

Community Engagement Of State Universities And Colleges In The Philippines: Towards Socially And Culturally Responsible Research And Extension Initiatives

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Abstract: This research paper aimed to present and discuss community engagement of State Universities and Colleges in the Philippines, and if SUCs do community engagement in a socially and culturally-responsible way. It also identified some issues and challenges of SUCs in establishing community engagement. It employed the descriptive research design, and purposively collected conceptual and research literature to answer the research objectives. Questions were also asked from considered experts in community engagements. The community engagements of SUCs generally were its four plus one-function namely instruction, production, and internationalization but it was found out that the heart of community engagement is research and extension. There were issues and challenges identified in conducting research and extension, relevant to the attainment of community engagement. Lastly, SUCs were socially and culturally-responsible in conducting its research and extension initiatives.

Keywords: instruction, production, internationalization, initiatives

Introduction

Community is a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings [1]. This depicts that the major factor comprising the community is the “people” and the other elements, are the structures, services, culture, tradition and others; there could be behaviour individualities among community people but there’s also commonness in them, more particularly as a human being. A strictly structured or cook book approach to participatory community research, programs, and development initiatives won’t work because of community people’s diversity [1]. They experienced differently about life and practical daily living, leading them to create different meanings and constructs on issues and concerns. Diversity must be addressed first so that the mentioned approach may be effectively utilized. Definition of community could be based on the context of someone who leads the group, situation they experience, and identification of who the community members are and not based from Community Engagement, CDC, 1997 [2]. In addition, community could be a people’s group with common characteristics such geographical location, interests, values, experiences, or traditions. It is also an emotion or feeling of belongingness, a relationship, a place, or an institution from CDC, 1997 [3]. On the other hand, engagement, based on literature, is sometimes difficult to define and especially difficult to measure. For most projects, engagement means that the individual understands the purpose of the initiative, develops a sense of ownership, commits to the process and the outcome, and works toward achieving success according to CDC, 1997. Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioral changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves

partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices from CDC, 1997 [3]. Community engagement refers to individuals that come together and form a group, and achieve together a common goal. It involves the process of building a grassroots movement involving communities. It primarily deals with the practice of moving communities toward positive behavioral change among individual people in the community, and eventually the whole community, hopefully the entire society, which may take years to achieve. Community engagement describes the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities such as local, state, regional, national, and global, for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. The three categories of engagement are curricular, outreach and partnership, and curricular engagement and outreach and partnership [4]. Higher Education Institutions or HEIs particularly SUCs or the State Universities and Colleges are committed to foster quality education through its four-fold function namely instruction, research, extension, and production. Nowadays, internationalization initiatives is also a part of a SUC’s function; one of the avenues in doing this is through partnership and collaboration in research and extension, students and faculty exchange programs, cultural experiences, and immersion programs to name a few. There is connection between community engagement, research and extension, and State Universities and Colleges. Each SUC is mandated to do research and create knowledge, and this created knowledge may be applied through upholding extension services. Furthermore, community engagement could be sustainably done and promoted by conducting extension services. Higher education institutions are mandated to render extension service hand in hand with instruction, research and production. This is in recognition of the vital role colleges and universities play in the

development of communities, especially the underserved and depressed [5]. Extension refers to the act of communicating, persuading and helping specific sectors or target clientele, as distinguished from those enrolled in formal degree programs and course offerings, to enable them to effectively improve production, community and or institutions, and quality of life [6]. Over the years, higher education has faced social and economic dynamics that have influenced the architecture dimensions of and approaches to research, innovation, and extension. Quite a number of interlocking discourses have also nuanced this definitions and approaches such as tension between basic and applied research, necessity to address questions of practical relevance, nurturing independent inventive and creative thinking and experimentation, research for innovation vs. research on innovation, partnership between universities and industry, academic and intellectual freedom, global research partnerships, and trans, multi, and inter-disciplinary engagements and changing lifelong learning needs. In the process, paradigm shifts were noted in research, innovation, and extension, patterns and structures of funding, and the formulation of outcomes [7]. Community is a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings [1]. This depicts that the major factor comprising the community is the “people” and the other elements, are the structures, services, culture, tradition and others; there could be behaviour individualities among community people but there’s also commonness in them, more particularly as a human being. A strictly structured or cook book approach to participatory community research, programs, and development initiatives won’t work because of community people’s diversity [1]. They experienced differently about life and practical daily living, leading them to create different meanings and constructs on issues and concerns. Diversity must be addressed first so that the mentioned approach may be effectively utilized. Definition of community could be based on the context of someone who leads the group, situation they experience, and identification of who the community members are and not (Community Engagement, CDC, 1997 cited by [2]. In addition, community could be a people’s group with common characteristics such geographical location, interests, values, experiences, or traditions. It is also an emotion or feeling of belongingness, a relationship, a place, or an institution (CDC, 1997; [3]. On the other hand, engagement, based on literature, is sometimes difficult to define and especially difficult to measure. For most projects, engagement means that the individual understands the purpose of the initiative, develops a sense of ownership, commits to the process and the outcome, and works toward achieving success (CDC, 1997). Community engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioral changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices CDC, 1997; [3]. Community engagement refers to individuals that come together and form a group, and achieve together a common goal.

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Research Objective

The major objective of this research paper is to discuss the community engagement of State Universities and Colleges in the Philippines to observe if SUCs initiatives on research and extension are socially and culturally responsible. Moreover, issues and challenges in conducting research and extension are presented and analyzed, and recommend measures how these issues and challenges may be lessened, if not totally solved.

Methodology

This research used the descriptive research design. Its major purpose is to present and discuss the community engagement of State Universities and Colleges in the Philippines to know if SUCs initiatives on research and extension are socially and culturally responsible. Relevant literatures were collected to answer the research objective. The researcher also asked some experts who are officials of a university under the research, development, and extension services offices. Views and thoughts on research and extension problems through online sharing were also gathered, as it substantiated the community engagement discussion. Moreover, it is assumed that research and extension is reversibly affected by the high or low level engagement of communities.

Results and Discussion

Community Engagement of State Universities and Colleges in the Philippines. The State Universities and Colleges in the Philippines are all community engaged by accomplishing its mandates and functions. Generally these are instruction, research, extension, production, and internationalization. This paper is focused on research and extension engagement as based on regular conversation with extensionists; it comes out that we would truly be able to establish community engagement through research and extension services.

Research Engagement. Aside from the academics, SUCs are likewise engaged to conduct research. Not just research but published research on high-impact journals so that aside from academic accomplishments based on its engagements, it is one of the areas credited in SUC Leveling. SUCs create their respective research thrusts and priorities and it is based on the availability of their resources and intellectual research capacity. In Batangas State University, it shall pursue thrusts and priorities which may be subjected to review at least annually by each area. These expected research areas are architecture, engineering and technology, agriculture and natural science, environment and biodiversity, entrepreneurial and business, and education, mathematics, and social sciences. These areas are also the major programs offered by the university, making it parallel to its research capacity and making the research program of the university responsive to the emerging needs and environmental changes and development. The research thrusts and priorities generally of SUCs are patterned on the national, regional, and provincial agenda of the government, identified through agenda setting and road mapping by research personnel, deans, faculty researchers, students, and external stakeholders. More specifically, the research thrusts and engagements of the university are food, energy, environment, health and medical sciences, material science, manufacturing, process, and engineering, information and communications technology, science and mathematics, and education and social sciences [8].

Extension Engagement. Extension engagement may be considered as the heart of community engagement. Through extension services, SUCs were able to extend and actualize the created knowledge of the university through insightful research to the people of the community or beneficiaries. But, it does not happen just in a snap or a wink of an eye because community engagement is a process. A clear,

careful, and thorough planning shall be done first before conducting any extension programs, activities and projects (PAPs) and soon community engagement will follow; depending on the rigidity and comprehensibility of the extension PAPs. Community Engagement is one particular outcome of effective extension PAPs that may happen through sustainable extension, and that is constantly monitored and evaluated. An integrated extension program shall include the following components:

1. Training programs – non-degree and non-credit courses offered by a college or unit;
2. Technical assistance and advisory services – to agencies, organizations, associations, and other groups;
3. Communication Information Services – communication and or dissemination of knowledge and skills to particular client groups through the various means of dissemination such as person-to-person contact, radio, television, newspaper, and other printed materials.
4. Community outreach activities – extension activities conducted in areas outside the university college, like community-based social services, pilot projects, mobile clinic, etc.
5. Technology transfer, utilization and commercialization – the process of circulating, promoting and marketing research outputs or technologies to potential users, In general, two mechanisms are used for this purpose: technology incubator – an environment and program that offers a full array of business assistance services tailored to the client companies; and technology part – a mechanism designed to stimulate the development of entrepreneurial knowledge-based micro to small and medium size enterprises [6].

Relating the SUCs extension service thrusts and priorities, the SUC shall pursue extension service programs, activities and projects (PAPs) that will enable institutions, industries and communities, particularly the depressed, and underserved to achieve sustainable development through community extension services, institutional and industry development program, and gender and development program. The community extension service is clustered into three:

Capability- Building Training Program – these are the Agricultural and Environmental Training for Farmers and Brgy. Officials, Livelihood and Technical-Vocational Skills Training, Continuing Education for Professionals and Basic Education and Information Technology Literacy Training.

Community Outreach Program – these are Food, Nutrition, Health, Sanitation, Maternal and child-care, Medical, Dental, and Optical Mission, Blood Donation, Clean and Green Community, Coastal Cleanup, Tree Planting, Nursery & Vegetable Garden Establishment, Relief Goods Operation, Gift Giving Activity, Youth and Sports Development and Environmental Camp, Visit to orphanages, prison camps, rehabilitation centers, Counseling and Legal advice, and Fund Raising for Community Development.

High-impact, Long-term Integrated Community-based Development Program – Adopt-a-Barangay Program, Adopt-a-School Program, Barangay Integrated Development Approach in Nutrition Improvement (BIDANI), and Agro-industrial Community-based Technology Center.

The Institutional and Industry Development Program is also clustered to three areas: Technical Assistance and Advisory Services – Workers Education Services AND Manpower Development Services, Information and Communication Technology, Engineering Design Consultancy, Construction Supervision, Disaster Mitigation, Solid Waste Management, Rural Development and Urban Planning, and Business and Financial Plan. Communication and Information Services – Communication and or Dissemination of knowledge and skills thru school-on-air program (DWPB FM 107.3), IEC Materials Development, and Information Drives and the last cluster is Technology Transfer, Utilization and Commercialization Program. Lastly is Gender and Development which is clustered into Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting, Gender Sensitivity Training, and Gender Analysis [9].

Issues and Challenges in Research and Extension that may affect Community Engagement.

Low faculty motivation. Faculty members as extensionists experience low motivation because they feel undervalued. This could be true based from the experiences of most faculty extensionists, that their programs, activities, and projects were given a very low point or most of time no point in the NBC evaluation. They also say that evaluation characteristics were too tight that even a director of extension services for seventeen (17) years in a university can't fill in the five (5) points for extension. In research, faculty may feel unmotivated whenever your proposal is always turned down due to technical matters. Sometimes, you do things or academic related matters all at one time, like completing your master's or doctorate degree, teaching responsibility – your teaching preparations, exam with table of specification (TOS), and teaching strategies to be used, and these may affect the quality of the research you do and even eat the time you should devote to research. In the research of [10], it came out that the teacher-respondents escalated the importance of their fellows, basically their social relationship and social role in the academic society and community, rather than the financial matters and physical working condition. It was therefore attributed that they were more concerned with their colleagues' relationship and they may be less motivated by money and good working conditions compared to their role in the society, but if the employees are over exhausted already, time will come that they might leave and give in to other companies with good pay and less toxic work.

Extension services as a second rate endeavor to research.

The friction between research and extension has been a long overdue issue. There were perceptions seeing extension services as a second rate endeavor to research, sometimes, considering a researcher more intelligent than an extensionist, where in fact, as mentioned above, all extension service PAPs should be research-based. This could probably mean that you possess good research skills if you conduct good and sustainable extension. In addition, some people's perspectives on research and extension are the factors that should be developed, that they may appreciate and consider that both are important and inseparable. The study of Kyomo supports this result, as the researcher mentioned that a strong research-extension linkage is important particularly in increasing the livestock production in their place, sub-

Saharan Africa. This could be possible if the public and private entities will harmoniously work together through research and development, input production, and technology transfer for their beneficiaries or stakeholders, primarily the farmers [11].

Multiple responsibilities and IPCR targets. This could be one of the reasons why sometimes, faculty members are not motivated to do extension. As faculty members, our major task is to teach, and yes we accept that academic teaching responsibility is coupled with writing research and conducting extension services. But how can we do it effectively if we have 18-24 unit regular course loads, or whenever you were given a local college designation or administrative position, the work and responsibilities keep on coming that you should be able to entertain it with a successful output. Moreover, sometimes we do extension service PAPs because of our IPCR targets, and if extension is forced, our effort and value of extension may be at stake. So as with research, this was highlighted earlier, but to reiterate the concept, the numerous things that we do all at one time is a factor that affects the quality of research that we write. Whenever the employee could concentrate on a set of responsibilities, good output is expected, but if it's too many, complains and rants in many ways and forms could possibly be the result. The study of Black et. al. is related to the results above as it used data from 747 rural African American mothers and incorporated role accumulation theory to test direct and indirect effects of stressors, coping behaviors, and role responsibilities on health functioning [12]. Results indicated that demands emerging from financial strain were related to compromise mental health and decreases in mothers' use of effective coping strategies and role responsibility engagement. Conversely, mothers who effectively responded to stressors and fulfilled responsibilities to their children and communities experienced enhanced mental health, which in turn promoted optimal physical health. The results can inform research and intervention with African American women.

No or low budget for research and extension. In most cases, SUCs, allot a low budget for extension PAPs. There were also cases that SUC budget is subjected to realignment and portions of the budget realigned were from extension. In so doing, the faculty extensionists are forced to use their own money in some contingency or emergency expenses. When your research proposal is not approved, it would be difficult for the researcher continue the research. It requires resources like capacity to conduct the research, effort, time, and equally important is the financial resources. It is said that organizations won't and can't work well like doing its projects, and it's the same thing in research. In support to the result above, the study of Patil disclosed that financial support is crucial for research [13]. However, winning a research grant is a difficult task. A successful grant-winning application requires an innovative research problem with best probable idea or plan for tackling it and appropriate planning of budget.

Community Engagement of State Universities and Colleges in the Philippines as Socially and Culturally-Responsible Research and Extension Initiatives.

It can be noted that all SUCs do not engage in any activity or endeavor without strong and prior bases. SUCs have to have

and use laws, executive orders, memorandum orders, ordinances and other valid documents which may be utilized as bases of university endeavors, and extension PAPs to be particular. In conducting extension services, SUC extensionists make sure that they have a research as basis, aside from request letters from stakeholders or beneficiaries. Research is also a major basis asked by accreditors whenever academic programs, particularly Community Involvement and Extension Services, are subjected to accreditation. Through a research-based extension, it's a little bit easier to justify the budget allocation for the particular extension to be conducted. We in SUCs really make sure that we use every single centavo for the benefit of the program and its beneficiaries, and most of the time researchers and extensionists are using their personal money whenever they come short of finances just to continue and go through with the research and extension programs, activities, and projects. Oakley and Garforth revealed that various social and cultural factors in extension should be considered [14]. These are structure, division, groups, formal and informal leaders, and expectations. Farming systems, social and cultural change, and barriers affect research and extension endeavors. These multiple factors are also considered by SUCs so that its research and extension efforts would earn good outputs and values.

Conclusion

The SUCs engage itself through academics, production, and internationalization, but the major ways to establish community engagement are research and extension. SUCs do always make sure that the extension PAPs conducted are research-based, and also through various ways and means of extension delivery, a sincere and true community engagement may be established. There were some issues and challenges in community engagement, particularly in research and extension. This could be a manifestation that no organization is perfectly going on, but it needs attention so that a not so good impact or possible negative results may be lessened if not totally solved. SUCs are guided by laws in a wider perspective, and specifically before engaging or doing anything, SUCs consider CHED Memorandum Orders (CMOs), Executive Orders (EOs), and research, and other documents which may be used as strong and legal bases.

Recommendation

It seems that up to this date, only some really and truly understand what extension is. As mentioned by a colleague in extension services, CHED may release a memorandum clarifying what is extension, its meaning or definition, policies, ways and means, incentives to name a few. This move may also be the platform to identify and say that extension is of co-equal importance when compared to research. As to other issues and challenges in research and extension that adversely affect good community engagement, SUC officials especially the Research, Development, and Extension officials may sit and create a management plan or possible solution, that may raise the motivation of faculty researchers and extensionists, be able to manage our responsibilities as learning facilitators, as researchers, and as extensionists, and find resources for the research and extension proposals. Lastly, SUCs believe that its research and extension initiatives are socially and culturally responsible, as SUCs do not move or work on anything without proper and strong basis. Moreover, to really enjoy

and prove the claim of a socially and culturally responsible research and extension initiatives of SUCS, it may develop a material that will determine, measure, and evaluate the level of social and cultural responsibility of SUCs research and extension initiatives.

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