

Research Article

**The Educational Program Delivery System: Medium of Communication for the Rural Community**

**Mahathir Yahaya, PhD, Masarah Mohamad Yusof PhD, Azlinda Azman, PhD, Farhana KamarulBahrin, PhD & Nur Atikah A Rahman, Ph.D**

School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

School of Communication, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Main Author: mahathiryahaya@usm.my

Corresponding author: masarahmy@usm.my

**Abstract**

An effective delivery system is essential in spreading any form of information about education to the community. Particularly, the essence of any education program may not be delivered to the society if the utilized system is inefficient. Thus, the aim of this article is to identify the medium of educational delivery systems that are used among the rural community of Baling. A total of 10 parents were involved in the in-depth interview process. Data acquired is analyzed through thematic analysis. The research suggested that the rural community opt for meetings or similar gatherings as their preferred medium to obtain information from the schools acting in the redelivery of the government. This article viewed that Baling community is in need of help from the local communities and the non-governmental bodies to obtain information about education programs. The 'top to bottom' and 'bottom up' approaches are needed to empower the people of Baling.

**Keywords**

Education program, delivery system, rural community, schools, Baling

**Introduction**

Management in the government sector is often being enhanced, but the issues plaguing the delivery system has not received considerable attention. Menor, Roth and Mason (2001) argued that the research on delivery systems, especially in the context of information dissemination to the community, should be pursued due to its lacking nature. In spite of the lack of attention, the government is seen to have made various efforts to improve the delivery system, especially for people in the rural areas. Specifically, this effort is apparent through the Tenth Malaysia Plan (10<sup>th</sup> MP) that was introduced in charting the development of the country between 2011 until 2015. In the plan, the government has been trying to improve the public delivery system to accommodate the rural communities in their everyday

## The Educational Program Delivery System: Medium of Communication for the Rural Community

lives to instill a culture of information venture, skills, and knowledge . The village-without-wires program that involved installation of Internet cable lines in 5,737 villages all over the country has been pursued . In addition, 971 telecommunication towers have been built to provide the rural community access to the Internet for various purposes including the needs of education .

These governmental efforts are specifically for the rural communities due to the wide gap between them and those living in the cities in terms of various aspects, including that of education. This is because the responsibility of information dissemination has primarily been the work of the government sectors rather than its private counterpart, especially with regard to improving the problems associated with the delivery services (Verma, 2005). Hence, it is clear that a delivery system is indeed necessary for the rural societies, in the field of education. However, the study conducted by Yahaya, Azman, Mohamad Yusof, Kamrul Nahrin & Md akhir (2020), found that despite government's efforts to upgrade the delivery system, those living in rural communities are unable to obtain information from the government. The pressures of life like poverty that these people are enduring is hindering the government in its role to channel information (Wisniewski & Olafsson, 2004). This is because the government uses various methods in delivering information, especially on their websites, Whatsapp application and e-mails that rely on Internet connection. For the rural communities, one main constraint in education is possessing an Internet connection. Recognising that the rural community as those of low income earners, it is well expected that the learning tools are unavailable for them, thus, making them unable to attain information from the government. This notion is supported by Wan Sofiah (2007), which specifies one of the main educational challenges of the rural community is financial. Due to their low incomes, they are unable to provide the essential learning tools for studies in a home like an Internet line, resulting in being unable to access information provided by the government (Yahaya et al., 2020). A study by Ibrahim and Abd Karim (2004) found that societal income, particularly those in rural areas, plays a pivotal role in increasing efficiency of technological usage. In other words, this community faces obstacles in getting information because they are incapable of paying the costs of Internet connections and equipment, such as computers and so on. In regards to the practice of delivery service system, Zakaria and Che Razak (2008) pointed out that the will and needs of the community should be accounted before the process started. Not only that, it is imperative to measure the effectiveness of the delivery system. Therefore, this article intends to identify a suitable medium for the rural society in allowing them to obtain the information transmitted by the government.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to identify a suitable medium for the rural community to ensure that they can receive the information transmitted by the government. Therefore, to achieve the objective, this study is using a qualitative approach and in-depth interview to collect data. Since this study is scrutinizing the government's delivery system in the context of education, a school in the district of Baling is selected to attain samples. This is because this district is rural in nature and has a poor education performance record (reference?). A total of 10 interviews (n=10) were conducted with the parents of the school's students. Their details were given by the school to facilitate our researchers to coordinate the interview process. In specific, the parents were chosen because they have met this study's sampling criterias, such as: First, the chosen individual should have children currently attending school in that area. Second, they need to have experience in dealing with the school. This is because researchers are to collect their experiences in receiving information from the government sector.

To determine the measure of a sample for this study, the general principle of saturation is used. This study follows the suggestion of Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi (2017), if the qualitative study is to attain data saturation, nine interviews will be sufficient to identify the problems throughout the process (this is contrary to meaning saturation, that required a higher number of respondents – between 16 to 24 interviews).

**Procedure and Interview**

Researchers build rapport ahead of time by contacting the informants. Then, a home appointment is scheduled to make sure that the informant was comfortable to meet on the agreed date and time. By agreeing to the interview, informants consent to being recorded for analytical purposes. Researchers guarantee that all personal details are not revealed and all answers provided are purely for research purposes.

Semi structured questions are used in this study based on the 5W technique (what, who, where, when, why) and 1H (how). This method is a systematic step in collecting all the data required for research or the preparation of a report regarding the current state of affairs. The problem analysis process has to be critical and constructive in nature to ensure comprehensive and quality data is collected. Therefore, it is necessary to utilize open-ended questions that requires a response whereby the consequent response will be used to identify and explain the problems that are currently being studied. Data received from the next interview is analyzed using the recommended thematic analysis as suggested by Braun dan Clarke (2006). This type of analysis helps in finding patterns of shared meaning or themes from informant’s views and experience in achieving the study’s objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

**Methodology Summary**

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<b>Method</b>	<b>Qualitative Research</b>
<b>Approach</b>	<b>Inductive Research</b>
<b>Research Sampling</b>	<b>Purposive Sampling</b>
<b>Number of informants</b>	<b>10 parents</b>
<b>Data collection method</b>	<b>In-depth Interview</b>
<b>Research Instrument</b>	<b>Guided questions (semi structured)</b>
	<b>Researcher</b>
<b>Research Analysis</b>	<b>Thematic Analysis</b>

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**RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The research found that almost all informants preferred face-to-face meetings to obtain educational information from schools. Other than that, other preferences suggest in favor of electronic medium and printed media. However, researchers only discuss face-to-face meetings in this article. The table below shows the themes that emerged from the data:

**Table 1:**  
*Three themes of the education delivery system for the rural community*

<b>Theme/(n)</b>	<b>R1</b>	<b>R2</b>	<b>R3</b>	<b>R4</b>	<b>R5</b>	<b>R6</b>	<b>R7</b>	<b>R8</b>	<b>R9</b>	<b>R10</b>	<b>%</b>
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The Educational Program Delivery System: Medium of Communication for the Rural Community

<b>Electronic Medium (n=1)</b>	√											10
<b>Print Media (n=1)</b>	√											10
<b>Meetings (n=9)</b>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	100

Findings portrayed that informants R2, R4, R4, R4 and R7 received educational information related to their children from schools via meetings as they maintained a good relationship with the school staff, with some referring to them being like "good old friends," providing a simple channel to be aware of school programs that were conducted as well as their child's performance without needing to rely on other mediums.

*"Well, we often meet up. I work at the PPD, of course I know all the programs conducted in schools throughout the Baling district. All records of the programs you run at the schools are kept at the PPD. Even a friend of mine is teaching at my child's school. "*

*"Of course. I'm active politically. Whatever the program they're holding in Baling, I'll know. I have a lot of friends at the PPD too. The teachers at the school my children goes to are my friends. "*

*"There is. There was an invite to a Yassin reading program for the SPM students. Although I don't teach at my kids' school, I can always find out through my other friends. "*

*"They don't come to my house. But meeting up with the teachers is regular. I'm a school guard, If I see them, I'll ask them. The teachers have told me about some programs. I'm more comfortable meeting up directly. "*

*"There haven't been house meetings before. Because we do work at the school, whenever we see the teachers, we just ask them. It's much easier to meet up. "*

On the other hand, there were also informants that mentioned they often meet teachers in public places, such as wedding feasts, mosque, and at work. More importantly, it is because they feel more comfortable with face-to-face meetups. With face-to-face communication, the informant can provide effective interaction and exchanging of information with one another. The information will also be received well without any confusion, as they can give their feedback directly.

*"There are also teacher coming to feasts. Like those Yassin readings, we get invited. We talk about the future. It's nothing big, just easy to ask anything "*

*"There was one time at the mosque. They invited me to attend the program. I cannot remember which program. If we talk directly, it's much easier"*

*"I'd rather see the teacher when I am outside like when attending a feast. My house setting is uncomfortable. If I'm out of there, I feel comfortable talking about my daughter's school. "*

*"I meet them at the community center when there is a public meeting. Not just the programs, I want to be updated on my child's class performance. "*

However, there was an informant, R1, who said this method of meeting was never practiced by them. This may be due to the meeting method was not practical for some informants due to certain issues. For instance, when there is a tight schedule, the informant does not use meetings as a medium

to get information on activities conducted in school. However, they can get the information via electronic media (email and websites) via the Internet. However, the informant agrees with meetings being used to obtain information.

*"It's nothing really, if the teacher stops by at my house, I won't be at home. The teachers have never come either way. I work, day in and day out. But if I do get to meet them, it is better, as I can ask. I agree with meetings as a medium as it can be comprehensive in nature when it comes to discussions. If that doesn't happen, the school will just email me, or I just check in the school website. It's all there. But I'd rather meet. It's more fun "*

In conclusion, most informants agree to the meeting method in disseminating education information. This is because they are more comfortable in meeting each other directly. By using face-to-face communication approach in meetings, the information is better understood by the informant and indirectly, the informant can give effective responses to the teacher. Any questions or confusion about their children's education, can be discussed clearly. This reveals that the method or the face-to-face meeting medium is the best option for parents who represent the local Baling community, in learning about programs or their children's activities or information from the government.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Media**

Today, media often appears to sacrifice the value of truth to protect the interests of certain parties whether it is the media owner or others that are controlling the broadcasts. This results in the media sacrificing the principles of truth, and at times disseminate false or imprecise information. With the flourishing information technology and communication such as mass media, the rapid changes have revolutionized every aspect of the society. The ability of mass media is seen in providing information to spearhead change and to influence the society's patterns. In specific, mass media is currently bringing the society into new cultural patterns that has begun to determine the behavioral pattern and cultural actions of society. Without realizing, mass media has organized our lives and created a set number of needs. The media is developing from only a verbal culture, which is words and spread of information via the mouth that can be further sharpened as a weapon through writing or print media.

From one perspective, the media is indeed an important agent of change for society. In Baling, particularly, media is an agent of change for this rural community as they did not prefer the media as a medium to channel information. In their perspective, this new media will change the culture of their lives that have always been face-to-face communication without the need for any equipments such as gadgets and computers. To them, it is much easier to obtain information from the government sector via face-to-face interaction, rather than the media. In contrary, Cohen (1960), one of the communication scholars, suggested that media does not tell us what to think, but it does influence what we are thinking about.

Besides, the challenges of channeling technology in rural areas serves a problem for electronic media use. Such difficulties are supported by research conducted by Mohamed et al. (2012), about efforts in narrowing the digital gap by looking at case studies in the rural community such as in the city of Kundang Ulu, Muar Johor. This research found that the digital gap is an ongoing issue in Kundang Ulu, limiting the dissemination of information from the school to those in the community. This also

## The Educational Program Delivery System: Medium of Communication for the Rural Community

happens to rural communities such as Baling. They perceived it is easier to meet directly because through face-to-face meetings messages can be conveyed in a clearer manner.

Although face-to-face meetings fosters a more interpersonal communication among the rural communities and government sectors, the adaptation of electronic media such as the Internet in their daily lives should also be instilled. This is to deter the people of the rural areas from being left behind in terms of Internet technology advances. With the new media, valuable knowledge can be generated faster and achieve greater widespread than ever, aside from accommodating the lifelong learning experiences. With the use of the Internet, the rural society can further improve the quality of thoughts by bringing good values to the community. The use of ICT is the fastest platform to gain knowledge with no boundaries that can additionally be utilized in socialization, economic, employment, political, and education. By using electronic media, the Baling community will become more knowledgeable, facilitating easier access to information via the Internet.

### **MEETING METHOD**

In some rural communities, the people are fond of conducting social activities. This also includes the Baling community. They preferred in having face-to-face meeting to discuss something directly, including matters pertaining to the status of their child's education and performances. They also stated that the conventional medium is often used by their parents to connect with the teachers to acquire information on education programs conducted at the school. Meetings were also arranged by the school to the student's homes via home meetings. Moreover, some of the informants practiced this meeting medium because their parents work at schools. Indeed, this social patterns facilitated the need for home meetings.

Other than that, meetings were also carried out at the mosques and surau, where the communal activities were held. Parents took this opportunity to obtain information about education programs and their child's performances in schools from teachers who were also present at the events in the mosque and surau. Most parents were in agreement of this method. They were also informants that obtain information regarding school activities during Friday prayers at the mosque. The informants' parents were very comfortable with this approach as the mediator of information. This is because the mosque is a place for a community gathering and is appropriate to deliver information. This is supported by the research of Mohd Rozaini et. al (2014) who stated in recent years, the mosques in Malaysia have been actively involved in activities based in the mosque itself. The target participants for such activities includes all ages such as veterans, youths, teenagers and children. In fact, such programs get immense participation during school holidays, especially among the youths. This also applies to corporate bodies that center their social services around the mosque. Therefore, it turns out the mosque can be a point of reference. This underlies Nor Azzah's (2012) argument that the mosque library is clearly emphasized by the local organization committee recently. The mosque library that is well-received will have a positive impact on the local community specifically and Muslim communities in general. Thus, the objective to make the mosque as the center of reference and source of reading is the best outcome based on current development.

However, this could only happen if the community of parents take interests about their children's education. For Hord (1997), a successful community is a community that emphasizes the education of their members. This is in line with Yahaya (2008), who concurs that the communities with the desire to increase the standards of life, will receive better support from a successful community and

their full participation. This is because members who are still undergoing the schooling process, such as the students need the support from their parents in raising their school standards and thus, stabilize their socioeconomy and improve their family background (Hill & Craft, 2003). With the cooperation between the parents and the schools in organizing the educational programs, these activities were conducted to ensure that all students show an improvement in their performance at school. This proves that the meeting medium is necessary in facilitating discussions regarding the programs and activities that will be conducted in school. There were also informants that attained the information on education available at the schools through weddings and community service. This is because announcements about the school programs were often made during the ceremony. This facilitates the dissemination of information to the parents who attended the ceremony. This highlights the importance of two-way communication in obtaining information about education programs at school.

The choice for face-to-face meeting is one of the few efforts in defending the culture of community within society that the Baling community upholds. Face-to-face meetings can be considered as an efficient medium and has high richness characteristics namely the availability of immediate response, support for various signals, use of natural language, and a focus on individuals at a personal level (Liu, Rau & Wendler, 2014). Based on that, face-to-face communication can be classified as the media with the highest position in the hierarchy of richness (for example, Media Richness Theory (MRT)) when compared to other media tools such as leaflets, memos, bulletins and so on (Noraihan, Mohd Saibi & Sabrina, 2016). Hence, the school needs to strive to preserve this culture because with these communal activities, information about education programs being conducted in schools can be disseminated more effectively to the public.

It is no surprise that there is a good relationship between the members of the mosque committee with the school. Such a relationship between the mosque and the school is the culture in rural communities. School is an important component to these people. For them, schools were used for social gatherings, whether it be for village meetings, while others have used it for festive events and village activities like cooking classes. Similarly, the mosque community members comprising of the local villagers has helped the schools in delivering information to the public. The schools used a mosque to convey information about the program that were conducted. The lack of electronic media like the Internet in spreading information is in line with the principles of the schools or governments in defending the culture among the Baling community that often utilised the face-to-face medium in getting information. This allows the schools to effectively disseminate information to the society. This allows society to maintain their communal bonds among each other, thus fostering a communal closeness in their daily life.

Therefore, the government or schools should preserve the culture of the Baling community by emphasizing on face-to-face communication as a meeting medium. This will help disseminate information and solve the problems associated with the lack of emphasis on electronic medium due to no home Internet. Therefore, the government needs to introduce Internet technology as a medium to obtain information. Teachers must provide students the space to use computer rooms at schools to garner information. If both these items are implemented in the Baling community, it will ease the flow of information to them without the need to disrupt their culture whilst simultaneously instilling the knowledge of information technology to ensure they will strive to achieve it in the near future.

### **Face-to-Face Communication**

## The Educational Program Delivery System: Medium of Communication for the Rural Community

Face-to-face communication method is used in this meeting medium. With the meeting activities occurring face-to-face, the parents or the students can communicate directly with the school. Maimunah Osman (2000) supports this notion by saying that face-to-face communication is the foundation of a relationship between one person and another. It is also in line with the research of Noraihan, Mohd Saibi and Sabrina (2016) that stated face-to-face is the most effective media in the process of communication. Face-to-face communication is considered to be a media that is on the highest level hierarchy of richness due to its ability to explain the uncertainty and ambiguities of the individual in fulfilling all criterias such as spontaneous communication or immediate response, using multiple communication signals, language that is easily understood by the individual, and focus on the individual's needs.

Face-to-face communication between students and parents with the school will unite the community. With such meetings via face-to-face communication happening, it will ease the flow of information regarding the education programs conducted at the school. Communication between students and parents is essential to channel the program's information and in sustaining students' good performance in education. It also means that if communication were absent in a family, then information about activities and programs that are conducted in schools remain unknown to parents. This will result in the programs organized by the school are not able to receive the desired participation and impede the child's performance.

Two-way communication medium communication is more suitable for the rural community that are conservative in nature. This is because they prefer to meet in crowds or social activities. This medium is unanimously agreed upon by the coordinating informants that indicated mode of meeting is best suited for the local community. The coordinators have always welcomed the arrival or meetings with parents to help them get the information on education programs available at the school. The parents will also have many opportunities to understand and learn the essence of the program being conducted with the provided explanations by the school's authorities.

In this context, two-way communication, which refers to the dialogue method, is the best method in circulating information. Such communication has sufficient space to channel information that the coordinator can utilize and offer the opportunity to provide feedback to the executors. However, the executor is unable to facilitate home visits for all students. This is due to the limited amount of energy and time to conduct it in this way. This can be solved if this communication method was accompanied by the community's own involvement (Abdullah, 2003). With the local community's involvement, they will be able to help the school in spreading school information. The program information can be passed on to the community representatives through the heads of the community or the PTA representatives. When the leader of the community has a close relationship with the school, it will make it easier to channel the information regarding the education program. The leader of this community will then deliver the information received to the village committee members to eventually deliver those messages to the parents. All of these activities practice face-to-face communication via dialogues.

This dialog communication can be regarded as a weapon to influence society to be active in the available programs. This activity will allow them to give feedback by providing insights, voice out problems, and express feelings about obstacles that are needed to overcome. The input obtained can help the coordinator further improve the available programs as well as plan future program based on the needs of the community. This is in line with Diaz Bordenave (1994), whom mentioned the availability of dialog provides opportunities to society to share information, give opinions and obtain

experience upon participation in the arranged activities or program, so that we can identify the best solution to improve quality of life through education. This can be applied in the programs by the coordinator by disseminating information on education to the society. Stuart and Bery (1996) noted that activities through participatory communication is a communal process whereby members learn more about themselves by engaging in local activities. In addition, with social participation in a society, there will be a resultant face-to-face communication among individuals in channeling the information to its members (Mus Chairil, Jamilah & Norazimah, 2011). This is because two-way communication between individuals allows the appreciation of valuable insight into the other's perspective. This shows this two-way communication can create participation in local communities (Abdullah, 2003). With this communication, the involvement of society in the community development will be more promising. Hence, face-to-face communication can help society in getting the information regarding the programs conducted by the coordinator.

Considering the form of the education system in the Baling community, it can be inferred that electronic media is not appropriate to be used in channeling information to the public. This is because most of the people in rural areas do not have an Internet connection. With the lack of facilities, students become disinterested in learning about the school activities, and as a result, fail to even attempt to recount such information to their parents. This will hinder the transfer of the information from the program coordinator to the parents. However, the weakness of the electronic media can be assisted by the print media in terms of providing the information on education programs. The printing media referred here is via letters. All schools utilize letters as a delivery system on available programs. The details of the program are described in detail in letters prepared by the schoolteachers via the counseling teacher. This letter is given to the student to be delivered to parents. However, one weakness in this system is when the student does not deliver the letter to their parents, dissuading the print medium from being used in giving education information to parents.

Upon further scrutiny, many obstacles or problems are faced by the students and parents when using this specific form of delivery. Therefore, researchers find that the meeting medium is the preferred option for obtaining information on education program. This meeting method can be viewed in two ways, whether the executor provides the information to the parents or a parent who gets their own information from the parties of interests. This is because the people feel more comfortable by meeting the school directly. With this method, they can get information about the program being conducted and give feedback quickly to the presenter. In this meeting activity, researchers find that the element of face-to-face communication exists. This face-to-face communication is seen as a weapon in the meeting medium. Face-to-face communication will help society obtain information throughout the meeting. It is a perfect fit for the people of Baling who value building relationships.

Particularly, rural communities such as Baling are firm in upholding their concept of society. The structure of their society comprising of relatives will make it easier to hold communal activities. According to this, rural societies still utilize the meeting medium in getting information. Having fostered a close relationship amongst themselves increases their frequency of meetups and so, they are not shy in asking questions, even personal ones. For them, to share experiences of life has been their practice for a long time. It is evident that society today no longer conduct community activities due to their busy workload. This requires a mechanism so that the culture of society can be nurtured in ensuring a social transformation for a better life. With a warm personality and readily getting to know each other in the community will help foster a closer relationship with the local community as well as cultivate unity amongst each other. This is why a face-to-face meeting method can easily be implemented among the Baling community to attain information on programs at school. Therefore, a meeting medium with

## The Educational Program Delivery System: Medium of Communication for the Rural Community

a direct communication element can be identified as a form of the education delivery system in the Baling community.

Even so, the strength of those with interests in this meeting method is that they need to ensure that the information is delivered. It has been said before that with the participation of the local community will realize successful information dissemination via the face-to-face communication method. Nevertheless, the engagement of social workers will help ease the flow of more information to the public. School social workers are capable of strengthening cooperation effectively by collaborating with school counselors, students, and local communities (Alavi & Amin, 2011). This is fitting in the role of social workers in helping schools serve as a link with society and other agencies that are involved (Dupper, 2003). Social workers will cooperate with the school and community in being connected to channel the education program that is conducted at school.

Therefore, to ease the launch of the meeting medium as the main medium in the Baling district, cooperation with the local community and social workers should be instilled to ease the flow of information. The school social workers need to be placed in all schools, because they can work with the schools in handling various problems that need guidance and help to increase their student's performance in particular rural area like Baling.

### **Community Collaboration and Social Workers**

In order to improve channeling of information at school, the community's involvement with the appropriate approach needs to be applied. The "top-down" approach, which refers to the channel from the school to parents, is often used in the Baling district. This indicates that information transfer at schools is one-sided. Hence, the "bottom-up" approach is also seen as a need for the Baling community. This approach, in practice, will require parents to know about the program being conducted in school. This is because the bottom-up approach emphasizes community participation in order to cooperate with the government (Waisbord, 2008). With the community involvement and the bottom-up approach, it will make it easier for the school to channel the information to society, especially the parents. In this situation, school social workers are also seen to play the role of disseminating information. This is because the social workers work as facilitators and mediators to the school in order to transfer information to the local community overseen by the based information by the Organisasi Berasaskan Komuniti (OBK). This is supported by Aslali et al. (2012), who mentioned that the role of social workers is to work with all manners of individuals that comprise of families, neighbors, community, and social policies are to improve the available school system.

### **Conclusion**

Indeed, the Baling community does not use social media as a practice of obtaining information from schools representing the government. They prefer to use more conventional methods because they are more transparent and clearly show communication. It is also closely related to the culture of rural communities which prioritizes clear and transparent relationships without disguise. This is the effort of the Baling community to choose the 'Meeting' method by using face-to-face communication as a medium to obtain information. The cooperation of these three groups (schools, community parents and

social workers), information about educational programs can be channeled accurately to people who understand the community and the community can provide feedback to the school.

Social participation is key in tackling this problem. The collaboration of the local community like the Organisasi Berasaskan Komuniti (OBK) and social workers serve as an aid to the local Baling community and the coordinators like the PPD and the school to channel information. However, the correct method is the foundation of the success of the delivery system. The "top to bottom" and "bottom-up" approaches need to be implemented. For the case of the "top-to-bottom" approach, the School (government) has delivered the information on the program to the parents (community). What is emphasized here is the "bottom-up" that trains society to be more responsible in attaining information on the education programs conducted in high school.

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