

Bayanihang Eskwela: The Case of Budget Re-alignment on School Building

Setting

Monitoring of School Building Project

Characters

Dr. Matilda O. Primavera	Department of Education Division Office
Mrs. Luzviminda C. Briones	Department of Education Central Office
Mr. Amante P. Dela Cueva	Executive Assistant (Office of Cong. Astoriano T. Rapo)
Mr. Ernesto L. Pugadlawin	Boy Scouts of the Philippines
Engr. Juancho Y. Leonillo	Department of Public Works and Highways Central Office
Engr. Analiza P. Cruz	Department of Public Works and Highways District Office
Mrs. Corazon R. Abe	PTCA President (Sinulog Elementary School)
Mr. Ben Santos	Volunteer Teacher (Pahiyas Central School)
Mrs. Hamira O. Campo	School Principal (Panagbenga Elementary School)
Ms. Dina A. Ceron	Volunteer Parent (Dinagyang Elementary School)
Mr. Bobby D. Leon	School Principal (Caracol Elementary School)
Richi Recentes and Raffy Aguilar	G-Watch Team

Scene 1: Briefing orientation

After having successfully mobilized support from respective government agencies and other stakeholders involved, the Ateneo School of Government's G-Watch team headed by Richi and Raffy began to conduct actual monitoring of the school building project in one of the identified districts in a province in Region 1. Before commencing the activity, Richi and Raffy gave an orientation seminar for the volunteers present during the activity to provide them with correct insight and guide on what to do and how to properly conduct a monitoring activity.

Richi: Good morning sirs and madams, thank you for coming today in our orientation for monitors. I am Richi and this is my colleague Raffy from the G-Watch team of Ateneo School of Government. We are here to brief you regarding our activity on monitoring the school building projects in your district. Raffy will give you detailed information on tips on how to conduct a monitoring initiative.

Raffy: Good morning, as mentioned by Richi we shall give you an overview of the activity and how we can use the tools designed by our team in G-Watch. Today, we are going to monitor the school building of 10 schools that were identified as recipients of the project. This list was provided to us by the DepEd.

Mrs. Briones: Raffy, I just wanted to raise this to your attention before we proceed. Engr. Leonillo of DPWH will be coming in a little late but we talked on the phone this morning and I was informed that they are going to change the list of the recipient schools for the school building project. So the names of the schools on your list are already useless.

Raffy: Ma'am, do you know the reason why are they changing the listing and what is their basis?

Dr. Primavera: He said Cong. Rapo gave the instruction, but we do not know why. They never consulted with us on the matter nor were we informed of the adjustments, except this morning when we are already about to conduct our monitoring activity.

** Engrs. Leonillo and Cruz enter the room.*

Richi: Sir, ma'am, good morning, please join us.

Engr. Cruz: Sorry we're late. We had to deal with the recent adjustments regarding the changes in the list of school recipients.

Mrs. Abe: So we were just told. We were surprised to find out of the changes in the list. Why did you just inform us only now, and without any consultation?

Ms. Ceron: That's true! You shouldn't be making decisions without proper consultation.

Raffy: Ma'am, we understand this has implications on what we are about to do and may be challenging for everyone, but maybe we could ask first Engrs. Leonillo and Cruz to relay to us completely what happened so we can properly assess the situation?

Engr. Leonillo: Sirs, madams, to be honest we were also surprised of the changes.

Mr. Santos: But according to Dr. Primavera and Mrs. Briones you changed the names on the list.

Engr. Cruz: Sir, we were on the phone with the DepEd representatives present here this morning to inform them that there have been changes on the list. But we did not make the changes. We are in no position to do so. It is not within our authority and capacity. When we received a copy of the list of recipients this morning, we found inconsistencies on the original version that we saw previously. We then verified this information with the office of Cong. Rapo and was told by his assistant that there were really changes, but we did not get any explanation why. We are just following orders and relaying the information to the group.

Dr. Primavera: So it is confirmed that the names on the list changed. What now?

Mrs. Campo: Does that mean we have nothing to monitor?

Richi: Engrs., may we have the name and contact number of the person you talked to at Cong. Rapo's office?

Engr. Cruz: We talked to Mr. Amante P. Dela Cueva the Executive Assistant.

Raffy: Sir, can you furnish us a copy of the list? I think it's best we communicate this issue with the respective offices concerned.

** Engr. Leonillo hands over the list to Raffy. Raffy and Richi scans the document...*

Richi: Engrs., I think we're only going to have problems with six schools and not the entire ten schools on our original list. It says here that Sinulog and Dinagyang Elementary Schools are still on the list together with other two in our original. However, the other six schools including Pahiyas and Panagbenga have been replaced by new names.

Engr. Leonillo: Yes, that's what we were trying to tell you since the beginning.

Mr. Pugadlawin: You did not clarify that to us. Anyway, so we can still proceed with monitoring the four schools then try to resolve the other six?

Raffy: I think that would be the option. Our team will communicate with the respective offices involved in the issue.

Mrs. Briones: I think before we proceed with everything, we should first require the office of the Congressman to give an explanation. It's going to be unfair to the other schools.

- Mr. Santos: But Mrs. Briones, why were you not on top of this? Why did you wait until Engrs. Cruz and Leonillo find out about this recent development?
- Dr. Primavera: Well, we were also informed about this beforehand but we were not sure how to explain and were also wondering why ourselves. Engrs. Cruz and Leonillo only confirmed this with us when they received the list and validated it. That's when we were able to realize that there really were changes on which schools will be the project recipients. But like them, we have no control of the situation.
- Ms. Ceron: So you knew! But what actions did you take? As beneficiaries, we are all expecting proper delivery of services. We have to stick with the rules and what was agreed upon.
- Mrs. Briones: But we cannot be held accountable for this because this was not our decision to make. Whatever the Congressman has to say is beyond us already.
- Mr. Pugadlawin: I'm not getting the entire picture. I'm now confused. How are we going to manage the six schools that were dropped out from the original list and the new additions who are both expecting to be project beneficiaries?
- Mr. Santos: That's correct, we are affected by this.
- Mrs. Campo: We already mobilized our group and our teachers and students are very excited about this. What am I going to tell them?
- Raffy: Sirs, madams, we would like to propose this: let's proceed with the monitoring of the four schools that were retained in the list. As with the six schools that have been dropped from the list, we shall communicate with the respective agencies involved.
- Richi: I believe it's best we do this through the formal channels.

Scene 2: Actual Monitoring

The G-Watch Team, after having realized the sudden changes on the list of project beneficiaries, decided to communicate with the Department of Education, Department of Public Works and Highways, Resident Ombudsman of the DPWH and Office of Cong. Astoriano T. Rapo.

While the G-Watch Team is in the process of communicating with the various offices, the monitoring team proceeded with monitoring the schools currently on the list (revised list). The monitoring team, together with G-Watch Team also assessed the situation to determine if the schools that replaced those in the original list also needed the school building project. It has been concluded that the original six on the list really needed to be the recipient more than the new ones on the list.

During the site inspection at Caracol Elementary School (a school not in the original list)...

- Mr. Santos: What else should be upgraded in this facility? It's all modern.
- Ms. Ceron: It's really good that we are doing spot inspection to determine who need it most.
- Mr. Leon: We were informed of the situation, but I think our school somehow deserves to be on the list as well. Ever since Cong. Rapo was a Councillor, he has always provided support to our school. He came from this school and during his campaign, promised to provide us support in terms of infrastructure and facilities. I think this is because no other official

has really gave attention to our needs unlike in other schools where support is constantly flowing.

Raffy: (turning attention to DepEd and DPWH officials) Sir, Ma'am, it seems like there were concerns in terms of prioritization on the schools. We would just like to ask what was the basis in choosing the schools that were not originally on the list?

Richi: We are just trying to get to the bottom of this to fully understand the situation and determine how we can address the challenge. We already sent our letters to the concerned offices and we found out that Cong. Rapo made the final say in determining which schools will be the beneficiaries.

Dr. Primavera: We determine the schools based on what we have all agreed upon. However there were things that happened beyond our control because the Congressman has the final decision on the beneficiaries.

Mrs. Briones: This is how the situation went, there was a deadline for submission of the list of beneficiaries of the school building project. Up to that time, Cong. Rapo has not yet submitted the list, so we at DepEd Division Office submitted to the Central Office the original list. After three days, Cong. Rapo also submitted his own list even if it's already past due date. His reason was that he received the original list late so he still had to submit his own. He wanted the budget re-aligned even if it has already been approved because according to him, the schools on the list he submitted needed the project more than the others. It's his district anyway.

Scene 3: Sharing Session

The G-Watch Team organized a joint-session between the LGU and CSOs. A representative from the Office of Cong. Rapo was also present.

Raffy: Good afternoon, thank you for coming to our joint-session. Today, the objective of our activity aims to give each one of us an opportunity to provide insights on our actual monitoring experience particularly insights on the use of tools, coordination, challenges, successes and feedback on the service delivery itself.

Richi: We have today our representatives from DepEd, DPWH, Office of Cong. Rapo, PTCA, BSP, and volunteer parents and faculty members. To set an order, we could probably start with our DepEd representatives, followed by our PTCA, DPWH, Cong. Rapo's office and volunteers.

Dr. Primavera: I think the issue that we encountered here was because there was poor communication between the office of Cong. Rapo and our offices. We had to take immediate action in submitting the list of school beneficiaries for the building project because we have not heard anything from Cong. Rapo.

Mr. Santos: But why choose the other schools over us? We went to Caracol Elementary School for instance and found that it doesn't really need that much assistance as opposed to our school.

Mr. Leon: But Sir, the Congressman has his reasons. He's from our district and he knows it better than anyone else.

Engr. Cruz: But I think there has to be an established line of communication. Because we were all shocked to find out of these changes and we got blamed for something that we should not be held accountable for.

Mr. Dela Cueva: But Cong. Rapo also received the original list late. He was not able to check the list immediately before the deadline passed. But we felt that we can still re-align the budget based on the assessment that there were other schools who needed assistance most

Richi: But won't the budget re-alignment have implications?

Mr. Pugadlawin: There are implications, of course. For instance, will Caracol Elementary School agree if we decide to take them out from the list to accommodate those in the original?

Mr. Leon: I think it's unfair, because you cannot take back what has already been promised to us.

Mrs. Campo: You have to go through another process of bureaucracy here for this to be resolved. This will cost us time and money.

Mrs. Abe: But it's also unfair to those who need it most. Apparently, there has been a case of misallocation and use of influence.

Mr. Dela Cueva: I don't think so. Cong. Rapo identified the schools based on his knowledge of his district. So it is only logical for him to prioritize what is within his jurisdiction. You also have to consider the fact that DepEd was late in submitting to us their list.