

Pursuing Inclusive Growth in Poor Municipalities of Sorsogon through Service Learning: Benilde Model

Milagros A. Cruz

ABSTRACT

Sorsogon, approximately 600 kilometers away from Manila, is one of the provinces in Philippines that has the highest poverty incidence. This study aims to design a self-directed, curriculum-based service learning program in its two municipalities, Gubat and Bulusan.

Ocular visits were conducted to determine the type of raw materials that are present in the region. Random interviews were conducted with the local farmers, fishermen, small-scale handicraft makers, a coco-coir businessman and government officials to learn their common interests and priorities. A two-page survey form that contained demographic characteristics, length of residency, educational attainment, and occupation/source of income was distributed to one hundred fifty impoverished households. Respondents were also asked to rate their own level of poverty, common medical issues, state of land ownership/housing, utilities/sanitary amenities, and possession of appliances. Secondary data such as reports and economic plans from government offices were also obtained.

The results of the survey and inquiries revealed a need to create an impetus that will drive the town folks to employ their available resources, produce and find a market for innovative homebased products. Given the findings, a proposal to integrate the school curriculum with a service learning program was explored to engage students' potential and faculty involvement. As a pilot intervention, students were required to consider the use of indigenous raw materials in their feasibility studies, the capstone project in export management course. The implementation phase includes the planning and presentation of selected papers to the community partners by the proponents. Special topics such as waste management and raw materials conservation were also considered. The numbers of hours spent in planning and conducting the workshop will be credited in the practicum requirement of the course. The end goal of the proposed service learning program is to initiate small community-based businesses.

Several challenges were encountered in the implementation stage. Future research work is needed to gauge the SL impact upon the lives of the community and the learning outcomes of the students.

Key words: curriculum-based service learning program, community partners, feasibility studies, practicum