

New Configurations and Governance Models for Catholic Schools
"DC-SLMES-IIA: Shifts Towards Wholeness and Mission"
CEAP National Convention
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Antecedent

It was by the Pasig Riverbank, along Plaza Magallanes in Intramuros, that the Spanish Hijas de Caridad first set foot on Philippine soil, with 4 Vincentian Missionaries, 7 Jesuits and 12 Augustinian Recollects, after 3 months of difficult sea voyage. The date was July 22, 1862. Intramuros was the first home of the Daughters of Charity in the walled city, Manila, of the mid-19th century. They were sent; they came in response to a call.

By the Royal Decree of Queen Isabel II on October 19, 1852, the Daughters, upon their arrival took over Hospital Militar located along Calle Sta. Clara. Two years later, the Daughters established Escuela Municipal de Niñas in front of Fort Santiago which became the forerunner of the Philippine Public School System. Soon the Daughters took charge of Hospicio de San Jose & Colegio de la Potenciana which was merged with Real Colegio de Sta. Isabel in 1866. In the same year, the Daughters started to administer Colegio de Sta. Rosa followed by Hospital de San Juan de Dios in 1868.

More Vincentian Missions arrived from Spain, notwithstanding revolutions and wars, to implant hospitals, social service centers and schools. In 1868, the Daughters established Colegio de Sta. Isabel in Naga, now USI, and opened the Escuela Normal de Maestras, the first normal school founded in the country. Soon Doña Margarita Roxas de Ayala offered her summer villa in Paco to start a school for young girls, later known as Colegio de la Inmaculada Concepcion de la Concordia. The missions fanned out into the towns and cities around the country. Today, 150 years later, the Daughters of Charity- St Louise Educational System serves the Philippines through its 22 schools. (Sr. Ma. Corazon P. Manalo, DC, Legacy Night Narrative on the DC Sesquicentennial Celebration, July 20, 2012)

The Integrated Administration Structure and Empowered Partnerships

Down South, in the island of Panay, the Daughters established
Colegio de San Jose in 1872
Colegio del Sagrado Corazon de Jesus in 1917 and
St Louise de Marillac School of Miag-ao in 1969

Three (3) institutions of great scope, capacity and diversity. As early as 1994, these (3) schools "came together" under an Integrated Administration to become what is known as the Daughters of Charity- St. Louise de Marillac - Iloilo Integrated Administration (DC-SLMES-IIA).

The Integrated Administration scheme was intended to improve fiscal strength in numbers so to create greater impact in the Vincentian apostolate in Western Visayas. With the three (3) schools as a cluster under an integrated leadership and governance, maximization of resources (human, material and technology) was geared towards cost-effectiveness. This come in the form of :

- collective learnings and capability enhancement of stakeholders through an integrated human resource development program and student development program
- integrated curriculum highlighting purposive niche-establishment
- borderless faculty exchange and student colloquy through cross-overs
- integrated personnel expertise and material resource-sharing and
- integrated representations, promotions and marketing.

This fresh arrangement of sharing staff expertise, facilities and savings from collaborative undertakings defined a creative relationship that transcends a false sense of separateness. This quantum interconnectedness empower partnerships among the schools, partnerships between the Sisters and the lay and partnerships among stakeholders, thus spawning high quality relationships, motivating engagement and improved system quality. DC-SLMES-IIA focused on creating capacity in the system to become healthy to sustain the mission.

Another intent of the integrated administration was creative resource management. Individual institutional surplus has improved substantially through :

- integrated resource selection and acquisition
- standardization of policies and procedures
- restricted hiring and expertise sharing towards right-sizing and
- system-wide alternative cost-effective modalities

thus, reaping bulk discount gains, broadened access to big company privileges and widened benefits of significant efficiencies. Significant efficiencies in our case, refer to reduced costs of purchases, operational expenses and maintenance of services predicting a generative and positive cash flow on a sustained basis. Based on an accurate inventory of institutional assets and fixed assets management, the DC-SLMES-IIA discovered new auxiliary sources of income and diversified its services and expertise.

The Integrated System capitalizing on the combined strength of the Integrated schools and their mission partners, as a cost effective strategy, unleashes creative potentials and possibilities towards financial viability and competitiveness in quality service.

The Iloilo Integrated System has a common Board of Trustees, an Integrated leadership and a cauldron of stakeholder knowledge and skill repertoire. The "coming together" towards becoming more fluid & permeable, boundaryless& seamless, open and whole, is characterized by

Encircling relationships rather than hierarchical
Web of influence rather than a chain of command
Lattice-like
Ripple-effect and

a dynamic and exquisite interconnectedness built on Trust in each other, Respect for institutional culture and Faith in Providence. Today, CSJ, CSCJ & SLMSM, dwelling on the Vincentian Charism and Legacy, are together, forming a NEW whole, interweaving and unfolding in their "effortless" flow to mission. Three (3) unique and diverse institutions. Neither one is primary, united in diversity, complementary and supplementary, self-similar not through a compliance to a prescribed set of rules and standards, but from a charism and legacy that everyone is accountable for, operating in a condition of institutional freedom.

The Vincentian Management Team and Lay Leadership

Today the DC-SLMES-IIA is run by the Vincentian Management Team, chaired by a lay mission partner, the first among the DC schools in the Philippine Province. The VMT is a truly revolutionary idea in many ways too, a bold stroke beyond the usual and an audacious act challenging conventional ways. On embracing the risk, Sr. Ma. Teresa Mueda, the Visitatrix of the Philippine Province, urged the Daughters and the Schools, "...all it takes is faithfulness..." But I am letting the cat out of the bag ahead...

The Major Documents of the Company:

the 2003 Lines of Action and
the 2004 Revised Constitutions,

and that of the Province:

the 2nd Provincial Meeting
the 2007 Philippine Provincial Plan and
the 2008 Philippine Provincial Assembly

enshrine the theme of Prophecy and Hope and urged communal prophecy in its revision of works.

In a move to review the schools towards the revision of works, the DC-SLMES, in 2008, under the Superintendency of Sr. Ma Corazon Manalo, conducted a purposive mission audit as a ground for strategic directional planning which paved the way for the revised vision-mission, outlined experience curves and designed waves of innovation. Fashioned along the Blue Ocean initiative with the V STAR Excellence as an edge and the Vincentian Charism as its heartbeat, the DC-SLMES was poised to "...serve with hearts filled with the pure love of God which enables us to love the roses amidst the storms..." (St Louise de Marillac, Spiritual Writings, p36)

The stirring storms of the current world brought forth the unbridled creativity of the Daughters. Of course, they have it in their genes. St. Vincent de Paul told them, "Be creative unto infinity." As Philippine Catholic Education reeled with the incoherent influx of circumstances such as the economic meltdown, rising costs, secularistic culture and the pluralistic world, the DC-SLMES took on shared leadership as a way of life in 2009. This view designated the Vincentian Management Team as the Chief Executive Body, in lieu of the President. It is heard and seen in the person of its Chair, recognized as the President to the external public: the community at large and the general public.

The Vincentian Management Team as a governance structure started in Sacred Heart College as

a temporary response to a pressing situation. This experience paved the way. Currently, the VMT is intentionally installed as an alternative governance structure & leads

Concordia College
St. Louise de Marillac School of Sorsogon and its supervised school,
St. Anthony College of Roxas and the Hospital and
DC-SLMES-IIA.

As an alternative emergent Governance body, it is a plural executive structure that operates as collegial body. It acts in a spirit of partnership and commitment, collaboration and co-responsibility, teamwork and accountability, communal discernment, openness and receptivity to the Spirit. This paradigm is a creative response to the three major directions called for by the 2nd Philippine Provincial Meeting, namely

Empowering partnership
Return to presence in relationships of collaboration and partnership
Alternative structures... Upholding teamwork.

The VMT acknowledges the inroads made, both along the lines of lay mission partner empowerment and partnership empowerment between the lay mission partners and the Daughters. It also upholds Transformation as the way to serve. Mother Suzanne Guillemin, Mother General of the Daughters of Charity, in a Conference on Religious Life in Rome in 1964, describes the five (5) Steps for Transformation:

"From a situation of possession to one of insertion,
From a situation of authority to a position of collaboration,
From a complex of religious superiority to a sentiment of fraternity,
From a complex of human inferiority to a full participation in life,
From a concern for moral conversion to a missionary concern."

The DC-SLMES-IIA VMT is unique because of the appointment of a lay Chair /President and its institutionalization for the cluster of 3 schools. The VMT managing the 3 schools with a lay mission partner as Chair/President surprised... startled... even shocked the stakeholders and the Iloilo community, including the newly appointed members of the VMT. The newness of the concept, the boldness of the move, the audacity of the vision and the DC exemplar of humility and partnership made everyone uncomfortable except the Daughters who saw this forthcoming as integral to their revision of works after the Philippine Provincial Assembly in 2005. It was a new way of being together. The situation demanded that the VMT be present together and be willing to improvise. Sr. Teresa Mueda in her letter of appointment to the VMT members quoted St Vincent de Paul who said, "Go where there is no path and carve a path." So we in the VMT agreed to make things up as we go along. We agreed on the melody, tempo and key, and then we played. We listened intently, communicated constantly, prayed hard and suddenly, there was music. The music came from somewhere beyond us, from a unified whole, an unbroken wholeness. In the journey of becoming in the mission, it is not only the VMT and the DC-SLMES-IIA becoming we. It is also about us becoming Him in the fullness of life. When the music appeared, I just can't help but be amazed and be grateful.

The VMT in its praxis is always unique. As a governance design, it is shaped by the school

culture and milieu, resources and environmental factors. Governance parameters are defined by the peculiar system boundaries of the institutions. Consequently, openness and respect for one another and trust in Providence should be the prevalent mindset and must be cultivated.

The DC-SLMES-IIA VMT Praxis:

Phase One: Entry Phase

1. Preparation Meetings
This involves institutional scanning and analyses of economic, technological, political and social factors that shape institutional choices and decisions. This brings to fore unique opportunities and constraints thus, pinpointing internal and external contexts, resource plurality and heterogeneity, structural complexity and possible needs adjustments.
2. Policy Formulation and Commitment to Action
This involves designing and creating collaboration arrangements, work schemes and divisions and decision-making paradigms defining function flow and role parameters towards a well-defined direction for action.
3. School Visits
4. Orientation and Information Dissemination of the New Governance Structure
5. Reflection in Prayer

Phase Two: Integration Phase

1. Institutionalization of Strategies
This comprises the implementation of the governance structure and the cultivation of an institutional consciousness.
2. Continual Development Mechanisms Generation
As the implementation progresses, operational and strategic development of the structure is pursued through feedback and feed forward.
3. Team Building and Bonding
4. Documentation
5. Reflection in Prayer

Phase Three: Evaluation Phase

1. Progress Checks
2. Continuous Monitoring
3. Comprehensive Review
 - 3.1 Performance Review. This embraces work performance resource productivity and budget performance. This is essential to generate continued support and trust.
 - 3.2 Program Evaluation. This includes stakeholder reactions, palpable institutional gains and benefits, institutional behavior and organizational effectiveness.
4. Recommendations and Endorsements
5. Celebrations and Prayer

The benchmark may not reveal utopia outright. Potential success may be gleaned through the

following elements:

- Stakeholders: performance and productivity, attitudes, behavior and outlook, commitment, delight and satisfaction
- Structures: DDSU effectiveness, procedural efficiency, sustainability indices, economies of scope and scale, school awards and recognition, relationships and VMT acceptance
- Context: extent of integration and collaboration, general institutional atmosphere, political and social climate, organizational leadership and management
- Assessment: instruments, processes and practices
- Transformation: unity and harmony in action, integrated advocacies, collaboration arrangements and extent, collegial avenues, seamless transactions, participation opportunities, perspective shifts and institutional synergy

For all concerns, this alternative governance paradigm also refers to partnership-as-leadership, distributed leadership and collegial leadership. This plural executive structure shares the burdens of leadership with others to create a collaborative ethos, builds community and strengthens shared commitments, standards of expectations and account abilities, bringing about continuous improvement and sharp competitive advantage. According to Margaret Wheatley of Leadership and the New Science, Turning to One Another and A Simpler Way, "... Participation is not a choice. You can't avoid including people because life is about the creation of new systems through relationships and inclusion." Even the dogs agree. The movie Marmaduke says, "In order for things to work, we have to be in this together... Together we see forever." For us in the DC-SLMES-IIA, each stakeholder is more self-led and self-directed because of a heightened human consciousness in a collaborative culture. As for the VMT with the DC-SLMES-IIA, allow me to define it using the words of Levi Strauss CEO Robert Haas, "We are at the center of a seamless world of mutual responsibility and collaboration, a seamless partnership with interrelationships and mutual commitments."

As the lay Chair/President, I am awed by the humility of the Daughters through their simple act of relinquishing the institutional leadership and authority to a non-Daughter of Charity. I am grateful for the trust and the opportunity to serve as their co-equal in the shared mission. I am privileged to be empowered by the partnerships, deeper and more intimate, because of the potentials and possibilities that we have accessed together among ourselves. I am humbled too, by the VMT efforts that far exceeded what each of us could do alone. With the togetherness, as the VMT Chair of the DC-SLMES-IIA, I am more courageous like the 1st 15 Daughters of Charity who came to the Philippines 150 years ago. After all is said and done, we have the Vincentian Charism as our gift. In the DC-SLMES-IIA and the VMT, we have the gift of each other.

Final Word

The VMT as a governance paradigm, the IIA as a sustainability structure and the lay Chairmanship/Presidency, put together as a triple whammy was all too much for most, but not for the Daughters. They are far too great to limit themselves to small deeds. For their audacity of vision, boldness of shift, humility exemplified by the act and Faith in Providence, the Daughters made history.

Today, the DC-SLMES-IIA braves the crest of change and rides the waters of doubt. It has afforded a competitive salary standardization scheme despite a 3-year tuition freeze. It has undertaken a system-wide computerization of its programs and services: cashless transactions, OPAC, E-grades, e-communications and electronic billboards, among others. It has placed its graduates in licensure examinations and has accredited all its programs. It has extended the accessibility of the C⁵ Evangelizing Vincentian Education to the Ilonggos through scholarships (73% of the total school population), alternative learning systems: school-based, community-based and mobile, especially for peoples-in-conflict-with-the-law and those who cannot be served by other educational providers, alternative evening schools (collegiate and high school) for the working youth and those restricted by poverty and other forms of indigence, IP education and a People Empowerment Academy for non-traditional students, thus allowing us to "love the roses amidst the storms". Acknowledged in the region for integrity, credibility and academic leadership, it has widened its web of influence and sparks the mainstream of meaningful educational service in Region VI as seat of CEAP 6, FAPE 6 and ILOPRISAA cultural affairs.

Let me end this sharing with these thoughts:

Mike Doodley of Dancing Life's Dance said, "We are a forever being.. With as many chances, new ideas and novel pathways saved up inside as there are stars in the night sky; whose thoughts fly on wings, whose dreams become things... There's always another way... Always!"

School leaders, as we take on new paths and new ways in the governance of our schools, let us set forth with Faith! Caritas Christi UrgetNos! "Let yourselves be guided by Providence..." (St Vincent de Paul, Conference of June, 1658).

Ma. Helena Desiree M. Terre, Ph.D.

President/Chairman, VMT
DC-SLMES-IIA