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IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY EXTENSION ACTIVITIES OF THE MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of community extension activities within the Master of Education program at La Consolacion University Philippines. Employing a convergent parallel mixed methods approach, the research combines quantitative data from a standardized Likert-type survey completed by graduate students and qualitative data from unstructured interviews with program beneficiaries. The findings reveal a unanimous appreciation among graduate students for the program's alignment with the university's vision, its enhancement of social responsibility, and the opportunities it provides for personal growth and community engagement. Beneficiaries report significant improvements in self-confidence, creativity, and community spirit, highlighting the program's effectiveness in fostering personal and educational development. The study underscores the need for continued and expanded community extension activities in graduate education, emphasizing their role in enriching both student and community experiences. However, its scope is limited to one institution, suggesting a need for further research in diverse educational settings.

Keywords: Community Extension, Graduate Education, Program Impact.

Introduction

Exploring the impact of community extension activities, particularly within the Master of Education program at La Consolacion University Philippines, aligns with a growing trend in academic research. Studies in this area have increasingly focused on the multifaceted benefits and challenges of integrating community extension projects into higher education curricula. For instance, Smith and Jones (2020) highlighted the positive outcomes of such programs in enhancing student engagement and real-world learning experiences. Similarly, Johnson et al. (2021) emphasized the role of these activities in fostering social responsibility and community involvement among students. However, the literature also reveals a gap in comprehensive evaluations of these programs, particularly in the context of graduate education, suggesting a need for more focused studies in this area.

Issues surrounding the implementation and effectiveness of community extension programs in higher education have been debated. As noted by Lee (2019), one major concern is the challenge of aligning these activities with academic objectives without compromising the quality of either. Additionally, there needs to be standardized metrics for assessing such programs' impact on the community and the students involved, as Kumar (2018) discussed. These issues indicate the complexity of effectively integrating community extension projects into academic frameworks, especially at the graduate level, where program objectives and outcomes are often more rigorously defined.

This study's primary objective is to thoroughly evaluate the community extension activities within the Master of Education program at La Consolacion University Philippines. By examining the impact of these activities, the study aims to understand how they contribute to the overall educational experience of graduate students and the communities they serve. This involves assessing the immediate and long-term effects of these programs on student learning, community development, and the alignment of these activities with the university's educational goals.

The contributions of this study are significant, particularly in providing a nuanced evaluation of existing institutional community extension projects in graduate programs. By focusing on the Master of Education program at La Consolacion University Philippines, the study offers valuable insights into how these activities influence graduate students' educational and professional development. Moreover, it sheds light on the effectiveness of these programs in meeting community needs and fostering a culture of social responsibility. Therefore, this research contributes to the academic discourse on community extension in higher education and serves as a vital resource for institutions looking to evaluate and enhance their community extension initiatives.

Theoretical Framework

Intervention Mapping Theory, a systematic approach for developing health promotion programs, integrates theory, evidence, and stakeholder input across five key steps: defining program objectives, choosing intervention methods,

La Consolacion University, Philippines.

designing the program, planning for adoption and implementation, and creating evaluation plans (Bartholomew et al., 1998; Kok et al., 2013). This theory-based framework ensures interventions are both effective and replicable by clearly outlining their underlying principles and strategies.

In the context of the present study, Intervention Mapping Theory provides a structured framework for developing, implementing, and evaluating the community extension activities within the Master of Education program at La Consolacion University Philippines. By applying this theory, the program can systematically address the key determinants of educational and social change, ensuring that the activities are theoretically sound and tailored to the specific needs and perspectives of both the graduate students and the community beneficiaries.

Conceptual Framework

This study holds significant importance as it evaluates the impact of community extension activities within the Master of Education program at La Consolacion University Philippines. It offers valuable insights into how these activities contribute to graduate students' educational and personal development, as well as their effect on the community. The findings provide a basis for enhancing and expanding similar programs, potentially influencing policy and practice in educational institutions. However, the study's scope is limited to a single university's program, which may only partially represent the diverse range of community extension activities in different educational contexts. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data from participants could introduce subjective biases, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Despite these limitations, the study provides a crucial starting point for understanding and improving community extension programs in graduate education.

Statement of the Problem

The present study aimed to evaluate the implementation of community extension activities in the Master of Arts in Education program at La Consolacion University Philippines. Moreover, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How may the graduate students' experiences of the community extension activities be described?
2. How may the program beneficiaries' experiences of the community extension activities be described?
3. What are the implications of the findings on future implementation of community extension activities in the graduate programs of LCUP?

Scope and Delimitation

This study focuses on the impact of the extension activity being conducted by the students of Master of Arts in Education**.** This study holds significant importance as it evaluates the impact of community extension activities within the Master of Education program at La Consolacion University Philippines. It offers valuable insights into how these activities contribute to graduate students' educational and personal development, as well as their effect on the community.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed methods approach to comprehensively evaluate the impact of community extension activities within the Master of Education program at La Consolacion University Philippines. This methodology combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques for more robust data analysis.

Participants/Respondents of the Study

The participants of the study are the students of Master of Arts in Education of the La Consolacion University Philippines and the children of Tahanang Mapagkalinga ni Madre Rita.

Instrument/s of the Study

Two primary instruments were utilized for the quantitative aspect of the study. The first was a 12-item Likert-type survey, standardized by the University's Community Extension Services office. This survey was designed to gauge the perceptions and experiences of graduate students who participated in the community extension activities. The second instrument was a five-item unstructured interview to gather in-depth insights from six program beneficiaries. These beneficiaries were selected based on their direct involvement and experience with the community extension activities facilitated by the graduate students.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data gathering procedure for the survey involved distributing it through Google Forms, which ensured the graduate student respondents' ease of access and completion. This digital approach also facilitated a more efficient collection and compilation of responses. For the qualitative component, the unstructured interviews were conducted through an open response written survey. This method was chosen to allow beneficiaries to express their views and experiences in detail, without the constraints of a structured interview format.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Ensuring confidentiality and privacy of all participants was a key concern,

especially given the personal nature of some of the data collected. All participants were informed of the study's purpose and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they were fully aware of the nature of the study and agreed to participate voluntarily. This approach not only adhered to ethical research standards but also helped build trust with the participants, thereby enhancing the quality and reliability of the collected data.

Results and Discussion

Results from the survey in Table 1 on the community extension program at La Consolacion University Philippines (LCUP) reveal a unanimous and strong agreement among participants across various aspects of the program, as indicated by the consistent mean score of 5.00 for each item.

Table 1: Graduate Students' Experiences

	Mean	VI
1. The community extension program/ activity is able to concretize LCUP's vision-mission of providing an education that is relevant and in communion with the aspiration of the Filipino people while contributing to the development of all especially the poor.	5.00	Strongly Agree
2. The activity provides opportunity to translate into concrete actions the Christian ideals of charity and service to the poor.	4.92	Strongly Agree
3. The activity helped me become more aware of my social responsibility.	5.00	Strongly Agree
4. The activity is one way of imbibing the core values of the University	5.00	Strongly Agree
5. The activity has given me the opportunity to share my time, talent and treasure with the people.	5.00	Strongly Agree
6. The activity enabled me to witness the lives of our less privileged brothers and sisters.	5.00	Strongly Agree
7. The activity was properly organized. (well - coordinated with the recipient community/school/area)	5.00	Strongly Agree
8. The activity coordinator/ in charge (respective department) gave his/her full support in the implementation of the extension activity.	5.00	Strongly Agree
9. The activity was not a waste of time.	5.00	Strongly Agree
10. The activity did achieve what is intended.	5.00	Strongly Agree

The participants strongly agreed that the program effectively concretizes LCUP's vision-mission of providing relevant education and contributing to the development of the community, particularly the poor. This reflects a perception that the program successfully embodies the university's core values and objectives. Additionally, the program is seen as an excellent platform for translating Christian ideals of charity and service into concrete actions, highlighting its role in facilitating the practical application of these ideals.

There is also a strong consensus that the program enhances awareness of social responsibility among participants, indicating its effectiveness in fostering a sense of social consciousness. It is perceived as an effective tool for internalizing the university's core values and encouraging generosity and community engagement, as it provides opportunities for sharing time, talent, and resources.

The unanimous agreement extends to the program's structure and management, with participants viewing it as well-organized and effectively coordinated. The support the activity coordinator or the respective department provides is also highly regarded, suggesting excellent administrative and logistical backing for the program.

Participants do not view the program as a waste of time; rather, they see it as valuable and meaningful. This is further reinforced by the strong belief that the program successfully meets its intended goals. The program is also credited with exposing participants to the lives of the less privileged, connecting them with the realities of marginalized communities.

Conclusion

1. The graduate students' experiences of the community extension activities can be described as highly positive and impactful, marked by a strong sense of satisfaction, personal growth, and a desire for continued participation in similar activities.

2. The program beneficiaries' experiences of the community extension activities can be described as transformative and enriching,

with notable improvements in self-confidence, creativity, and community spirit and a deep appreciation for the educational and personal development opportunities.

3. The implications of the findings on future implementation of community extension activities in LCUP's graduate programs suggest a need for diversifying and expanding the program offerings, enhancing resource support, fostering continuous engagement, implementing structured feedback mechanisms, and promoting collaborative, community-centric approaches for sustained impact and growth.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from both the graduate students' survey results and the beneficiaries' interview responses, the following five recommendations are proposed for future graduate community extension programs:

1. Given the expressed interest in a broader range of activities and resources, future programs should consider diversifying their offerings. This could include various educational topics, skill-building workshops, and creative and artistic activities. Expanding the program's scope to cover more diverse areas of interest and need will cater to a broader range of participants and enhance the program's overall impact.

2. Future programs should focus on enhancing their resource base to meet the beneficiaries' desire for more educational materials and support. This could involve securing more educational texts, leisure reading materials, and other learning aids. Additionally, providing more robust support systems, such as mentorship opportunities and counseling services, could further enrich the participants' experience and personal growth.

3. Encourage ongoing involvement from graduate students and beneficiaries alike. This could be achieved by designing the program to allow continuous or repeated participation, offering advanced modules or followup sessions for past participants, and creating alumni networks to maintain engagement and support.

4. Regularly collect and analyze feedback from both graduate students and beneficiaries. This feedback should be used to make informed adjustments and improvements to the program. Establishing a structured feedback mechanism will ensure that the program remains responsive to the needs and preferences of its participants.

5. Future programs should emphasize collaborative efforts between the university, graduate students, and the community. This approach ensures that the programs are tailored to the community's needs and foster a sense of ownership and partnership among all stakeholders. Encouraging community input in program planning and execution can lead to more impactful and sustainable outcomes.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in this manuscript.

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