

# Chapter 10

## Community-University Partnerships for Improved Governance

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### Introduction

More than ever, there is a need to heighten and drumbeat the promotion of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in poverty eradication, primary education, maternal health, gender equality, environmental sustainability, combating child mortality, AIDS, and other dreadful diseases. To keep at bay the challenges, universities and local governments must foster a genuine partnership in implementing public administration reforms as a means to achieve the MDGs.

The public administration (PA) schools play very crucial role in promoting governance reform mantras—efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, and accountability in the functioning of a nation. They are the basic means through which government strategies to achieve the MDGs can be harnessed. Aside from molding the characters of the youth, the PA schools develop leaders who would be at the forefront of community development and governance.

This curriculum enhancement project is made to respond to the challenges of this modern world by using the town-and-gown approach to local community development and governance. The town-and-gown approach implies a relationship between the “town” which is the community or the local government and the “gown” which is the university located in the local area. The relationship is seen to be more of a partnership where each partner shares its resources for a common cause or goal, which is the development of the local community. By improving the local governments’ human resource base, PA practitioners in the local governments would be able to participate in the decision making in a larger scale.

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Philippines. It is under the Department of Governance Studies and has been offered by the college for 31 years now. The governing minimum standards for BSPA under Commission on Higher Education are CHED Memo Order (CMO) Number 27 series of 2001 or the Revised Policies, Rules and Guidelines for Business and Management Education and CMO Number 59 series of 1996 or the General Education Curriculum.

The study has the following specific objectives:

1. To enrich the BSPA program by providing it with a distinct set of core competencies
2. To strengthen the BSPA program by including more fieldwork and research-oriented courses

## Theory Base

This study is anchored on egalitarian worldview. This belief leads to an active orientation toward the world based on the collective group will. Accountability is imposed and actions are judged by the collective; this is necessary to maintain a delicate balance between the group and environment. An egalitarian approach to action is often dialogue focused, generally based on a “town meeting democracy” process model, and guided by a communal viewpoint. Egalitarians believe that decentralized self-governing units, rather than conventional large scale structures, are the most viable forms of governance (Hood 1998).

It would be difficult to overstate the influence of the egalitarian orientation on current thinking in the service-learning literature. This definition from the emerging Carnegie elective classification project, among several others in circulation today, attests to the influence of this cultural frame in the service-learning field: “Community engagement describes the collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, elective classification project documents, Draft, 2005).

So, based on an egalitarian orientation, one might expect to find partnership policies, processes, and arrangements that appear (at least on the surface) to be built on mutual respect, democratic principles, reciprocity, and responsibility. Nearly all decisions affecting the partnership would be made jointly between parties, communication would be regular and ongoing, and the relationships would be marked by trust, reciprocity, shared values, and commitments (Thompson et al. 1990).

Partnership is generally seen as aligned with concepts such as empowerment and equity, because it has been advocated as a form of more democratic and more local corporatism within a social democratic development model. By contrast, in both the United States and the United Kingdom, partnerships have focused more on the role of the private sector and have been described as “the local growth machine” (Molotch 1987).

While Molotch did not discuss universities, they fit the place-bound characteristic of organizations such as newspapers, department stores, and utilities that are typically part of the growth machine. The interest of universities in partnering with

community organizations around issues of curriculum development, in general, is an example of a localized growth machine. It reflects a more democratic “third way” approach combining public and private efforts in more democratic and participatory structures (Wiewel et al. 2000).

In most cases, however, the partnership programs of universities appear to be driven mainly by the interests of faculty in research projects or service-learning opportunities for their students or by the applied research and service agenda of university centers and institutes. As such, they represent a new approach to using resources of the university and reflect a new respect for the importance of community organizations as legitimate partners, rather than simply research subjects in the real-life laboratory of the city. It is as yet unclear whether these partnerships will have the staying power, institutional capability, and legitimacy to go beyond project-specific collaborations to become lasting alternate forms of neighborhood service delivery and governance (Wiewel and Lieber 1998).

To ideally implement the community-university partnership, action research methodology is often used as it offers a systematic approach to introducing innovations in teaching and learning. It seeks to do this by putting the teacher in the dual role of producer of educational theory and user of that theory. This is both a way of producing knowledge about higher education learning and teaching and a powerful way of improving learning and teaching practice in collaboration with the different stakeholders. No separation need be made between the design and delivery of teaching and the process of researching these activities, thereby bringing theory and practice closer together (Riding et al. 1995).

A variety of forms of action research have evolved (McTaggart and Kemmis 1988). All adopt a methodical, iterative approach embracing problem identification, action planning, implementation, evaluation, and reflection. The insights gained from the initial cycle feed into the planning of the second cycle, for which the action plan is modified and the research process repeated.

It has always been argued that promotion of good governance principles promotes quality of life in general. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its Interim Committee Meeting (1996) identified promoting of good governance in all its aspects, including ensuring the rule of law, improving the efficiency and accountability of public sector, and tackling corruption as the key for economic efficiency and growth. The IMF’s involvement in bringing about governance can be looked upon into following two spheres:

- Improving the management of public resources through covering public sector institutions (e.g., the treasury, central bank, public enterprises, civil service, and the official statistics function), including administrative procedures (e.g., expenditure control, budget management, and revenue collection)
- Supporting the development and maintenance of transparent and stable economic and regulatory environment conducive to efficient private sector activities (e.g., price systems, exchange and trade regime, and banking systems and their related regulations)

In this chapter, it is argued that promotion of good governance at least at a local level is best done through quality, responsive, and relevant education in public administration. The continuous improvement of the curriculum of the course must



**Fig. 10.1** Participatory BSPA curriculum enhancement for the achievement of MDGs

be done through the active partnership of the different stakeholders and the necessary alumni tracer studies. Figure 10.1 shows the partnership of the different groups to enhance the public administration curriculum. The practice helps promote good governance at the local and national level by producing graduates who are technically and ethically qualified thereby making possible the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The figure also typifies the idea that enhancement of BSPA curriculum is a work in progress. Its regular revision to suit to the needs of time and clientele is deemed necessary. In the same manner, promotion of good governance as a means to an end, that is, achievement of MDGs, needs to continuously improve to reach more people in the society who are in great need.

## Methodology

The technology of participation was used in this study. This approach enabled the academic community—faculty, administration, students, and representatives of nongovernment organizations, government organizations, and national government agencies—to analyze, review, and share their insights on how to improve the existing curriculum. The approach enables learning from them directly by taking their related experiences; flexible use of methods; offsetting biases by unimposing and by learning their concerns and priorities; facilitating investigation, analysis, presentation,

**Table 10.1** Distribution of stakeholders according to stratum

| Stratum        | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Students       | 17        | 23         |
| Faculty        | 15        | 20         |
| Alumni         | 7         | 9          |
| NGO            | 9         | 12         |
| NGA            | 8         | 11         |
| LGU            | 12        | 16         |
| Private sector | 7         | 9          |
| Total          | 75        | 100        |

and learning from the people themselves, so that they present and own the outcomes and also learn; and lastly, sharing of information and ideas between them and the researcher, and among other stakeholders. Proceedings of this inquiry were referred to the University Council through the University Curriculum Committee before the subsequent approval of the Board of Regents.

Data triangulation method was employed to validate the participatory research approach sequences. It included a mix of structured interview questionnaire, focus group discussion, and data validation through key informants' interview.

The data for this study was collected from First Semester of SY 2007 to Second Semester of SY 2009. The stakeholders were given printed copies of the course prospectus of BSPA for their comments. They were also requested to indicate any relevant change in the curriculum and the reasons for such change. Respondents were informed of the CHED minimum standards covering the BSPA program that cannot be abridged. While waiting for the comments, a series of benchmarking activities was conducted in universities and colleges offering the same academic program. A total of 75 respondents were involved in this study.

## Presentation and Analysis of Data

### *Profile of Stakeholders*

Table 10.1 presents the representation of stakeholders during the culmination of BSPA curriculum enhancement on January 26, 2009. Full-time faculty members teaching BSPA subjects constituted 15 or 20% of the total number of stakeholders. Students composed 23%; LGU representatives, 16%; NGO representatives, 12%; NGA representatives, 11%; alumni, 9%; and private sector representatives, 9%.

### *Program Core Competencies*

Table 10.2 presents the sets of program core competencies for BSPA program. These competencies were identified by the stakeholders during the consultation.

**Table 10.2** Program core competencies

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|  |
|--|
| Policy analysis                              |
| Strategic planning                           |
| Performance measurement                      |
| Project detail management and statistics     |
| Resource management                          |
| Quantitative and qualitative decision making |
| Knowledge management                         |
| Enterprise management                        |
| Work ethics                                  |

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These core competencies were identified to provide the BSPA program with distinct target characteristics for its graduates. Each competency is based on the current and proposed revision/enhancement in the subjects under the curriculum.

### *Inclusion of More Research Courses*

Under the new BSPA curriculum, the number of research subjects is increased from 3 or 9 units to 5 or 15 units. Representatives of the NGOs and POs strongly suggested for the inclusion of public policy analysis under the BSPA program. These subjects are seen to support the current industry need of graduates who can help make policy alternatives and rich databases ready for sharing and utilization to end users of information. They suggested that graduates should be thoroughly trained to become leaders who are active decision makers in their fields and not just mere recipients of decisions made for them by their peers.

A careful deliberation however was made to make sure that other non-research courses that are very vital are retained. To cite as example of courses deemed inappropriate in the BSPA program are Filipino languages and Philippine literature as these are seen as redundant to other courses in social sciences and humanities that can tackle the same basic concepts. Under the Philippine educational system, state universities like the University of Southeastern Philippines are given partial autonomy to manage academic programs based on some strict academic standards.

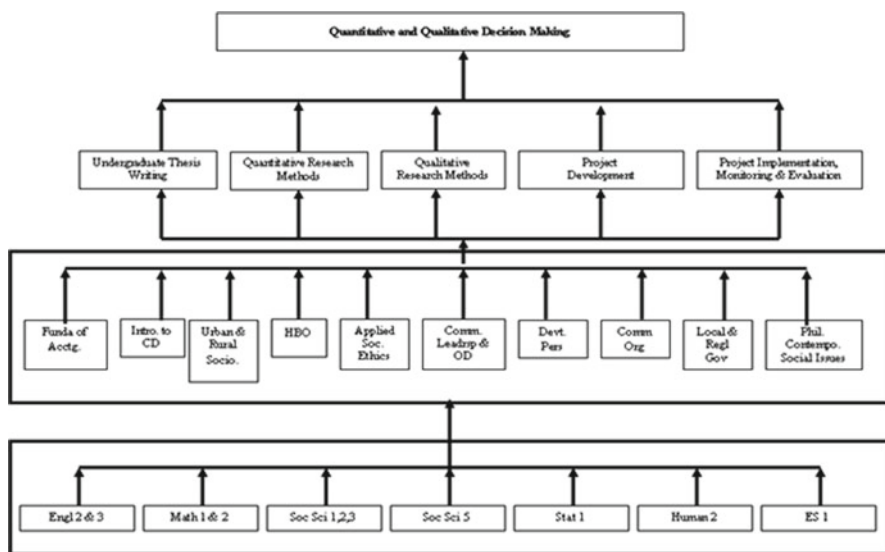
The curriculum enhancement team however made sure that the BSPA curriculum is still compliant to the minimum standards set by the country's Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in revising and enriching the program (Table 10.3).

### *Hierarchical Arrangement of Subjects*

Figure 10.1 shows how the quantitative and qualitative decision making as a competency is being supported by subjects in the BSPA curriculum that scaffold it. Research methods under the new curriculum is divided into two major

**Table 10.3** Comparison of research subjects under old and new BSPA curriculum

| Old                                  | New                                     |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Introduction to statistics (3 units) | Introduction to statistics (3 units)    |
| Basic research methods (3 units)     | Quantitative research methods (3 units) |
|                                      | Qualitative research methods (3 units)  |
| Thesis writing (3 units)             | Thesis writing (3 units)                |
| –                                    | Policy analysis (3 units)               |
| 9 units                              | 15 units                                |



**Fig. 10.2** Hierarchical arrangement of research courses

courses—quantitative research methods and qualitative research methods. The stakeholders identified this as a necessity to provide students with a good background in research and/or undergraduate thesis writing. Project management is now divided into two major subjects—project development and project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. This happened because the stakeholders unanimously saw the importance of giving students more time to experience and learn project management as a judicious process of searching for solutions to problems.

As shown in Fig. 10.2, major subjects in the BSPA curriculum are arranged in a hierarchical and logical manner. Subjects found at the bottom part of the figure are general education subjects which are prerequisites of the next higher major subjects. The next higher level subjects in the hierarchy are the ones that will be taken by students on their 3rd year. The next higher subjects are the ones to be taken by students during their 4th year.

**Table 10.4** Issues and recommendations

| Issues/concerns  | Recommendations   |
|--|---|
| NGA, LGU, and NGO representatives' participation in the curriculum review is very limited  | Involve more industry representatives in the future curriculum revision   |
| There has been no serious effort to trace graduates' employment and other career advancement updates in the college              | Conduct Alumni Tracer Study specifically to measure employability of graduates of BSPA  |
| There is no available information about common issues and concerns relating to students and faculty performance in the classroom | Conduct more action research in the classroom to monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of instruction, research, and extension along public administration and community development |
| Curriculum revision is not regularly done  | Conduct curriculum revision every 4 years   |

### ***Other Issues and Concerns and Corresponding Recommendations***

The BSPA program stakeholders have corroborated the agreements on the revised curriculum. Table 10.4 presents the agreements and corresponding lessons learned during the deliberation process.

### **Conclusions**

This study found out that the best way to review a curricular program is through community participatory approach wherein stakeholders share their views, experiences, and expectations for the academic program they are most concerned about. The new model of BSPA curriculum enrichment, that is, through public-private-social partnership, has truly worked based on the Philippine context of resource sharing called *bayanihan* wherein the entire community, as much as possible, contributes to the accomplishment of task or goal.

Setting of core competencies provided the BSPA program a clearer perspective of what this has to offer to students to become better and leading professionals in their field of work. The hierarchical arrangement of subjects according to their prerequisites and target core competency is one best way to avoid redundancy, inappropriateness, nonalignment, and randomness of subject load, requirements, and resources. Arranging the subjects according to hierarchy gives a well-meaning direction to students, parents, instructors, and administrators. Monitoring and evaluation of this program is believed to be a lot easier now as subject description, content, and requirements are already set according to the course bulletin developed as a result of this undertaking.



The inclusion of more research-oriented subjects in the BSPA curriculum is considered a necessity to give students more opportunity to learn, experience, and unlearn research skills. Students trained and developed under this curriculum are believed to possess genuine passion for research and decision making. They are also seen to become leaders in their respective field of work after graduation.

The community-university partnership for curriculum enhancement in BSPA program promotes local knowledge, credibility, and access. In its ideals for improving governance and community building education, it gives expression to the democratic impulse for citizen participation and responsibility. At best, such mobilizations ensure that the academic program has wide ownership, legitimacy, and sustainability, while the voluntary input is a valuable form of social capital, even if it is difficult to calibrate. Given their motivation for community benefit, the community participants also can ground the partnership by prioritizing practical outcomes.

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