

## **PTCA-Funded Public Preschools: Basis for Adopt-A-Preschool Program**

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**Abstract** - LDCU was awarded for having the most outstanding community extension program. Thus, the researcher conducted this study to determine the institutional capability of three selected PTCA-funded public preschools which have been operating for five years in the rural areas of Cagayan de Oro City. Adopting a community extension preschool program as an output of the study is based on school capabilities focused on management, faculty, parents, learning activities and experiences, and physical environment. Profile of parent respondents concerning monthly family income, occupation, and preschool involvement helped in the preschool assessment. Significant differences in the responses involving the five capability criteria helped identify the preschool that would be adopted as a pilot school. Having used the descriptive-evaluative method, the qualitative and quantitative aspects were considered to determine the institutional capabilities of the selected PTCA-funded public preschools. Study evaluators were parents, teachers, and school administrators. Three sets of instruments were used based on Department of Education standards and previous studies. These were incorporated on the institutional capabilities of preschool, parent involvement, and interview

schedule. The research tools made possible the in-depth study for possible improvement of the existing preschools.

**Keywords** - parents involvement, preschool, community extension

## INTRODUCTION

The development of the child is the bedrock of the nation. The UNESCO Convention came out with the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Children (<http://www.unicef.org/crc/connection>) which advocates that:

"The child shall enjoy special protection and shall be given opportunities and facilities by the law and by other means to enable him to develop physically, mentally, spiritually, morally, and socially in a health and normal manner and in a condition of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interest of the child shall be the paramount consideration."

This was then reinforced by the Presidential Decree 603 on the child and youth welfare code. With the UNESCO edict, preschool education or early childhood education has become global in scope. Early Childhood Development has been identified by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) as early as 1971 with BPS Memorandum No. 25, s. 1971, encouraging public schools to organize preschool classes. Then the Education Act of 1982 of the Philippines was promulgated, which included preschool programs in elementary education and the "Education for All" Philippine Plan of Action (1991 – 2000), as cited by Santos (2000).

Observations evidently show that early childhood education provides opportunities for a child to interact with another adult besides the teacher, in sharing knowledge about their hobbies, interests and experiences. It was also noted that children in the early education stage develop meaning as a result of concrete encounters and experiences and that learning takes place primarily through sensory experiences and actions. Therefore, it is essential that children be encouraged to explore, manipulate, create, dismantle and reconstruct things in the environment.

Looking at the public preschool system in its initial stages,

the researcher observed that rural preschools do not meet the standards and requirements for operation. Several factors hinder the administration of these schools, especially the funding support which is supposedly intended for classrooms and staff training for early childhood education (ECE).

These situations moved the researcher to evaluate the PTCA-funded public preschools. The researcher, a preschool administrator in Liceo de Cagayan University (LDCU), decided to help the underprivileged children through this study. It focuses on the assessment of the PTCA-funded public preschools in the rural areas. This is cognizant of one of the University's institutional goals, which is Relevant Community Extension Project, through the Liceo Center for Community Development headed by dedicated and committed personnel whose desire is to help alleviate the lives of the needy and preserve the natural environment which resulted

Liceo University to be awarded for having the Most Outstanding Project undertaken through volunteerism in colleges and universities in Region X, entitled Safer River Life Saver Program. This program is the university's flagship community extension project, which aims towards the prevention, protection and conservation of the Cagayan de Oro River. The University provides initiative and exercises moral leadership in a multi-sector endeavor geared towards environmental concerns and management.

Inspired by the reputation gained by the university, through its extension program, the researcher was prompted to undertake a study on the assessment of the PTCA-funded public preschools in the rural areas of Cagayan de Oro City. The study looked into the five environmental aspects of the said public preschools, particularly on the management, faculty, parents, learning activities and experiences and physical environment, which are vital to the development of the potentials of preschool learners. Once the school is identified with the university, the collaboration of the government and of other interested NGO's, will adopt such preschool. This will serve as a pilot school among the preschools under the supervision of public school officials. Thus, underprivileged children will not only gain quality education but also experience the kind of education experienced by children of affluent families. A domino effect among other PTCA-funded public preschools is then expected.

## FRAMEWORK

This study which focuses on the community extension service program covering preschool education, is anchored on the **Extension Service Theory** (Greer, 1996) presented in Figure 1. Concerns for extension services include illiteracy, poor economic growth, lack of food, peace and security, and environmental improvement. Support for the ongoing maintenance and development of the education sector comes partly in the form of an extension process with information from educational researches.

Over the recent decades, extension services were directed at improving livelihood. Services do not only focus on education, but also on environmental health and well-being. Sustainable development extension must also address the complex issues of environmental management, as well as develop a community's capacity to look at other issues in the educational context.

Challenges of extension outreach services consider the design and delivery of programs. Extension is expected to be more capable of serving all clients including those on the kindergarten level.

**Harms Assessment Theory.** Environmental facilities complement Greer's (1996) Community Extension Service Theory. According to Harms (cited in Pciorek and Murmo, 1995, 1996), every institution offering such early childhood education must possess the following salient features: a viable physical environment, an interpersonal environment and activities which would stimulate development among preschool learners. In as much as the children's engagement in activities depend on the environment, it is the role of the institution to provide the most appropriate setting possible for learning, thus assessment should be done to give assurance of a quality preschool education. As exemplified, it is very significant to provide an environment that supports development and learning among preschool learners, because the quality of an environment has an impact on the behavior of children. School operations should be based on standards of excellence or criteria for quality. Philippine preschools provide for curricular standards within the scope of physical, personal-social, affective, cognitive and creative-aesthetic development. Physical or motor development means physical growth. Motor development and

physical growth refer to growth in the ability of children to use their bodies (Mayesky, Neuman and Woodkowski, 1980).

**Legal bases for preschool education.** DECS Order No. 107, s. 1989, which focuses on the Standards for the Organization and Operation of Preschools (Kindergarten Level) is issued to serve as a guide to every learning institution who wants to offer preschool education (Figure 1). Enclosure No. 1 discusses the rationale and objectives as well as the legal bases for the operation of preschools. The standards come in three parts: Part I – The Curriculum, Part II – Staff Requirements, and Part III – Physical Environment.

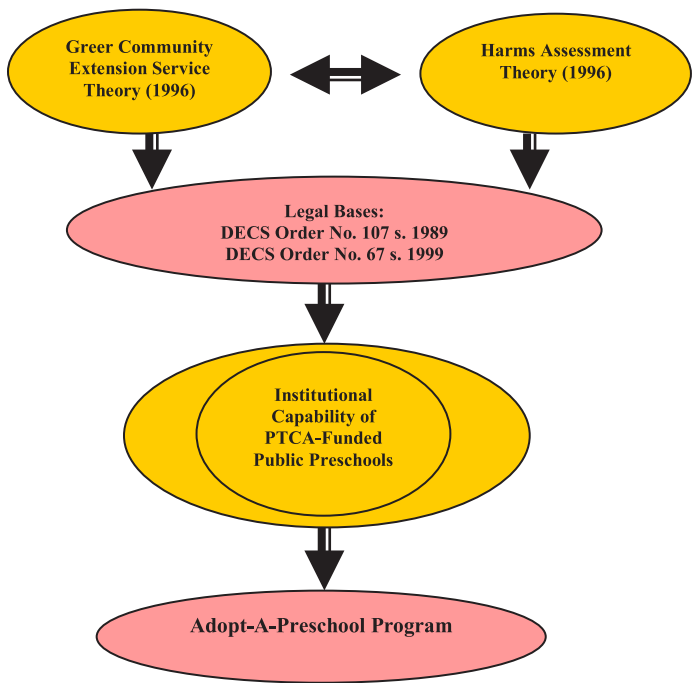


Figure 1. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework of the Study

While preschool is not yet a part of the educational ladder, the need for early childhood development has long been felt. The present standards for preschool education consider the chills, the teacher and the school, with the support of the family, in maximizing the

child's potentials and his capacity for learning. The stimulating and meaningful experiences provided for in the different learning areas will help develop the child in all aspects that will make him a socially sensitive, independent, spiritual and rational individual. The teacher, is therefore, expected to come up with a class program suited to the needs of the children in that particular school.

Staff requirements are intended for owners/operators, administrators/principals/heads, as well as classroom teachers and para-professionals who are involved in Early Childhood Education learning situations, with children 4 to 6 years of age. The owner/operator must be a college degree holder in a discipline allied to education with at least 18 units of preschool education and two years of teaching, must be a BEEed graduate in Early Childhood Education, or with at least 18 units of preschool education and 54 hours of practicum in preschool classes. Likewise, para-professionals must be high school graduates and have attended training in early childhood education for at least 120 hours, with a certificate from a recognized training institution.

The physical environment, which refers to the site of a preschool, should also be considered. The school site must have a minimum lot area of 500 square meters and the area may be divided into a minimum of 140 square meters for the classrooms and 360 square meters for the playground. The school site must be used for educational purposes only with provisions for offices, faculty room, music rooms and library rooms.

Another legal basis is **DECS Order No. 67, s. 1999**, which contains the Revised Guidelines governing Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) and Parent-Teacher-Community Association (PTCA). These are taken into consideration in this study. The following revised guidelines are hereby issued:

1. The scope of participation of the PTA and PTCA in school management
2. Membership;
3. Officers;
4. Tenure of office;
5. Collection of dues and contributions;

6. Financial accountability;
7. Relationships among school personnel, principals, administrators and parents;
8. Engagement in business transactions.

**PTCA-funded public preschools.** The establishment of a PTA and PTCA in all schools under the Department of Education, Culture and Sports is being encouraged because of their participative and cooperative support in the management of schools for the best interests of pupils and students. Behind such rationale, the revised guidelines were promulgated under DECS Order No. 67, s. 1999.

In this study, the management, faculty, learning experiences and activities, parents and physical environment of the PTCA-funded public preschools are being evaluated. These environmental factors are very significant in the developmental milestones of young children.

With regards to management as described in this study, it tried to point out the process of working with others to accomplish organizational goals effectively. It is believed that the quality of performance manifested by the people involved in attaining the goals would depend much on the availability of resources.

The administrators in the early childhood education plan, implement, supervise, monitor or evaluate the school programs. With such responsibilities as mandated by the DECS Order No. 107, s. 1989, they should have a master's degree in education and at least two years very satisfactory work experience in a school set-up. Moreover, a college degree in a discipline allied to education with at least eighteen units of preschool education subjects is required.

The faculty members in an institution play a vital role in the learning of children. Considering that they are directly involved in handling preschool learners, they need adequate training and preparation. Teaching young children is an important task which demands a teacher's patience, attention, good judgment and professional preparation.

Learning for young children is intricately tied up with concrete experiences and observations as stressed by Pestalozzi (1996). It is important to recognize individual differences among the children's self activities rather than rote activities as the basis of learning (Brain

& Edward, 1982). Froebel (qtd. In Catron et al, 1993) strongly stressed the important role of play and learning activities in young children's development, and not merely as a preparation for adult work. He saw play as a pure and natural mode of learning through which children can achieve harmony.

Young children learn in a way that is fundamentally different from how adults learn as explained by Montessori, (qtd. In Catron et al, 1993). Montessori was impressed with the great capacity of children to learn so much during the first few years of life. She called this capacity, the absorbent mind. She felt that all children have an in-born intellectual structure that unfolds gradually as they develop, although individual differences are due to different environmental experiences.

Steiner (1919) a Swiss philosopher, emphasized learning through work, play, song and dance. Advocates assume that children create a new world each day and try every imaginable situation with it. This is supported by the theory of Froebel (1970) which emphasizes play as the heart of learning.

According to Shaeffer (1994), parents are of primary importance in children's development. They are usually the first and influential teachers. In the first year of life, parents teach the language symbols and meanings used in their culture. Parents as role models contribute significantly to children's acquisition of basic skills and values. It is important that parents stay involved in their children's lives both at home and in school. School is only one form of education, and the education children received at home should be connected to the school in order to provide continuity.

## METHODOLOGY

The descriptive-evaluative method of research was employed in this study. Calmorin (1995) states that the descriptive research design determines and gathers data from a relatively representative number of subjects in order to get some information about the present status.

The qualitative method was used to record the answers of the interviews with the administrators, parents and teachers to validate or confirm the responses from the questionnaire. Ocular visits were made to the different preschools, and observations of varied children's



activities and play equipment/materials were considered and identified.

Similarly, the quantitative method was also used to get the percentage, average profile, and the significant difference of the three PTCA-funded preschools, using the analysis of variance (ANOVA).

The study was conducted in three selected PTCA-funded public preschools in the rural areas of Cagayan de Oro City, which have existed for five years now. The following were the Bayabas Preschool, Canito-an Preschool, and Lumbia Preschool.

The respondents directly involved in this study were the administrators, parents, and preschool teachers in selected PTCA-funded public preschools in the rural areas of Cagayan de Oro City during the school year 2004-2005. There were 33 public schools offering Early Childhood Education in the rural areas funded by the PTCA. Purposive sampling was used since only the respondents from the three preschools which existed for at least five years were involved.

Universal sampling was used in this study. All the three principals, five teachers, and 136 parents in the three PTCA-funded preschools identified in the study answered the instruments. Casual interviews with the respondents were conducted to supplement the data from the questionnaire.

The researcher used three sets of instruments: Instrument I was on the Institutional Capabilities of the PTCA-Funded Public Preschools (Appendix B). Instrument II was on the Parent Involvement in the Preschool Program. Instrument III was on the Interview Schedule for Principals, Teachers, and Parents. The teachers and school administrators gave the feedback on the preschools' institutional capabilities, while the parents described their preschool participation.

The interview schedule was designed for the principals, teachers, and parents. More information was gathered from the school staff as detailed responses were revealed. The questions for parents were translated to the vernacular for better understanding. It took more time to converse with the parents. The dialogues were productive. Some problems were raised and discussed, and suggestions were agreed and interwoven in the study.

The institutional capabilities expected of the preschools were based on the DepEd's standards for the Organization and Operation

of Preschools. On the Physical Environment criterion, a checklist for physical facilities and learning equipment for a preschool was included, in addition to the minimum requirements for the school site, and classroom size and its use. Personal data of parents were gathered for information regarding monthly family income, occupation of husbands and wives, and the school involvement of parents. The statistical tools used in the study were frequency and percentage distribution, mean, and one way Anova.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Institutional Capability of Selected PTCA-Funded Public Preschools.** Preschool faculty members were observed to be very satisfactory in their teaching jobs rated as capable to handle preschool learners.

Management tasks in the preschools were assessed as capable as gleaned on their very satisfactory performance. Learning activities and experiences were carried out among the preschools and raised as Moderately Capable. Observed parent involvement in preschool activities was described as Moderately Capable. Preschool physical environment was satisfactorily provided and set up described as Moderately Capable.

**Profile of parent-respondents.** Most families with preschool children received very low monthly family incomes from below P3000 to P6000, which is hardly sufficient to support the living and school needs of the children. The fathers of preschoolers were mostly self-employed while the mothers were housekeepers. Parents' occupations were restraints, which inhibited the educational pursuits of the children at an early age. Parents were involved in preschool activities, such as conferring with the teacher in school attending meetings, doing volunteer assignments, providing some reading materials when possible, and monitoring children's school work.

**Significance in the level of Institutional Capability of Selected PTCA-Funded Public Preschools.** The public preschools involved in the study are capable of establishing and sustaining preschool operations considering faculty and management, and moderately capable, considering parents, learning activities and experiences, and

physical environment. Management, faculty, parent involvement, and learning activities and experiences came up with not significant F-test results, thereby accepting the null hypotheses of no difference in the assessments. Only on physical environment was the result significant, thus rejecting the no difference in the assessment,

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the operation of the PTCA-funded preschools could be a basis for implementing a community extension program. In terms of management, faculty, learning activities and experiences, parent involvement, and physical environment, an adopt-a-preschool program is feasible. The institutional capabilities of PTCA-funded public preschools could vouch for the establishment of more adopted preschools, since sustainable development extension depends not only on education but also on environmental management focused on health and well-being based on Greer's theory (1996).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Considering the results obtained in this study, the following recommendations are formulated:

1. Majority of the preschool teachers have completed the Elementary Education Course. They should be encouraged to pursue graduate studies, preferably Early Childhood Education. More importantly, teachers should pass the LET in preparation for the DepEd's plan to include preschool as part of the formal ladder of education.
2. Administrators and teachers should collaboratively design a program to intensify parental motivation to actively involve them in all school activities.
3. The physical environment for preschools needs much improvement, particularly the compliance on the standards of indoor and outdoor space, the fire prevention gadgets, the required standards for class area and size, the classroom equipment and facilities, and children's lockers.

4. School administrators should continue sending their teachers to seminars, workshops and conferences related to preschool teaching to keep themselves updated on the latest trends and innovations in Early Childhood Education.
5. The output of this study on adopting a preschool program should be implemented at the soonest possible time so that public preschools will be able to experience the reality of preschool education, and eventually compete with private schools to produce proactive learner output and consequently make a difference in the lives of the less fortunate school beginners.
6. A more comprehensive study may be conducted on public preschool education to find out if it yields the same results or more revisions may be initiated to improve the present curriculum and its implementation.
7. Feasible studies focused on the following will replicate or expand the present study:
  - 7.1 Positive Staff Interactions with Preschool Children and Parents: A Critical Analysis for a Quality Preschool Program
  - 7.2 Community-Based Child Care Programs, The Preschool Level
  - 7.3 An Open School for Preschools Based on Before-and-After School Programs

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