

## EXPLORING ICT AND PLATFORMS FOR E-LEARNING WITH K-7 LEARNERS IN A PROGRESSIVE SCHOOL

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### **A Seedbed for a Prospective Open High School Programme**

A learning system based on formalised teaching but with the help of electronic resources is known as E-learning. While teaching can be based in or out of the classrooms, the use of computers and the Internet forms the major component of E-learning. E-learning can also be termed as a network enabled transfer of skills and knowledge, and the delivery of education is made to a large number of recipients at the same or different times. Earlier, it was not accepted wholeheartedly as it was assumed that this system lacked the human element required in learning. However, with the rapid progress in technology and the advancement in learning systems, it is now embraced by the masses. The introduction of computers was the basis of this revolution and with the passage of time, as we get hooked to smart phones, tablets, etc, these devices now have an importance place in the classrooms for learning. Books are gradually getting replaced by electronic educational materials like optical discs or pen drives. Knowledge can also be shared via the Internet, which is accessible 24/7, anywhere, anytime.

In developing and underdeveloped countries, open schooling through distance education can be a means for a better life. Thus, it is largely viewed as one of the strategies for social and economic development geared towards the fulfillment of the goal for Education for All (National Economic Development Authority, 2004, National Institute for Open Schooling, 2012, and Wright, Dharanajan, and Reju, 2009). Both developed and industrialized countries as well as developing and emerging nations view open schooling as a concrete and viable solution to an array of educational problems at the basic education levels. Opening access to suitable educational programmes through alternative delivery modes is a concrete means of augmenting a lack of qualified teachers, as well as providing remedial and enrichment courses for varied student bodies in local schools.

Recent research in the practices of open and distance learning across the globe indicate that, in the Philippines, international and national home school and distance learning  
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programmes from elementary to high school levels have been accredited, and are operationalized through private institutions where the use of the internet to provide individualized education is encouraged among students in home study programmes (Barbour, Hoey, Hunt, Kennedy, Ounsworth and Powell, 2011). A version of open schooling is also existent in the non-formal educational sector, namely the Alternative Learning Systems, under the direct supervision of the Bureau of Alternative Learning Systems (BALS). Distance learning through the ALS, which is largely delivered through correspondence mode, is seen to reach out to a marginalized student population to help them achieve basic literacy levels through non formal and informal interventions (DEPED, 2005). Only recently did the Department of Education introduce distance education programmes in the formal education sector to decrease dropout rates under the Division of City schools by blending the use of ICTs to deliver teaching and learning. Specific programs, namely the Open High School Programme (OHSP) and the Internet-based Education Programme (iDEP) cater to secondary level students who may fall in any of these criteria: school returnees, working students, or independent learners.

The OHSP currently operates in a correspondence-tutorial mode, and is looking into online delivery. Programme frameworks and implementation action plans have been formulated in a few public city schools to make Open High School programmes happen online and internet-based (DEPED, 2011). However, their full implementation through appropriate and quality online course development, grounded in studies about the nature of blended and online learning among K-12 learners, quality standards, and promising practices in online course design and teaching, have yet to be realized. With the recent shift to the K-12 basic education in the Philippines, a decade of alternative learning practices in place, and emerging open schooling at the K-12 levels, along with blended and fully online learning for Filipino students, is a foreseen eventuality, and thus a viable option among progressive schools in the Philippines. Progressive schools in the Philippines ascribe to the philosophy of progressive education, thereby offering education which is an alternative to big, traditional private schools in the Philippines. The common features of progressive school programmes are inclusive, child-friendly, experience-based, and developmentally appropriate school and classroom-based practices.

I come from the fields of basic education, curriculum studies, and distance education. I still see myself drawing from these fields, being a life-long learner. I practice a progressive

philosophy in my current work as a curriculum consultant and co-founder of a progressive school in the Philippines while at the same time serving as Assistant Professor in my country's open university. Lately, however, no matter how I try to keep these spaces separate, I see the convergence of educational ideas and practices in all these involvements. This realization comes at a time when I now see my school children growing and gaining twenty first century skills, and I can imagine them getting into an open school programme in the form of a virtual high school or an open high school program.

Contrary to how others view today's generation as digi-natives, I see my current grade scholars as learners and meaning makers who are benefiting equally from the face to face world and the online world, learning from both asynchronous and synchronous environments. As opposed to how some conservative parents who view technological advances as something be scared of, I see all these as innovations we can excitedly embrace and become comfortable with—all because this is part of change.

Hence, through this paper, I seek to share experiences and educational ideas as a teacher and lifelong learner. I plan to do so in the following manner:

1. Describe a model of a progressive school programme in the Philippines
2. Narrate explorations of integrating technology in the school's curriculum and instruction
3. Discuss a common ground where progressive education and open schooling are situated
4. Draw out a working model of a school based curriculum development for open schooling at the secondary level

Almost twenty years of teaching experience at the basic education level has allowed me to develop a school programme grounded on a progressive philosophy. My ongoing learnings as an online teacher at the higher education levels continue to impact on current explorations with integrating technology at the grade school programme and classroom level. As I continue to draw from the field of curriculum studies—which is currently my area of doctoral studies—I am able to foresee future directions of the grade school I work with. Thus, I have begun to prepare a seed bed for open schooling at the high school levels. All these will then lead me to evolving a working model of curriculum development for progressive schools which may eventually lead to open schooling at the secondary level.

### **The Builders' School: Building Ideas, Crafting Solutions Philosophy**

The Builders' School started in the school year 2007-2008 with a definite philosophy, mission vision, and programme approaches in mind. This small school (now with 40 children,

6 teachers, 3 staff) was organized by parents who themselves are educators, with their own areas of expertise, more than 15 years of teaching experience and 5-8 years of school programme leadership in other small, non-traditional schools. The founders believe that the existing learning culture in big schools is not compatible with their own views about children and how they learn. These educators are guided by the following the views of children and learning, and the role of the school and the subject matter. These are summarized below:

1. Children learn best (beyond the basic skills) in a school which is a safe and fun place to experience meaningful learning with others.
2. Children are caring, spirited and diverse learners, with prim knowledge and experiences they can share with fellow learners through a creative and collaborative learning culture.
3. School is a place for children to experience life and learn their basic skills as citizens capable of contributing to their families and communities.
4. The classroom is a place for independent learning as well as collaborative learning.
5. Learning in a grade school only happens once in life; hence learning through the subject areas should be interesting, engaging and rigorous.
6. Teachers and students are life-long learners, and school is for both teacher and student growth.
7. The process of curriculum making involves collaboration among a team of teachers and school leaders. A research based orientation and reflective practice are valuable for this process.

### **The Builders' School Programme Practices**

The school's programme provides a balance of skills learning through different subject areas, and through skills application via science or social studies inquiry learning projects. Like other progressive schools in the philippines, its curriculum design is primarily integrated, having organizing themes with a major focus on philippine history, culture and global citizenship. Salient features of its curriculum include inquiry learning projects to ensure integrative learning, and discipline- based approaches to ensure the learning of content and subject specific skills. During the subject area periods—which include standalone periods for science and social studies—subject specific concepts, content and skills are tackled to ensure children become equipped with the necessary skills for efficient learning. During project period, learn to learn skills application happens while children engage in selected social studies and science topics through guided or structured inquiry learning projects to

investigate answers to their questions, pursue their learning interests, and share their outputs with fellow schoolmates. In some cases, students are also given opportunities to choose topics they are inclined to pursue, making the inquiry projects more open-ended. A few action oriented outputs also take place as a means of sharing their knowledge and new ideas through school-based and community-based events (Villanueva, 2012).

At the core of these inquiry learning projects are learn to learn skills, categorized according to the following: habits of mind/thinking skills; communication skills; group work skills; self, management skills and attitudes; research skills; and IT skills. Below are excerpts from a list of research and IT skills which the school ascribes to, as drawn from cited sources.

**Table 6.1: Research Skills, and It Skills, Adapted from Alberta Learning (2004)**

	<b>For students new to inquiry</b> <b>EARLY GRADES</b> <b>Kinder— Grade 2</b>	<b>For students with limited inquiry experience</b> <b>PRIMARY GRADES</b> <b>Grades 3-4</b>	<b>For students with more inquiry experience</b> <b>UPPER GRADES</b> <b>Grades 5-7</b>
<b>Research and IT Skills</b>	Students are specifically taught note-taking skills to record information using a graphic organizer that is provided by the teacher.	Students begin to use finding guides, such as online library catalogues, online subject directories, keyword and subject searches, indexes, tables of contents, and databases.	Students are specifically taught note-taking skills, including highlighting techniques.
	Students share their final report or project with small groups within the classroom and with family.	Students are taught note-taking skills, using graphic organizers provided by the teacher. Teacher provides a choice of notes or graphic organizers for students to record information.	Students cite references and acknowledge sources of information.
		Students use -2 references.	Students use 3 or more references.
		Students start to	

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	highlight information, and make bullet information. Students browse through text material by taking note of new words/keywords; headings and subheadings	
Teacher provides carefully selected resources, including Internet sites, for students.	Teacher provides carefully selected resources, including Internet sites, for students and also encourages and supports student searches.	Students use the Internet, with minimal guidance and instruction from the teacher.
Students begin to use technology to locate, and create presentations.	Students are taught basic search engine strategies for the Internet, including how different search engines work. Students use technology to locate graphics and media to enhance their presentations and reports. Students continue to use technology to locate, organize and create presentations	

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These examples of sets of skills serve as a guide for planning inquiry learning, while the school draws on the evolving needs and interests of children. Some inquiry learning topics are also aligned with local and international content standards, while some are chosen specifically to cover controversial issues.

### **Integrating Technology**

Inquiry Learning Projects play an important role in the integration of technology. The best way of illustrating how the teaching of technology is integrated in our inquiry learning

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projects is by taking yin on a short journey to show you how it actually happens. A recent inquiry learning project about human growth and development was conducted in a multi-grade class consisting of children from Grades 3-5. The aim of the unit—titled 'Growth, Change and Development'—was to provide an avenue for students and teachers to tackle concepts of growth and change, individual identity, responsibility, and self-awareness. Students exchanged ideas about growing and changing, discussed ways of seeing themselves in the present and how they could develop as they became adolescents, young adults, and adults. It was also a means of understanding themselves as preteens, and learn about how they would develop elastically into teenagers. Such projects provide good opportunities for the teacher to discuss growth in all areas: physically, socio-emotionally, spiritually, and how individuals relate with society's expectations, and that children are in fact individuals faced with certain choices and decisions they need to make.

You might well ask: where is integrating the use of technology in this unit? I began with I showing prior blogs made by their older schoolmates on the school website—'The Builders' Project Workspace'—which shows samples of the children's works. I did this through a Show and Tell method, narrating stories to the children of what their older schoolmates (a few happened to be brothers/sisters) were like at their age, how much they had changed, and what they had become. This allowed the students to foresee that they would be able to learn a lot through this unit, including how to make their own web pages through a few tips and tricks with Google sites. Simultaneously, the daily lessons also focused on the following:

**Table 6.2: Sample Activities/Skills of Integrating Technology to Inquiry Learning**

Project							
S.No	Sample Activities	Weekly/	Daily	Integrating Skills	IT	Integrating Management and Attitudes	Self-
1	Finding out about growth milestones through the different stages of human growth and development			Using reference books and Google search		Using class period and internet time solely for schoolwork	
2	Learning more about real life experiences of adolescents and adults through interviews and questionnaires sent and received through Gmail			Using Google forms and emailing links to parents/teacher		-- being cautious about securing one's password for Gmail	
3	Writing essays about themselves as human beings,			Google sites announcement			

4	growing and changing Group sharing about portions of their essay	template Encoding their work, cutting and pasting works	
5	Choosing and creating visuals for their web pages	Creating and inserting word clouds, images and slideshows	— trial and error as well making mistakes are all part of learning
6	Helping and teaching each other how to use Google sites	Using different commands in Google sites to get things done	— understanding that children go through different learning pace in acquiring IT skills
7	Reading and sharing about each other through their final webpages	Using comment boxes at google sites	— observing care in posting comments using a common school web site for children

Source: The Builders' School Curriculum Online, 2010.

Certain attitudes, values and self management skills were also identified by the teacher to be consciously instilled among the students. Here is a sample of a student's webpage after 4 weeks of classes:



Hi A Am Guia:, a sample webpage as part of Inquiry Learning project Output, 'Growth and Change'

(The Builders' Grade school Project Workspace, 2010), Techfest@Builders

The above example describes the ways and means the teaching and learning of technology happens through inquiry learning projects, which are a major part of our school programme and any child's school day at Builders' School. Not all inquiry learning projects involve the major use of gadgets and IT applications through the internet. However, children still love planning and making diagrams, posters, and other forms of presentations to share what they have learnt. In some learning projects, children take action to share what they have

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learnt by organizing school events. One of the most interesting action-oriented out-put was presented by the Grade 5-6 class for the other school children through an organized event called TechFEST@B. This was an offshoot of their unit on Communications Technology where they learnt the history of telecommunications, common acronyms, and meanings used in the internet, operating systems gadgets, and internet-based applications. All these were meant for children to understand technologies which help us communicate and learn better. For the TechFEST@B event, children were able to share with others about their choice of topic and set of activities. The programme of activities they prepared for were as Table 6.3:

The final portion of the programme proved to be the most valuable for the students. The older students disclosed experiences

**Table 6.3: Techfest@Builders Programme of Activities, 2011.2012**

TechFEST@B	Registration and Welcome
9:00-9:45	Whole Group Sharing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking About the Telecommunications throughout Tow</li> <li>• Windows and other Operating Systems</li> </ul>
9:45-10:30	Small Group Workshop 1: Gadgets Galore <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tablet</li> <li>• Kindle</li> <li>• Mobile Phone</li> <li>• Computer</li> </ul>
10:45-11:30	Small Group Workshop 2: IT Apps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making Illustrations through Paint</li> <li>• Manga Drawing Lessons at Youtube</li> <li>• Learning about Shortcut Keys in your PC/Laptop</li> <li>• Understanding Social Networking Sites: FB and Google +</li> </ul>
11:30-12:00	Panel Sharing and Open Forum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real life Experiences with Using the Internet: The Good and the Bad</li> <li>• Internet Safety and Security</li> <li>• Essential Agreements for Responsible Use of the Internet@Home</li> </ul>

of navigating the online world, providing me with a good opportunity to process their thoughts and feelings about using the internet. This was also the appropriate time for me to help facilitate the actions students can take in case they are faced with sites, images, comments, and language which make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. School rules and guidelines for the safe and responsible use of gadgets in school, the development of self-management and co-regulation, as well as welcoming adult monitoring were also emphasized. All these were meant to expose children to the realities of learning with technology, and how they could empower themselves to deal with situations.

## Exploring Platforms for Teaching and Learning: Google Sites+Moodle+Wiziq

For two consecutive summers, I have offered free online classes to our school children to sustain our learning exchanges through other online platforms for learning. This was a way for me to examine how children behave and learn online, and understand how they navigate with online tools for learning. I made use of the e-learning platform, WizIQ, which has multimodal features to make online learning happen. I witnessed how children exchanged ideas through the chat Box, and responded to content through the power point feature. I saw how a few children were able to use the writing tool and upload images or provide links by taking turns, and by listening to a few tips to make use of the live v irtual classroom.



A Screenshot of an E-Learning Platform, Wiziq

Another platform we explored is the use of Moodle, an open source content and learning management system, where teaching and learning can happen asynchronously. I was interested in finding out how they can manage to use the different features of a course site where I ran a course called TechTALINO, and taught a few applications through the Filipino language. I set up discussion forums, and uploaded videos and screenshots to guide them through Moodle, and learn technology applications for learning. Apps for learning focused on preparing them for future learning project presentations—for example, doing/making screenshots, using screen casting (Tipcam or Jing), using Prezi, and creating word clouds. Alongside all these, children learn to use Filipino as their first and second language through reading and following instructions, post my, comments and feedback, and making conversation at our cots site in Moodle.



### Progressive Schooling to Open Schooling (Villanueva, 2011)

My concrete experiences with all these gave me reassurance that it is indeed possible for online learning to happen, but perhaps in a form which children can truly benefit from so that they manage to do all types of learning, and also in learning spaces which have multiplied with the emergence of Web 2.0 tools. However, for a school programme to flourish in this path of blended and fully online learning, the Builders' School must begin to establish roots on strong, critical foundations which support these learning designs. Hence, I turn to the philosophy of open schooling for principles to guide the future direction of the school.

### **Open Schooling: Taking Root**

The Builders' School is now in its sixth year. By the coming school year, our grade school offering shall be completed, and we are now looking into building on our upper grade school programme as our workable solution for the shift to a K-12 system. I foresee moving towards this direction: our Grades 6-8 shall comprise the upper grade school programme to transition the students into a years 9-12 high school program. Being an Assistant Professor 1st the University of the Philippines Open University, and having gained more experience with what it means to teach and learn online, I have reason to believe that open schooling may be a viable path for Grades 6-8 and Years 9-12 learners. Perhaps for now, it may be seen as an alternative route; but a few years from now, with a more operational open high schools programme by the Department of Education, open schooling may be an option parents and students can both embrace.

As a progressive educator and school-based practitioner, I see some students in progressive schools as marginalized by traditional, big school programs. I also see common attributes among students of progressive schools and students who are getting into open school programs. Our student populations seek ways of learning which are suitable to them given their needs, interests, and life circumstances which formal schooling does not readily

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accommodate or provide space for. And yet, a common attribute among students who seek such alternative paths is that they are driven and highly motivated to learn, and will not stop searching for new ways through which their kind of learning can actually take place, and be validated either by a progressive school or through an open school program.

As a researcher in the field of Curriculum Studies and ODEL, I would like to go back to the roots of distance education to fully understand the foundational principles which guided pioneers to create alternative programmes to provide wider access to a broad range of learners, some of whom may be disenfranchised or marginalized by an inflexible formal schooling system. In this context, the tenets of open schooling need to be reiterated.

Initially, I thought open schooling is rooted in the open school movement and, equally, in Dewey's works since in literature most educationists continue to ratify the relevance of their current ideas and practices by citing John Dewey's works. Included below is an excerpt from Bader and Blackmon (2008) and Rathbone and Smith (2013) about open schooling in the context of American education.

Almost all that is written about Open Schools comes from the early 1970s. 'Open Schools' can take on different definitions, including open concept schools (classrooms without walls), and

**Table 6.4: Aligning Progressive School Practices  
 (Villanueva, 2010, 2012) with Principles**

<b>Principles of Open Schooling</b>	<b>Attributes/Features of Open Schooling and Open Learning</b>	<b>Programme Practices in Progressive Schools (Villanueva, 2010 and 2012)</b>
Lifelong learning	The enhancement of educational access and achievement through the removal of all unnecessary barriers to learning is central to open learning. Learning is learner centred, and geared to meet the idiosyncratic needs and preferences of individual learners.	The school's philosophy supports a learning culture which is creative, collaborative, and caring. Learning programmes are developmentally appropriate and experience based, giving due consideration to the need, and interests of children from diverse backgrounds. The school allows for learner centered activities through inquiry learning projects

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and the learning of  
subject specific skills in  
different subject areas.

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Source: Attributes/Features of Open Schooling from Ambrioux Ferreira (2009) and Commonwealth of Learning (2010)

schools with open enrollment, but the particular Open school movement, or philosophy, discussed here is defined by principal Ruth Pechmann of the St. Paul (MN) Open School as 'K-12 schools encouraging and engaged in individual growth and self-directed learning from each other and the world around us.' These are schools sharing a common goal: the desire for students and teachers together to discuss, explore, investigate, and learn. 'The basic theory of open education is that children learn in different ways at different times from things around them [that] interest them. Ideally, the teacher acts as a guide and resource person, and encourages pupils to proceed at their own pace and develop independence of thought. The goal is to develop in children initiative, creativity, and critical thinking (in Muir, 2005)...These ideas are grounded in the Progressive philosophy of American educator John Dewey (1859-1952), and in the developmental psychology of Swiss clinician and theoretician Jean Piaget (1896-1980) (in Education Encyclopedia, 2013)

The open school' movement was founded in America. The above ideas were transplanted to Philippine progressive schools on a priority basis, as narrated in the earlier section of this paper. However, being a progressive educator, I do believe that if we have to continually evolve our progressive practices, we must constantly look into other ideas and experiences to contextualize our innovations for Filipino students. Since progressive schools are committed to experimentalism, they have always taken a position of creating models of sound and coherent programmes and practices, and as such they must seek out other educational ideas at work. This essay is an attempt to search for the meaning of open schooling in the context of Education for All, and particularly at basic education levels in developing countries.

Open schooling is a flexible education system that allows learners to learn where and when they want, physically away from a school and a teacher. It uses several teaching methods to support learning, and has no age restrictions. As the term suggests, open schooling offers school-level education rather than post secondary, although in practice there may also be some skills training. Phillips defines open schooling as 'the physical separation of the school-level learner from the teacher, and the use of unconventional teaching

methodologies, and information and communication technologies (ICTs) to bridge the separation and provide the education and training'. This means that the provider uses a variety of ways to 'open up access to education for learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds (Commonwealth of Learning, 2010).

Having looked into the features, I tried to see in what ways progressive education blends with the principles, attributes, and features of open schooling from publications by the Commonwealth of Learning. In Table 6.4 (below) shows how I am in agreement with certain practices within progressive schools in my home country which are aligned with the major principles of open schooling. The Table shows how certain aspects of open schooling are present in The Builders' School, which makes it a good model of a progressive school in the Philippines, and, consequently, a fertile seedbed for open schooling at the secondary level, if in fact this is the direction school educators and parents envision in the future.

At this point, the Builders' School may continue to offer school based programmes for Grades 6-8, but also include a more blended learning design which shall explicitly build on research and IT by adding the teaching of twenty first century skills stipulated in research. It can also use guidelines and standards set by open schooling as well as the virtual high school consortium based abroad. The programme may run parallel classes/courses with what is available on the web through the Middle School Collaborative, or the Virtual High School Collaborative. However, doing so may come at a price; hence this can be done selectively.

At the secondary level, the Builders' School programme may look into the local Open High School programme in order to fulfil its role of reaching out, and providing access to quality secondary education among students from diverse backgrounds. These would include highly independent home scholars, regular students coming from other progressive schools, and students who may have special learning requirements. Working closely with a local government Open High School programme will ensure balance in the needed coverage of local content and standards, as well as the secondary education certification needed for future admission in college and universities.

Some specific aspects of open schooling which progressive schools must take into consideration need to be identified. By working with the Department of Education's (DepED) Open High School Programme (OHSP), certain areas may be appropriately covered by taking root in the principles and features of open schooling. To briefly show in what ways the Department of Education's High School programme can complement, if not augment The

Builders' School, I looked at the other attribute/ features mentioned in the literature about open schooling, and in what ways the local OHSP can complement our future programmes for secondary level students (See Table 6.5). At the same time, it also evident that progressive schools can, in return, augment the OHSP through specialized means.

**Table 6.5: Areas/Issues in Which DEPED OHSP and Progressive Schools can Reduce Barriers to Open Learning, and Address Issues in Secondary Education.**

Principle	Core Issues	DepED High Programme	Open School	In Partnership with The Builders' School
Flexible Learning	Relevant curriculum Quality of teaching and learning	Online courses and materials developed by progressive school educations may be certified/accredited for offering though the OHSP	courses and developed by progressive school educations may be certified/accredited for offering though the OHSP	Special courses/ courses/classes may be developed and online to selected students of DepEd's OHSP, at the student's individual pace Other open education resources and materials may be curated by school based subject area specialists experts
Flexible Learning	Breadth and equality of access Openness of access	DepEd may consider awarding certificates of completion at certain time periods of the school year	DepEd may consider awarding certificates of completion at certain time periods of the school year	Students with special learning needs may be assessed by subject area specialists/expert
• Geographic flexibility				• Additional individualized programmes may be developed, delivered and monitored by school-based teacher
• Age flexibility				
• Part-time student status				
• individualized pa sing				
• Flexible time for course completion				

Learner Support • Student services • Alternative delivery modes (or one model for all)	Breadth and equality of access Openness of access	Screening tools of DepEd OHSP may be made available to students of the Builders' School •Standards based OHSP learning modules can be accessed by students from the Builders' School free through the DepED website	Other students enrolled in the OHSP may use resources and learner support services of the Builders' School, including F2F consultation with expert teachers or subject area specialists; for internet access to internet-based/onion course materials
Cost Effectiveness	Cost-effectiveness, cost-efficiency and Sustainability of the educational system	• DepED OHSP assure ensure the sustainability of the student population, investments in IT infrastructure and the technologies •DepEd can assure sustained partnerships with key institutions who can provide professional teacher training and staff development	School shall can sustainability of teachers and academic support they are paid to provide through the usual school needed fees • Short term and long term goals and strategic plans may be formulated t monitor sustainability

Progressive Schooling to Open Schooling: Towards a School-Based Curriculum Development of an Open High School Programme

Formulating a curriculum involves a process of planning and designing in order for it to be developed, implemented and evaluated (Print, 1993). The written curriculum as product is anchored on a model of curriculum development. Models of curriculum development have been a major concern among researchers in the field of curriculum studies over the decades. These models are grounded on certain views and conceptions of curriculum which influence curriculum decisions in schools.

With the emergence of the World Wide Web, curriculum development for open schooling continues to be a relevant endeavor. A recurring issue, especially in the field of ODL, would be the types of programmes through which learning shall take place, especially  
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now that technologies have created impacts on our classrooms, and have 'disrupted' our ways of teaching and learning. Specifically at the K-12 levels, existing research in open schooling point to two forms of curriculum: one which complements existing, conventional curricula, while the other provides a complete alternative curriculum for adult learners in need of secondary education (Ambriox and Ferreira, 2009). Educational content of curricula are delivered in 3 modes: a tutorial-correspondence mode; fully online and blended forms, either through formal virtual schools, traditional brick and mortar schools or agencies; and institutions providing online courses (Porter, 2004). The choice of curriculum content and delivery modes are in some ways determined by IT infrastructure capabilities, internet connections, and new and emerging technologies which impact on the availability and access to types of resources for teaching and learning (Barbour, et al. 2011). Add to these issues related to form and delivery modes of DE curricula. These are major challenges to teachers, curriculum developers, and instructional designers which lie in the area of adapting traditional curriculum development models (Chou and Tsai, 2002; Scheinheinze, 2005).

Among-12 virtual schools abroad, research indicates existing practices which point to online curriculum and course development happening in teams which include teachers, content writers, instructional designers, and multimedia developers (Porter, 2004). Virtual schools are guided by standards of quality online course development and delivery for K-12 learners (Aronson and Timms, 2004; Watson and Gemini, 2008). Several district and state based virtual schools are able to rely on organizations and external research groups to ensure the quality of programmes and courses, and share information about online curriculum content, teaching approaches, and resources.

In the Philippines, curriculum content for ODeL at the K-12 are largely used by homeschoolers and delivered through the tutorial mode. Likewise, the practice in the current OHSP is the same, where modules based DepED conventional curriculum guidelines and subject matter competencies are made available to DE learners and educators (DepEd, 2012). Though the OHSP have formulated implementing guidelines and put a few policies in place to implement correspondent type DE programs, the OHSP has no clear standards and principles in developing curriculum content and resources, nor a set of recommended instructional design and teaching approaches to ensure proper delivery of instruction through a fully online or through blended modes. Hence, progressive schools, such as the Builders' School are in a good position to contribute to the development of a virtual open school, the

likes of an Open High School Program, suited to the Philippine context, and for a specific student population it currently caters to and will continue to have in the near future.

As seen in this essay, progressive schools are in a position to explore and provide good models of integrating technology at the grade school level, making both students and teachers predisposed to comfortably teach and learn with technology and, later on, gear up for an open school program. In the area of flexible learning, progressive schools are also in a position to adjust to a diverse population having a track record of accommodating learners' diverse needs, interests, and special learning conditions. Lastly these types of schools have the openness and flexibility to work with other programmes which may enrich their existing programmes and, therefore, provide the quality education and access which Filipino students need.

An area of strength which progressive schools have is specifically in curriculum development. Since progressive schools are bent on making their chosen programme practices work well, and being strongly guided by developmentally appropriate practices with the child as the source of the curriculum, they cannot simply rely on content stipulated by the Department of Education. Progressive schools will most naturally find ways to develop and design curriculum to be able to do the teaching and learning they envision. Having in mind the best interest of children and their needs, these progressive schools will most definitely want to prepare students for twenty first century learning. To successfully do so, progressive schools must become conscious of curriculum processes and models they have been evolving over time. As a researcher from the field of curriculum studies, I can only see that progressive schools have been operating in what is described in literature as school based curriculum development.

Since progressive schools in the Philippines initially presented themselves as an alternative to big, traditional schools, even the act of curriculum making becomes non-traditional; hence a school based curriculum development (SBCD) is commonplace. In literature, SBCD is described to be the opposite of 'bureaucratic, hierarchical, and centralist approach to curriculum development' (Print, 1993). SCBD involves the major participation of teachers who are perceived to be educators cognizant of students' needs and interests, and thus develop a curriculum which is most likely to be contextualized to the needs of the school population. However, in the process of curriculum-making, certain factors are still considered, namely: the national curriculum and its goals, number of subject options, and the

availability of resources (Commonwealth of Learning, 2000). Designing curriculum through SBCD also follows a systematic process. Like any model of curriculum development, it begins with diagnosing the needs of the learners, and other phases as prescribed by a curriculumist and educator Hilda Taba. But the process is, nevertheless, dynamic and interactive, since it involves a collaboration of teachers and school leaders as well as staff (Commonwealth of Learning, 2000). Since open schooling in the formal set up, and through the Open High School Programme in the Philippines are still at the birthing stages in implementing a Yr7- 12 program, the progressive schools may simply continue on with their SBCD, and may possibly get into open schooling for secondary school offerings. If this is the case, then I would like to suggest in what form the curriculum shall take place, giving due consideration to the development of twenty first century skills, in the spirit of lifelong learning.

### **Suggestions for Open Schooling**

Specific to the Builders' School, suggestions for a prospective Open High School programme are summarized below.

#### **Relevant Curriculum**

1. The Builders' School may continue on with their school based curriculum development by building on its current interdisciplinary skills and having twenty first century skills and attitude at its core. These core skills should be grounded on recent research, namely self regulation (Zimmerman, 1986), metacognition, self efficacy, learning presence (Shea and Biderjano, 2010). These skills should be explicitly spelt out, and included in the instructional design and course guides (Villanueva, 2013).
2. A blended learning design would also be beneficial to adolescent learners, and further research in adolescent learning should be undertaken to guide the curriculum.
3. The programme should also draw from the theory and practice of networked learning to inform the 'mantic' through which possible learning communities can be facilitated among open school learners.
4. The Builders' School can also use the modules produced by the Department of Education and enrich these through sessions, videos, and other resources. The academic support team of the Builders' School can recommend online courses from other virtual schools, such as foreign language courses, or even run parallel Social Studies units with other K-

12 online classes. Extracurricular classes may be done a few times a week, depending on the chosen PE or Arts and Design Class.

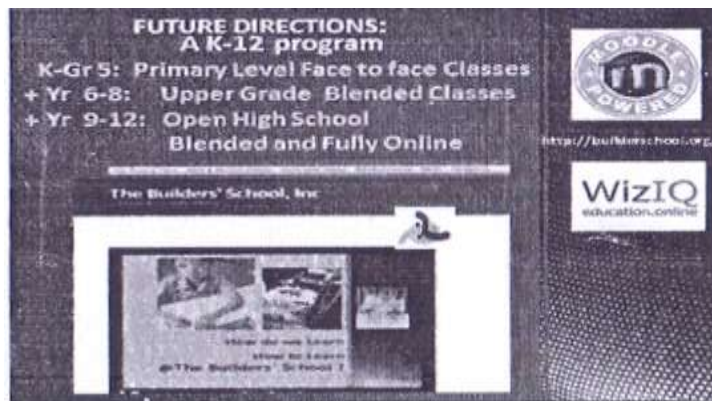
5. For Year 11-12, the school may look into online classes and resources developed by higher education institutions such the UP Open University. Therefore, as a school, it should I able to start linkages with higher education institutions.
6. Curriculum materials and online courses may best be managed and stored within Moodle/CMS for other student,\* of OHSP to engage in and use.

### **Quality of Teaching and Learning**

1. The Builders' School academic team responsible for cot!! NI' design and instruction shall comprise the following: sublet t area experts, instructional designer and IT administrator, academic adviser, team of tutors/online teachers.
2. The programme will maintain the availability of expert teachers in Language, Science and Math up to Grades 9 or 10. Eventually, university based experts may be hired as resource persons/consultants for Year 11-12 courses.
3. To maintain quality of teaching and learning, subject area experts/consultant should curate online resources, and work closely with tutors and the instructional design team.
4. Integrating the use of ICT's will continue on, even during face to face sessions and tutors shall be trained accordingly by the instructional designer and IT administrator

### **Learner Support**

1. An academic support team shall comprise the academic adviser, instructional and technology support team to assist students in managing their blended learning. The team shall be responsible for:
  1. providing academic advice
  2. assisting students in setting up their personalized learning networks; gmail student accounts
  3. monitoring student participation and accomplishment of schoolwork/online course work
  4. regulating/coordinating schedules for F2F, independent online learning, collaborative work time
  5. setting up and facilitating virtual community forums should be encouraged to develop sense of community among online learners.



### Progressive Schooling to Open Schooling (Villanueva, 2012)

Given the above suggestions, the Builders' School shall simply continue on with integrating technologies at the upper grades, and begin offering blended classes of selected courses. It can begin to offer Open High School Programmes directly under approval and eventual accreditation the Department of Education, or be a learning and resource centre providing Academic and Instructional Support to students under the OHSP. A framework for a school based curriculum development for the OHSP can be formulated based on the worthy suggestions found in this study.

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