

Assessing Implementation and Sustainability Factors of Economics-Focused Service-Learning Engagements

Philip Tuaño

Lecturer, Ateneo de Manila University

Presentation for 4th Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Service-Learning
June 6th, 2013, Lingnan University, Hong Kong

Outline

- Introduction
- Theory and Practice of Social Development Course
- Review of Literature and Methodology
- Cases of service learning projects
- Factors Affecting Implementation and Sustainability of Service Learning
- Conclusion

Introduction and objectives

- Most research on service-learning has focused on student learning outcomes, but very little on community impacts
- However, in order to sustain S-L activities, it is also important to consider to what degree projects have been successful in improving community outcomes
- This study reviews the implementation and sustainability of project-oriented service-learning projects of a course at the Economics Department at the Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines
- Part of a broader study on service learning initiatives at the University

Course Description and Framework

- The economics course (Theory and Practice of Social Development) was first organized in the university 1975 to give academic credit for students undertaking voluntary activities in marginalized communities
- The course became a **core requirement** for senior year economics and management economics majors in the mid 1980s
- The aim of the course is to introduce to students social development issues and problems in the country, and to provide tools for planning, implementation and evaluation of community-based interventions in Metro Manila and surrounding areas

Course Description and Framework

Types of service-learning interventions:

Type	Skills required	Examples	Impact/ Use
Community Profile Write-up	Socio-economic profiling, data analysis	Profile of households in urban poor areas, farming areas	Develop project interventions useful for community
<i>Development of project interventions</i>	Criteria to assess alternatives, logical framework planning tool	Water system in urban poor area; indigenous community farm; candle making proposal for prisoners	Translation into proposal for grant, loan funding; implementation by resource agencies
Project evaluation/ assessment	Cost-benefit analysis, impact assessment	Assessment of foreign funded assisted livelihood projects for indigenous peoples group	Realignment of project funds to more successful components

Review of literature and methodology

- It has been known that service-learning provides significant benefits to student learning and classroom pedagogy
- However, it has been noted that research on effects on community has been anecdotal, i.e., Cruz and Giles (2000)
- Some of the important factors that have been noted to affect SL impact on communities are:
 - Compatibility of communities with vision, mission and goals of educational institution
 - Improving lines of communication between institution and communities
 - Projects are able to mediate between learning outcomes and community needs

Review of literature and methodology

- Other factors ensuring S-L impact on communities are:
 - Ensuring students have adequate service orientation and skills
 - School commitment
 - Community organizational capacity
- Study examines 'implementation (i.e., process)' and 'sustainability (i.e., outcome)' factors that have affected 1 'fully successful', 1 'partially successful' and 2 'not successful' S-L projects; 'success' is *defined as student proposals implemented by community and sustained over a certain period of time*
- Methodology is the use of FGD and KII among students, community representatives and institutional intermediaries; assessment methodology utilizes questionnaire assessing process and impact factors for the conduct of S-L activities

Lambatan project in Barangay Uno

- In 2009, leaders of a fisherfolk organization, Samahan ng Mangingisda sa Barangay Uno, SMBB1, requested a feasibility plan in expanding **marketing of fishing net** to other areas
- Economics majors assessed expansion in three barangays; using cost-benefit analysis, they assessed project efficiency, amount of capital needed by the project and the priority areas for expansion
- Community with institutional support undertook **expansion** in late 2009
- Results
 - Increased total sales of fishing net; margins are around 15- 16 percent
 - Reduced cost of fishing net from 660 pesos to 500 pesos every 3 months
 - Increased quality of nets daily catch from 5 to 8 kilos per day



Livelihood in Tanglaw Buhay

- Composed mainly of **senior citizens** in the Quiapo, Manila, undertaking entrepreneurial activities to support their families; skills survey showed that most were knowledgeable in **sewing, cooking**
- In August 2009, students suggested that they market '**huggable pillows**' that were sewn by senior citizens; students provided designs to senior citizens group
- Another student group assisted the senior citizens starting in July 2010; they suggested that the group produced **canvas bags** that can also be handpainted and sold to the market
- Students assisted with marketing of products, with sales at Php 52,000 in merchandise, with 10 percent going to senior citizens as salaries; total payments reached Php 15,000 by March 2009 and Php 7,500 by March 2010; sewing machine provided



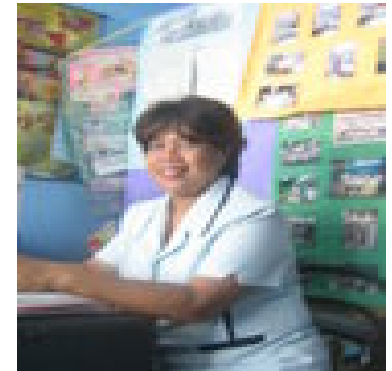
Goat's milk project in Puncan



- Kalinga ng Kalikasan ng Puncan (KAPUNCAN) in Puncan, Carranglan, Nueva Ecija, was organized in 2007 to protect the forest reserve around Mt. 387 in the barangay
- student group proposed the production of **fruit-infused carabao's milk** in the community under the Dairy Godmothers brand; funding was supposed to be derived from social enterprise competition
- However, there were problems in terms of **negotiation between the community and a government body providing carabaos** and the group had difficulties in negotiating between the two parties
- This issue was not resolved and the community project did not take off

Plastic waste project in Sitio Arenda

- Kilusan ng Mamamayan ng Pasig (KUMPAS) is an urban poor organization advocating **urban poor** concerns in the city starting in late 1990s
- An Eco 177 group noticed the high volume of plastic waste in the area; the group examined the feasibility of implementing a **plastic waste to bricks project** in the area
- Under the feasibility assessment, the plastic waste project would only be successful if a **guaranteed amount of plastic waste** would be provided; the DOST would provide the machine and the barangay would maintain the facility
- But KUMPAS had problems in **advocating the project** to the local governments



Factors in SL implementation

Dimension	Factors	Assessment
Process Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selection and engagement of service learning partners - Strategies undertaken to address community needs - Initiation of service learning activities - Defining and managing expectations among different stakeholders - Interest and preparation of students and community and other stakeholders - Communication and types of activities undertaken in the community - Submission of report to client, utilization of output by client - Institutional support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of orientation is important • Initial community ownership of SL intervention and presence of local skills made the SL interventions more likely to be successful • Community levelling off and management of expectations are necessary at the start of intervention • Feedback to the community of proposed intervention leads to better community ownership • Post-service learning evaluation and planning is necessary

Factors in SL implementation

Dimension	Factors	Assessment
Impact Factors- Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perspectives in service learning (clarity of goals, community use and valuation of output, engagement of university personnel) - Attitude towards student involved (including perceived benefits) - Relationship with and perceived competence/ capacity of students - Satisfaction in participation in service learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding service learning goals and supervision of student SL intervention is important for community • Main motivation for community participation is to increase availability of financial resources; but partners were motivated in terms of undertaking new activities and developing new relationships • Main concern of the community is short length of time of student commitment and their skills to adequately supervise students • Student involvement in the community mainly brought new energy to the community
11/6/2013	Eco 177 service learning	13

Analysis

- Important factors that differentiate the projects are the following:
 - **Organizational capacity:** SMBB₁ (fishing net) and Tanglaw Buhay (bags) had existing skills to continue the project; but Tanglaw Buhay had issues in marketing
 - **School commitment:** University, through social involvement office, had important commitments in the SMBB₁ project
 - **Community expectations and levelling-off:** Lack of levelling-off of expectations constrained the implementation of Puncan (carabao's milk) project
 - **Appropriateness of project design :** Need to re-design project to ensure implementation at a smaller scale in the Kumpas (plastic to brick project)

Conclusion

- Important factors in S-L implementation
 - Community ownership of service learning proposal
 - Communication and levelling-off between student and community
 - Implementation of post-service learning evaluation and reflection
- Community views S-L to have greatest impact
 - When these provide *additional resources (not necessary financial)* to the community, when *service learning goals are clear* and when the *benefits are tangible to the community*
- Continue to further understand the factors affecting implementation and impact to derive lessons for partner selection, student orientation, etc.
 - Undertake survey-based assessment of projects for 80+ partners of the course over the last 10 years or so