

EDUCATION GOVERNANCE--- SYNERGEIA'S PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH

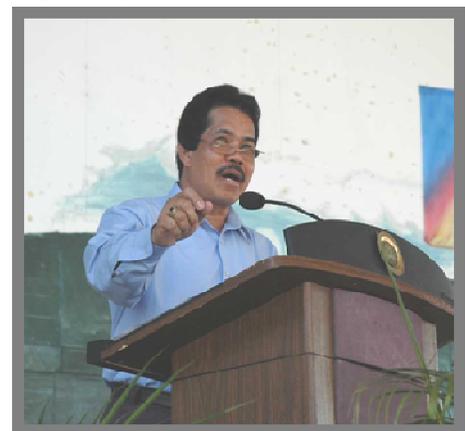
Education breaks the cycle of poverty. Almost 3 out of 4 poor families in the Philippines are headed by household heads whose highest educational attainment is primary education.¹



Literacy programs are not just developing knowledge and skills. It is about enabling people to think for themselves, speaking from their hearts, and assuming their responsibilities in a community.

1. Synergeia's approach: bottom up, collaborative, and systemic.

- Bottom-up: decisions, programs, processes are developed by communities and not prescribed from the top.
- Collaborative : everybody participates in the decision-making process so that programs are in accord with what communities need. "Equal rights for everybody".
- Systemic: the difficulties in basic education are addressed as a whole and not through separate programs.



2. The process of transformation is simple.

Our First Encounter. Synergeia uses data for local leaders to understand the deterioration in the quality of basic education. The crisis in education is made a personal issue: "Children are your constituents and their education is your responsibility as a leader."

¹ National Statistical Coordination Board, Poverty Statistics

Shock and awe: A Synergeia mayor inspires the new community with his experiences as an education champion. He presents the processes he followed and the results of the education reforms.

Education Summits. Parents are invited to join to an “education summit”. They are shocked on how poorly the children perform, and is followed by a cathartic period where they share their thoughts on:

- * What are my dreams for my children in school?
- * What factors prevent these dreams from coming true?
- * What can we do together to make our dreams come true?



Every participant is given a card where he writes his answers to the questions. The Mayor then summarizes targets and the doable programs that the LGU will undertake.

Capacity building. Synergeia works with communities in designing and implementing the programs to improve the performance of students, teachers, principals, LGU officials, and parents.

More than a Training Program. Our genuine concern for community members and the dignity we give them by treating them as equals are at the core of our programs. Trustees, Governors, Mayors, and faculty members from Synergeia partner-institutions serve as resource persons. Discussions are experiential: sharing of best practices, case studies, role playing, arts, games and reflections on how lessons learned can be applied.



Holding their Hands. “Sparks of inspiration” from training programs can easily die. Other concerns take the mayors away from the education agenda. Communities are not used to holding regular discussions. They lack resources and systems to translate plans into operations. Synergeia coaches local teams in coping with their day-to-day challenges. We regularly converse with local leaders to review targets and work programs. We connect them with organizations that can provide them with more resources and expertise. Synergeia provides them with modules for training programs that they can consider.



Reinventing the Local School Board. Local School Boards have the power to disburse the Special Education Fund tax. Synergeia uses the Robredo model that broadens membership and functions of Local School Boards. The philosophy is “what the law does not prohibit it allows.”



Benchmarking the Impact of the Program. Communities are trained to measure results by looking at the dropout rate, achievement scores in reading and math tests, the National Achievement Test, collection of the SEF, participation of parents and barangay officials in school activities, and programs of the Local School Board.



Celebrating Performance. Wins and successes are recognized through recognition programs, fellowships, and small but meaningful rewards.