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Preliminaries

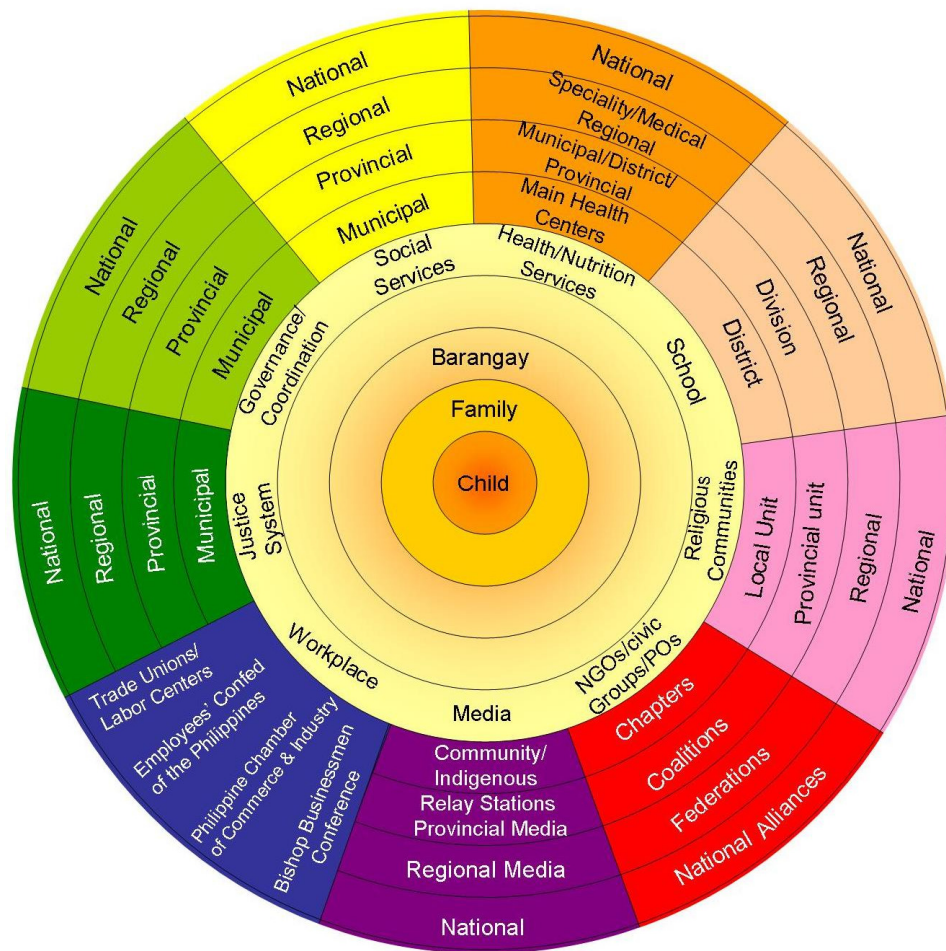
Documenting good practices for early child care and development in Mountain Province is one step closer towards delivering better services to a wider reach of clientele. Documentation enables practitioners to synthesize what they have learned through experience and makes it easier to share these field-tested expertise to other practitioners. To identify the factors that facilitate, hinder and validate the value of good practices, this documentation is conducted to jumpstart the attainment of such objectives.

Efficiency in program development and deployment in the ever-changing environment of local governance is becoming a challenge to decision makers. Local governments every now and then create programs from scratch instead of drawing on best practices developed by previous administrations or by other barangays, towns, or provinces. As a result, investments from local and national governments and international funding agencies are not effectively leveraged.

In the field of early child care and development, the documented creation and replication of best practices would speed up the improvement of social conditions, while the target clientele are still young. Implementation costs would be driven down, and tasks are accomplished at a shorter time. Four concepts are then outlined in the succeeding pages to clarify the key points that guide the documentation process: the child-friendly system, organization development, knowledge management, and best practices.

Child-Friendly System

The ECCD System refers to comprehensive, integrated and sustainable policies, programs and implementing structures and mechanisms designed to ensure the well-being, optimum growth and development of children from conception to age six. The Child-Friendly System puts the child in the center of all efforts of the family, the barangay and all agencies that serve the people from the local to the national levels. Services on social welfare, health and nutrition, education, justice and governance are very important in this system.



Organization Development

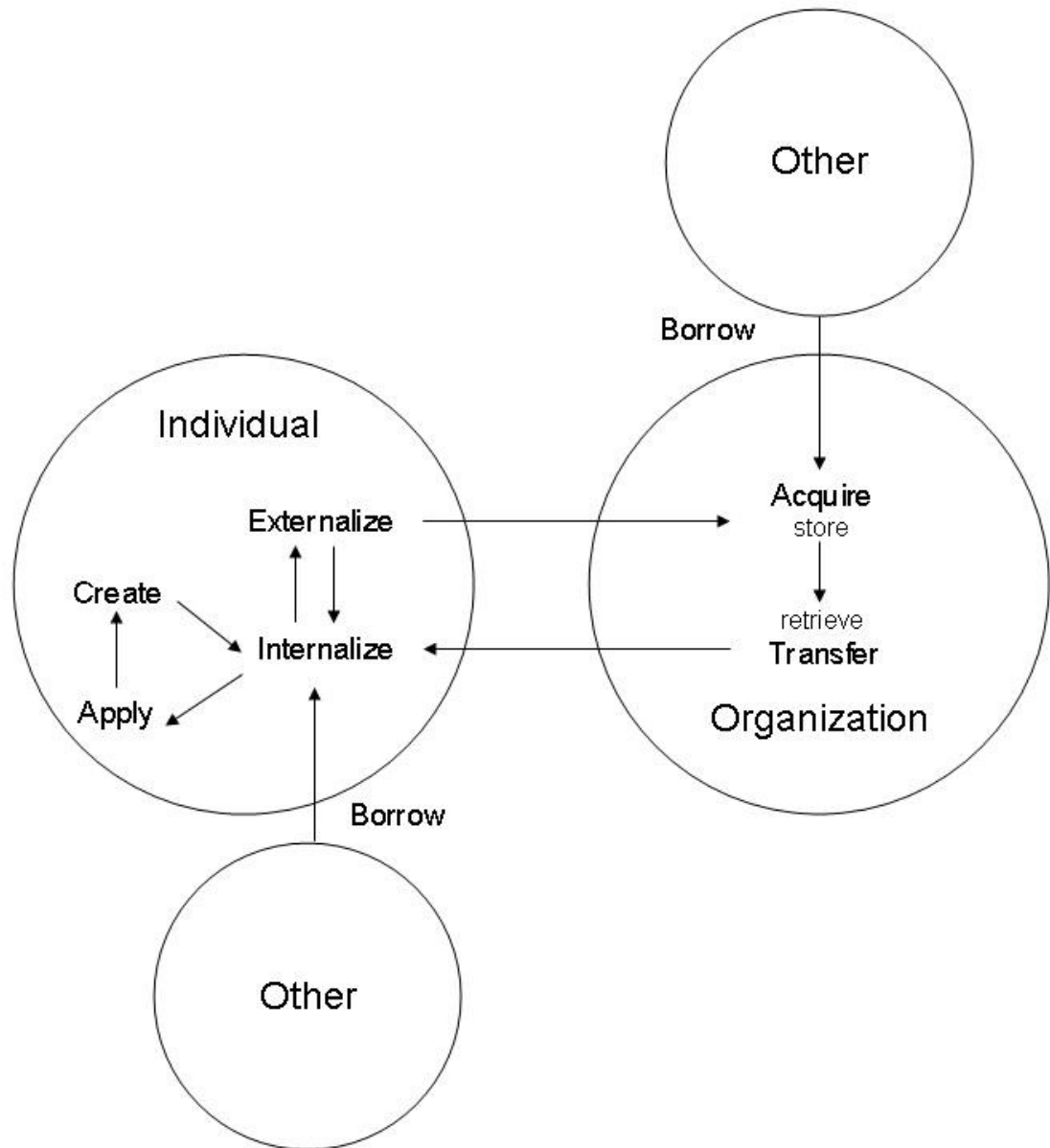
Organization development can be seen as a process of how an organization evolves, through its interaction with the environment, by creating and defining problems and then actively creating and distributing new knowledge to solve them.

Knowledge Management

Knowledge Management is defined as the process by which an organization creates, captures, acquires, and uses knowledge to support and improve the performance of the organization (Kinney, 1998). Knowledge is that which is created and organized when information flows between and among humans.

Polanyi (1964) categorizes knowledge as either explicit or tacit. Explicit knowledge can be expressed in numbers and words. These are then easily shared formally and systematically in the form of data, specifications, manuals, and the like. Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, includes insights, intuition, and hunches – things that are often difficult to formalize and share. Explicit-knowledge transfer is common. Employees share reports, financial budgets, policies, and the like. Tacit knowledge, however, needs to be converted into explicit knowledge in order for this sharing to take place. This needs to be done without losing critical parts of the tacit knowledge. Nonaka (1994) identifies four possible methods for tacit knowledge to become explicit knowledge: socialization, externalization, internalization, and combination.

- Socialization is the sharing of tacit knowledge between individuals, usually through joint activities rather than written or verbal instructions. Apprenticeship and mentoring, strategies that fall under this category, allow newcomers to observe how others work.
- Externalization involves the expression of tacit knowledge and its conversion into comprehensible forms that are easier to understand. Externalization involves techniques that help to express ideas or images as words or visual concepts. Training is one strategy that falls under this category.
- Internalization is the conversion of explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge. This requires the individual to identify relevant knowledge within the organization's explicit knowledge, embrace it as their own, and incorporate it into their own knowledge base. On-the-job training and learning by doing fall under this category.
- Combination involves the conversion of explicit knowledge into more complex sets of explicit knowledge. Focusing on communication, diffusion, integration, and systemization of knowledge, combination contributes to knowledge at the group level as well as at the organizational level (Nonaka, 1994).



Documentation

Along with coordination and monitoring, documentation is one task in knowledge management that requires the storage of externalized knowledge or information using language that is either spoken or written. Activities or visible output may also be documented using photos and videos. Relationships or interactions may be recorded using diagrams. A lot of documentation efforts are focused on re-recording those that are already on paper, but observations and interviews could also extract tacit knowledge from the field and convert it into something explicit.

Best Practices

Practice is knowledge transformed into action. A best practice could be related to the implementation of a program, a project, a policy, a legislation, a strategy, an activity, a manual, or some other endeavor requiring action from individuals. Best practices hold value when they are documented and shared -- what elements of the practice work or do not work, how do they work, and why do they work or do not work. Documentation of the outcomes and lessons learned is crucial.

What is considered as best practice depends on one's vantage point. Those who work at the national or international level would value a high degree of standardization and replication while those at the local level would put a greater value on customization and originality.

For national and international practitioners, scale or replicability is more important. For researchers and the academe, validation through experimentation and peer-reviewed publication is a must. But at the community level, evidence lies less on empirical measures and more on the high level of acceptance by its members. Provincial and regional actors, therefore, have the favored role of gathering and promoting what are highly accepted by the communities and what are scalable and tested as noted by the national and international actors. Middle level practitioners are seen as peddlers of best practices and sifters of what are practical and tested.

Documentation and dissemination of best practices provides real opportunities for acquiring knowledge about what works. Continued learning about how to improve and adapt strategies and activities through feedback, reflection and analysis in order to implement larger-scale, sustained, and more effective interventions is highlighted.