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

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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
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.
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:

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

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<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Process Factors</td>
<td>- Selection and engagement of service learning partners</td>
<td>• Provision of orientation is important</td>
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<td>- Strategies undertaken to address community needs</td>
<td>• Initial <strong>community ownership of SL intervention</strong> and <strong>presence of local skills</strong> made the SL interventions more likely to be successful</td>
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<td>- Initiation of service learning activities</td>
<td>• <strong>Community levelling off</strong> and <strong>management of expectations</strong> are necessary at the start of intervention</td>
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<td>- Defining and managing expectations among different stakeholders</td>
<td>• <strong>Feedback to the community of proposed intervention</strong> leads to better community ownership</td>
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<td>- Interest and preparation of students and community and other stakeholders</td>
<td>• <strong>Post-service learning evaluation and planning</strong> is necessary</td>
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<td>- Communication and types of activities undertaken in the community</td>
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<td>- Submission of report to client, utilization of output by client</td>
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<td>- Institutional support</td>
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| Impact Factors-    | - Perspectives in service learning (clarity of goals, community use and valuation of output, engagement of university personnel)  
| Community          | - Attitude towards student involved (including perceived benefits)                                  | • Understanding service learning goals and **supervision of student SL intervention** is important for community                               |
|                    | - Relationship with and perceived competence/capacity of students                                  | • 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** |
|                    | - Satisfaction in participation in service learning                                              | • 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                                                  |
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