

# School-Based Community Engagement in Higher Education Institutions: Selected Case Studies in the Philippines

Glenn S. Lubuguin<sup>1</sup> • Rowena DT. Bacongus<sup>1</sup> ✉ • Jody Aked<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of the Philippines Los Baños, PHILIPPINES

<sup>2</sup> University of Sussex, UNITED KINGDOM

## Abstract

There is growing scholarly interest in understanding the dynamism of school-based community engagement in educational institutions, particularly on the formative effects of these modes of instruction-driven public services on students, school staff, and communities. This study sought to investigate different modes of community engagement activities in selected Philippine higher education institutions. A multi-sector participatory systemic inquiry using a series of field visits, focused group discussions, semi-structured key informant interviews, and informal workshops (i.e., storyboarding, impact mapping, stakeholder analysis, etc.) were conducted among volunteers, school staff, and community members of respective higher education institutions. Results showed that school-based community engagement can be classified in relation to teaching-learning functions as curricular, co-curricular, and non-curricular. Among students, faculty, and staff, such activities generally improved sense of self-fulfillment, over-all well-being and developed competencies, enhanced teaching pedagogy, and appreciation for participatory tools for both classroom and community work. Among communities, the engagement improved economic opportunities, organizational and project management skills, and expanded networks. Unfortunately, school-based community engagement in Philippine higher education institutions are hampered and discouraged by administrative and policy problems that include weak internal coordination among school units, paperwork, protocols, and lack of enabling mechanisms such as promotion, merit, or incentive system. Recommendations emphasize the need for structural adjustments in the administration of community work plus the need to mobilize external support specifically additional policy and resources.

**Keywords:** higher educational institutions; modalities of volunteering; Philippines; volunteerism

**Correspondence:** RDT Bacongus. Institute for Governance and Rural Development, College of Public Affairs and Development, University of the Philippines Los Baños, College, Laguna 4031, Philippines. Phone: (+6349) 536 0407 Email: rdbacongus@up.edu.ph

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**Glenn S. Lubuguin<sup>1</sup>**  
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<sup>2</sup> University of Sussex, UNITED KINGDOM

## Introduction

Community civic service engagement is currently changing the landscape of education, development, and socio-politics of countries throughout the globe. Primarily, there is growing recognition of the role of such engagements on values formation, community development, and nation building, which has influenced policies, theory, and practice of social service delivery. This has further led to the discharge of private and public resources into organized acts of altruism, translating into systematic forms of assistance towards individuals and communities such as redistribution of goods and other interventions. But more than anything else, community engagement has been proven to change the lives of both server and served, demonstrating a strong influence on the development of positive well-being, upright values, social capital, and active citizenship among volunteers and community members (Sherraden et al. 1990; Sherraden et al. 2008; Gaskin 2004; Santillan 2011; NCEAV 2012; Sastrillo 2010; Medina 2010; Lubuguin 2012; Lalap et al. 2013).

Higher educational institutions play a central role in the development of human resources and are generally expected to perform the tripartite functions of instruction, research, and extension. In the last few decades, community engagement has become a common thrust within these

three functions. As such, these institutions have become nontraditional basic or social delivery instrumentalities supplementing government front offices, nongovernment organizations, and charitable institutions.

In the Philippines, school-based community engagement activities commonly involve a range of activities including dole-out relief operations, community organizing, technical assistance and educational enhancement, environmental protection and disaster-risk management, and agricultural productivity and livelihood assistance, just to name a few.

Due to the rise of school-based civic service initiatives in the last decade, there is already an extensive literature establishing the effects of community engagement on both the server and the served. In terms of development impact, school-based community engagement is a proven strategy for social capital development, specifically in terms of enhancing access to networks and valued resources. It has been proven efficient as a social mobilization strategy for addressing multi-faceted pressing issues and development of multi- and cross-cultural competencies necessary in the global village. More specifically, volunteer activities have been proven to result in positive developmental impact in terms of promotion of positive social and civic values, including values to multiculturalism and formation of groups and in addressing social issues such as joblessness, low income, improvement of international networks, and enhancement of social capital (Table 1).

In terms of effects on the server, the opportunity to work in the field and interact or collaborate with communities has been found to enhance understanding of theories discussed in class, develop important life values and academic values, enhance social skills like public speaking, improve psychological well-being, expand professional network, and increased appreciation for hard work and collective efforts (Table 2).

As such, the role of school-based or higher education institution-led community engagement has been mainstreamed and supported through various legislations, which recognize these activities as means of delivering social services, carrying out humanitarian efforts, and responding to various social issues while at

**TABLE 1** Developmental/social impact of community service on the served

General areas	Effects	Source
Socio-politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Led to effective responses to a range of issues, including unemployment, health problems, natural disasters, crime, and inadequate schools</li> <li>• Produced researches that are beneficial to both schools and communities</li> </ul>	Sherraden et al. (1990) Gaskin (2004) NCEAV (2012)
Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased income among community members</li> </ul>	NCEAV (2012)
Human resource development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enriched workforce that led to better educational performance and career/employment prospects</li> <li>• Fostered values and skills of civic-minded leadership and active citizenship</li> </ul>	Sherraden et al. (2008) NCEAV (2012)
Social capital and networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved international networks and resources</li> <li>• Enhanced social capital in international contexts</li> </ul>	Sherraden et al. (2008) Medina (2010)
Multi- and cross-culturalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defined intercultural sensitivity and interaction</li> <li>• Heightened tolerance towards different population groups</li> </ul>	Sherraden et al. (2008) Tserendorjiin et al. (2009)
Social mobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed a sense of optimism and hope among community members and formation of grassroots organization</li> </ul>	NCEAV (2012)
Active citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heightened citizenship in terms of improved social awareness</li> <li>• Improved sense of civic duty to promote peace and societal well-being, and increase charitable acts</li> </ul>	Sherraden et al. (2008) NCEAV (2012)

**TABLE 2** Formative effects of community service on the server

General areas	Effects	Source
Life values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoted favorable attitudes like values, sensitivity, and sense of social justice</li> </ul>	Wilson and Musick (1999) NCEAV (2012)
Academic values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved performance</li> <li>• Increased appreciation for value of education</li> <li>• Increased appreciation of community interface as an effective means of learning compared to classroom environment</li> </ul>	Scruggs and Osguthorpe (1986) Lubuguin (2012) NCEAV (2012)
Professional skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforced commitment to civic involvement even after graduation</li> <li>• Enhanced writing and public speaking skills</li> </ul>	Sherraden et al. (2008) Sastrillo (2010)
Social skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved interpersonal and communication skills</li> </ul>	McBride et al. (2006) Gaskin (2004) Lubuguin (2012)
Psychological well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced self-esteem and confidence</li> <li>• Fulfillment and sense of self-worth</li> <li>• Reduced mortality, delinquency, and behavioral problems</li> </ul>	Aguiling-Dalisay et al. (2002) Yogev and Ronen (1982) Yates and Youniss (1996) Medina (2010) Santillan (2011) NCEAV (2012)
Personal growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased social network, power, prestige, and resources</li> <li>• Improved personal efficacy</li> <li>• Increased reflective thinking on what volunteers can contribute to their communities</li> </ul>	Yogev and Ronen (1982) Yates and Youniss (1996) NCEAV (2012)

the same time developing essential civic values. These national policies include recent Philippines legislations like the National Service Training Program Act of 2001 and the Volunteerism Act of 2007.

In terms of nature and objectives, McBride et al. (2008, 75–78) classified community engagements among the youth worldwide into four broad categories, which are as follows:

1. *Service learning community engagement activities* are curriculum-driven civic services with very specific curricular goals and output. These activities emphasize development of knowledge, competencies, and skills related to a field of specialization. Field practice, on-site practicum, special problems on community-oriented projects, and supervised field instructions are among the common forms of this type.
2. *National service activities* are programs that are implemented in partnership with government or nongovernment organizations and within a single national context. These are various forms of community assistance oriented towards nation building and addressing specific pressing national concerns.
3. *International service* are generally transnational services that provide participants to serve in another country or foreign territory. These activities aim to enhance cross-cultural competence among participants, including development of tolerance and cultural understanding and other values and skills necessary for globalization.

Although this classification system had been used in analyzing many school-based public service initiatives worldwide, its applications in higher education institution–led community engagement in the Philippines remain hardly explored. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of community engagement as they transpire within educational institutions by surveying the various forms and conditions of community engagement activities in selected Philippine higher education institutions and determine effects of community engagement

on both server and served. It will also implicate administrative and policy conditions around which these initiatives are implemented in order to suggest courses of actions to strengthen over-all public service undertakings in the country.

This study aimed to characterize the different methods of community engagement programs, projects, or activities among selected Philippines higher education institutions in relation to instructional mandates or teaching-learning functions of the schools. Specifically, it aims to (1) examine the different modes of school-based community engagement in selected Philippine higher education institutions; (2) identify the various effects of these initiatives among school students, faculty, staff, and community members; and (3) discuss the problems and challenges in implementing these forms of civic-service development interventions.

## Methods

The study involved case studies of community engagement programs, projects, and/or activities in selected higher education institutions from the three major island groups of the country. Specifically, the study investigated existing programs, processes, policies, and dynamics of volunteer service programs and identify gains of volunteering and problems faced by these institutions.

Three universities were purposively selected from among participants of the 2012 National Convention of Engagement of the Academe on Volunteerism (NCEAV), which was composed of a network of schools, government, and civil society organizations engaged in volunteer work. The criteria set for selection of case studies are as follows: (1) private and public higher education institutions from the different island groups of the Philippines (i.e., Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao); (2) with experience in implementing programs, whether long established or relatively new; (3) with currently running or existing programs; and (4) willingness to participate in the research.

Based on the above criteria, three higher education institutions expressed their willingness to participate in the study during the consultations

conducted at the NCEAV. A multi-sector participatory systemic inquiry involving a series of field visits, focused group discussions, semi-structured key informant interviews, and informal workshops (i.e., storyboarding, impact mapping, stakeholder analysis, etc.) were conducted among volunteers, school staff, and community stakeholders (see Aked 2014) of the respective institutions. The willingness of these institutions was a critical element of their selection since the methodology of the study required intensive mobilization of students and staff for interviews and focus group discussions, including a number of field visits to community sites.

On-site investigations were conducted from May 2013 to May 2014. For Bicol University in Luzon, there were a total of 92 participants consisting of 3 faculty/staff members, 8 volunteers, 20 community members, 29 college students, and 32 elementary school children; for Bohol Island State University in the Visayas, a total of 64 participants consisting of 18 students, 36 residents of three communities, 3 faculty/staff members, and 7 community stakeholders; and for Xavier University–Ateneo de Cagayan in Mindanao, a total of 29 participants consisting of 12 academic staff, 6 student volunteers, and 11 community members.

## Results and Discussion

### Classifying School-based Community Engagement in a Teaching-Learning Environment

Although McBride et al. (2008) provided a classification of youth service that is a useful template for classifying the school-based civic-engagement activities characterized in the study, it was found to have limitations especially since civic service or community engagements were more often defined not in terms of scope, coverage, or areas but in relation to curricular objectives and instructional mandates. As such, the school-based engagements identified in the study were more appropriately classified as curricular, extra-

curricular, and non-curricular. What is glaring, however, is the lack of international service programs or projects which is a noteworthy observation since similar international engagements have grown in countries like the United States, Canada, Europe, and Korea in the last few decades and academic interest on the subject has likewise increased (see Lough 2015).

Among the respondent higher education institutions, curricular undertakings included both service learning and the National Service Training Program, which required courses that use community engagement activities with very specific educational goals, competency targets, and expected outputs. Co-curricular activities, on the other hand, were usually research and extension community engagements that aim to generate knowledge and/or apply it to assist communities towards addressing specific problems, often of a technical nature. The latter does not fall under circular requirement but still emphasizes harnessing and developing technical expertise. These activities include technical assistance, capacity building, and a host of community extension services that are conducted as part of the institutions mandated tripartite function. Finally, extra- or non-curricular activities include volunteer activities outside regular school programs. Among the three institutions, these activities were often independently initiated by units or by student organizations. Most of these community engagement programs were also focused on development and relationship with local communities and very few have cross-cultural competency objectives.

The selected case studies show three modalities of school-based community engagement, which can be categorized based on curricular objectives and the school's overall learning functions. Bicol University's Social Work degree program is curricular in nature while Bohol Island State University's Aquatic and Fisheries program is co-curricular extension and Xavier University–Ateneo de Cagayan's Kristohanong Katilingban sa Pagpakabana (KKP) is extra-curricular. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis.

## Common Elements and Diverse Context-specificity

A common feature of the community engagement programs analyzed in this study is the emphasis on participatory methods from planning to implementation. Most respondents describe their program or project as service activities where faculty, staff, and students share knowledge, skills, and resources based on needs identified by the community members. Interestingly, this participatory approach is applied to community engagement activities not just in community organizing, training, information dissemination, technical assistance, and even in dole-out relief operations and tree planting. Also, most curricular and extra-curricular community engagement activities are described as “sustainable” engagements often only by virtue of multiyear memorandum of agreement between the higher education institution, usually through an extension or public service office, and the community, usually through the local government unit. Most of the community-engagement activities of the participant institutions were also very context-specific and is geared towards very particular locale (i.e., community) rather than broad national concern. As such, community relations were often emphasized by respondents as an important dimension of their community engagements.

Thematically, Bicol University’s extension programs were primarily focused on providing new opportunities for additional income sources, improving relationship between communities and local government, and advocating better delivery of social services. For the Bohol Island State University, extension activities emphasized the training, community development, linkage and partnership building and development of information/education materials particularly in coastal and aquatic resource management. Lastly, Xavier University–Ateneo de Cagayan’s KKP focused on community development with emphasis on literacy and development of information communication technology in support of farmers and agriculture.

## Service Learning as Curricular Community Engagement in Bicol University

Bicol University is a regional state and research university located at Legazpi City, Bicol region, in the island of Luzon. Situated in the eastern seaboard of the country, the Bicol region is prone to typhoons coming from the northwestern Pacific Ocean. The region is also considerably agricultural with rice, coconut, corn, pili, abaca, and pineapple as its major crops. As such, the major focus of the university’s extension activities was on improving farmers capacity and the area’s agricultural productivity.

The university has seven campuses, one of which is the Daraga campus, which offers the BS Social Work program that serves as the main community engagement platform. As part of the supervised field instruction curricular requirement, students are sent out to conduct field work or field practice in selected communities during the second semester of their final year. Although it is a compulsory part of the course, students get to choose to work among either nongovernment organizations, local government units, or directly integrate in a community for three months. The roles and tasks of students vary according to the type and design of intervention, which in turn is determined by articulated community needs. For Bicol University, curricular community engagement is an alternative method to achieve prescribed learning outcomes. For the community, these interventions provide opportunities for additional sources of income, local resources, and other capacity-enhancement assistance and improved relationship between communities and local government (e.g., through inviting officers to give trainings identified by residents).

The field work component of the BS Social Work degree program is also supplemented by other extension activities of the school, which range from technical assistance and capacity building for farmers to food processing seminars to mothers and tutorials for school children, particularly in the nearby communities of the school, which were also visited as part of this research. A major role of faculty in program implementation is to build and sustain



relationships with communities and to forge long-term agreements. The roles and nature of involvement of volunteers vary according to community context, arrangements, and expected learning outcomes. Students are encouraged to spend the first month of their three-month placements integrating into community life in order to increase social awareness and develop competencies and aptitude prescribed in a given course curricula.

### **Extension as Co-curricular Community Engagement in Bohol Island State University**

The Bohol Island State University, which is composed of six campuses, is the only state university in the province of Bohol. The province is composed of one main island surrounded by seventy-five other smaller islets. As such, a major concern within the area are coastal issues such as coastal resource management, particularly mangrove management and development and fishing technology.

Within this setting, the university maintains an extension office to support other departments in their various field work activities. A major program of the office is the promotion of Philippine aquasilviculture, which aims to protect and restore habitats for fisheries and aquatic resources. The project, which is part of the national government's initiative through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and the Commission on Higher Education, was implemented in partnership with 61 other higher education institutions in the area. It aims to plant mangroves for rehabilitation of the offshore shores, establish multi-species hatchery, and develop 100 techno-demo aquasilva farms in coastal areas. For participating institutions, the project is expected to have a significant impact on improving the delivery of services and, at the same time, provide opportunities for capability building for both faculty and staff. Under the project, the university was commissioned to plant 55 hectares of mangroves in the whole province. In addition, students and faculty members were mobilized for training, community development activities, linkages and partnership building, and

in the development of information education communication materials. Specifically, students perform field work at nearby coastal and watershed communities. Student field work happens once or twice a month to support and learn mangrove management techniques. There are, however, other students who work for longer periods on a separate project working with the local community and dive shops to replant the coral that has been destroyed in the area and educating locals on resource protection and utilization.

### **Volunteerism as Extra- / Non-curricular Community Engagement in Xavier University–Ateneo de Cagayan**

Located in one of Mindanao's active urban centers, Xavier University–Ateneo de Cagayan is a Jesuit university involved in addressing a range of issues in Cagayan de Oro City and Northern Mindanao, primarily in agricultural productivity, poverty reduction, education, and cultural conflicts. But instead of focusing on a specific social concern, the university operates five campuses and actively implements its outreach programs within the principles of its mission and ministry.

The *Kristohanong Katilingan sa Pagpakabana* is a component program of the Research and Outreach Centers of the university established in 1980 as the Social Involvement Office. Its current name is the local translation of "Christian Community for Social Awareness," which refers to the spirit of Jesuit education that seeks to elevate student awareness and commitment to social change. It maintains an outreach and social involvement center or office that implements activities reflective of the spirit of Jesuit education that seeks to elevate student awareness and commitment to social change. While the program also supports curricular service learning activities, it primarily provides venues for non-compulsory students and staff involvement in a range of platform:

1. *Issue advocacy* where students engage in a process of campaigning for social justice, social situation analysis, and concrete action responses;

2. *Community development programs* where exceptional students and staff lend technical expertise for capacity-building efforts for nearby communities;
3. *Educational enhancement projects*, which have been in place for the last ten years and continue to field students to improve literacy and educational attainment of nearby schools;
4. *Technology support farm management projects* like the development of text messaging services for farmers that inform them about weather and fluctuations in market prices for produce.

### Effects of School-based Community Engagement

*Effects on Students.* Positive effects of volunteer work among students validate existing evidence on the effectiveness of community work on the promotion of active citizenship and civic values (Table 3).

The impact of these activities includes a range of individual benefits that can be clustered into two streams: improved well-being (i.e., self-worth) and developed competencies (i.e., values and skills), both of which are important skills and critical foundations in the practice and promotion of good citizenship. Generally, improved well-being or sense of accomplishment serve as motivation for further involvement in civic service (i.e., after graduation) while competencies developed through community engagement are necessary for proactive civic involvement.

Based on the results of the focus group discussion, students acknowledge how community engagement enhances appreciation of their respective courses and improves their attitude towards learning. In general, student respondents affirm the value of community engagement in bridging the gap between theory and practice and help them remember the abstract concepts through real-life experiences, with community engagement making these more concrete. Students likewise developed important skills such as project and conflict management and general leadership skills since they are urged

by circumstances to engage with community members and learn to handle various situations that require decision making and leadership. As they engage with diverse individuals in the community, including members of their own respective groups, they also develop interpersonal skills as well as sense of confidence in public speaking since they routinely have to conduct training, workshops, and seminars. As many respondents claim, these important skills are foundations of good work attitudes that could not have been explored had there been no community engagement.

*Effects on faculty and staff.* The effects to faculty and staff are more on the improvement of teaching and, consequently, a feeling of achievement through unintended positive results, such as perceived civic attitude and leadership skills development among students (Table 4). They also see the activities as strategies that foster improved community relations. Because of these, the faculty and staff members gain professional fulfillment and better appreciation of the value of community work.

Among faculty and staff, there is also a pronounced appreciation for “participatory” strategies of volunteer service. More importantly, faculty members highlight the fact that the volunteer work provided them an opportunity to explore and enhance pedagogy. For most faculty and staff respondents, there were also increased appreciation for the need to be highly “interactive and collaborative” in order to optimize lessons and insights from the involvement of faculty, staff, and students. With regards to success of community engagement initiatives, they also realized that well-built multi-sectoral partnerships require massive involvement of various stakeholders not just the school and community, which increased their recognition on the importance of continuous and sustained “dialogue and consultation.”

*Effects on community.* As participatory and interactive activities, community engagement does not just affect over-all developmental direction and/or status of communities but also impact individual skills, knowledge, and attitude of community members. The positive impact



**TABLE 3** Effects of community engagement on students of selected higher education institutions in the Philippines

Effects	Bicol University	Bohol Island State University	Xavier University–Ateneo de Cagayan
<b>Well-being</b>			
Improved sense of fulfillment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Led to happiness and contentment with their performance and its effect on them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of making a difference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed sense of accomplishment in terms of social relevance</li> </ul>
Enhanced sense of selflessness and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their own struggles impacted their sense of achievement at the end of three months</li> <li>• Connection to communities motivated students to do more</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed sense of involvement or ownership in community undertakings</li> <li>• Valued personal effort as part of collective aspirations</li> <li>• Expanded “thinking beyond self”</li> </ul>
<b>Life values</b>			
Greater self-confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed of self-confidence through interaction with community members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved ability to communicate with foreigners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed self-confidence</li> </ul>
Better flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed flexibility in adapting to different cultures, personalities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed flexibility in dealing with both professionals and community members</li> </ul>	
Enhanced strength of character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved strength of character in responding to challenges and difficulties</li> </ul>		
<b>Academic values</b>			
Appreciation and application of active-reflexive learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning in the field caused them to explore theoretical concepts</li> <li>• Learned to bridge theory and practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longer term engagement provided an opportunity to deepen classroom lessons through real world experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gained hands on experience which increased understanding of topic</li> <li>• Provided opportunity for reflection</li> </ul>
Improved academic performance		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students can remember more in class concepts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved academic performance</li> </ul>
<b>Skills</b>			
Improved speaking skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved capacity to communicate with residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved English-speaking skills</li> </ul>	
Improved leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitated others to be active in their own development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved public speaking skills and leadership</li> </ul>	
Improved interpersonal (social skills)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built relationships of trust with community members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced persuasion strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved interpersonal and social skills and willingness to interact</li> </ul>
<b>Improved problem solving</b>			
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking of new ways to deal with issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed critical thinking and problem-solving skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed critical/reflective thinking and problem-solving skills</li> </ul>
Enriched understanding of culture and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immersion into local culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved understanding of diverse cultures and communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed deeper understanding of community issues</li> </ul>
<b>Professional growth</b>			
Enriched social network		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established a professional network of people that would be useful even after graduation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gained personal and professional network for future references</li> </ul>

**TABLE 4** Effects of school-based community engagement on faculty and staff of selected higher education institutions in the Philippines

Effects	Bicol University	Bohol Island State University	Xavier University–Ateneo de Cagayan
Personal satisfaction			
Improved sense of fulfillment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gained sense of reward in facilitating students' and communities' own sense of fulfillment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided a sense of professional fulfillment</li> </ul>	
Teaching			
Enhanced pedagogy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitated development of pedagogy and learning from interactive teaching methods</li> <li>Provided opportunity to teach students active learning and to expose them to new learning styles and fresh insights to supplement classroom discussions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brought new insights into class discussions</li> <li>Promoted student active learning and enhanced various learning styles</li> </ul>
Developed leadership skills			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed civic leadership skills</li> </ul>
Opened new opportunities for learning		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided an opportunity to conduct research in their field and share these with the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Led to new avenues of research</li> </ul>
Enriched personal and professional experience		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experienced first-hand experience in solving real-world issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learned first-hand about community issues.</li> </ul>
Attitude		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Led to greater appreciation for the value of volunteering and working with the community</li> </ul>	
Community relationships (networking and social capital)			
Stronger local stakeholder relations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fostered bonds among the school, local nongovernment organizations, local government units, and communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established better ties within the community</li> </ul>

among community members include better understanding of issues to development of social skills, which can be classified into improved capacity, economic opportunities, management, and attainment of other benefits (Table 5).

Community members welcome faculty and staff members and students of the higher education institutions as they see it as an opportunity to engage with and learn from and, at the same time, share their learning with the students. The engagements are appreciated as they are able to improve their networks, strengthen relationship with the local government units and

the academe, and enhance their personal and organizational skills.

Interestingly, communities view higher education institutions as important “government agencies” and attribute a significant level of change in the community to the school’s presence but not necessarily to one specific program or project.

**Negative effects.** While there were overwhelming responses on the positive effects of school-based community-engagement, there were also noteworthy negative ones, particularly when

**TABLE 5** Effects of school-based community engagement on individuals in community partners of selected higher education institutions in the Philippines

Effects	Bicol University	Bohol Island State University	Xavier University–Ateneo de Cagayan
<b>Economic opportunities</b>			
New economic and development opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided skills development livelihood for additional potential source of incomes</li> <li>• Facilitated small-scale infrastructure development in the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional resources for planting mangroves has allowed community to earn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement in small businesses from what they have learnt through the seminars</li> <li>• Improved health and access to services</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational management</b>			
Developed management capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed organizational skills such as conduct of meeting</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning new skills from the different seminars, capacity building of members, needs assessment</li> </ul>
Acquisition of new knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learned how to make floor mats for sale</li> <li>• Linked the community to officers in local government specific to community interests / livelihood needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness and caution on activities harmful to aquatic resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a greater knowledge of children’s rights and giving it importance</li> </ul>
<b>Project management</b>			
Enhanced communication capabilities			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of websites and text messaging services for farmers</li> <li>• Created means of sharing and learning at university summits and for a</li> </ul>
Improved efficiency and project implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better organizational management systems among people’s organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better systems of regulating dynamite fishing activities</li> </ul>	
<b>Community-university relations (networks)</b>			
Strengthened relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enriched interactions among local stakeholders (i.e., local government unit)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Led to better work relationships among community members</li> </ul>
Social capital build-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Led to formation of grassroots organizations among stakeholders (i.e., women seniors citizens groups)</li> <li>• Bridged the gap between community with the local government units and allowed better lobbying and negotiations</li> </ul>		
<b>Personal well-being and other benefits</b>			
Psychological well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced sense of hope and therefore more active participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed satisfaction among community members on being able to teach students (i.e., how to plant mangroves)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved sense of confidence among community members who were able to share knowledge and skills with students</li> <li>• Improved literacy and educational attainment</li> </ul>

community projects cause a sense of disappointment and disillusionment among participants. For instance, respondents articulate that curricular programs that “require” community service and incentive systems for extra-curricular extension activities do not actually engender values of community commitment and volunteerism because the community service is done in compliance with a requirement or in pursuit of a reward. Apparently, as one student explained, there is a difference when community engagement is initiated by the person and the institution: “There is a big distinction . . . when you initiate it [community engagement] by yourself, there is intrinsic motivation. It is more functional, effective, successful more of a self-achievement when you do it yourself.”

However, it was also observed that most of the negative effects articulated by the participants has to do with the design and operationalization of the programs rather than the nature of community engagement as a form of education and development through academic-community interaction. For instance, the negative sentiment of “not knowing the effects of the activity” as articulated by a university staff is to the lack of impact assessment tools. A similar disappointment when community members tend not to apply or “forget” their trainings as expressed by a university staff is common among short-term activities that do not have follow-up mechanisms. Other negative perceptions were also found to be caused more clearly by administrative and policy constraints.

### **Problems and Challenges in the Conduct of School-Based Community Initiatives**

Despite the felt benefits of volunteer work among students, faculty, and community and its contribution in enhancing the teaching-learning environment of higher education institutions, results show relative weaknesses in terms of institutional structure and support for volunteer initiatives. These are manifested in the following administrative difficulties:

1. Paperwork and bureaucratic protocols that discourages community work by making it more tedious
2. Lack of collaboration among departments in implementation of community work (i.e., extension office and academic colleges/ departments)
3. Lack of financial support that results to students and faculty spending their own resources (e.g., fare)
4. Lack of appreciation of extension/ community/public service work both in terms of administrative recognition (i.e., credit load for promotions) and a general perception that community work is merely “recreational activities”

Respondents also noted that despite strong foundations of community projects and activities (i.e., participatory stakeholder analysis, dialogue, etc.), the lack of administrative support affects the sustainability and positive impact of community engagement initiatives. Lack of long-term plans within the institutions make community projects volatile to changing priorities and/or leadership thrusts and create a general apprehension among stakeholders on the long-term track of the projects. These have also created a sense of disappointment among students regarding a project’s long-term positive impact. One student opined that she was very happy to have participated in the mangrove planting project but was disappointed that after a year, she observed that some of the mangrove areas had been neglected by the local government unit and the community members. The lack of assessment tools that could allow continuous improvement of interventions are also accounted as a negative reason for the lack of long-term visions and commitment within institutions.

But more importantly, although community-engagements in the selected higher education institutions have relatively clear relationships with curricular functions of the school, this relationship blurs due to administrative priorities. As a staff member of Xavier university explains, “Community engagement is taken for granted because of the requirement in teaching load . . . they just want to be practical and not complicate their teaching.”

It must be further emphasized that these administrative issues do not just affect the effective and efficient implementation of community engagement activities but adversely mitigates the positive individual and social impact of such undertakings.

In the context of volunteer work in higher education institutions, Aked (2014) underscores how these structural and policy problems deter the potentials of school-based community engagement as a “force for poverty alleviation and national development”:

There is a gap however, between this rhetoric and design of volunteer programs to fit features of the university system. This means programs cannot be tailored volunteer interventions to get to the root causes of issues. Communities can be left feeling like social laboratories and saturation of volunteer activities reduces their receptiveness. (Aked 2014, 30)

## Summary and Conclusion

School-based community engagement has evolved into a legitimate strategy of instruction and community development strategy. In the context of the three higher education institutions studied, community engagements were defined and implemented in relation to curricular and institutional goals. Service-learning activities are curricular community engagements that were conducted based on very specific curricular goals, target competencies, and expected outcomes. Extension activities are community services that are co-curricular in nature since they still largely complement curricular and expert-based institutional thrusts while extra-curricular activities like volunteering are more short-term community engagement that are initiatives independent of any curricular goal. Across the three categories, a range of on-ground activities engages students, faculty, and staff in a range of public service activities ranging from dole-out relief operations, tree planting, community organizing, technical assistance, advocacy, and other community engagement field work.

Generally, the school-based community engagement of the selected institutions showed positive individual and societal impacts on participants. Among students, it improved general well-being, sense of accomplishment and sense of self-worth or social relevance; enriched knowledge and competencies such as communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills; developed life values such as confidence, social skills, and strength of character; enhanced learning and academic performance; and facilitated professional growth through expansion of networks and linkages. Among faculty and staff, community engagement served as a means for personal satisfaction or fulfillment; improved pedagogy and teaching strategies; strengthened professional relations specifically with the immediate community; and improved appreciation of participatory and collaborative stakeholder involvement as development strategy. For community members, community engagement partnerships with higher education institutions provided more economic/developmental opportunities, enhanced individual and collective organizational and project management capacity; expanded networks and linkages; and improved over-all psychological well-being and personal growth.

In the three institutions, community engagements were already considered difficult undertakings that require additional efforts from both school and community in terms of coordination and security and additional time and resources. These problems are further compounded by lack of structural support and enabling environment that mitigates the positive impacts of civic service and even discourages sustained involvement. These problems include (1) bureaucratic procedures and protocols, (2) inefficient coordination among internal school units (i.e., colleges, extension office), (3) lack of financial support for volunteer work, and (4) lack of motivation in the form of incentives or recognition.

These selected case studies show that school-based community engagements are defined based on curricular objectives and functions of higher education institutions

and therefore directly contribute to realizing instruction, research, and extension functions of any institution of learning. They also have potential and substantial positive effects on personal and social development among internal and external school stakeholders. These positive effects, however, are often compromised, even negated, by administrative and policy issues. Taking lessons from three institutions, namely, Bicol University, Bohol Island State University, and Xavier University–Ateneo de Cagayan, the following recommendations are forwarded to optimize the positive impacts of school-based civic service not just in the three participant institutions of the study but in other educational institutions as well:

1. Establishment of central bureau for coordinating all school-based community engagement activities, whether curricular, co-curricular, or extra-curricular. This will significantly decrease bureaucratic procedural problems, clarify accountability in terms of hazards and risks of field work, and provide a centralized system for monitoring and documentation. Assigning a coordinating unit to assume planning, coordinating, and monitoring functions will allow respective academic units to focus on strengthening their programs and leave community arrangements and liaison functions to the central bureau, which can even improve inter-unit collaboration within the higher education institution. The office can also more effectively generate resources for community engagement in order to save institutions from considerable financial costs of such activities.
2. Strengthen workload and merit system for involvement in community engagement activities. In order to encourage involvement in community engagement, especially for co-curricular (i.e., extension) and extra-/non-curricular service, there is a need to improve workload crediting in a community engagement. In addition, these types of activities differ from regular teaching tasks due to the logistic requirements needed to implement such activities and commensurate incentive systems would only be judicious.
3. Improve the monitoring, reporting, and assessment of community-engagement. Since school-based community service have dual functions of developing server and served, evaluating success of such activities must emphasize assessing the achievement of both educational and developmental goals. Long-term studies like community impact studies and longitudinal effects of community engagement among graduates are also potential research avenues that are rarely explored in determining effects of community engagement.
4. Mobilize external financial or resource support for community engagement initiatives. The case studies show that students and staff involved in community engagement already expend personal time and resources for community work. Asking them to use their own money, especially in the case of students, is not only imprudent but may be completely discouraging. At the same time, community work is costly, and allocating substantial resources on the part of the institutions may be inefficient. As such, securing resource-sharing arrangements with local government units, nongovernment organizations, and charitable institutions are practical and sustainable alternatives.
5. Academically, there is a need to study the nuances across the different categories of school-based community engagement. Although the paper has found common effects and problems among service learning (curricular), extension (co-curricular), and volunteer activities (extra-curricular) in the selected institutions, there are also important differences. For instance, motivations and nature of involvement varies from one category to the other, in addition to the different goals and expected output, their effects may also vary in range, depth, and degree.



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