



## Project PUSH (Personnel Upgrade and Skills Harmonization): Improving the work performance of the personnel unit of Schools Division Office of Paranaque city

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Open Access Research Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies, 2022, 04(02), 001–010

Publication history: Received on 03 September 2022; revised on 06 October 2022; accepted on 09 October 2022

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53022/oarjms.2022.4.2.0093>

### Abstract

The fast-gearing and sudden changes in the work landscape brought by the pandemic have forced many organizations to undergo significant transformation and rethinking of the key elements of their processes and work systems including the migration of most office transactions to the digital platform. However, this also demands organizations to produce strategic personnel upgrades and skills harmonization programs to improve the work performance of the employees specifically tailored in the present work landscape. The purpose of this study was to prove the effectiveness of Project PUSH (Personnel Upgrade and Skills Harmonization) as a technical assistance model to improve the work performance of the employees in the Personnel Unit of SDO-Paranaque. This study was a mixed method experimental research design under the pre-experimental category which utilized one group pre-test-post-test. A total of 11 non-teaching personnel took part in the study and have been selected purposively. Initially, a survey questionnaire on personnel needs assessment was conducted as a basis for skills upgrade and harmonization. Then the midyear rating of the participants was collected as baseline data prior to the employment of the program. After the implementation of the program, the final rating was collected for comparison and interpretation. To determine whether there is a statistically significant difference on the mean scores on the skills categories before and after the intervention as well as the ratings for midyear and final rating, t-test was employed. The results revealed that for both computations, there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores. The result of the qualitative analysis paralleled to the quantitative data presented which also indicated a positive impact to the participants in terms of communication, ICT, work, and social skills and manifested in their performance rating. Evidently, the intervention as a technical assistance model was effective. Research or Personnel implications were provided for future research directions.

**Keywords:** Push; Work Performance; Personnel Upgrade; Personnel Skills; Personnel Harmonization

### 1. Introduction

In every organization, the workforce is always its best asset. It has been a widely recognized factor for an organization or agency to prosper as globally competitive and at par service provider. For this reason, the ability of an organization is to develop their personnel. Lee and Bruvold, 2003 (as cited in Kunvaas & Dysvik, 2010) argued that the principle of investing on employee development is to sustain and develop the skills, knowledge and abilities of the individual employee. In a much closer look, Gileva and Peskova (2020) defined personnel development as a systematic upgrade of employees' competency by expanding and deepening existing professional abilities, training new qualifications, as well as increasing the motivation and organizational capabilities for more thorough realization of the employees' potential toward achieving the organization's goals.

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One indication that an organization cares for their employees is when they continuously involve their personnel in skills upgrade. On the other hand, Hammed and Waheed (2011) underscored that when organizations are contributing towards the employee development activities, the employees work hard, thereby utilizing their full skills and efforts to achieve the goals of the organization. On the other hand, with the fast-gearing changes in the work landscape, effective organizational response to the pressures of an increasingly dynamic and unpredictable environment caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, demands organizations to produce strategic personnel upgrades and skills harmonization to improve work performance specifically tailored in the present work landscape.

Dwivedi, et.al (2020) pointed out that the pandemic has forced many organizations to undergo significant transformation, thereby rethinking key elements of their processes and using technology to maintain operations whilst adhering to a changing landscape of guidelines and new procedures. Thus, no organization was exempted. Organizations have to adopt new ways of remotely working, utilizing new systems for communication and altered practices to meet social distancing requirements and modified work patterns (Leidner, 2020; Richter, 2020). This notion indicates that there is an urgent need to reconfigure the activities contained in the personnel development projects. This also proves that adjustment and alignment of skills in every work area is vital to make sure that each individual will contribute to the success of an organization.

In Particular, the Schools Division of Paranaque City, Manila, Philippines through its educational leaders and heads, thus perceiving that upgrading a new skill can help any organization to take on new tasks, as well as increase personnel's ability to articulate their ideas on how to make a difference in the workforce. This stance also gives rise to opening an avenue for an employee to be confident in their skills and to actively demonstrate skills will be viewed as an asset to the Schools Division of Paranaque City.

The role of unit heads and chiefs is deemed vital. Their expertise is valuable in training and improving the skills of the personnel.

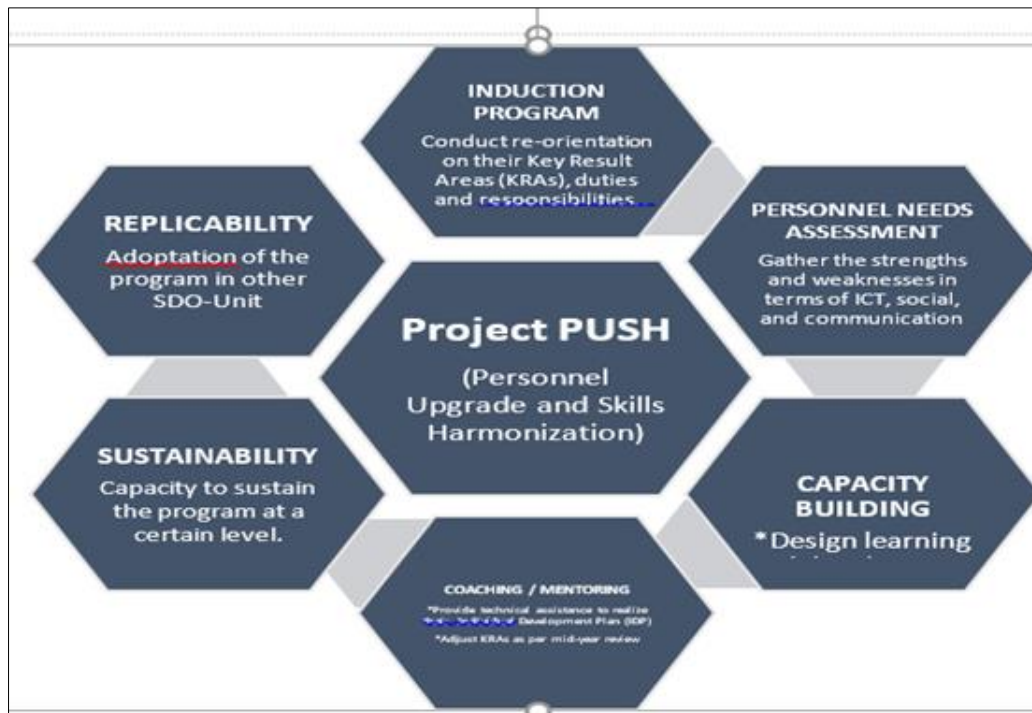
In order for the division of Paranaque to realize organizational goals, intensive mentoring and coaching play a significant role in improving the work performance of each non-teaching personnel. Technical assistance must always come in handy every time it is needed. Open communication must be established for each personnel to communicate their thoughts or when they are having a difficult time in their tasks.

Hence, the present study attempts to prove the effectiveness of employing Project PUSH: Personnel Upgrade and Skills Harmonization as a form of technical assistance in improving the work performance of SDO-Paranaque human resource personnel.

DepEd Order No. 2 s. (2015) otherwise known as "Guidelines on the Establishment and Implementation of the Results-Based Performance Management System (RPMS) in the Department of Education" stipulates the specific mechanisms, criteria and processes for the performance target setting, monitoring, evaluation and professional development planning for Schools Division Offices covering the non-teaching employees holding regular plantilla positions. The Human Resource Personnel are covered by these guidelines and their work performance is assessed whether they are National- or LGU- funded employees.

Evaluation of employees is based on actual accomplishment and results as discussed and agreed upon in the commitment and measures made at the beginning of the rating period which is usually done in January. As a result of work performance evaluation, an employee may have a numerical rating of 1, 2, 3,4 or 5 and a descriptive rating such as poor, unsatisfactory, satisfactory, very satisfactory or outstanding. The numerical rating and descriptive rating has a description of their meaning.

The pandemic has changed many areas in the work landscape that may greatly impact the performance of employees. To cope up with the fast-gearing changes, it is a must for an organization to recalibrate and reconfigure different processes including the upgrades of skills and capabilities of employees. Hence, Project PUSH is developed to purposely deal with these changes by strategically upgrading not only the skills of the personnel but also the entire process of capacity building and coaching and mentoring.



**Figure 1** Project PUSH (Personnel Upgrade and Skills Harmonization) program implementation model specifications

## 2. Induction Program

This part will be utilized to inform the personnel on their key result areas and duties and responsibilities. Upon assumption of duty, each personnel will undergo an induction program. This is comprehensive initiations or introductions to a position that provides personnel with the necessary models and tools for their duty, as well as specific guidance aimed at helping them to meet performance standards. This may include mentoring, assistance in planning, professional development and evaluation.

### 2.1. Skills Harmonization and Capacity Building

Personnel Upgrade and Skills Harmonization (henceforth PUSH), acknowledges that capacity building is a key component of any success of a program. This aims to allow personnel to attend and participate in different seminars/ training on competency and personal development. Providing personnel an appropriate training aligned with their strength, weaknesses, desires, duties and responsibilities make them confident in carrying out their tasks. PUSH as a program provides a chance for personnel to acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses; hence, capacity building is considered as vital. Claiming this notion as correctly effective, Yamoah & Maiyo (2013) regarded capacity building broadly covers the inabilities of all employees and develops the desirable skills and attitude, which enable them to accomplish suitable tasks efficiently. In general, capacity building improves effectiveness at the organizational level.

### 2.2. Coaching

PUSH aims to provide technical assistance on the processes that need to be learned. Coaching on a regular basis is deemed vital in this study. Coaching personnel is the key to building and maintaining a self-motivated staff. Initially, it will take extra time but the results are worth the investment. The better the coaching is facilitated, the more prepared the personnel will be to achieve their goals. Successful coaching guides personnel in the right direction but promotes independent thinking and team collaboration to overcome obstacles. This in turn fosters a relationship of trust and empowers the team to act dynamically. PUSH put a delineation between coaching and mentoring.

### 2.3. Mentoring

PUSH sees the needs for mentoring. It puts delineation on coaching and mentoring. While coaching is more on performance driven, mentoring on the other hand, is development driven. This is a process through which chiefs/Unit heads offer professional expertise as well as support to a less experienced personnel. PUSH facilitating mentoring as a priority improvement area results in a mutually beneficial professional relationship over time. Moreover, it also

acknowledges that the intent of mentoring is not to remediate weak performance, but rather to shape personnel that shows promise.

PUSH acknowledges that these parts are the heart of the proposed program. For personnel to undergo these programs will eventually give a massive impact to the Schools Division of Paranaque City.

According to WES-World Education Service, posted as a blog dated April 2020, new skills can give personnel the ability to offer solutions to problems that may occur on the job. Therefore, the Schools Division of Paranaque City values personnel who are self-directed and able to anticipate and resolve issues as they occur which can be seen when the organization provides appropriate training for the non-teaching personnel. These skills can be demonstrated on the job, where each personnel can provide examples of a solution they developed to a challenge that arose.

A number of researches have been devoted to the personnel variables such as employee support human management, perceived investment on employee development; however, little has paid attention to exploring the improvement the work performance of the non-teaching personnel in a schools division. Therefore, the current study is proposed to identify the development needs of the personnel to improve their work performance. Hence, the study is guided with the following research objectives: to identify the development needs of the non-teaching employees in the personnel unit; to find if there is a significant difference between the work performance of the participants as reflected in the 2021 IPCRF mid-year rating and 2021 IPCRF final rating; and to determine the impact of Project PUSH in improving the work performance of the non-teaching personnel in the Office of the Schools Division -Personnel Unit in the new normal.

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### 3. Methodology

This study was a mixed method experimental research design under the pre-experimental category which utilizes one group pre-test-post-test. This was the most appropriate design given that there were only few personnel under the Personnel Unit. A total of 11 non-teaching personnel took part in the study and have been selected purposively with Salary Grade (SG) 1-10 range since they were considered mentees in the personnel unit. Initially, the CY 2021 Midyear IPCRF (Individual Performance Commitment and Review Form) rating of the participants were collected that served as baseline data prior to the employment of the program (pre-test). After the implementation of the program, the C.Y 2021 IPCRF ratings were collected as post-test data for comparison and interpretation. Survey questionnaires on personnel needs assessment were created as a basis for skills upgrade and harmonization. The said questionnaire has four components namely Work Skills (3 questions), Communication Skills (with 8 questions), Social Skills (with 4 questions), and ICT Skills (with 13 questions) for a total of 28 questions. Hence, a Learning and Development Plan has been designed to address the development needs of the personnel. To substantiate the claims deduced from the quantitative data, a one on one interview was conducted focusing on the influence of the program on the participants' work performance. Moreover, the gathered data were statistically treated using dependent samples t-test since the study utilized one group pre-test-post-test. This was used to assess whether there is a statistically significant difference in the performance rating of the participants before and after the intervention. In terms of the qualitative data culled from the interview, coding procedures to content analyze the transcripts of the participants responses were employed which involved open coding, initial coding framework and final coding framework to generate meanings out of the transcripts (<https://delvetool.com/guide>, 2021). To verify the results of the coding procedures as to its validity and accuracy, a group validation with the participants was conducted. The process includes asking the participants whether the coded transcriptions match what they thought and mean in their responses. The said group validation was done using the native language of the participants to promote understanding and to encourage more probing.

#### 4. Results and discussion

**Table 1** Post-Evaluation of Work, Communication, and ICT Skills of Personnel Units' Employees After the Employment of the Intervention

Work skills	Pre-Test Results	Post test Results
Establishing and monitoring goals and objectives of the Personnel Unit	4.00	4.64
Encouraging collaboration among fellow employees and other units to achieve results	4.09	4.55
Seeking to achieve DepEd vision, mission and core values	4.09	4.45
COMMUNICATION SKILLS	4.6	4.55
Establishing rapport and trust among peers and customers using clear and positive communication skills	4.18	4.55
Organizing thoughts before responding to conversations	4.00	4.45
Listening attentively to instructions and discussions	4.18	4.45
ICT SKILLS	4.12	4.48
Utilizing Microsoft Power point to create reports and presentations	3.91	4.36
Utilizing Microsoft Publisher to create work related outputs	3.82	4.36
Utilizing Email and Calendar Management – The ability to use an email solution (such as Microsoft Outlook) to communicate with internal and external contacts, keep calendars up to date, and book meetings	3.82	4.45
Utilizing Google Docs to create online sharable documents and reports including other work-related outputs	3.64	4.27
Utilizing Google Sheets to create online sharable documents and reports including other work-related outputs	3.82	4.55
Utilizing Google Slides to create online sharable presentations and reports including other work-related outputs	3.64	4.27
Utilizing Google Forms to create online surveys, polls and other work-related outputs	3.37	4.73
	3.72	4.43

As can be seen in table 5, it can be noted that all identified skills needed to be enhanced prior to the intervention under work, communication and ICT skills have significantly increased after the employment of the intervention.

To determine that the data on the skills category before and after the intervention are statistically different, t-test was employed. All pre and post evaluation mean scores for each skill category was computed. The results revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre and post evaluation since all the computed t-value for each skill category is greater than the tabular t-value. This also implies that the skills of the employees have increased in terms of work, communication, and ICT after the implementation of the technical assistance program, PUSH. As the main measurement for the effectiveness of Project PUSH, performance ratings for the midyear and final rating were collected to determine whether there is an increase as believed the result of the implementation of the intervention as seen in Table 3. This particular finding may have supported the study of Hammed and Waheed (2011) underscoring that when organizations are contributing towards the employee development activities, the employees work hard, thereby utilizing their full skills and efforts to achieve the goals of the organization. Another strong implication of the finding is that it supports the notion provided by Dwivedi, et.al (2020) pointing out that the pandemic has forced many organizations to undergo significant transformation, thereby rethinking key elements of their processes and using technology to maintain operations whilst adhering to a changing landscape of guidelines and new procedures.

**Table 2** IPCRF Midyear and Final Rating of the employees in the Personnel Unit for CY 2020- 2021

Personnel	Midyear Rating 2021 (Before the Intervention)	Final Rating 2021 (After the Intervention)
1	4.430	4.600
2	4.300	4.500
3	4.350	4.500
4	4.350	4.500
5	4.350	4.480
6	4.350	4.550
7	4.350	4.600
8	4.350	4.50
9	4.300	4.530
10	4.350	4.480
11	4.450	4.600
Mean	4.357	4.535

Table 2 shows the midyear and the final ratings of employees in the personnel unit before and after the intervention. The overall mean for the midyear rating is 4.357 and 4.535 for the final rating. As seen, there is a significant increase not only in the individual ratings but also on the overall mean rating. To statistically treat the data, t-test was also employed to find out if the difference in mean score for the midyear and final rating is significant. The results revealed that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the midyear and final rating.

The increase in their IPCRF ratings seems a direct indication that there is an improvement in the work performance of the employees amidst the change in the work conditions brought by the pandemic. The technical assistance provided has aided the employees to adapt to changes and be efficient in their jobs. This is highly consistent with the views of Hammed and Waheed (2011) that employees work efficiently and utilize their full potential if the organization they are in directly provide positive influence in their developmental needs as employees.

From the data collected, backed with statistical treatments employed, it is evident that Project PUSH as a technical assistance is deemed effective in improving the work performance of the non-teaching employees under the Personnel Unit in the new normal. The improvement of the employees in terms of the different skills categories through the implementation of the technical assistance program have directly contributed to their performance as reflected in their IPCRF rating which is the department's means of measuring how well an employee is performing.

To further substantiate the claim of improved performance in the workplace as a result of Project PUSH, the researchers conducted interviews to the participants for probing purposes.

**Table 3** Coding procedures on the transcripts for interview question “Do you think the capacity building/ coaching and mentoring help you develop your skills?”

Transcripts	Initial Coding Framework	Final Coding Framework/Emerging Theme
<b>Interviewer: Do you think the capacity building/ coaching and mentoring help you develop your skills?</b>		
P1: When I attended a 3-day seminar, I have developed my skills in communication, ICT, social, and work skills.	Beneficial	Beneficial in developing my skills
P2: The capacity building was helpful particularly Sir Arnil’s topic on short cuts in word and excel in making a memo.	Beneficial	
P3: Learned do much about ICT-files, encoding, excel and looking forward for next capacity building. I learned many things such as ICT files, encoding, excel, and I forward to the next capacity building. This is a big help for me particularly when face to face classes come.	Beneficial	
P4: Writing communication has been developed through capacity building and how to communicate with other people.	Beneficial	
P5: Yes, the capacity building helped me to be comfortable and confident in my job.	Beneficial	
P6: Overwhelming experience, satisfied with the capacity building, improved my knowledge on communication, ICT, proud to be included in the Capacity building.	Satisfied	
P7: Capacity building was a big help on my part specially in addressing my weaknesses specifically in social and communication skills.	Beneficial	

As can be seen in Table 3, the transcripts of seven participants in their response to the question “Do you think the capacity building/ coaching and mentoring help you develop your skills?” have undergone a coding procedure to make sense of the data. The content analyzed transcripts are presented as initial coding framework as a result of the open coding and combined into themes as the final coding framework. The data revealed that Project PUSH as a form of capacity building, coaching and mentoring has been beneficial to the participants in developing their skills. These findings suggested that Project PUSH provided a valuable contribution to the employees as far as developing their skills in different areas are concerned and for them to capably perform their task in the dynamic workplace. These findings may have supported the definition given by Gileva and Peskova (2020) as they went on to define personnel development as a systematic upgrade of employees’ competency by expanding and deepening existing professional abilities, training new qualifications, as well as increasing the motivation and organizational capabilities for more thorough realization of the employees’ potential toward achieving the organization’s goals.

As displayed in Table 4, the transcripts of the participants in their response to the question “What do you feel that your skills have been developed?” And the underlying meanings in the data. The findings revealed that the participants felt that they were capacitated and appreciative for the opportunity to develop their skills in different areas. These findings may imply that when employees consciously feel that they are capacitated after a particular session of coaching and mentoring, these emotions would significantly magnify their enthusiasm to apply the developed skills in performing their tasks in the workplace. This also means that how employees feel about their skills influence in shaping the conditions of their work. These findings may have supported the assumptions of Yamoah & Maiyo (2013) as they regarded capacity building broadly covers the inabilities of all employees and develops the desirable skills and attitude, which enable them to accomplish suitable tasks efficiently. In general, capacity building improves effectiveness at the organizational level.

**Table 4** Coding procedures on the transcripts for interview question “What do you feel that your skills have been developed?”

Transcripts	Initial Coding Framework	Final Coding Framework/ Emerging Theme
<b>Interviewer: What do you feel that your skills have been developed?</b>		
P1: I am proud of myself because my skills have been enhanced.	Feel proud and refreshed	Capacitated
P2: I am happy because I was reminded of so many things as a public servant particularly our rapport with one another has become stronger because of the meetings we attended with Mam Sheryl.	Reminded of my duties as a public servant	
P3: Excited in preparing a communication on behalf of mam Sheryl	Enthusiasm in applying the skills developed	
P4: Gain confidence in preparing communication letter	Gained confidence	
P5: I have become prouder and braver and humbled because my skills in communication have been developed. Also, my ICT Skills particularly in the shortcuts.	Proud and less fear in doing tasks	
P6: Am overjoyed, proud and given the rare opportunity	Overjoyed and proud	Appreciative for the opportunity to develop one’s skill
P7: I felt blessed because we were chosen. It was heart-warming that we were given an opportunity that our ICT knowledge has been upskilled.	Grateful	

**Table 5** Coding procedures on the transcripts for interview question “What is the impact of Project PUSH to you?”

Transcripts	Initial Coding Framework	Final Coding Framework/ Emerging Theme
<b>Interviewer: What is the impact of Project PUSH to you?</b>		
P1: I was able to produce a memo sometimes without any corrections.	Efficiency	Efficiency in accomplishing tasks
P2: I had the opportunity to widen my knowledge specially in efficiently making my report.	Efficiency	
P3: Improvement in performing the tasks	Efficiency	
P4: Developed the skills of the personnel in filing, encoding and using excel	Efficiency	
P5: My self-confidence was boosted particularly in making letters of communication because before I was less confident I do not have the skills)	Confidence Boost	Confidence boost in accomplishing tasks/workplace
P6: I gained confidence as a front liner in dealing with people.	Confidence Boost	
P7: I gained confidence because of the added information I got from the capacity building specially the one on one coaching that I learned that there were some areas that need to be addressed as regards my work.	Confidence Boost	



As can be seen from Table 5, they illustrated the coding procedures on the transcripts for interview question “What is the impact of Project PUSH to you?” It can be noted that participants talk about confidence boost and efficiency in accomplishing their task in the workplace as the impact of Project PUSH for them personally. It would seem, therefore, that the said project has justified its purpose in capacitating employees in different aspects to cope with changes in the workplace. As underscored by Hammed and Waheed (2011) that when organizations are contributing towards the employee development activities, the employees work hard; utilize their full skills and efforts to achieve the goals of the organization. Improved individual performance means improved organizational performance.

**Table 6** Extent of importance of skills developed as perceived by the participants

Participants	Extent of importance of Skills as Perceived by the Participants
	Rank 1 → Rank 4
P1	Communication Skills → ICT → Work Skills → Social Skills
P2	Communication Skills → Social Skills → Work Skills → ICT
P3	Communication Skills → Social Skills → Work Skills → ICT
P4	ICT→ Communication Skills → Work Skills→ Social Skills
P5	Communication Skills → ICT → Social Skills→ Work Skills
P6	ICT→ Communication Skills → Social Skills→ Work Skills
P7	ICT→ Communication Skills → Social Skills→ Work Skills

As seen in Table 6, they illustrate the extent of importance of skills developed through Project PUSH as perceived by the participants. Most of the participants identified communication skills as the most essential skill developed in them with four frequencies of occurrence and three participants indicate ICT as the most important skill. On the other hand, participants consider work skills as the least important with three frequencies of occurrence. This finding suggests that communication and ICT skills are the most dominant skills as far as the participants are concerned and that they reflect the demand of the changes in the work environment especially in the migration of most transactions to digital platform.

## 5. Conclusion

As researchers of this study, we have witnessed how the technical assistance provided shaped and reshaped their skills in terms of work, communication, and most especially in the ICT skills aspects. The fact that the pandemic has brought major changes in the work landscape and transactions that they must deal with every day, it was a massive challenge for them to cope up. Not to mention that 63% of them have served with at least 16 years in service which also implies their current age. Though we cannot discount that they can learn how maximize the flourishing technology platforms and applications, it is still a big challenge for them since it is sudden, and everyone caught off guard. By understanding their weaknesses and strengths, we were able to strategically design a technical assistance appropriate for them. Though at times, schedules became restrictions for both invited speakers and the participants, the training program and follow up assistance still came to fruition. The willingness and eagerness of the participants to learn more was also a big factor for such feat. In addition, the interviews conducted one on one with the participants substantiate the claims manifested from the quantitative data. The results evidently showed that Project PUSH was effective and serve its purpose as a form of technical assistance framework in improving the work performance of the employees in the Personnel Unit.

This study has attempted to analyze the impact of Project PUSH (Personnel Upgrade and Skills Harmonization) as a form of technical assistance model in improving the work performance of the non-teaching employees in the Personnel Unit of SDO-Paranaque City. By analyzing and understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the employees, an appropriate training program was designed and implemented. As evidently implied, Project PUSH proved to have aided in strategically upgrading the skills of the employees and that in effect they were able to work efficiently and utilize the skills needed in the new normal.

On the other hand, the main limitation of this study is the sparse of respondents and that there are only 11 respondents included since they are the only employees in the personnel unit. Hence, research replication or extension is highly recommended focusing on a greater number of respondents.

Generally, the result of this study would provide other departments, units, administrators, and future researchers with valuable insights on the effectiveness of the technical assistance model designed, explored, and probed in improving the work performance of employees. In the same manner, this would create an avenue where other researchers can corroborate or even refute the results of this study by extending this study with different respondents. Furthermore, the claims raised and proved in this study would aid policy makers in the development of programs, trainings, and technical assistance programs for wider scope. It is indeed virtuous that such findings would be in part a consideration for future developmental activities for employees in the division. Therefore, the results in the current study may be considered inconclusive; thus, it needs further investigations employing the same research variables to further substantiate the findings of the study.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Acknowledgments*

The HRD-team would like to express appreciation goes to the following:

- Dr. Evangeline P. Ladines, Schools Division Superintendent, and Dr. Violeta M Gonzales, Assistant Schools Division Superintendent, for initiating and revitalizing the research in the Schools Division of Paranaque and for allowing the HRD team to think outside the box with their invaluable inputs and guidance throughout in this undertaking.
- Dr. Bernardo N Mascarina, CID- Chief, Engr. Thelma F. Montiel, SGOD – Chief, and other members of the Division Research Innovation and Development Committee (DRIDC) for the insights to make this research successful. Mr. Alvin Dumas, Mr. Darius Villanueva, and Miss. Leah E. Sudsakorn for their indispensable suggestions, feedback, and recommendations to make this research possible. Participants from the Personnel Unit of the Schools Division Office also deserve appreciation for their cooperation, time, and effort in providing the HRD Research team with all the needed information. Finally, the HRD Team families for their unconditional love, patience, understanding, and support while doing this action research.
- Dr. Rodrigo C. Morales, for his rendered technical assistance and research directions he provided.

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest.

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