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## Case Study 6

HR/OD Intervention Focus: Superintendents' Leadership Programme for DEPED

## **Changing Perspectives and Mindsets**

To move forward, change is necessary. This is what Dr. Jojo Fadul, the Department of Education's (DepEd) division superintendent for Davao del Norte, seems to have learned from

what has transpired in her organisation in the last few years. "If we do not accept change, then we will not be moving forward. We will not be growing. We will not be going anywhere. It will just be a big waste of resources, a big waste of energy," she exclaims.

With a new administration and many new ideas being introduced such as the K-12 programme, the rationalisation plan and collaborative learnings, among others, the past two to three years have been tumultuous for her and many others in DepEd. With help from the Government of Australia extended through the Philippines Australia Human Resource and Organisational Development Facility (PAHRODF), however, she and other fellowsuperintendents have finally seen the light.

Thanks to the intervention programme for 50 division superintendents provided by PAHRODF and pushed for by the DepEd Undersecretary, what once was difficult to understand and accept finally became clear. This allowed her and others in the Department to at least embrace, if not buy into, what was being put forth by the new DepEd officials.

Many of the changes being implemented brought fear and anxiety to DepEd personnel, as anything new is usually met with opposition. But Dr. Fadul says that the resistance to change was at an alarmingly high level then. The situation was further complicated by the vastly different approaches between them and the new administration. As Dr. Fadul puts it, "Basically, they had difficulty convincing us. It's a transition period. Because of the change of administration, almost all of the old officers of DepEd were replaced. They were replaced by new ones, and then the new ones brought a different culture because they came from the academe and private universities." This meant that procedures and expectations clashed.

Moreover, Dr. Fadul and her colleagues were put on the defensive by what seemed to be an inherent distrust of the new DepEd officials towards the old personnel.

According to Dr. Fadul, while the new administration personnel may have judged them harshly because of some perceived underhanded dealings during the previous administration, she feels it was unfair to generalise. Though they did not hear these hurtful comments from the higherups, they heard them from staff members. "So nasasaktan din kami every time. Kung makalait-lait sa mga teachers and mga principals, ganoon na lang. (So we, too, got hurt every time. They criticised teachers and principals at will.)" With some exceptions, Dr. Fadul says that their people are also hard workers, so she could not help but stand up in their defence when needed. She stresses that there are still many like her who genuinely serve without counting the cost.

## Intervention needed

With so much contention and doubt going on, and given a rather unreceptive employee base, she feels that it was difficult for the new administration to proceed with their plans. This, she thinks, was what necessitated intermediaries — neutral and credible third parties they could believe and trust, who could lay the platform for these reforms. Fortunately, PAHRODF and the Learning Service Providers (LSPs) fitted the bill.

Characterised as "professional" in the eyes of Dr. Fadul, PAHRODF's credibility is unassailable. "I see how it is being run and they are no-nonsense. Black is black, white is white. I like it. Very professional and this is also how I would like every organisation to be run. Kung quality, quality talaga sila. (You want quality, and that's what they embody.) And they really mean business."

This reputation transferred as well to the LSPs, which she thinks tapped good instructors and provided relevant content at a conducive venue. "They coached us and really squeezed out from us how this intervention could be a big help in raising the quality and efficiency of our services," she says.

A 12-module Superintendents' Leadership Programme was conducted to strengthen the superintendents' role in bridging the gap between the central office and the school administrators and teachers. It was supposed to run for a year from October 2012 until September 2013, but due to various holidays and "busy months" like graduation, local elections and enrolment, this stretched on until February 2014. With this intervention, the walls between them and the new DepEd administration slowly yet steadily began to come down.

She admits that initially, her reason for wanting to attend the intervention was to speak up for her team. "I wanted to find out ano ba talaga ang gusto nilang mangyari so I can defend my staff. Kasi masakit na, eh. Change nga of administration. Masakit magtrabaho, it does not feel good working when you are suspected of not doing everything. Tatamad-tamad kayo diyan, masakit. (I want to find out what it is that they expect so I can defend my men. We've been hurting due to the change in administration. It pains us to work. It does not feel good to be suspected of not doing everything, of being lazy.)"

She also wanted to understand better what the new administration wished to implement, especially the K-12 program and the rationalisation plan. With DepEd officials coming in from time to time to link their talks to the modules discussed, things started becoming clearer.

Seeing the Department's higher-ups attend the sessions quietly and inconspicuously also

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impressed upon her their sincere desire to get the participants' no-holds-barred viewpoints. Slowly but surely, with the help of facilitators who painstakingly and skilfully handled the issues, they began to see where DepEd was headed. "We saw sincerity in them—the organisers, the ones running the program, the Secretary, the Undersecretary up to the presenters of the modules—it touched our hearts. It's not only the brain and the mind, but it touched our hearts," she recalls.

## Standing up for one's principles

Dr. Fadul relates that she also encountered resistance from her team as she was discussing with them her Re-Entry Action Plan (REAP), an integral part of the intervention program meant to carry forward her learnings to help address gaps in her organisation. Her team questioned the necessity of her REAP which focused on clinical supervision, as it was very similar to the teacher observations that were already in place. To get them to understand how the program has been refined, Dr. Fadul ran a one-week orientation similar to what she experienced with PAHRODF. Although this helped most to understand, she admits that not everyone has fully accepted her plans.

Nevertheless, Dr. Fadul trudged on. Although her REAP is primarily about ensuring quality learning and efficiency by empowering school administrators to supervise teacher instruction, she was also driven to sit in on classroom sessions. Motivated by a burning desire to understand why their students were consistently doing poorly in the National Achievement Test (NAT) despite all their efforts, she took on a more hands-on approach, hoping to find the reason for the low student performance.

True enough, her hunch proved to be correct as she discovered that "they were just concentrating on the procedure, on the strategy to the detriment of the content." Being a math expert, she pointed out mistakes in something as fundamental as simple equations which had apparently remained undetected by the principal for more than 10 years.

Aghast at her discovery, Dr. Fadul says she chose to speak up at the risk of violating clinical observation procedures. She discloses, "Hindi nakita ng principal so my heart bleeds. Maoffend sila kung ma-offend but then, so be it. Ngayon ang paraan lang na i-point out ko lang na something must be done. (The principal never noticed it so my heart bled. If they would get offended, then so be it. That time was the only chance to point out that something must be done.)" She continues, "They may accuse me of violating the essence of clinical supervision, but I firmly believe that it's useless, [that] we will be wasting our efforts [and] resources if we end the day without touching on this part."

Passionately, Dr. Fadul emphasises that although clinical supervision should only be confined to technical procedures, she could not let the teacher's mistake pass as doing so would be "tantamount to telling the teacher [that]...nothing is wrong to the detriment of the children.'"

She felt it would be a grave injustice to children and parents if she did not speak up, as one could imagine how many students are taught that way on a daily basis.

Corrective measures have been put in place as a result of Dr. Fadul's findings, and DepEd has been monitoring NAT results for the past 3 years and will continue to do so until 2015 to determine if scores will have improved. Although it may still be too early to tell, she feels that her efforts have somehow made a dent as scores have already slightly improved. "I am just

keeping my fingers crossed that that increase will continue with this kind of intervention that we are doing," she says.

Dr. Fadul remains committed to delivering quality education to Filipino students, and she likens her role to that of a soldier "in the war front" who carries out commands from the central office. In the end, she understands that all the work that needs to be done "is not for the Secretary, not for the Chief, but for the love of our children."

In light of this more positive appreciation of what DepEd is trying to accomplish, the future looks bright for the youth of Davao del Norte.

Dr. Jojo Fadul, Schools Division Superintendent for Davao del Norte, was among the participants for the HR/OD intervention on Superintendents' Leadership Programme for DEPED