

A GROUNDED THEORY MODEL FOR THE ONELETRAN SYSTEM: CHALLENGES AND LEARNINGS

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ABSTRACT

This is a case study in the integration of private sectarian schools in the Philippines. In 2012, the Dominican Province of the Philippines (DPP), a religious congregation belonging to the Roman Catholic Church, legislated the “move towards integrating all existing educational institutions of the Province within two venerable and historical traditions, that of Colegio de San Juan de Letran (1620) and the University of Santo Tomas (1611).” In 2014, four of these schools bound themselves unto ONELETRAN integration with inaugural efforts in religious education and research. This research undertaking sought to: (1) Identify the specific steps undertaken to effect integration in the religious education and research clusters; (2) Identify the challenges encountered in terms of organizational structure, human resources, financial resources; (3) Describe the kind of academic environment that would be conducive to successfully effect the integration; (4) Identify the benefits that have emerged since the integration; and (5) Craft a theory and model derived from ONELETRAN experience that may be used to initiate integration efforts in the other areas. This research is a “midterm assessment” of what has been accomplished so far by ONELETRAN from 2012 to 2017. Uniquely, it employs the grounded theory model in order to solicit the ideas and experiences of people “on the ground,” to listen to their voices, to articulate their views, to enter into discourse with those directly tasked to collaborate on the integration project and thus provide learning for the greater public of higher educational institutions.

Keywords: higher educational institutions, school integration, grounded theory, organizational structure

INTRODUCTION

In 2012, the Dominican Province of the Philippines, a religious congregation belonging to the Roman Catholic Church, legislated that the eight schools under its administrative care integrate into two venerable traditions, namely the University of Santo Tomas (established in 1611) and the Colegio de San Juan de Letran (established in 1620). In 2014, the heads of four of those schools: Colegio de San Juan de Letran, Manila and Bataan (henceforth “Letran Manila,” “Letran Bataan”), Colegio de San Juan de Letran, Calamba (“Letran Calamba”) and Our Lady of Manaoag College, Pangasinan, signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) binding themselves to integrate unto the ONELETRAN system; also, Our Lady of Manaoag College

renamed itself as Colegio de San Juan de Letran, Manaoag (“Letran Manaoag”). The neologism ONELETRAN has been applied for copyright as patented brand representing the four schools.

This is the context from which this research project arises. It offers “A Grounded Theory Model for the ONELETRAN System: Challenges and Learnings.” It is analogous to a “stop-over” or a “midterm assessment” in order to evaluate what has been accomplished so far by the ONELETRAN system from 2012 to the present in the areas of Religious Education and Research and Publication.

As a relatively new endeavor in educational institutional integration in the context of the Philippines, this research breaks ground in order to document and gather a body of literature as the process of integration unfolds, to establish

inductively a “science” of educational integration in general and of the DPP schools – ONELETRAN integration in particular, to address a gap in research about the integration of educational institutions, drawing knowledge from the laws of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, from the strategies of the schools involved, and the experiences of people on the ground – administrators, faculty members, support staff members.

Statement of the Problem

This research draws inductively from participants in the integration process: (1) the specific steps undertaken to effect ONELETRAN integration; (2) the challenges encountered in terms of organizational structure, human resources, financial resources; (3) the kind of academic environment that would be conducive to successfully effect the integration; (4) the benefits, if any, that have emerged since the integration; (5) and from these, a theory and model to articulate ONELETRAN integration experience. These questions provide structural and narrative coherence to the study, with data provided mainly by the participants themselves, from their remembrance (of initial steps undertaken and challenges encountered), their felt experience (of benefits), their recommendations (about the conducive academic environment). From the coding of their replies, progressively a grounded theory and model of ONELETRAN integration shall be drawn.

Literature Review

Among current literature on the topic, integration can be defined as a system formation that combines procedural and resulting components contributing to the appearance of a system’s new integrative quality, which cannot be reduced to the sum of the qualities of its autonomous elements (Shaidullina et.al., 2015). Furthermore, the imperative of self-transformation is provided by structural heterogeneity, which gives rise to contradictions and new growing points in the system, because it is exactly in a non-structured situation when the protective mechanisms of adaptation are triggered in the system (Hodgson, 2011; Kozminski, 2003; Petrov, 2009; Smirnov and Tkachenko, 2004). This research positions itself as a study of integration of schools in the Philippine educational context.

More so, it pioneers an application of Grounded Theory to this enterprise of school integration. Philosophically, this qualitative research method belongs to a species of

phenomenology, and uses insight gained through the direct observation of a phenomenon (e.g., simulated clinical experience) in order to develop theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). A hypothesis will emerge from a constant and careful analysis of the data from observation and participants’ descriptions (Parker and Myrick, 2011). The grounded theory method (GTM) is appropriate when little is known about a particular phenomenon (Wuest, 2007). Since this research focuses on the efforts of ONELETRAN integration, which is unique and specific in itself, “the researchers’ job is to investigate the socially constructed meanings that form the participants’ realities and behaviors that flow from those meanings” (Milliken and Schreiber, 2001).

The grounded theory style of research is especially suited to generating theories of social process (Glaser and Strauss, 2006), including generating static models (Burden and Roodt, 2007), such as a typology. The “theory” in “grounded theory” does not (and should not) refer to a rigid application of one theoretical concept, “but does also (and should) refer to typologies and models (Burden and Roodt, 2007). The heuristic function is the most common characteristic of models, while the explanatory function is usually attributed to theories. A model is an abstract representation of reality that is built, analyzed, and manipulated to increase understanding of that reality (Browning, 2002). While the use of grounded theory in research in the field of education, sociology and psychology is widespread (Smith-Sebasto and Walker, 2005), this research uniquely combines this inductive method with the project of school integration along the lines of (re)organization and (re)structure in the context of private education in the Philippines.

METHODOLOGY

The research applied the five analytic phases of grounded theory building, namely: research design, data collection, data ordering, data analysis, and literature comparison (Bonner et. al., 2014). Table 1 provides a summary of the research questions, sources of data, and ethics approval.

Data Collection

Pertinent texts include: (1) the Acts and Statutes of the of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, which provided

a chronology of events related to the integration efforts, dating back to 1975; (2) official letters from the Office of the Rector and President of Letran Manila who served as the Chair of the Council of Rectors (COR), minutes of meetings, electronic communications, copies of white papers/concept papers, seminar workshop papers, digital presentations, memoranda of agreement and other documents on the ONELETRAN experience, all of which helped identify individuals to be included for interview.

As an inductive and qualitative research, interviews with key personalities who are involved in the integration efforts are central to this study. Interviewing is the predominant mode of data collection in social science research (Burden and Roodt, citing De Vos et. al., 2005). Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in several sites, namely: Manila, Laguna and Pangasinan at the time most convenient to the participants.

Initially, the researcher planned to interview only eight (8) individuals whose names were frequently mentioned in the documents. The number increased to sixteen (16) primarily because additional personalities were identified in the course of the interviews. From the sixteen (16), only fourteen (14) acceded to the request for an interview. Of the fourteen (14), six (6) are males, eight (8) females. Two (2) of the participants belong to the Dominican Order, one a priest and the other a religious sister. Eight (8) are from Letran Manila, three (3) from Letran Calamba, two (2) from Letran Manaoag, and one (1) from Letran Bataan. Table 2 presents the profile of the participants.

The Process in Grounded Theory

The interview transcriptions were subjected to coding, which means categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data (Charmaz, 2006). It is categorized as open, axial and selective. Manual and electronic coding were done using NVIVO software.

Open coding. It is primarily concerned with the fragmentation of data (Ruppel and Mey, 2015), entailed line-by-line analysis, which ensured thoroughness of the process from the start. The researchers noted the similarities and differences in the data that involved constantly comparing indicators and concepts with new data, which in turn led to new concepts (Foley and Timonen, 2015).

Axial coding. Through constant comparisons, the researchers were able to derive relationships between the participants' responses in the different contexts of their experiences, such as their positions, cluster memberships and the schools they came from. These relationships formed the categories and their emergent sub-categories consequently resulted to memos. Memo records of ideas relating to categories themselves form the basis of the written theory (Partington 2000). The researchers crafted a conditional matrix that showed highlighted incidents, categories, sub-categories and memos that prove helpful in the formulation of the model. This analytical phase is called axial coding.

Selective coding. This is not very different from axial coding, but takes place at a higher, more abstract level of analysis (Burden and Roodt). This step achieves a cohesive view of the data by defining core category and an accompanying theory of how categories are related (Charmaz 2001, 2008).

Ethical Considerations

In as much as one of the co-authors (Marquez) is the current Rector and President of Letran Manila and Letran Bataan, and also the Chairperson of the COR, the process of seeking ethical approval and support was significantly facilitated. The files in the Office of the Rector and of the Chair of the COR were easily accessible. The researchers have obtained the documents and other materials legally and with the consent of the owners of the documents.

To secure ethical approval, formal letters of request and invitation were sent to all interviewees, which included an explicit statement on the strict confidentiality and protection of data privacy. Also, the participants in the interviews and FGDs signed consent forms detailing their extent of participation in the study as well as the risks, benefits, and other expectations upon joining the data gathering.

Following the process of grounded theory, every phase of coding, the researchers constantly referred back to the interviewees, including email correspondences, follow-up conversations, and partial presentations of results. The respondents are integral to the execution of the process and building of the theory; their approval and appreciation of the study is constantly held at the heart of the project.

Table 1: Research Questions and Data Sources

Research Questions	Data Sources	Ethics Approval
1. Specific steps undertaken to put into effect ONELETAN integration.	a. Acts of the Provincial Chapters (1 st to 11 th) b. Minutes of meetings c. Interviews	a. publication duly cited b. permission from head of Council of Rectors/Clusters c. explicit permission to record interviews and data confidentiality
2. Challenges encountered: • organizational structure • human resources • financial resources	Interviews	explicit permission to record interviews and data confidentiality
3. Academic environment conducive to the successful integration of ONELETAN system	Interviews	explicit permission to record interviews and data confidentiality
4. Specific gains derived from ONELETAN Integration	Interviews	explicit permission to record interviews and data confidentiality
5. Theory crafting and Model designing	Review of literature	publication duly cited

Table 2: Profile of the Participants

Participant	Gender	State of Life	Position	Affiliation
1	Male	Dominican Priest	Former Rector-President	Letran Calamba
2	Male	Lay	Former Executive Secretary (COR)	Letran Manila
3	Male	Lay	Director, Planning and Development Office	Letran Manila
4	Female	Lay	Faculty member, Religious Education	Letran Manila
5	Female	Lay	Directress, Religious Education	Letran Calamba
6	Female	Dominican Sister	Adviser, Religious Education	Letran Manaog
7	Female	Lay	Directress, Research Center	Letran Bataan
8	Female	Lay	Former Directress, Research Center	Letran Manila
9	Male	Lay	Vice President for Research	Letran Calamba
10	Female	Lay	Research Coordinator	Letran Manaog
11	Female	Lay	Former Dean	Letran Manila
12	Female	Lay	Directress, Alumni and Public Affairs	Letran Manila
13	Male	Lay	Former Director, Center for Community Development	Letran Manila
14	Male	Lay	Former Director, Human Resource Department	Letran Manila

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Steps in the ONELETAN Integration

The heads of the four schools who bound themselves to ONELETAN mobilized their people to execute the agreement, without pre-determined instructions on how to proceed. Here are some of the initial and important steps as recalled by the participants representing the four schools.

These are adequately backed by notices of meetings, minutes of meetings, and other related documents.

Frequent Cluster Meetings. Clusters refer to groupings of representatives from the four schools in order to focus on certain areas for integration as identified. Most prolific among them were the Religious Education and Research Clusters, which held frequent meetings in the different Letran

campuses for the purpose of familiarizing the member-representatives with each institution's contexts.

Cluster Membership. Members of both clusters occupy parallel but not equivalent positions. In the Religious Education cluster, member-representatives included two (2) Dominican priests, a Dominican sister-in-charge of Christian Living Education (CLE), and a layperson. From among them, a Dominican priest was elected as convener and the layperson as secretary. In contrast, the Research cluster was composed of all lay members, representing parallel offices dedicated to research, but not occupying equivalent positions. The members were: one Vice President for Research, who acted as convener, two Directresses of the Research Offices; and one Coordinator for Research, whose appointment is non-administrative.

Cluster Output/Results. Quite independently, the two clusters were able to draw up mission-vision statements for their respective clusters. Likewise, they identified initial topics for collaboration, such as a common ONELETRAN Religious Education curriculum, common spiritual exercises, a mentor-mentee scheme for researchers, ONELETRAN Research Conference, and ONELETRAN publication.

Challenges

The ONELETRAN integration project immediately confronted difficulties and challenges. To structure their replies, the internal integration difficulties (Bernardo et al.) were used.

Challenges in Organizational Structure. At the outset, several choke points in the Religious Education cluster were identified. These challenges are consequential to the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533) of the Philippine government, promulgated on June 8, 2013, which effectively expanded the basic education system in the Philippines from K+10 (kindergarten + ten years of basic education) to more internationally accepted K+12 (additional two years of senior high school). The implementation of this law brought to the surface the differences among the four Letran schools on how Religious Education should be integrated into the revised curriculum.

Another challenge to the organizational structure is the parallel but not equivalent positions held by the

representatives. In three Letran schools, a Vice-President leads the "Religious Affairs" Division, while the other school has a religious sister as Religious Education coordinator. However, the above mentioned "Religious Affairs" division varies in scope in the three Schools. One Vice-President for Religious Education, Mission and Identity (REMI) oversees the Student Affairs and Development, Culture and Arts, Community and Extension, Campus Ministry and the Religious Education. Such encompassing set-up does not hold true for the two other schools. In the context of Catholic Education in the Philippines, the sphere of influence of a vice-president is broader than a religious sister or a lay person.

Challenges in Human Resources. Internal resistances and obstacles to integrated management systems (IMS) implementation "may be related to resources, attitudes and perceptions and obstacles during the implementation process." Behavior and attitude of workers can affect the successful implementation of the system. Several sub-categories emerged under the identified challenges in human resources.

In terms of qualifications and competencies, most of the faculty members from one school presented their ongoing master's degrees these as their research outputs; very few have pursued their doctoral degrees. Understandably, the culture of research is at its nascent stage, thus a limited number of faculty members are able to take a research load.

In the Religious Education cluster, some of the lay teachers are retrained extensively in order to meet the requirements of Catholic religious education

In terms of attitude, it has been mentioned that there is a "struggle" in the leadership of clusters. Personality differences is an ever-present difficulty in integration. The choice of personalities designated to work initially on ONELETRAN Research are not equally receptive to "collaboration and subordination of self-interest." The level and extent of awareness between and among the four educational institutions vary.

Another attitudinal challenge is the lack of openness and commitment. Those who find it difficult to embrace change become obstructionist to the cause of ONELETRAN. This lack of openness and commitment is also apparently reflected by top administrators themselves, who then "infect" people in middle management.

In terms of levels of awareness, resistances to organizational changes to be brought about by ONELETRAN are due basically to poor information about the new system, lack of involvement from key employees, including the ambiguity in new roles to be performed and lack of motivation and empathy concerning the implementation.

In terms of organizational factors, the challenge of uneven organizational support is reflected in the limited number of attendees sent to cluster activities. This, in effect, places the burden of cascading and implementation upon a limited number of people.

People clamor for information and direction about ONELETRAN emanating from top management. Apparently, the plan has excluded some key people from the information loop, who could shake and move their institutions towards the agreed direction of ONELETRAN.

And then, there are challenges that pertain to succession and transition issues. A Rector and President serves for four years. Lay officials serve at the pleasure of the Rector and President. These changes upset the political continuity which supports ONELETRAN initiatives, cause delays and loss of direction in meeting objectives and goals that have been previously agreed upon.

Challenges in Financial Resources. These are categorized into: 1. sources, 2. budgeting constraints, and 3. support from top administration.

In the Philippine Education Landscape, funds for private educational institutions are mainly sourced from the tuition and matriculation fees collected from student enrollees. Government has limited subsidy to private education, in contrast to public education.

Expectedly, the successful integration of the four Letran schools need funds. Lack of resources, for example funds and knowledge is one of the main difficulties during the integration process. As such, fund sources from the tuition and other fees are limited. This is further compounded by decrease in the number of student enrollees.

In terms of budget, the four Letran schools have different means of financing cluster needs. There are institutions that do not have separate budget because they are under the aegis of a higher office. Budget therefore is dependent on the approval of the higher office.

Admittedly, these financial challenges reflect the varying degrees of support from the top administration of each

school and the extent of their willingness to make integration happen.

Conducive Academic Environment

After bringing to the surface the initial steps and challenges confronted by ONELETRAN participants, the discussion now shifts to what kind academic environment is envisioned by the respondents as conducive to ONELETRAN integration.

Openness. On the personal level, individuals involved in ONELETRAN must be open to change. In as much as this integration project is a new thing towards which the four schools strive, it is important for each and every participant and partner to be open to the process, to hear each other, to share anxieties and vulnerabilities, to help each other, and to build hope and confidence. In the spirit of openness, genuine collaboration, idea generation, planning of projects, activities, etc. must be generated inclusively.

In this open environment, the right people with the right attitude can dream together, believe together, commit together, and work together more passionately in seeing the vision through. Together, institutions and people manifest generosity in sharing resources. Each and every school is summoned to the higher interest of ONELETRAN. Here, people from the four Letran schools become genuine friends, the spirit of fraternity thrives, co-equality and complementarity prevail in discussions and deeds towards integration.

Shared Decision-making and Collaborative Culture. “An integrated system works much better in terms of an educational cluster in which the actions of its subjects lead to more consistent, objective and mutually beneficial relations, which are mediated consolidation of subjects’ interests of the system” (Shaidullina et. al., 2015), involving “collegiality in decision-making and corporative responsibility” (Merzon et al., 2015). Member institutions and cluster members share equal authority in the decision-making processes. There may be a cluster convenor, but members are co-equals in discussions and decision-making.

“Teamwork, shared resources, and joint goals between departments lead to more effective integration. Managers ascribing to this philosophy would emphasize training and work groups aimed at establishing collective goals, shared rewards, and common vision” (Kahn and Mentzer, 1996).

The focus of collaboration is not merely on information linkages, but on building the esprit de corps.

Beyond personal and relational levels, the integration project demands that the different schools level up to each other, in the different areas where one or the other excels. Through the principle of “systemacity” (Shaidullina et al., 2015), schools are not only fused simplistically into a single system, but each institution, as parts of the whole, matures organically and organizationally, in the preferred direction for the development of the educational system --- namely, its integration and harmonization of standards, connecting the outputs of some educational institutions with others (Mrathuzina, et al., 2015).

The success of ONELETRAN does not rest on administrators, faculty and staff alone and apart from the rest. It is a concerted effort of all stakeholders, including the students. It is imperative that everyone share in performing and meeting quality standards set by ONELETRAN. It is essential to any academic environment that the organization believes in their own people. ONELETRAN must be able to identify, tap and invest on the right people in order for the integration to succeed and to be sustained. People who have potentials and whose tenure in the institution are not defined by term limits ought to be the ones sent to integration-related meetings. Memories exist in individuals, and, when individuals have shared knowledge and experience, such as that evolving from participation in an organization, they may also have shared memories (Fauske and Raybould. 2005). These memories, then, serve as building blocks that guide future actions and responses interconnected by stories common to those who have put in good work in the pursuit of ONELETRAN.

Leadership Commitment to Integration. There is a crucial need for top-level administration to set goals and objectives in the realization of a common vision. This common vision and mission should be spelled out clearly, cascaded and lived despite insurmountable constraints in the institutional and personal levels. A clear and compelling vision, relentlessly communicated by a company’s senior team, is crucial (O’Reilly and Tushman, 2004). The breadth of information distribution across the school is an indicator of organizational learning (Fauske and Raybould, 2005).

This leadership commitment ought to drive ONELETRAN integration and the organizational change it entails. To shift the shared norms, beliefs, and implicit understandings within an organization, leaders of the integration can talk with one

another through the change as it happens (Groysberg, et. al., 2018). The pulls and pushes of centralization and decentralization required by the integration project can be adjusted as the four schools progress, to overhaul old behavior, replace with new values, and reinforce behaviors consistent with the aspirations of ONELETRAN. This administrative support must be consistent and evenly spread across clusters and concerns.

Benefits

Within a few years of ONELETRAN integration, certain benefits are palpable. According to Bernardo et. al. (2012) integration enables an organization to optimize resources. And all the integration participants acknowledge and affirm this. Looking beyond themselves, member institutions acting in unison result in greater economies of scale.

The principle of relevance (Shaidullina et. al., 2015) allows the formation and development of integrated forms of interaction by combining previously disparate parts and components into a single unit. A necessary condition for transition of the self-organizing system to a new level is not only a reorganization of its internal structure, but also the process of filling in its subsystems based on the interaction with the external environment. Integration provides greater and easier opportunities to benchmark among Letran schools. This, in turn, allows the members of the different institutions to learn from their counterparts that could lead to increased productivity.

Organizations that lean toward a highly interdependent culture emphasize integration, managing relationships, and coordinating group effort. People in such cultures tend to collaborate and to see success through the lens of the group (Groysberg et. al., 2018). This benefit also redounds to the individual stakeholders, in terms of relationships and also in their professional growth and development. Working with different sets of people boosts the confidence of cluster members thereby improving performance.

Though much still needs to be done, ONELETRAN has established a semblance of structure. Credit to the first generation of rectors of ONELETRAN who have exerted ways and means to put into action this dream and desire for integration.

Theory and Model for ONELETRAN

This study adapts a paradigm model from Corbin and Strauss (1990, 2008) in order to systematize a “cause-and-effect schema... to explicate relationships between categories

and subcategories” and apply it to ONELETRAN (see Figure 1). Likewise, the conditional matrix (see Figure 2) in order “to aid the identification of relationships between conditions, consequences, actions and interactions,” graphically tracing the conditional paths through “set of levels drawn as eight concentric circles corresponding to different aspects of the world pertaining to a phenomenon.”

In both of these classical models of grounded theory, the ideology and initiatives of ONELETRAN integration fit

feasibly. From this perspective, both the external (K+12 Law) and internal conditions (Acts of the Provincial Chapter) may be identified as “causes,” which produce this phenomenon of the “Two in One, Dominican: the UST system and the Letran system.” This idea was received in context by the four Letran schools. By executive fiat of the Council of Rectors as an intervening condition, the ONELETRAN General Assembly and the Cluster meetings were convened as action/interaction strategies, towards the intended consequence of achieving “integration.”

Casual Condition	Phenomenon	Context	Intervening Conditions	Action / Interaction Strategies	Consequences
Acts of the Provincial Chapter, Dominican Province of the Philippines	“Two-in-One” Dominican: UST System and Letran System	Four (4 schools): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letran Manila • Letran Calamba • Letran Manaoag • Letran Bataan 	Council of Rectors’ meeting	ONELETRAN Assemblies CLUSTER Meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Religious Education 	“INTEGRATION”
RA 10533: Enhanced Basic Education Act 2013 (K+12)	Two (2) additional years in the Basic Education Disruption in college student enrollment beginning 2016-2017				

Figure 1. Corbin and Strauss' PARADIGM MODEL as applied to ONELETRAN

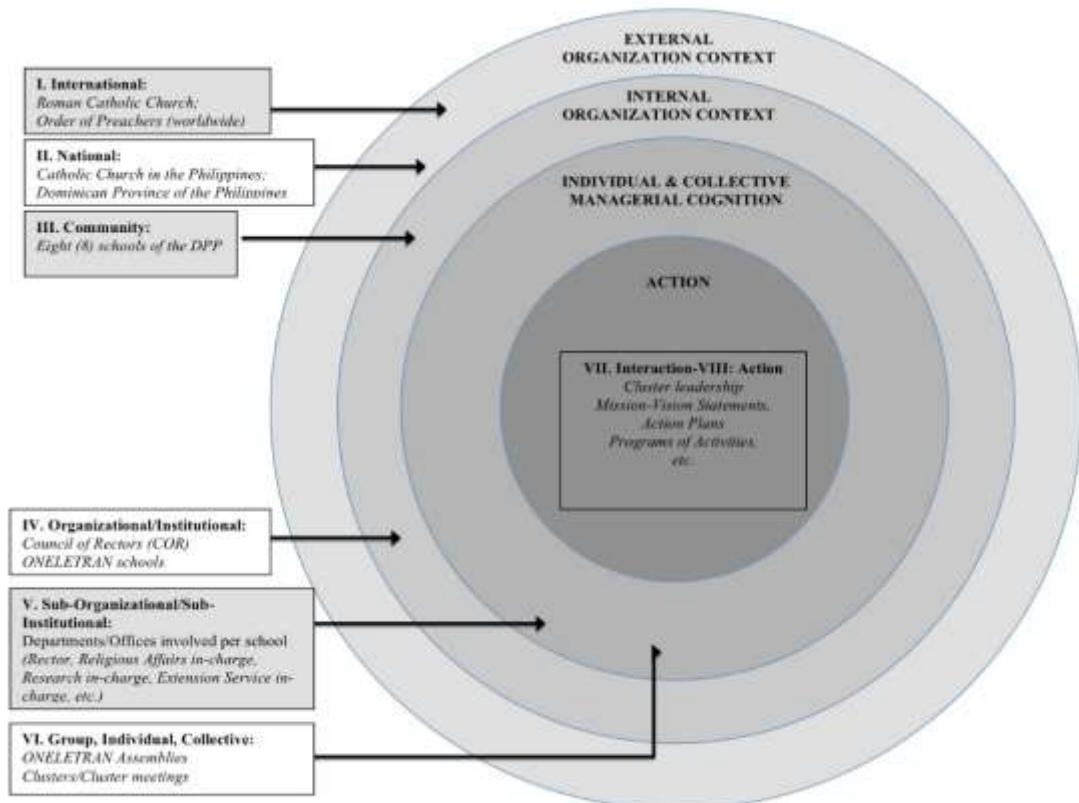


Figure 2: Conditional Matrix

Furthermore, to overcome the complexity of grounded theory prescriptions, a simplified version of both models is adapted and applied directly to the development of a “stimulus-organism-response” (S-O-R) theory (Partington 2000, 2002). In the simplified conditional matrix, data and causal tendencies are thus aligned and categorized as instances of stimuli and responses. As spelled out in the S-O-R model (Table 3), aptly simplified and adapted to ONELETRAN, all instances of stimuli and responses are mediated by the organism, i.e. the people involved in ONELETRAN, the people interviewed for this research served as “underlying mechanism.” They provided cognition, through a complex psycho-social process of reception-response-reflection. In various capacities, the respondents were the acting subjects who enabled, executed, exchanged ideas, explained the process, evaluated strengths and weaknesses, challenges and benefits, in order to prescribe a conducive organizational environment and desired personal behavior as remedies and further recommendations.

Per cursory glance, environmental stimuli came from top management, from the Acts of the Provincial Chapters of the

Dominican Province of the Philippines and from its Council of Rectors as designated executor.

Thereupon, in response to stimuli, as management action, the ONELETRAN General Assembly was convoked, gathering representatives from the four Letran schools. Another enabling mechanism was the “cluster meetings,” which focused people and resources on identified “areas of integration.” The Clusters on Religious Education and Research were chosen for this research inasmuch as they manifested relative promise, progress and productivity.

Through interviews, the respondents provided retrospective data. They recalled events and people, output; they identified challenges and difficulties along the way; they proposed remedies to infirmities and solutions to problems; they were invited to imagine scenarios and environments that would help the ONELETRAN integration to move forward and further; and they affirmed benefits and learnings which they gained as individuals and as institutions from participation in ONELETRAN. This research reinserts them in the process as intermediary, as instrumental cause, who acted and reflected, executed and evaluated.

Table 3: GROUNDED S-O-R THEORY: Simplified PARADIGM MODEL as applied to ONELETRAN

Environmental Stimulus	Cognition	Management Action
Acts of the Provincial Chapter, Dominican Province of the Philippines		
Council of Rectors		Initial Steps ONELETRAN General Assembly
	Participation in ONELETRAN General Assembly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from the 4 Letran schools • from offices pertinent to “areas of integration” 	
	Participation in CLUSTER meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Religious Education 	Cluster Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Religious Education
	Challenges	
	Challenges in Organizational Structure/Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural/Contextual Differences in delivery of Religious Education among the 4 Letran schools 	Output of Cluster Meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission-Vision Statements • Topics/Plan of Action
	Challenges in Organizational Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cluster representatives were from PARALLEL BUT NOT EQUIVALENT offices 	Cluster Leadership
	Challenges in Human Resources <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Educational qualifications and competencies 2. Levels of awareness 3. Personality differences/clashes; behavior and attitude 4. Organizational factor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. sub-culture b. administrative support c. turn-over, succession d. direction-setting; process 	
	Challenges in Financial Resources <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sources of Fund 2. Budget Constraints 3. Support from Top Administration 	
	Conducive Academic Environment, Behavior	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. openness to change b. passion 2. Relational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. non-competitive b. sense of camaraderie c. collegial d. collaborative 3. Organizational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. communicative b. institutional investment in people c. clear direction from top administration d. administrative support e. clear organizational structure 	
	Benefits of ONELETRAN integration	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Unified action towards communal benefits 2. Maximizing resources 3. Networking 4. Personal and Professional Growth, Development 5. Leadership Action towards realizing ONELETRAN 	

In this way, looking upon our data, our tables, our codes, our categories, we pose and propose answers to the following (Partington):

What key features of ONELETRAN's context are parts of its underlying mechanisms, which tend to encourage, discourage, enable or inhibit action? How do these mechanisms act?

In terms of mechanisms, first, the Provincial Chapter (which meets every four years) as causal stimulus must continuously legislate on ONELETRAN integration by constant encouragement and enabling. Secondly, the Council of Rectors and the Rector-Presidents of ONELETRAN must place integration in the front and center of their strategic plans and directions. They must be constantly involved in the discourse of integration, committing firmly in word and in deed. Thirdly, the ONELETRAN general assembly and the cluster meetings must be sustained, with fervor and regularity. These have to be better planned, financed, attended and documented.

Where does ONELETRAN stand on a continuum of best practice in relation to integration as envisioned?

With regard to the continuum (Figure 3), we adapt the classification of integration types (Shaidullina et. al., 2015):

By “the presence of the necessary components,” ONELETRAN has reached PARTIAL INTEGRATION, i.e. implying interaction of individual elements or levels. At this stage, only ONELETRAN General Assembly and cluster meetings provide actual interaction among the four schools.

By “temporal characteristics of integration,” ONELETRAN is moving from EPISODIC INTEGRATION to PERIODIC INTEGRATION, with the hope that temporary, fragmentary interaction between subjects according to simultaneous requirements would progress towards a long-term, more stable relationship. While the general assemblies and cluster meetings help in spreading the awareness about ONELETRAN, more substantial and systematic integration remains to be fulfilled.

By “the type of subjects in integration,” ONELETRAN is a CROSS-SECTORAL INTEGRATION type, with subject-representatives in general assemblies and cluster meetings affirming the development of camaraderie and symbiosis not only within their areas of integration but across sectors of the plenary assembly.

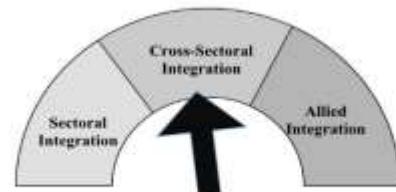
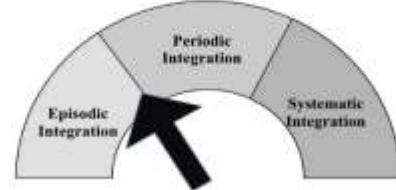
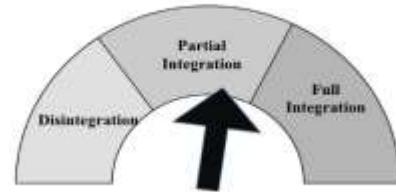


Figure 3: Integration Continuum

What steps should be followed and barriers to be overcome in order to progress along the continuum?

In the S-O-R Model, the organism who mediates between stimulus and response, who provides cognition and action are the people who could make ONELETRAN succeed.

As such, the Provincial Chapters, the Provincial, the Rector-Presidents, and the communities which administer these schools must commit themselves to integration.

To ONELETRAN gatherings, the right people must be sent – qualified, from offices pertinent to integration, rightly motivated, open to change and collaboration, collegiality, camaraderie, and passionate for ONELETRAN. To send people with less or none of these qualities would burden the integration effort.

The S-O-R model need not be a unidirectional cause-and-effect schema. Reflexively, allowing the organism to speak more and be heard more can enhance the process. As the acting subjects and agents of integration, they contribute

significantly to planning, leading, organizing and controlling all integration efforts. Their interpretation of actions provides solid input and insight to be fed back to the original causal stimuli, thereby completing the cycle towards more informed, more sustained support for ONELETRAN.

CONCLUSION

The ONELETRAN integration can adapt one more model – the Biblical one, like the story of God's people on pilgrimage.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites, consisting of tribes, clans and families, led by Moses, journeyed for forty years through the desert towards the Promised Land. Like them, ONELETRAN is journeying, a physically exhausting, inter-generational drive towards becoming ONE, integrated in faith and in law, in collective identity and culture as mandated by the Provincial Chapters. Along the way, they commit mistakes, lose direction, digress, quarrel, suffer from work, learn humility and obedience and embrace willful endurance; finding their way, finding God, and reaching the destination against all odds.

Analogously, in the New Testament, like the followers of Jesus, the four schools form the new people of God and continue in this pilgrimage of faith towards the promised land of integration. The Letran schools, like the early Christian communities, are taking steps, facing challenges and learning why and how to become ONELETRAN.

The emergent theory represents a progressively higher level of theoretical abstraction:

1. the tabulated data replying according to objective, codes and categories;
2. the narrative summary interpreting and cross-referencing the categories generated; and
3. the theoretical propositions and summary process models.

ONELETRAN is the integration of four Letran schools under the Dominican Province of the Philippines, legislated by the Acts of the Provincial Chapter, directed by the Council of Rectors, by the Rector-Presidents of the Letran schools through ONELETRAN General Assembly and Clusters. Thus far, it has produced an integrated Mission-Vision statement and Plan of Actions, particularly the clusters on Religious Education and Research.

The integration of schools, programs and actions radically and ultimately is founded upon the integration of people – in vision, desire, and collective action. It is the people who legislate the acts of the Provincial Chapter. It is the people who comprise the Council of Rectors. It is the people who constitute each of the four Letran schools. It is the people who are sent to represent the four schools, who comprise and participate in the general assembly and cluster meetings. It is the people who craft plans, execute action, respond to queries and receive its results. Indeed, ONELETRAN is about PEOPLE – all the people of Letran schools; one people for Letran.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of what has been foregrounded by this study, it is recommended that future studies be conducted on the following fields of concern:

1. How to address the gaps in the integration process of ONELETRAN as mentioned in the typologies of integration?
2. How to build an Integrative Organizational Culture suitable to ONELETRAN?
3. How to appreciate and apply the Performance ESP (Execution-Strategy-People) Framework to ONELETRAN?

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