

# Assessing the Ateneo de Manila University's Praxis Program

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# The Ateneo de Manila University and Formation for Service

- Excerpts from the University Mission
  - *Through the education of the whole person and the formation of needed professionals... the University aims to contribute to the development goals of the nation.*
  - *...the Ateneo seeks to form persons who... will devote their lives to the service of others, and through the promotion of justice, serve especially those who are most in need of help.*
- Ateneo seeks to form “persons for others”

# Theology 141: Catholic Social Vision

- Required course in Catholic Social Vision (Theology 141) for all undergraduate seniors (a little less than 2,000 students)
- Required course component since late 1980s of a three-day immersion in a marginalized community
  - ex. communities of farmers, fishermen, laborers, families of overseas contract workers, urban poor, indigenous peoples
- Expected outputs: state of the sector report, state of the community report, theological reflection

# Economics 177

- Theory and Practice of Social Development, required for all Economics and Management Economics majors since 1985.
- Required fieldwork and output relevant to the course and useful for a particular marginalized community, non-government organization or people's organization required since 1990s.
  - note: people's organizations are organizations composed of members of the marginalized communities. Ex. Association of fishermen, farmers, etc. Non-government organizations are usually composed of professional service

# The Praxis Program

- Prior to the Praxis Program: separate fieldwork for Theology 141 and Economics 177
- **Praxis Program: one community for two courses, two different outputs; presentation with clients present**
- Administered by Economics and Theology faculty, and professionals from the Office of Social Concern and Involvement (OSCI)

# Perceived Advantages of the Praxis Program

- Students spend more time with one community
- Immersion communities benefit from the technical output
- Output is integral to the academic course and is discipline-based
- Two subjects for one site contributes to administrative efficiency

# Program Status

- 100 groups of students, 700 students
- Contributions in the following forms:
  - Socio-economic profiles
  - Livelihood identification
  - Feasibility studies
  - Impact assessment
  - Operational assessment
  - Case documentation

# Program Flow

- OSCI identifies communities for Theology immersion
- OSCI, Economics faculty and communities identify possible outputs for Economics 177 (demand-driven)
- OSCI prepares students for immersion
- Students go on immersion accompanied by OSCI and are briefed during immersion on their output
- Students re-visit the community
- Students prepare output and present to the faculty with representatives from the community present
- Students are assessed by the faculty and the community



# Assessment of Praxis

- Yearly assessments but no over-all evaluation
- Assessment based on evaluation documents, interviews, personal experience

# Students' Assessment

- (+) Relevance
- (+) Deepened understanding of communities
- (+) Challenging frameworks
- (-) Access to sites
- (-) Need for discussion with students on theology and economics

# Assessment by the Communities

- Generally appreciative of students' output
- Main reason why some were not happy: Expectations differed. Measures taken to address this include:
  - Semestral conferences between OSCI and faculty
  - Briefing during the immersion with OSCI, the community and the students
  - Submission of first draft to community

# Most Visible Examples of Impact

- P1,000,000 (US\$22,000) World Bank grant awarded to client.
- P20,000 (US\$220) raised for water pump after cost-benefit study
- Community profiles of indigenous peoples that were used by an NGO for strategic planning in one town
- 2 aborted projects, one worth P50,000 (US\$1,100)

# Assessment of Community Impact: Need for Follow-Through

- People's organizations have no funding to follow-through on recommendations after socio-economic profiles, feasibility studies and project proposals.
  - Possible interventions:
    - Conduct capacity building sessions in resource mobilization or project proposal writing
    - Ensure organizations have necessary requirements to receive grants
    - Source funds from graduates who immersed in the community
- No follow through on NGOs.

# General Assessment

- Appreciated by students, communities
- In some cases, impact to the community is high-profile.
- The main challenge is follow-through on recommendations

# Prospects for the Praxis Program

- Expanding Praxis to cover other units in the University
  - Communications, Information Design, John Gokongwei School of Management, Biology, Health Sciences and Environmental Science
- Service learning beyond Theology 141

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