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A Proposed Practicum Course: Towards University Participation in Direct Social Development

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This paper is part of a collection of working papers presented by members of the Human Development Committee which in its ongoing discussions is trying to explicate the role of University education in the context of the Philippine situation. The basic question which the group has been asking itself is how the University, in this country marked by social inequalities, economic instability and by a lack of an expressed collective aspiration, can contribute its resources towards equality, stability and expression. Along more specific lines, this means finding how the University fits along with other sectors of society in the task of nation building. And in terms of the education process, this means more efforts in answering the need to base education on experience, the need to seek the unity of theory and practice and the need to make social consciousness part of the total formation of the student.

It is then within the above context that the practicum course is being proposed. Although the course in itself is a limited means to meet the needs stated above, the course is really part of a comprehensive proposal that the University set up a structure by which it can harness all available resources in order to participate in direct social development no matter how limited such participation might be.

In general, the structure proposed is the organization of the resources offered by the Administration, the Faculty, the Alumni, the Student Body by a social development agency now based in the campus.

The course too has not been worked out from a vacuum. Rather, it was evolved from the experiences of student volun-

teers of Ateneo Sarilikha, a volunteer organization doing social development work in depressed rural and urban communities, in collaboration with the staff of the SPES Institute (formerly Institute for Human Development), a social development agency based in the campus. These two groups have actually been working in the field together for over a year, and thus share a vast body of common experience in setting up economic projects which simultaneously are supported by and are supporting small indigenous social organizations.

Human development is the orientation of this course and of the volunteer program as a whole. This simply means that the ultimate aim of the program is the liberation of the Filipino poor from the constraints of his physical environment, from the existing social arrangements and from economic deprivation, towards his control of nature, his total well-being and his free participation in cultural and social affairs. In effect this orientation serves as the vision for both student volunteer and the community he is working with.

It should also be noted that this practicum course complements the learning that takes place in the field. Field work, the essential part of the volunteer program forms the structure for actual exposure to the depressed communities and the implementation of development projects. Thus, in a sense, the experience and action part of the program is complemented by and is served by this course. Experience and reflection form the basic cycle of learning.

Around eight rural barrios and sitios constitute the rural volunteer centers, while a string of cooperatives in nearby Rizal towns constitute the urban area.

The following then is a brief description and outline of the course.

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: A COURSE FOR SARILIKHA VOLUNTEERS

This course is designed to integrate theory and practice of working in the barrio. The student is first introduced in a weekend live-in seminar to the concept of man and society in the

context of the rural and urban barrio, and to the rationale for social development. Then he is assigned an area, a barrio or a sitio, to work and live-in on weekends. Regularly, on a weekday he reports and is trained usually through a lecture, on the tools for change such as planning and management techniques, agrarian reform programs, means towards integration with communities, basic accounting and group dynamics. Requirement for the course is a concrete project in the barrio and a synthesis paper to integrate his experience.

Outline

Part A: Context

1. Man and Society
2. Philippine Socio-Economic Situation
3. Political Structure
4. History and Culture

Part B: Planned Change

1. Sociology of Communities
2. Process of Change
3. Role of the Volunteer: The Change Agent
4. Integration into a Community

Part C: Tools for Change

Rural

1. Grain Economics
 - a. Rice Production: Stages and Techniques
 - b. Irrigation
 - c. Marketing
2. Agrarian Problems
3. Agrarian Reform Program
 - a. Land Transfer
 - b. Samahang Nayon and Cooperative Development
 - c. DLGCD

Urban

1. Modernization

- a. Factors and Effects
- b. Traditional and Modern Sectors
2. Cooperative Movement
 - a. History
 - b. Government Program
3. Cooperativism as an Economic System
4. Cooperatives as Business Enterprise
5. Case Studies

Part D: Management Principles

1. Planning
 - a. Principles
 - b. Structure
 - c. Cycle of Planning
2. Project Development
 - a. Rationale
 - b. Components of Project Study
 - c. Process

Part E: Resumé and Synthesis

1. Philosophy of Man
2. Man and the Absolute: Theology of Liberation

Parts A and E form the orientation and vision while B and D are the skills required for the fieldwork.

The course as outlined above is now a formal and accredited course offered by the Economics Department. Although the long term objective is to make this course available to all college students at present only members of the Sarilikha are required and allowed to take the course. This is due to the experimental status of the course. After one semester's experience, it is clear that certain modifications have to be undertaken before recommendations are made that it be made available as an elective, if not as part of the core curriculum. Furthermore, this course is designed to serve the demands of fieldwork experience. So far only Sarilikha has a complete and integral fieldwork program in the college.

It is a most vital point to recognize that this course cannot be given in isolation. It is intimately and necessarily linked with fieldwork; it is made to serve activities in the field; and it provides the reflection part of an action-reflection process of learning.

From early reactions to the course as implemented in the last semester, a significant modification seems to be pointed out. In order to meet the individual pace and needs of the volunteer realistic to the actual development in the field and to allow for a more thorough abstraction of the field experience, the adoption of a tutorial (versus the general lecture and discussion) system is suggested. Evidently, the success of such a step will demand more time and effort from both staff members and more experienced volunteers.