training or to enter the world of work through employment or entrepreneurship. Thus, there is a need for partnerships especially in the work immersion of Senior High School students. Through the DepED Order No. 40, s. 2015, entitled, Guidelines on K to 12 Partnerships, it hopes to assist and to enable department and school. The conduct of the partnership projects in schools are expected to improve the Access, Retention, Completion and Achievement (ARCA) of learners.

Similarly, it would also indirectly benefit the community and Local Government Unit since the schools are windows of the municipality. It would influence and inspire positive transformation of local leaders, institutions and communities toward bringing good governance and education together to impact economic and social development, progress and sustainability. This study would also serve as benchmarks for best practices across local governments, communities and public institutions.

Moreover, it is one of the thrusts of the education department to contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SGD 17 – Partnership for Goals, and in upholding support to SDG 1 – No Poverty (Provision to less privileged learners); SDG 2 and 3 – Zero Hunger (School Feeding Program and Good Health and Wellbeing); SDG 4 – Quality Education; SDG 6 -Clean Water and Sanitation; SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructures; SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and Communities; and SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

It is for these reasons that the researcher took this research initiative to study the current status of partnership and linking in the locality with the hope to initiate a partnership program that would strengthen linkages in the school community of Pingkian Central School, that would comply to DepEd mandates, and would extend help and support to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Problem Statement

This study was conducted to:

1. determine the profile of respondents in terms of: work affiliation; nature of school involvement and number of partnerships with the school.
2. assess the status of linkages in the school community from the perspective of the respondents
3. investigate the relationship between the profile variables (work affiliation, nature of school involvement, and number of partnerships) and the status of linkages in the community
4. develop project to strengthen the partnership in the school community

METHODOLOGY

Research design

Quantitative research is useful in obtaining an objective understanding of people, things, places, and events. It lies greatly on the production of results that should reflect precise measurement and an in-depth analysis of data (Baraceros, 2016), as cited by Ramel, (2021). Deemed appropriate, this research employed quantitative descriptive correlational approach for it determined and described the status of stakeholders' partnership with the school and vice versa.

The quantitative-descriptive correlational aspect involved the analysis required for the supposed relationship of the profile variables and the assessed status of community linkaging. Specifically, test of relationship, particularly Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was employed in this study since it endeavored to establish possible relationship between the studied variables.

Locale of Study

The research locale is a typical central school located in Pingkian, Kayapa, Nueva Vizcaya.

Respondents of the study

It belongs to medium category for it has a total learner population of 380 with 16 teachers inclusive of Special Education Teachers and ALS, three (3) non-teaching personnel and one (1) school head.

Ideally, the school has a General Parent Teacher Association (GPTA) and School Governing Council (SGC) which usually work in tandem with the teachers and school head in the implementation of school programs.

Selection and Description of Respondents

There were 172 respondents of this study. The private institution, civic group, non-government institution, education sector, local government unit, and agricultural sector were selected through purposive sampling based on the specific criteria aligned with the research objectives. Parents' group who does not belong to the other work affiliation and religious group leaders or representatives were drawn through total enumeration who have been the strong partners and internal and external stakeholders of the school while government institution, business sector and alumni group were selected through purposive random sampling based on the research requirements and access of the researcher and the target individuals as well.

Data Gathering Instruments

A structured survey questionnaire adopted from Lango (2014) was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into three (3) parts. The first part intended to collect the profile of the respondents. Part II assessed the status of community linkaging; and Part III included an open-ended question each respondent had freely answered in a free-flowing manner, using their most preferred language.

Follow up interview from a few respondents was conducted to validate and clarify responses through in-person modality.

Data Gathering Procedure

To get to the process of data gathering, the researcher forwarded a letter requesting for the approval from the Schools Division of Nueva Vizcaya Schools Division Superintendent, and District Supervisor. Also, letter of permission to conduct the study and informed consent were forwarded to access the respondents.

To ensure reliability (inter-rater) of the instrument, a *pilot testing* was conducted to a total of 17 teachers; 48 parents and external partners and eight (8) PTA and barangay officials of Dupax del Sur Central School. The instrument has a reliability coefficient of 0.913 for Part II (Linkaging and Community Development Skills). If the Cronbach alpha (reliability coefficient) is higher than 0.70, the instrument has internal consistency or reliability. Hence, the instrument is reliable.

Nonetheless, Part I and Part III were subjected for language editing and/or critiquing to ensure language facility and clarity of the items. When already ready, the researcher gathered the respondents from the group of parents, teachers, community and religious group during the quarterly school meeting and barangay general assembly meeting to hand the questionnaires, while copies for the respondents from the local government unit were handed during the monthly Local School Board meeting to ensure a hundred percent data collection from the target respondents.

Also, confidentiality of the data collected from the respondents has been ensured to them by the researcher. Accuracy and integrity were guaranteed before, during, and after the process of data gathering. Throughout the whole process of data gathering, ethical research standards were adhered to voluntary participation, informed consent, and respect to the rights and privacy of the respondents were highly respected. Upon retrieval of the questionnaire, the data were tallied and analyzed using the appropriate statistical methods.

The whole process of data gathering was carried out in an effective and efficient manner and within the time frame, which guaranteed that it was completed as planned.

Data Analysis Procedure

The study utilized appropriate statistical methods to ensure the accuracy and reliability of data analysis and interpretation. In alignment with the sequence of the research problems, frequency counts and percentage distribution were applied to analyze the profile of the respondents. To assess the status of community linkaging in the school, the researchers employed mean scores accompanied by qualitative descriptions for interpretative clarity. Finally, Pearson *r* correlation was used to determine the significance of the relationship between the respondents' profile variables and the status of community linkaging, thereby addressing the study's relational research objective.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study presents a comprehensive synthesis of stakeholder engagement and community linkaging in Pingkian Central School, highlighting the multifaceted roles and contributions of various partners in the school community. Employing frequency and percentage distribution, the profile of respondents revealed a predominance of parent-group affiliates (37.21%), followed by those from the business sector, government institutions, and other civic or private sectors. These findings affirm that school partners originate from a broad range of sectors, reflecting both direct and indirect affiliations with the school, consistent with Drew's (2024) classification of stakeholders as internal and external contributors to institutional functions.

Further analysis showed that stakeholders are involved in diverse ways: nearly half (48.84%) provided labor services, and 34.88% gave financial support. A smaller yet valuable group donated materials, supported sustainability and infrastructure projects, and contributed to educational resources. This distribution illustrates how stakeholder involvement is shaped by individual capacities and available resources, aligning with Paganao's (2024) assertion that both internal and external stakeholders play specific roles in educational ecosystems.

Data on the nature of benefaction revealed that 32.56% of stakeholders are non-regular benefactors, while 29.07% are regular contributors. Other types of support included infrastructure (17.44%), extracurricular (10.47%), and student or technology development, showing a broad spread of involvement. Notably, 89.53% of these partnerships were informal and without signed MOUs/MOAs, suggesting a culture of voluntary collaboration, consistent with Hendricks (2023) and Fransman et al. (2021), who note that effective collaboration may occur with or without formalized agreements.

Regarding the nature of partnership, most stakeholders (58.14%) are engaged in environmental programs, with others supporting resource mobilization, community outreach, capability building, academics, infrastructure, and even research. The distribution reveals a diversified pattern of support across both academic and non-academic domains. However, Lopez and Bauyot (2025) stressed that sustainable partnerships require structured collaboration, clear communication, and strategic resource allocation.

The respondents' years of involvement suggest that nearly 30% are new partners, with a substantial proportion (26.74%) engaged for three years and 25.58% for more than five years. These numbers reflect the school's effort in nurturing long-term relationships. Such efforts echo Lopez and Bauyot's (2025) recommendation on inclusive stakeholder engagement for sustainable school development.

The status of school-community linkaging, measured by mean scores, was rated as very satisfactory ($M = 4.08$). Among the indicators, the most highly rated behavior was the school's openness to stakeholders' inquiries and concerns, whereas maintaining alumni relations scored the lowest ($M = 3.81$), suggesting an area for improvement. Rivera Jr. (2023) corroborates the finding, indicating that the school's performance in community linkaging aligns with its overall very satisfactory implementation of educational programs.

Correlation analysis using Pearson r revealed significant relationships between work affiliation and years of partnership with the status of linkaging ($r = 0.271$ and $r = 0.247$, respectively). This suggests that the type of organization a partner represents and the duration of their involvement substantially influence the effectiveness of collaboration. However, other variables such as donor type, partner status, and nature of partnership were found to have no significant correlation, reinforcing that depth and consistency of engagement matter more than formal labels or occasional contributions.

Stakeholders also proposed several development initiatives to enhance future collaboration. These include strategic planning with sectoral groups, establishing stable funding mechanisms, promoting inclusivity through learning resource centers, and implementing outreach and infrastructure development projects. Feedback from stakeholders emphasized the urgent need for a parent-teacher partnership program, wellness initiatives, and engagement in creative industries for broader community impact. These recommendations align with Horton's (2009) call for in-depth case studies on partnership dynamics, noting that while partnership is widely promoted, its practical complexities must not be underestimated.

To respond to these identified needs, the school proposed a development project titled TandEM Pa MORE: Teachers and Education Mentors with Parents Motivated to Operate, Reform, and Engage, to be launched in SY 2025–2026. The project aims to foster skills in partnership, mobilize resources, and conduct outreach programs focused on education, wellness, and sustainable development. Monitoring and evaluation will be institutionalized following DepEd and Division protocols to ensure accountability and sustainability.

In conclusion, this study underscores the critical role of varied, sustained, and sector-diverse partnerships in enhancing school performance and community integration. By institutionalizing a proactive and collaborative framework such as TandEM Pa MORE, Pingkian Central School is poised to strengthen its linking capacity and serve as a model for community-anchored educational development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, several key conclusions were drawn regarding the nature and effectiveness of school-community partnerships. The majority of school partners are parents, followed by individuals affiliated with government agencies—particularly from the Barangay and Municipal LGUs—and members of the business sector. This indicates a broad representation of stakeholders, as other sectors such as civic groups, alumni, private institutions, and religious organizations also contribute as donors and benefactors, offering cash, materials, services, and support for infrastructure and developmental programs. Notably, while many partners collaborate informally without formal MOUs or MOAs, a portion of the partnerships are formalized through written agreements, with engagements spanning varying durations.

Although the school exhibits a well-established and functional linkage with its community, the current status is assessed as very satisfactory rather than ideal. This highlights the need for school personnel to intensify efforts in expanding partnerships, initiating larger-scale projects, and cultivating more formal and lasting collaborations. The study emphasizes that the strength of school-community partnerships is significantly influenced by the partners' work affiliation and the length of their collaboration with the school. Consequently, initiating a well-structured, practical development project—anchored on strategic planning and inclusive stakeholder engagement—is deemed essential to further enhance partnership quality and support the school's long-term development goals.

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