

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

Philip Tuaño

Lecturer, Ateneo de Manila University

Presentation for 4<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Service-Learning  
June 6<sup>th</sup>, 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



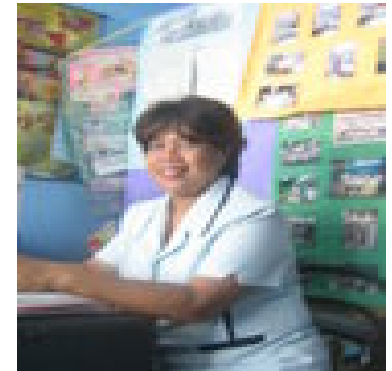
# Goat's milk project in Puncan



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

# Factors in SL implementation

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

# Analysis

- Important factors that differentiate the projects are the following:
  - **Organizational capacity:** SMBB<sub>1</sub> (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 SMBB<sub>1</sub> 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