Training/Educational Objectives and Community Development: The Institute of Social Work and Community Development Experience

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The training design of the Institute of Social Work and Community Development is a classroom-practicum component. A laboratory community is chosen where the participants apply the theories they have learned in the classroom in pursuit of a thrust which is blending educational objectives and community development. Social investigation, consciousness raising, and the establishment of mechanisms for popular participation are among the strategies built into the training design to effect behavioral changes in the rural laboratory communities. To further enhance the efforts of the Institute in blending training objectives and community development, it has conceptualized the Integrated Rural Social Laboratory Program, a collaborative concern of the Department of Community Development, the Department of Social Work, the Office of Continuing Education, and the Office of Research and Publication.

Introduction

Development training programs in the Philippines have become common features of almost all development undertakings of the government and the private sectors. With varying objectives, these training programs cover a wide latitude of concern—from enhancing technical/managerial competencies of community and local governments to complementation and integration of development efforts at the national level. A common com-ponent of most of these training programs is a community-based module designed to bridge theory and practice.

Ranging from a few days to a number of years, the community-based module of development training programs envisions among others, to:

(1) Enable the participants to relate what they have learned with the actual realities in the community;

(2) Provide the participants the opportunity to operationalize or put into actual practice what they have learned; and

(3) Enable the participants to help even in a modest way in the development of the community.

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The field exercises of most development training programs usually result in the following:

(1) The participants gained in the process; and

(2) The community turned out as an experimental object.

Why do these things happen? Let us consider an illustrative example.

Agency A is concerned with providing local officials with a training in local development planning to enhance their competencies in planning the development of their areas of jurisdiction. The design of the training is such that half of the training time is devoted to classroom learning and half of it to field work or practicum. Thus, after the classroom learning portion, the participants are brought to a laboratory community to apply what they have learned in the classroom in a real situation. Since the field exercise has been designed only for the participants, the need for training in the community has not been considered. The operationalization of the planning process in the community, therefore, has been carried out mostly by the participants with the people of the community serving as mere observers. The field exercise is over. The participants have prepared a plan for the community. They have complied with the course requirements. The people of the community, on the other hand, have turned out to be ever grateful to the participants, for without them, the community could not have prepared a plan. Thus, in the process, the people have been passive experimental objects. Instead of becoming self-reliant, they have become more and more dependent on outside assistance.

Blending training objectives and community development is easier said than done. This is so because a number of issues have to be considered in the process. Among these issues are the following:

(1) The need to effect behavioral change in the community.

(2) Moral and ethical aspects of barangay immersion;

(3) Relevance of the field exercise to the needs of the people; and

(4) Ensuring continuity of the development in the community.

These issues are discussed in this paper which presents the attempts of the Institute of Social Work and Community Development (ISWCD) at blending training/educational objectives and community development.

ISWCD's Rural Social Laboratory: Blending Training/Educational Goals and Community Development

On Overview

The Institute of Social Work and Community Development has been pursuing its rural thrusts through its rural social laboratories. These social laboratories together with their respective objectives follow:

(1) A Training Program for Indigenous Farmer-Leaders and Study Groups: This project being carried out in Barangay Lalangan, Plaridel, Bulacan, has the following objectives:

General: To build a working relationship between the community of farmers and a group of university people in Plaridel, Bulacan, thereby making them partners in rural development.

Specific:

(a) To form study groups of farmers and ISWCD faculty and students who will undertake educational activities deliberately designed to assist them in identifying and resolving certain needs/problems/ issues collectively and through self-discovery.

(b) To identify and develop indigenous leadership from the community of farmers in general and from the study groups in particular.

(c) To train local leaders and study groups in organizational and data-gathering skills so that they can assist the people in exercising the power to make decisions.

(d) To develop a core of farmers/paraprofessional community workers who can follow up and sustain the formation of study groups especially when the University staff moves out of the barrio.[1]

(2) Linking with communities for Development (LINK-COD) Project. This project being carried out in Barangay Pantok, Sariaya, Quezon, is an innovative and integrated approach to the training of future professional frontline community workers. It seeks to:

(a) foster the integration of theory and practice;

(b) develop a theory and a model of community development applicable to communities not only in the Philippines, but also in other Third World countries;

(c) bring the University closer to the grassroots and vice-versa;

(d) develop communities through popular participation.[2]

(3) Rural Social Work Field Placements (RSWFP). The project being carried out in Barangays Bungahan, Lumaniag, and San Diego, Lian, Batangas, and assisted by the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), has the following objectives:

(a) To provide students with the opportunity to work in a rural setting so that they may become competent rural development workers.

(b) To provide the faculty with an avenue for direct involvement in rural social work so that they may increase their teaching competence in rural development strategies and approaches.

(c) To enable both students and faculty to work together in increasing the rural people's consciousness of social reality and their capacity towards self-reliance by:

(i) helping them identify their priority needs/problems around which they can be organized

[1]Marylou L. Alcid, Amanda C. Bueno, Eulogia P. de los Reyes, and Josefina L. Fonda, "Grassroots Participation in Development," Paper presented at the Workshop on Management of Integrated Rural Development, sponsored by the Management Education Council of the University of the Philippines and the Ministry of Agriculture's National Council for Integrated Rural Development, Asian Social Institute, November 13-15, 1978.

[2]Ibid.

into viable groups.

(ii) identifying and training indigenous leaders for rural development.

(d) To build/increase/develop local indigenous teaching materials through the documentation of the teaching/learning experiences of students, faculty, and the rural people's involvement in the development process.[3]

The participative approach to community work is applied in the above rural social laboratory projects in an evocative manner throughout the following phases:

(1) Integration with the community;

(2) Social investigation;

(3) Establishment of mechanisms for popular participation/mobilization; and

(4) Consolidation/pull-out/expansion.[4]

Thus, the ISWCD's concern to blend educational/training objectives and community development is being operationalized in these rural social laboratories. The problem issues confronted in the process follow.

Issues in Blending Educational/Training Objectives and Community Development

The Need to Effect Behavioral Change in the Community

The concern to effect behavioral change in the rural social laboratory communities where the ISWCD is _rooted in its belief that the people are not only the objects of development;

they are also the means to development. And that popular participation must be concretized in all facets and stages of development by upholding the people's basic right to determine by themselves the direction and the means to a better life.[5] Thus, the behavioral changes envisioned is the transformation of the community from a passive object of development into a master of its own destiny.

But, this behavioral change cannot be effected easily. A number of strategies have been tried in the course of the three-year stay of the ISWCD in its rural social laboratory communities but each strategy, despite some favorable results is not problem proof. The highlight of each strategy, including the problems met in its implementation, follows.

Social investigation strategy. Although a number of trangible results can already be identified in the rural social laboratories of the ISWCD in terms of social investigation (community profiles depicting the present conditions, problems, needs, and potentials of the community, in-depth studies of critical community problems, periodic reports and student diaries providing meaningful behavioral insights, and so on), a number of problem issues are still worth considering. These are as follows:

(1) The need to simplify techniques of social investigations. Why should the students do the community survey with the help of the people of the community? Would it not be better to reverse the system, that is, the students assist the community in doing the survey?

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[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] *Ibid.*

This is easier said than done. Unless such things as community surveys are reduced to the level of competence and understanding of the people of the community, the situation, whereby the people themselves study their own community so that they themselves can develop critical awareness of their problems and needs, will not be improved. The people will remain respondents to survey questionnaires and interviews.

(2) The need to integrate social investigation activities. Apart from the students doing their field work in the community, field personnel of the government and the private sectors usually conduct their own community surveys. Thus, in the process, the people get tired of being asked the same questions over and over again. This system dissipates scarce resources. Besides, results of these surveys in most cases also differ thereby portraying different pictures of the community. Would it not be possible for all these outsiders to communicate with each other effectively, and hopefully agree on a collaborative manner of conducting a community survey together with the people? Would this not result in a situation where the people are given a genuine opportunity to be more aware of their problems and needs while the outsiders are afforded an avenue to share common understanding of such problems and needs, thus making themselves the partners of the community in development?

(3) Social investigation to be really meaningful takes a very long time. Getting to know the people in the community does not end with a one-shot survey where the people are asked to respond to a prepared questionnaire. Living in the community, relating with them at home or at work or in *barikan* (drinking spree) are necessary in understanding the people.

Consciousness-raising strategy. Although favorable results can already be identified in the rural social laboratories in terms of the consciousness-raising strategy (increase in the number of community leaders who can critically analyze situations in the community and relate them to national issues; presence of cultural groups like children's drama groups, composed of indigenous talents, conducting continuing consciousness-raising activities, and so on), a number of problem issues to some extent hampers efforts along this line. Among these are the following:

(1) It is not that easy to know where to start the process. In one of the laboratory communities of the ISWCD, the students involved in the project went even to the extent of conducting a survey of levels of consciousness of the key leaders of the community. Eventually, they ended up doing the consciousness-raising activity almost on an individual basis.

(2) If it is difficult to know where to start consciousness-raising, it is equally difficult to determine the appropriate end of it. Should it end in just developing critical awareness on the part of the people of the community? Or should it go to the extent of agitating people to act to redress their grievances? If related to Martial Law, might it not be possible to misconstrue consciousness-raising as activists' teach-ins, especially when done through a structured training program or through informal group

discussions in the community? Would it not be possible that the students and their teachers be branded as activists and eventually get invited to ABC (Forts Aguinaldo, Bonifacio, and Crame)?

(3) It is not that easy to relate community problems with national issues or vice-versa. It is not that difficult for the people of the community to be critically aware of their problems at the community level. What is difficult for them is to relate these problems to national issues. How, for instance, can one express in layman's language the reality of imperialism?

Establishment of mechanism for popular participation/mobilization. To widen the base of decision-making and to develop viable mechanisms which can plan, implement, and evaluate the development of the community, the ISWCD assisted its rural social laboratories by setting up various groups and inter-group organizations. In one of its rural social laboratories, the students and faculty assigned in the community assisted in the formation of an organization rooted on a problem issue common to the whole community— pollution.

In the other rural social laboratory of the ISWCD, the students and faculty members assigned in the community assisted in the setting up of a barangay development council, more or less patterned from the development councils envisioned under Memo-Circular 76-110 of the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development. Although efforts had been exerted to ensure that the council would be set up in keeping with the problems and needs of the community,

a number of problems cropped up in the course of making the body a really mass-based organization. Among these problems are:

(1) As usual, only a few of the members of the council are articulate, thus, making the representation especially of the poorer sectors of the community nominal. The need to strengthen sectoral organizations, therefore, cropped up and to date, efforts exerted along this line, already identify visible favorable results, like the formation of a strong hired laborers' organization.

(2) The formal and informal leaders of the community which constitute the barangay development council have not effectively related with the sectors they represent thus making themselves apart from the masses whom they represent.

(3) The varying backgrounds and interests of the members of the council have not also permitted the realization of a cooperative spirit for community development.

(4) The organizing efforts of the government (the most recent of which is the Barangay Brigade) and some of its programs (like the Barangay Irrigation Development Association (BIDA) and the Barangay Roads Program) undermine efforts at really making the barangay development council a mass-based organization which can plan, implement and evaluate the development of the community.

Moral and Ethical Aspects of Barangay Immersion

Although the ISWCD has been conscious of its concern to assist its rural social laboratory communities in development, there are, to some extent,

a number of problem issues that are worth considering in the Institute's current effort of conceptualizing an institute-wide integrated rural social laboratory program. Among these are:

(1) There is the need to further minimize the situation where the people of the community are being treated as experimental objects. The students' one-year stay in the area is very much longer compared to other barangay immersion exercises. The problem is, the year of stay of the students in the community usually ends up this way—they get to know the community and integrate with the people for the first six months and gain knowledge and skills in community work during the next six months. After the year, each one of them would claim, "Now I already know what to do as a community worker." After that, they leave the community. Another batch of students comes in. The same thing happens. The community will again start adjusting to the new batch of students while the students are getting to know the community.

(2) In the process of community work, some degree of manipulation usually take place. How to reduce this to the minimum is an issue worth considering. To what extent can manipulation be justified? Should not the people be left on their own? Is it really manipulation when one facilitates the carrying out of something in the community? Or is there such a thing as "facipulation"?

Relevance of the Field Exercise
to the Needs of the People

Although the ISWCD has tried its best to assist in meeting the needs of the people of the community, even in a very limited way, certain problem issues have been confronted by the students and faculty in the field. Among these are:

(1) The prevailing felt needs in the community are usually spelled out in terms of infrastructure projects (roads, bridges, school buildings, chapel, multipurpose hall, irrigation system, and the like) which require substantial resources. Meeting these needs is beyond the reach of the rural social laboratory program. Nevertheless, these are needs which cannot be ignored.

(2) There is the need to balance felt and objective needs. The need to start from where the people are and build on what they have has been recognized by the ISWCD. However, in assisting and responding to the people's felt needs it has not neglected to assist the people in developing the awareness of the objective needs of the community.

Continuity of the Community Organization and Development Process

Providing continuity to the community organization and development process in the community is a difficult task. Karina Constantino-David in her paper, "Issues in Community Organization,"[6] has outlined a number of key issues borne out of the ISWCD's experience in the LINK-COD program in Pantok, Sariaya, Quezon which are worth considering in searching for ways and means of ensuring the

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[6] Karina Constantino-David, "Issues in Community Organization," Paper prepared for the Third World Studies Program, College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines, *The Philippines in the Third World*, Series No. 22, March 1980.

continuity of the community organization and development process. These issues are:

(1) Providing a vision to the community organization work
(2) Self-reliance vs. dependence
(3) Evocative vs. provocative organizing
(4) Facilitation vs. manipulation
(5) Felt needs vs. objective needs
(6) Consciousness raising vs. dole-outs
(7) Immediate economic impact vs. long-term political development
(8) Issue- vs. non-issue-based organizing
(9) Democratic participation vs. creating a new elite, and
(10) Lawful vs. subversive acts.

The ISWCD's Integrated Rural Social Laboratory Program

The meaningful accomplishments of the ISWCD in its rural social laboratories and the challenges of further pursuing its rural thrusts have provided the rationale for conceptualizing an integrated rural social laboratory program for the Institute. Envisioned as an institute-wide concern, the Integrated Rural Social Laboratory Program (IRSLP) will be identified with the Institute and not with any of its units. It will be a collaborative concern of the four units of the Institute, namely: the Department of Community Development; the Department of Social Work; the Office of Continuing Education, and the Office of Research and Publication. The research, teaching, and extension services of the Institute will thus blend together in the IRSLP to effectively respond to the challenge of enhancing the Institute's contribution to community development. Along

blending educational/training objectives and community development, prospects of the IRSLP are the following:

(1) With the participation of the Office of Research and Publication, the IRSLP can search for innovative strategies of community research. It can now respond to the challenges of simplifying research methodologies to enable the people to do the research themselves, instead of just being respondents to survey questionnaires. Hopefully, in due time such things as community surveys will no longer be the concern of students doing field work or the field personnel of the government and the private sectors working in the community, but that of the people. In this way, they will now be afforded genuine opportunity to be more aware of their problems and needs.

The participation of the Office of Research and Publication will also enhance the documentation capability of the IRSLP to ensure wider dissemination of the meaningful experiences gained in the laboratory communities.

(2) The inclusion of the Office of Continuing Education will enable the IRSLP to develop innovative approaches and participative strategies of community development training. Hopefully, it will be in a much better position to transfer necessary knowledge and skills to the people of the community to ensure continuity of the community development process.

The participation of the Office of Continuing Education will also enhance the sharing of experiences in the various social laboratory communities of the Institute, on the one hand, and the social laboratory communities of other

institutions on the other. In the process, the Office will also be in a much better position to develop training models and indigenous training materials for community development.

(3) The participation of the Department of Social Work and the Department of Community Development in the IRSLP will afford it the wide variety of experience of the two departments in community organization and development work. Hopefully, their involvement in this undertaking will enhance the integration of social work and community development to put the IRSLP in a much better position to effect the needed behavioral change in the community, make the stay of the students in the community more rewarding, ensure the relevance of the field practicum of the students to the needs of the people, and provide continuity to the community organization and development process.

Through the Integrated Rural Social Laboratory Program which is now being conceptualized by the faculty and staff of the ISWCD, it is hoped that the Institute's contribution to solving the challenges of blending educational/training objectives and community development will be enhanced.