

INSTITUTIONAL VISION FOR ESTABLISHING A FUNCTIONAL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN EDIFY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, KATHMANDU, NEPAL AND EMILIO AGUINALDO COLLEGE (EAC), PHILIPPINES

Preamble

Edify International School is established as a center of excellence in school education through functional collaboration with Kathmandu University, School of Education. Under this collaborative arrangement, the school operates as a university laboratory school, and is recalled as A LAB SCHOOL OF KATHMANDU UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION. The concept of this school has emerged as a result of more than a decade long experiential learning and analysis of the prospect for inculcating the fundamentals of total quality management (TQM) in school administration and leadership functions. Envisioned by Dr. C. P. Rijal, following the findings of a systematic inquiry backed up by several reviews of the best practices, related benchmarks and a nation-wide survey research in Nepal, the model for *excellence in school education* comprises of integration between the universal functions of school management and established philosophies of total quality management (TQM). And, Edify International School comes as a unit of testing this hybrid under changing national as well as international context.

Following figure best represents the holistic model of Edify International School.

	Customer focused	Total involvement	Total commitment	Systems standardization	Continuous improvement	Systems support
Human resource management	EDIFY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL (1000 points rating of 100 indicators)					
Short/long-range planning						
Curriculum development and implementation						
School and classroom environment						
School's process management						
Communication and information systems management						

More precisely speaking, this model has been portrayed keeping in view the established school management functional indicators as recognized by Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award Criteria, and various established philosophies of quality school management propagated by the great quality Gurus including Deming, Juran, Arcaro and UNESCO's advocacies for the promotion of child rights and development.

We firmly understand that the essence of our stewardship to this institution should gradually reveal a model institution within next five years by crafting and promoting a culture of learner focus, collective participation, systems standardization and robust measurements, continuous process improvement, institution-wide personal and professional commitment for progress, and our readiness to pay with adequate accountability and responsiveness for everything we do at this institution.

We have a vision *to excel in school education* by developing this institution into a truly lab-based school system through our own approach, Edify Approach in School Education. The approach has been blended following features:

1. Student development: It will be achieved by means of four dimensional support system that includes development of i. life skills, ii. physical and intellectual ability and competence, iii. socialization skills, and iv. creative work with fun in a safer, caring and respectful school environment rewarded with emerging as well as ancient universal practices.

2. Teacher development: Our approach to teacher development focuses on creating self-realized training and development opportunities aimed to help them excelling in their level and subject-wise skill competence as well as learning and promoting a research-based culture of teaching profession. More specifically, we focus on instructional skill development, intellectual development, academic writing, group teaching, communication and leadership and collaborative teaching learning through experiential practices. At the same time, we respect for teachers' innovative ideas to improve our mission in this respect assuming that such instances would promote with the development of curricular and instructional leadership.

3. Management support for school system development: The school has come up with a vision to help other schools excel in diverse ways. **Edify International School** supports for improving management and teacher competence so as to lead successfully the educational institutions. The schools aspiring for the excellence at strategic as well as functional level may benefit from this service.

4. Institutionalizing research-based practices: We firmly understand the importance of research-based practices in education. This is one reason why we are developing this institution as a University Laboratory School. The outcomes of this mission will contribute significantly in

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establishing the cases of research-based practices in the country. It will be made possible through university-school-community linkages in many respects. The end-results of every research and innovation work will be published in the form of a periodic journal with wider circulation.

5. Providing internship opportunities: We want to promote this school as a learning center for the higher education students specializing in different applied areas and pure sciences. The university interns and fresh graduates can observe and experience the school practices, bring in their new thoughts and ideas for testing, and conduct research and gain experience through direct involvement in the school process management. Institutional incubation, systems development, instructional leadership, multi-mode teaching learning and assessments, liberal promotion policies, study of transfer of learning, understanding child psychology, etc. will be the core aspects of learning for these interns.

6. Extending partnerships: We intend to develop and promote a number of partnerships with universities, corporate houses, and research and development agencies globally for contributing in the transformation of education and its providers.

7. Promotion of professional learning community: We intend to develop this school as a systematically crafted open-system promoting the professional learning community.

We are keen to establish a number of institutional partnerships to strengthen the long-term sustainability of our approach to school education through the proven stewardship and synergy effect of functional excellence of our intended partner organizations globally.

Predispositions

Developing strategic partnership as a means to achieve improvement in teacher preparation and development is a significant departure from past practices. Successful partnerships will be established on the following predispositions:

Trust is absolutely the key to long-term success of and partnership. It firmly builds on an explicit organizational track record as well as personal relationships where people routinely deliver on promises made. Effective partnerships are characterized by an alignment between what is said and what is done between people in the consenting organizations. The creation and maintenance of

honest and open communication between the partner institutions is essential to building and sustaining trust.

Attitude and assumptions that permeate organizations and their people play major roles in transforming the success of partnerships. There must be an acceptance on the part of the administration, faculty, and staff that developing strategic partnerships is essential as a major strategy for improving schools and the professional preparation of teachers, administrators, and other school-based members.

Partnerships ultimately survive on a deep foundation of **shared-knowledge** between partner organizations. The institutional partners must understand the environment and culture and how it affects to each other, if they were to support in transforming their important and critical areas.

Mutual dependency is another foundation of the success of any new partnership. Each member of a partnership proposition may possess a distinctive set of competencies and resources. Such potential has to be cashed in fuller sense. Successful partnerships in education should learn how to manage an environment where each holds critical cards tied to the other's success. These 'cards' may include a situation-bound and differentiated combination of allocated time, money, technology, special expertise, facilities and supporting environment. As a result, each member's influence over key policies and decisions increases over time.

Organizational linkage is the life-blood for sustainable development and promotion of any partnership. Successful partnerships are characterized by formal and informal linkages at all levels. Three types of linkages are most crucial in educational partnerships –

- a. **process integration** where the two-way actions and activities cross traditional university-school boundaries, using partners' human resources and facilities, and sharing costs, to bring about school improvement and better prepared teachers, administrators, and other school-based professionals, thus necessitating joint planning,
- b. **information integration** that involves the exchange of information within and between the university and school to better plan and monitor organizational actions, and
- c. **social networks** that develop at all levels between people and groups or teams in the partnership organizations are critical to the long term success of partnerships. Cross-training or short-term assignments help develop an understanding and appreciation of the partner's culture and work environments. The personal relationships built between

universities and schools enable leaders to manage across the rough spots that inevitably arise.

Brief Introduction of Edify International School

Edify International School, established in 2004, is now runs with its newly transformed vision, and service focus to make it a truly *center of excellence in school education*.

The overall school system has been developed with adequate provision for early childhood development, elementary education, secondary education, teacher development, promotion of educational leadership, and contributing in educational research, innovation and publication of a referred journal.

In this discourse, the Early Childhood Development Center (ECD), Elementary School (grades 1 through 8), and Secondary School (grades 9 through 12, this year running up to grade 9), teacher development cell are already in place, and shortly research and innovation cell is going to be established. More recently, a household survey research has been accomplished so as to identify the level of public awareness on lab school-based teaching-learning practices and their preferences on quality education.

Through every strategic as well as functional orientation, the school management is committed to develop it as a total quality management school (TQMS). Propagated by its leadership, the school holds ownership of a universally applicable model of quality school management. The model has already been tested in many ventures and the results are quite encouraging.

All the recent developments taking place in this school system are the part of implementation of this model. Yes, it will take long time to achieve this status, but this length may be reduced significantly by enacting with distinctive quality steps to this mission right from the beginning.

School's Mission Statements

We are dedicated to symbolize Edify International School as a model institution for universal quality education by means of promoting itself as a center of excellence in early childhood development, student development, teacher development, and rigorous research and innovation.

Learner focused, total participation, systems standardization, continued improvement, leadership commitment, systems culture of learning, interpersonal respect and dignity represent our entire mission. All of our resources and processes are always driven by an integrative framework of all these elements.

With a single-fold objective, we intend to develop an avenue of quality learning experience to all with lasting impacts.

School's Value System and Working Principles

Edify International School firmly believes and nourishes with distinctive institutional value systems by complying with the universal practices of ethics, equity, equality, access, empowerment, accountability, responsiveness, respect and dignity. The School recognizes that any success today is a new chapter for tomorrow to remain on the lead, always...

Our working principles are nourished by a set of quality culture that include learner focused, total participation, respect and dignity, systems standardization and measurements, continuous improvement, organization-wide commitment for transformation, and providing advocacy for the transformation of education system in practice. We firmly believe that every member in this school is part of the responsible mission of this learning community where learning happens from the experiencing and sharing.

Institutional Stewardship

The entire Edify Group System has been envisioned with a long-term prospect of promoting a truly international education institutional system with diverse specializations to be executed in the form of autonomous system entities in the country and abroad. The entire vision has been credited by Dr. Chandra Prasad Rijal, with his firm standing on self-developed model of institutional incubation and development.

Dr. Chandra Prasad Rijal leads the school as the Chairperson of the School Management Committee. Dr. Rijal provides leadership role in crafting school's vision and policies. His management ideas, leadership capacity, and more than a decade long experience in education are helping to a greater extent in visualizing an ideal organization. With an MBA degree from the Netherlands-based Maastricht School of Management, and MPhil and PhD degrees from School of Education, Kathmandu University, Dr. Rijal stands for educational leadership for quality school management.

Mr. Uddhab K. C. is another equally important member of the team to provide successful stewardship to create and promote international relationships of the school since he is one of the national pioneers in building international relationships in education. His international exposure, partnerships and expertise are very important to promote this institution in international contexts. More importantly, he also specializes in institutional development with lasting impact on society.

Mr. Dwarika Nath Amgain, a Kathmandu University graduate (MEd in Educational Management), is leading as the Principal of the School. His extensive involvement and experience in teaching to leadership roles in the best schools of Nepal, backed up with ample training exposure confirms his fitness to this position. More importantly, Mr. Amagain specializes in not only management of educational institutions, but also he is a very good instructional leader. His leadership style and instructional expertise are the strengths of the school for its continuous transformation and growth.

Professor Dr. Mana Prasad Wagley, Dean School of Education, Kathmandu University, along with the association of Professor Dr. Tanka Nath Sharma and Associate Professor Dr. Padam Lal Devkota, a proven anthropologist, provide visionary support to the school management committee as the elite members of the advisory committee.

Institutional Partnerships

Edify International School believes on working together to meet the common goals and enhance quality in school education. The school is exploring appropriate organizations to establish and promote functional partnerships for the mutual benefits.

The school has already established functional relationship with **Edify International Pvt. Ltd.**, a newly established service organization that provides active support in human and institutional development of this school (visit them at www.edifyintl.org).

Our association with Edify International will be instrumental in promoting the lab-based school system with advanced research and development activities in education.

Similarly, our association with Kathmandu University, School of Education – as the university lab school – paves the road for operational excellence in school development, teacher training, instructional materials development, research and innovation practices and exchange of resources for promoting better culture in education.

Similarly, the school management has been working closely with a number of international agencies to commence its operations from different countries where many Nepalese people have been suffering in educating their children in Native Nepalese education system. Japan, America, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada are some of the probable destinations.

Under the initiatives of Edify International School, we have also established a service organization for a special cause, ***Edify Foundation Nepal***, to provide quality educational opportunities for the needy children. Shortly, the *Foundation* will commence its services making ***Edify International School*** as one of the units of its intended partnerships.

The future will witness creation and promotion of several other functional partnerships at national as well as international levels.

An Overview of the New Lab School System

1. *Edify ECD Center*: As an integrated part of the proposed lab school system, Edify International School has established Early Childhood Development Center which replaces its pre-primary classes. The center promotes the development of early childhood physical, mental, sensorial, social, and basic mathematical and language skills in children of 2^{1/2} to 5 years. Teachers, teaching methods, materials, and the classroom environment are safe, caring and joyful.

Edify Approach in education substitutes the existing paradoxes of Montessori and Kindergarten systems as it precisely focuses on four-dimensional development of the children at their early and pre-schooling stage. Flexibility in curriculum and instruction has been emphasized with proper focus on six-corners of learning at this stage.

2. *Training and Development Cell*: Promoted through the noble efforts of Edify Approach, the teacher development is one of the major services of the school. The training and development opportunities are not only limited to the Edify International School members, the school has been extending its services even leading schools of the country.

Parents and guardians can also benefit from the training and development cell and can develop skills to help their children in their learning at home.

Besides teachers and parents, this cell also serves for promoting educational leadership skills to all concerned. Such programs will help participants explore and harmonize their leadership potentials.

Similarly, the school leaders will receive focused programs to develop their leadership skills, especially in the field of educational management and instructional leadership. Educational management basically covers all school management functions from the generic perspectives of planning, organizing, leading and controlling of all school management process functions that include human resources management and development, short-term and long-term planning, day-to-day process management, design, delivery and evaluation of instructional curriculum, management of information and communication systems, management of school and classroom environment and management of school database.

3. *Research and Innovation Cell*: The school has provision for Research and Innovation Cell to undertake necessary initiatives to promote a culture of research-based practices in teaching learning. The school emphasizes on developing teachers as researchers and involving them in fact-based decision making. The cell works closely with professional researchers and support early researchers in education. The main aim of the research and innovation cell is to bring in the best practices and test their relevance in our context, and appreciate and support new researchers in the field of education.

Additionally, this cell provides research and innovation services to different agencies and government departments advocating for educational development in the country. To lead it more successfully, the institution receives need and competence-based assistance from its partner organizations. The members of the partnering institutions, their early research fellows, and teachers from Edify International School will be provided with opportunities to work in various research and innovation activities under this proposition.

4. *Internship for Professional Development*: The school has a plan that strongly emphasizes the strategic involvement of the school and partner organizations in the selection and development of teachers, administrators, and other educational professionals. The school also intends to help different universities intending to help the fresh graduates to transform them into future teachers, administrators, and educational professionals.

The School intends to establish and promote various partnerships that are guided to --

- a. strengthen relationships and shared responsibilities among school, university, and community in the initial preparation, induction, and continuing professional development of highly skilled teachers, administrators, and other school personnel,
- b. build on successes of current teaching programs and establish professional development partnerships for the initial preparation, induction, and continuing professional development of career teachers, administrators, and other school-based personnel,
- c. extend and improve the school-based components of both initial preparation and continuing professional development programs,
- d. strengthen the linkage between the theory and practice of teaching and learning, thereby narrowing the gap between what is known to be effective practice and how it is applied, and
- e. focus and resource sharing among the partner organizations.

There may be a wide range of relationships between schools and other public/private institutions -- from simple episodic transactions to complex on-going partnerships. What distinguishes between these polarities is the "value-added" to partner-school relationships as they grow from transactions to partnerships by sharing risks, rewards and trust.

5. *Publication of a Referred Journal of Education:* To sustain research and innovation, the School intends to work together with different organizations including universities, colleges, schools, private and social sector organizations and publish a referred journal of education in defined timeframe. The journal should cover various themes in education in practice.

The university graduates, higher education scholars and professional researchers in education and other applied areas will be insisted to contribute with the scribes from their recent studies. Such journals could become the real platforms for researchers and research students to share relevant information produced through more systematic observations/studies.

6. *Extension Programs:* School-based programs are more effective in school environment rather than in University classrooms. University programs such as teacher training,

headteacher training, curriculum development, development of instructional materials could be organized in school premises as part of university's extension programs.

In long-run, the school may offer a number of university formal academic programs from various outreach centers in and outside the country.

7. *Professional Learning Community*: School is a common venue where students and teachers share and create knowledge. In schools, during the interactions between students, teachers and curriculum, emerge many issues and problems which could be addressed through a number of professional discourses initiated by the respective professional societies and interest groups.

To face and resolve issues and problems may require a common venue so that educators, and education professionals can share their varied experiences, learn from one-another and help each other through the experiential exchange and learning. Members of the professional community may include the school leaders, school teachers, University professors, University students and other professionals in education.

8. *School Exchange Programs*: The School also has been looking for international partnerships to initiate the management and teacher-student exchange programs with various educational institutions globally so as to promote an experiential learning among all the members of the school community.
9. *International Affiliations*: The School also intends to diversify its formal education programs by means of international affiliations to offer the international curriculum and methodology-based teaching-learning in Nepal.
10. *Promotion of Chain School System*: In association with various partners globally, the School also has provision to extend its scope by creating a number of chain schools in different places and offer internationally recognized education at school level.

Expected Outcomes of the Partnership Propositions

We, at Edify International School, firmly believe that any functional partnerships initiated among different institutions will create synergy effect on overall functioning and performance outputs of all the institutions involved in such partnerships.

More precisely, we dream for the following as the expected outcomes applicable to all the involved partner institutions of such partnerships:

- ✚ Gaining international institutional citizenship and recognition.
- ✚ Contribution in the process of globalization of educational systems.
- ✚ Universal promotion of the resources, information and methodologies in school education.
- ✚ International promotion of the best practices in education.
- ✚ Establishment and promotion of international relationship and good will between the School and partner institutions.

Our Commitments

We understand that every partnership requires a long-range view as well as willingness over time to harmonize institutional thrusts, competencies and service priorities as part of shared vision of the partner organizations.

1. Developing *shared organizational mission, values and goals* to guide the partnership by initiating such a process environment that the administrators, faculty and staff in the school and the partner institution are fully interested with this partnership. The goals should be based on shared-vision of the partnership which should be developed through mutual understanding between the School and partner institution.
2. Identifying and institutionalizing *recognition and reward systems* that reinforce the partnership goals. For instance, if one of the shared goals of the partnership is to produce initially licensed teachers ready to teach, then the partnership function must be customized leverage the opportunities with exposure to obtain teacher licensing and overall training and development programs should be guided to promote the teachers skill competencies to successfully achieve the license.
3. We are also committed for the development of necessary infrastructure, human resource pool, and formalizing more liberal and productive rules and regulations to promote the truly functional spirit of the partnership.
4. We are also equally committed to place each partnership on the priority for mutual benefits.

5. The school management is also committed to give long-term continuity to such partnerships for more sustainable development of both the partners. In doing so, the highest emphasis will be placed on maintaining the institutional ethics and values through every deed.

Building and Sustaining Strategic Partnerships

Strategic partnerships require energy and leadership for the development, growth and expansion of them. The following action steps are advisable to build and sustain strategic partnership:

Educating the members: The key members of the partner organizations must understand and internalize the rationale and the need for developing strategic partnerships of any scale. This requires specific actions to educate all members of partnership organizations in three areas --

1. members of the partnership must be jointly prepared and trained in those task-related activities in which high interdependency exists, such as joint supervision of schools any functional areas,
2. it needs general education for individuals to understand and appreciate the knowledge and skills of other members of the partnership, and
3. it needs direct and frequent on-site interactions to better understand the culture and "customer needs" of the partners. Faculty and administrator exchanges, guest lecturing, action research, and joint curriculum development are just some of the strategies the School and its partners may initiate to get acquainted with the insights of better understanding of each other's culture and value systems.

Joint Planning: The partner institutions should develop an ongoing, integrated planning process that reflects both strategic thinking and the translation of each strategy into action. Joint planning is a key organizational linkage in strategic partnerships. We see at least four impacts of such planning as a primary mechanism:

1. for negotiating and agreeing upon the mutual benefits that can be derived from effective institutional partnerships,
2. for creating a common set of goals necessary to give shared direction to the partnership,
3. it allows for shared assessment of changing conditions, quicker adjustments and response time between partners, and
4. a form of education, thus creating a shared knowledge-base between the institutions joining hands in partnership.

Assessment and Accountability: Identifying and creating appropriate measures to monitor results and to judge performance is an important function of a strategic partnership. The willingness and ability of partners to design, develop, implement and assess the system effectiveness and accountability and responsiveness are necessary in building and sustaining partnerships. We visualize these actions into three major areas:

1. designing compatible recognition and reward system that reflect joint commitment between multiple systems (at individual institutional level) that historically have employed very different reward structures,
2. identifying benchmarks of best practices in other comparable partnerships to measure progress towards achieving common goals and establishing higher benchmarks, and
3. designing and implementing shared information system, primarily related to the institutions in partnership; profiling internal and external stakeholders; establishing and implementing proper monitoring and control system for the successful transformation of commitments into actions leveraging institutional success; documenting the evidential information in the form of performance measurement.

Teaming: We are clear that effective teams, including natural work groups and cross-functional teams between partnership organizations, provide three significant contributions to any partnerships:

1. provide means to access and coordinate the diverse knowledge and skills within and between the institutions in partnership,
2. build social networks that can support commitment and spark innovation in programs and services, and
3. support stability between the organizations by maintaining the direction of the partnerships and organizational memory as players change over time.

Multi-level Strategy: In our understanding, actions to build partnership must address all levels and all personnel of the partnership organizations. Partnerships are relatively easy to form between organizational leaders like Chairperson, Dean, Principal, and Managing Director, or so on. However, partnerships are not likely to last beyond the tenure of the senior leadership unless there is a plan to develop relationships among and between the members throughout the organization, which is more challenging.

Thus, a multilevel human resource strategy aimed at direct partnership development actions across departments and between different faculty-staff roles is key to developing sustainable university-school partnership. An effective plan will build a shared knowledge base, strengthen organizational linkages, and maintain organizational memory even as administrators, faculty, and staff come and go, and generally improve the disposition to partnering.

Technology: An effective partnership requires significant technology support, primarily for four reasons:

1. to reduce costs in some areas, most notably travel and mail services, if reliable e-mail and other telecommunications links are established and maintained,
2. to enhance communication of partnership information and activities,
3. to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of team members, and
4. to support a wide array of performance management data which allows partners to document and build a track record on partnership commitments and activities.

Proposed Partnership Cycle

Step I: Have preliminary discussions.

Step II: Develop and sign the MOU of the partnership.

Step III. Re-define the school approach in line with the partner institution's philosophy, if necessary.

Step IV: Identify the areas of partnership functions.

Step V: Define the roles, responsibilities, responsiveness and accountability for individual member institution in the partnership.

Step VI: Sign the functional agreement/s for overall partnership operations.

Step VII: Implement the course of action.

Step VIII: Closely supervise, monitor, assess and evaluate the operations in partnership areas through a jointly agreed mechanism.

Step IX: Reflect and modify the partnership.

The Steps Next

The intended partner institutions should work collectively to sign an MOU to head with institutional integrated partnership framework in real-life service operations of the new partnership.