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FEATURE

Experiences with Service-Learning as Perceived by Students, Faculty, and Community Partners Involved with the Master of Public Health Program at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Philippines

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***Abstract** - Service-learning on a voluntary basis as well as being a requirement for a degree has a positive impact on learning. The AIIAS Department of Public Health (DPH) in the Philippines has conducted various community service activities in the communities surrounding its campus. The Master's of Public Health (MPH) students participated in these service-learning activities through their final projects, internships, and class activities. This study evaluated the perspectives, attitudes, satisfaction, and personal reflections of the students, faculty, and community partners involved in AIIAS DPH service-learning activities during 2003 - 2004. Students and faculty agreed that the service-learning experiences helped them to improve themselves and the community they served, while the community partners had neutral attitudes. Specific recommendations for improvement are presented to the AIIAS DPH.*

Introduction

For about a decade, the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIIAS) Department of Public Health (DPH) has conducted various community service activities in the communities surrounding its campus, such as in Silang Town, Balubad I Village, Biga Village and Pook Village. These activities were school-based programs, which were related to the curriculum of the Master of Public Health (MPH) program. The students participated in the service-learning activities through their final projects, internship, and class activities. They served in the community centers, hospitals, and maternity clinics. In cooperation with the faculty, they helped educate and train the community through programs such as water and sanitation, environmental

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health, nutrition for mothers, health care for children, and infectious and chronic disease prevention.

The curriculum of the MPH program includes 400 hours of activities in the community. Part of these hours (100) are expected to be done in combination with the courses. The MPH Internship requires another 100 hours of community experiences in hospitals, primary health care centers, non-governmental organizations and other institutions. The MPH final project requires 200 hours of community work targeting a specific problem or need from a specific community. During the final project, MPH student is expected to conduct a needs assessment, select a problem in communication with the community leaders, design, implement, evaluate and communicate appropriate interventions to improve the situation of the community regarding the selected problem, and to write a final report of the project.

The Department of Public Health at AIIAS felt the need to study whether the experiences of the students in those communities had a positive or negative effect on the students, the communities and the faculty. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the experiences on service-learning as perceived by students, faculty, and community partners involved with the Master of Public Health Program at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Philippines.

Background

A US nationwide study on service-learning highlighted the positive impact of this kind of program on students, community and educational institutions (Eyler & Giles, 2002). The students' experiences with the community produce a positive impact on their learning process and brings benefits to the community. This concept is in line with some authors that expressed that students learn better when their learning is not bound by classrooms and textbooks (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003).

In the United States, service-learning programs are increasingly integrated into school programs, as part of the students' learning and required service to the community. The National Center for Education Statistics estimated that the service-learning programs involved more than 13 million students in the 2000-2001 academic year in the United States of America (Coverdelt, n.d.). Service-learning has been perceived as a reciprocal activity, from which the students and the community both benefit (Senge, et al., 2000). Service-learning impacts the faculty, students, community, and the institutions and provides benefits such as development of personality, critical thinking skills and perspective transformation (Driscoll & Holland, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 2002; Hesser, 1995). It has also been connected to student achievement on United States educational content standards (Loney, n.d. ; Morgan & Streb, 2001).

Objectives of the Study

This survey aimed at evaluating the service-learning activities that were launched by the AIIAS Department of Public Health. The survey intended to obtain data on the impact of the service-learning programs on the students' learning, and benefits to the school and community. This survey focused especially on the perspectives, attitudes, satisfaction, and personal reflection of the students, the faculty, and the community partners, as well.

The objectives of this study were

1. To describe students' perspectives regarding their service-learning activities, attitudes towards community involvement, the impact of service-learning on their career/specialization choice, and students' personal reflections on their service-learning experience(s).

2. To describe the teachers' perspectives about their service-learning courses, their attitudes toward community involvement, the impact of service-learning on their professional development, their personal reflections on their service-learning experience(s) and the process of teaching their service-learning courses.

3. To describe the community partners' perspectives towards the service-learning activities, their attitudes towards community involvement, their personal reflections on the service-learning experience(s), their satisfaction with their roles and responsibilities and the process of participating in the service-learning partnership.

Method

Questionnaires and Focus Groups

This survey was a descriptive study, based on quantitative and qualitative data. Questionnaires were used for students, faculty and community partners, and focus groups were held for students and community partners in order to collect the data. The questionnaires and focus group questions were originally developed by Shinnamon, Gelmon, and Holland, for the *Health Professions Schools in Service to the Nation Program* in the United States (1999). The three questionnaires had a similar design. Some questions and scales were modified from the original to suit the local context.

The three questionnaires used in this study were modified from a 5-point Likert-scale to a 6-point Likert scale, adding the option "does not apply." The respondents were asked about their level of agreement with different statements regarding their service-learning experiences. The questionnaires evaluated the perspectives on service-learning, the attitude, the satisfaction, and reflection of personal development. In the questionnaire for the faculty and community partners, there were four guided questions that evaluated the process of teaching

a service-learning course, while in the students' questionnaire there were three additional questions that assessed the learning of critical thinking and leadership skills, and the integration of faith on the service-learning activities. The last section of the three questionnaires consisted of an open-ended question that allowed the respondents to add other comments about the service-learning experiences.

Two focus groups were implemented, a student focus group and a community-partner focus group in order to obtain qualitative data. The duration of each focus group was one hour. The group was asked to discuss a set of specific questions regarding their experience with service-learning.

Participants

The respondents were the students and faculty members of MPH program offered by the AIIAS Department of Public Health (DPH) and the community partners that helped accommodate the students during their community services in their local communities. There were 18 students enrolled for the second semester of the academic year 2004, 7 faculty members of the DPH, and 10 community partners.

For the implementation of the focus groups, 10 students from the 18 respondents to the questionnaires were selected according to their availability to participate on the date and time the focus group took place. All the community partners that helped to coordinate students' service-learning activities were included in the community partners' focus group. Special arrangements were made for their transportation to and from the meeting place. The respondents were asked to answer a set of questions and give feedback on their perceptions of the overall service-learning experience.

Statistical Methods

The data collected with the questionnaires was analyzed using the statistical software SPSS for Windows, version 11.0.0. Questions using a Likert scale were coded as 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. The option "does not apply" was not coded. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each question, and a grand mean including all the questions was calculated for each section of the questionnaire.

Result

Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaires were submitted to 18 students, and all of them returned the questionnaire to the department (response rate 100% for all questions). Of the 18 students, 3 were male and 15 female. The age distribution showed that the majority of the students were over 30 years old (see Table 1).

Table 1
Age and Gender Distribution of the Students

Gender		Age Group				Total
		20-24	25-29	30-34	35> years	
Male	n		1		2	3
Female	n	2	3	6	4	15
Total	n	2	4	6	6	18

Students' Perspectives About Service-Learning

The students' general perspective on service-learning was basically neutral (mean = 3.4, see Table 2).

They agreed that service-learning should be implemented in more classes in the MPH degree program, and they would like to enroll in them. They agreed that their class activities, internship, and project helped them in the following:

- To see how course material they learned could be used in everyday life.
- To better understand the material from lectures and readings.
- To see the direct link between building public health skills and service-learning experiences (except internship).

The students strongly agreed that participation in service-learning made them more aware of the roles of health professionals in other disciplines and more responsible for their own learning.

Table 2
Students' Perspective About Service-Learning

Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
The community participation aspect (class activities) of the MPH program helped me to see how course material I learned can be used in everyday life.	3.7	1.5	3	5
The community participation aspect (internship) of the MPH program helped me to see how course material I learned can be used in everyday life.	3.7	1.0	2	5
The community participation aspect (project) of the MPH program helped me to see how course material I learned can be used in everyday life.	3.6	0.9	3	5

Table continues

Table 2 (continued)
Students' Perspective About Service-Learning

Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Class activities helped me to better understand the material from lecture and reading.	3.8	1.0	1	5
The internship helped me to better understand the material from lecture and reading.	3.6	1.1	1	5
The Project helped me to better understand the material from lecture and reading.	3.7	0.8	3	5
I feel I would have learned more from the courses if more time was spent in the classroom instead of in the community.	3.2	1.2	1	5
Service-learning should be implemented into more classes at my school.	3.9	0.9	2	5
My service-learning experience (class activities) was not directly linked to building public health skills.	3.8	0.9	1	5
My service-learning experience (internship) was not directly linked to building public health skills.	3.3	1.0	1	5
My service-learning experience (project) was not directly linked to building public health skills.	3.6	0.8	2	5
Participation in service-learning made me take more responsibility for my own learning.	4.5	0.6	3	5
Community service (class activities) should be a voluntary activity rather than a MPH program requirement.	3.2	1.4	1	5
Community service (internship) should be a voluntary activity rather than a MPH program requirement.	2.9	1.3	1	5
Community service (project) should be a voluntary activity rather than a MPH program requirement.	3.0	1.1	1	5
Service-learning made me more aware of the roles of health professionals in other disciplines besides my own.	4.5	0.7	3	5
I would like to enroll in additional service-learning courses offered through my degree program.	4.0	0.8	3	5
Grand Mean	3.4	0.4		

Students' Attitude Towards Service-Learning

As depicted in Table 3, the students' general attitude toward community involvement was positive (Mean = 3.8). To some extent, they agreed that they got involved in the community through service-learning. Many were already volunteering before the service-learning experience initiated by the school. They agreed that they would probably volunteer after their MPH program and continue to be involved in the community. To them the class activities, internship, and project benefited the community and helped them become aware of the community needs. They strongly agreed that they had a responsibility to serve the community.

Table 3
Students' Attitudes Towards Community Involvement

Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
I was already volunteering before this service-learning experience.	3.9	0.9	2	5
The community participation aspect of service-learning showed me how I can become more involved in my community.	4.2	0.4	4	5
I will continue involvement with especially my service-learning site.	4.1	0.7	3	5
I feel that the work I did through service-learning (class activities) benefited the community.	4.1	0.6	3	5
I feel that the work I did through service-learning (internship) benefited the community.	3.7	0.8	2	5
I feel that the work I did through service-learning (project) benefited the community.	3.8	0.8	3	5
I probably will volunteer or continue community involvement after MPH program	4.2	1.0	1	5
Service-learning (class activities) helped me to become more aware of the needs in the community.	4.2	1.0	1	5
Service-learning (internship) helped me to become more aware of the needs in the community.	3.9	0.8	3	5
Service-learning (project) helped me to become more aware of the needs in the community.	3.8	0.9	3	5
I have a responsibility to serve the community.	4.6	0.6	3	5
Grand Mean	3.8	0.4		

Influence of Service-Learning on Students' Future Professional Work

In general, the students agreed that the service-learning experience will have an influence on their professional work in the future, and they would integrate the experience into their future career plans (see Table 4). The service-learning experience helped them define their personal strengths and weaknesses and clarify their career/specialization choice.

Table 4
Influence of Service-Learning on Students' Future Professional Work

Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Doing work in the community helped me to define my personal strengths and weaknesses.	4.4	0.6	3	5
Performing work in the community helped me clarify my career/specialization choice.	3.9	1.1	1	5
I will integrate community service into my future career plans.	4.4	0.6	3	5
Grand Mean	4.3	0.7		

Students' Personal Reflections on Service-Learning

In general, the students indicated positive personal reflections on service-learning (Mean = 4.0, see Table 5). They became more comfortable working with people different from themselves, and service-learning made them more aware of some of their own biases and prejudices. In fact, they were able to develop good relationships with their teachers. During this experience, they could make a difference in the community. They were able to develop their leadership skills, communication skills, and critical thinking skills.

They strongly agreed that they were able to integrate faith in the service-learning experiences. They became more involved in the church/faith mission and developed a better relationship with God.

Student Focus Group

The respondents in the focus groups mentioned that they encountered many problems which they did not anticipate before going to the community. To them, the core of the problems was that some of the service-learning programs were implemented without specific goals, careful planning and good organization. In the planning and organization of the program, for example, they would have needed someone who could function as a liaison officer, someone who knew the

network and could connect them to the community or non-government organizations. This kind of liaison officer could also open the way for the students to break the language and cultural barriers and thus penetrate the community. They also expressed the need to have some kind of course or seminar about the local culture, especially topics related to government bureaucracy.

Table 5
Students' Personal Reflections on Service-Learning

Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
I developed a good relationship with my service-learning instructor(s) because of the community work (class activities).	3.8	0.9	2	5
I developed a good relationship with my service-learning instructor(s) because of the community work (internship).	3.5	0.7	2	5
I developed a good relationship with my service-learning instructor(s) because of the community work (project).	3.7	1.0	2	5
During this experience, I became more comfortable working with people different from myself.	4.4	0.6	3	5
Service-learning made me more aware of some of my own biases and prejudices.	4.3	0.6	3	5
Participating in the community (class activities) helped me enhance my leadership skills.	4.2	0.6	3	5
Participating in the community (internship activities) helped me enhance my leadership skills.	3.7	0.8	3	5
Participating in the community (project) helped me enhance my leadership skills.	3.7	0.9	3	5
The work (class activities) I performed in the community enhanced my ability to communicate my ideas in a real world context.	4.2	0.6	3	5
The work (internship) I performed in the community enhanced my ability to communicate my ideas in a real world context.	3.9	0.8	3	5

table continues

Table 5 (continued)

Students' Personal Reflections on Service-Learning

Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
The work (project) I performed in the community enhanced my ability to communicate my ideas in a real world context.	3.7	0.8	3	5
I can make a difference in the community.	4.1	0.8	3	5
Participation (internship) in the community helped me enhance my critical thinking skills.	3.8	0.7	3	5
Participation (project) in the community helped me enhance my critical thinking skills.	3.8	0.8	3	5
I developed a better relationship with God because of the community work.	4.5	0.7	3	5
Service-learning made me more involved in my Church's mission	4.4	0.9	2	5
Grand Mean	4.0	0.4		

Some of the respondents said that in the community they learned things by themselves—for example, the cultural understanding, in order to meet the needs in their service-learning programs.

Even if most of the students had a background in the health sciences, they expressed the need to learn teaching strategies, maternity and child care and some practical skills like taking blood pressure. They felt the need to have interesting teaching materials to use in the community on tobacco prevention, malnutrition, and water and sanitation.

When asked about the relationship between service-learning and their academic program of study, one student responded that the classroom lectures give the basic knowledge and theory. She said, "They [the classroom lectures and readings] gave the reasons behind doing something. . .they really help give us the confidence and also the reason. . . . In the classroom you don't use the theory. . . so you go out there, you'll be glad that you are able to learn." This opinion of hers was supported by her fellow students in the focus group.

The students expressed that they had a very good experience in general, that the villagers were always friendly, that they gained cultural understanding and learned customs from the communities and that they were helped by village officers in many ways (like getting photocopies done for the community, snacks for the participants in the projects, etc.).

Teacher Questionnaires

Teachers' Perspectives About Service-Learning

Table 6 shows that in terms of the teachers' perspectives about service-learning, they strongly agreed that the service-learning was helpful for the students to see the applicability of the subject matter in the classroom in everyday life and that this experience prepared them for their careers.

The teachers perceived the service-learning as helpful for students to better understand their lectures and readings. They indicated that service-learning should be implemented into more classes and programs at AIIAS, including their classes. There was a wide variation in perspectives regarding that students would learn more from their courses if more time had been spent in the classroom. They perceived that the service-learning would help students to learn more.

Table 6
Teachers' Perspective About Service-Learning

Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Service-learning helps students to see that subject matter they learn in the classroom can be applied in everyday life.	4.9	0.4	4	5
Service-learning helped students to better understand their lectures and readings.	4.3	0.8	3	5
I feel students would have learned more from my course(s) if more time had been spent in the classroom instead of doing community work.	3.6	1.5	1	5
Service-learning should be implemented into more classes and programs at my institution.	3.9	1.1	2	5
I would like to implement service-learning in more of my classes.	3.9	0.9	3	5
Service-learning helps prepare MPH students for their careers.	4.9	0.4	4	5
Systematic evaluation of the outcomes of the service-learning course(s) will be useful to me.	4.1	0.7	3	5
Grand Mean	4.2	0.4		

***Teachers' Attitudes Towards
Community Involvement***

Teachers generally had positive attitudes towards getting involved in the community service (see Table 7). They strongly agreed that working with the community partners would help to structure and deliver the service-learning experience of the students. They were positive about the idea that service-learning benefited the community and helped them to become more aware of the needs in their community. They learned something new about the community from their community partners.

Three out of four teachers had already volunteered in their community before they implemented the service-learning activities. They agreed that they had a responsibility to serve their community and the service-learning showed them how they could be more involved in the community. They agreed that the faculty members should be role models for students regarding community service.

Table 7
Teachers' Attitude Towards Community Involvement

Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
I value working with community partners to structure and deliver the service-learning experience of the students.	4.6	0.5	4	5
I learned something new about the community from my community partners.	4.6	0.5	4	5
Faculty members should be role models for students regarding community service.	4.4	0.5	4	5
I was already volunteering in my community before we implemented service-learning.	3.6	1.1	2	5
My participation in the service-learning showed me how I can become more involved in my community.	4.4	0.8	3	5
I feel service-learning benefited the community	4.6	0.5	4	5
Service-learning helped me to become more aware of the needs in my community	4.6	0.5	4	5
I have a responsibility to serve my community.	4.3	0.8	3	5
Grand Mean	4.4	0.5		

Influence of Service-Learning on Teachers' Professional Development

The faculty agreed that the service-learning influenced their professional development (see Table 8). To them, participation in service-learning was an important component of their professional portfolio. Participating in service-learning helped to clarify areas of focus for their scholarship and helped them to understand their professional strengths and weaknesses. Four of them expressed that teaching a service-learning course has changed their teaching style(s).

Teachers' Personal Reflections on Service-learning

In general, the faculty members expressed positive reflections on the service-learning experience (see Table 9). They were able to develop a good relationship with the students and make them more aware of some of their own biases and prejudices. Participating in the community helped them enhance their leadership skills and their abilities to communicate their ideas in the community. They agreed that through service-learning programs they could make a difference in the community.

Even though the faculty members might have become more aware of their own prejudices and biases towards others, however, their opinions differed as to whether the service-learning experience had made them more comfortable working with different people.

Table 8

Influence of Service-Learning on Teachers' Professional Development

Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Service-learning helped me to understand my professional strengths and weaknesses.	4.3	0.8	3	5
Participating in service-learning helped clarify areas of focus for my scholarship.	4.3	0.8	3	5
Teaching service-learning course(s) has resulted in a change in my teaching style(s).	3.6	1.3	2	5
Participation in service-learning is an important component of my profession portfolio.	3.7	1.0	2	5
Grand Mean	4.0	0.8		

Table 9
Teachers' Personal Reflections on Service-Learning

Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
I was able to develop a good relationship with the students in my service-learning course(s) because of the community work.	3.7	1.0	2	5
Through the service-learning experience, I became more comfortable working with people different from myself	3.3	1.1	2	5
Service-learning made me more aware of some of my own biases and prejudices.	3.7	1.3	2	5
Participating in the community helped me enhance my leadership skills.	3.9	0.7	3	5
The work we performed enhanced my ability to communicate my ideas in the community.	3.9	0.7	3	5
I can make a difference in the community	4.3	0.5	4	5
Grand Mean	3.8	0.6		

Teachers' Responses on the Process of Teaching a Service-Learning Course

The faculty got involved in the service-learning programs because of various reasons. First of all, it was because they desired to increase the relevance of the courses they teach and wanted to try something new. They also acknowledged that institutional mandate and their job description made them involved in the service-learning programs.

In relation to the most serious concerns when teaching a service-learning course, the faculty indicated the following concerns in order of importance:

- Time constraints
- Assessment of student learning and work
- Communication with community partners
- Human, fiscal, and physical resources
- Supervision of the students

The service-learning experiences, however, have brought the following positive impacts to them, in order of importance: The programs were considered as part of their personal and professional service in the community. Their relationship with the students and the community partners was developed. Two of the faculty members indicated the service-learning activities influenced positively their plan for publication and presentation (research agenda).

Community Partners

Community Partners' Perspective About Service-learning Courses

As shown in Table 10, the community partners indicated that they had a positive perspective regarding service-learning courses, even though the mean of 3.5 did not indicate strong agreement. They were not certain whether service-learning should be implemented into more classes, but they agreed that the service-learning helped the students to see the usability of their classroom material in everyday life and helped the students to prepare for their future career.

Table 10
Community Partners' Perspective About Service-Learning Courses

Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Service-learning helps prepare health professions students for their careers	3.5	0.5	3	4
The students experience with service-learning helped them to see how classroom material can be used in everyday life.	3.6	0.5	3	4
Service-learning should be implemented into more classes at the University	3.4	0.5	3	4
Grand Mean	3.5	0.5		

Community Partners' Attitude Toward Community Involvement

In general, as shown in Table 11, the community partners' attitudes towards community involvement were neutral. Eight out of the 10 respondents were neutral when asked if their participation in the program brought social and economic benefits for their organization. Nevertheless, they agreed that the students' program benefited their community. Seven of the respondents were neutral about being valued as "teachers" by AIIAS faculty. When asked if the program made AIIAS more aware of the needs in their community, 50% of the respondents agreed and 50% were neutral.

Table 11
Community Partners' Attitude Toward Community Involvement

Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
The community served by our agency benefited from the activities of the service-learning students.	3.5	0.7	3	5
Participation in the service-learning program made the University more aware of the needs in the community.	3.5	0.5	3	4
I felt valued as a teacher by the University faculty.	3.3	0.5	3	4
Participation in the service-learning program had valuable social benefits for my organization.	3.3	0.5	3	4
Participation in the service-learning program produced economic benefits for my organization.	3.2	0.4	3	4
Grand Mean	3.4	0.4		

Community Partners' Reflections on Service-Learning Experience

Community partners were not as positive about the service-learning experience as teachers and students, but their responses were not negative, either (see Table 12). Only two of the community partners expressed that the service-learning project made them more aware of some of their own biases and prejudices. Only three of them felt that the benefits of working with service-learning students outweighed any burdens it may have added to their work, but most of them were neutral. Three individuals agreed that the relationship with AIIAS would continue, and seven were neutral.

Seeing themselves as mentors to the students, the community partners generally stated that they developed good relationships with the AIIAS students and teachers. This reflection was similar to those of the students and the faculty. The experience of service-learning programs made them more interested in developing further partnerships with AIIAS.

Community Partners' Satisfaction with their Roles and Responsibilities

More than 60% of the community partners were neutral when asked whether they were satisfied or not with their roles and responsibilities as they were involved in the service-learning programs. Several partners agreed that

they were satisfied with the roles and responsibilities of evaluating students, designing curriculum, facilitating student reflection, participating in the classroom, and on-site supervision of students.

Table 12

Community Partners' Personal Reflections on Service-Learning Experience

Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
I developed a good relationship with the students from the service-learning course.	3.6	0.7	3	5
I developed a good relationship with the faculty from the service-learning course.	3.6	0.7	3	5
I see myself as a mentor to the students.	3.7	0.8	3	5
Because of this experience, I am more interested in developing an extended partnership with the University.	3.6	0.7	3	5
This project made me more aware of some of my own biases and prejudices.	3.1	0.6	2	4
In general, the benefits of working with service-learning students outweighed any burdens it may have added to our work.	3.2	0.6	2	4
I anticipate that the relationship we have developed with the University will continue	3.3	0.5	3	4
Grand Mean	3.4	0.5		

Table 13

Community Partners' Satisfaction with Their Roles and Responsibilities

Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Evaluating students	3.4	0.5	3	4
Designing curriculum	3.3	0.5	3	4
Facilitating student reflection	3.4	0.5	3	4
Participation in the classroom	3.4	0.5	3	4
On-site supervisor of students	3.3	0.5	3	4
Grand Mean	3.4	0.5		

***Community Partners' Process of Participation
in the Service-Learning Partnership***

Regarding the process of their participation, the community partners were motivated to get involved in the service-learning partnership by the following reasons, in order of importance:

1. They needed additional help
2. They had positive prior experience with students
3. They wanted to try something new
4. They wanted to influence the training of future health professionals
5. They wanted to make connection with the university
6. They wanted professional recognition

The community partners indicated the following five most serious concerns regarding the partnership in the service-learning, in order of importance:

1. The supervision of the students
2. The time commitment in supervising the students
3. The training/orienting of students
4. The trusts/confidence in students
5. The time constraints of academic world

The community partners indicated that the students' involvement in their organization had the following positive impacts, in order of importance:

1. Increasing their awareness of organizational operations
2. Raising their public profile
3. Bringing new energy to their organization
4. Saving them money because of additional help

Community Partners' Focus Group

In the focus groups, the community partners expressed their appreciation for the community service sponsored by AIIAS Department of Public Health and they wished to continue the partnership. Furthermore, they expressed their request that the community service would be continued and would include their other dire needs such as prevention and health care for skin diseases and dengue fever, which were rampant in their community. They even mentioned that if possible AIIAS would provide water pumps in some strategic places in their villages, for the community to have free access to fresh, clean water, which was the number one need in their community as they saw it.

Discussion

Comparison of Results of Students, Faculty Members, and the Community Partners

Overall, the students and the faculty agreed that the service-learning experiences helped them improve themselves and the community they served, while the community partners had slightly more neutral positions in their attitude, personal reflection, and satisfaction with the roles and responsibilities. Discussions during the focus group sessions did not result in strongly negative responses, however, and the desire for the program to continue was clearly voiced. The students and the teachers indicated stronger agreement in their perspectives, attitudes, and personal reflections, which is not surprising, given the amount of time they have spent together in classrooms, and the common religious background they share.

While the three parties indicated that service-learning gave positive impacts, they also indicated some important concerns regarding their involvement in the community work. The concerns of the community partners were similar to those of the faculty members in some areas, since both of them indicated that they were concerned with the time constraints and the supervision and assessment of the students' learning and community work. However, the students—through the focus group—recommended that service-learning should be included in their evaluation. The faculty and the students were concerned about the language barriers. The teachers, in particular, were concerned with the human, fiscal, and physical resources. This concern could be connected to the community's request that AIIAS Department of Public Health provide public facilities such as water pumps.

Comparison of Results from Questionnaires and Focus Groups

The students expressed in the questionnaires that they perceived that participation in service-learning made them more responsible for their own learning and more aware of the roles of public health professionals in other disciplines besides their own. With a very positive attitude, they indicated that they had a responsibility to serve the community. Many of them also reflected that they had developed a better relationship with God because of the community work. However, in the focus group they expressed their concern about having clear objectives and skills to succeed in the service-learning experience. According to the focus group, service-learning helped them to realize their strengths and weaknesses.

Even though the MPH program from AIIAS has a faculty member assigned to lead students through their final project and internship, the students expressed

the need to have someone to be with them during most of the time they stayed in the community. This need was not clearly reflected in the questionnaires.

The data obtained from the questionnaires that the community partners submitted shows that most of them had neutral positions in their attitude, personal reflection, and satisfaction with the roles and responsibilities. However, the information obtained from the focus group indicates that the community partners were satisfied with the service-learning program. They clearly expressed their desire that the MPH program should continue working in their communities, and that the MPH program should plan to do more projects and target other needs. There is a clear difference between the data from the questionnaires and the data obtained in the focus group.

Comparison of the Results to Similar Studies

There are not many studies published that evaluate the impact of service-learning activities on students, faculty members, and community partners. However, some published studies on this topic and some others who address the issue of community-based participatory research partnerships showed similar outcomes with the study presented in this report: the biggest enemy to service-learning is time. The most important concern regarding service-learning activities expressed by faculty members, and the second most important concern expressed by community partners, had to do with the time constraints for implementing the program. Similarly, a report of a formative evaluation of the first 4 years of a community-based participatory research project, the Detroit Community-Academic Urban Research Center, concluded that time constraints were the main barrier and challenge for that program (Lantz, Viruell-Fuentes, Israel, Softley, & Guzman, 2001).

Another study evaluating the impact of a service-learning program on dietetics students concluded that

Service learning was an effective teaching method in the dietetics curriculum. Students reported that they were able to integrate the classroom content with real-life experience and learned more while doing so. Service learning had a positive effect on learning by bringing additional personal, professional, and spiritual context to the subject content taught in the classroom and on an understanding of community resources and needs. (Kim, Clasen, & Canfield, 2004, p. 275)

The findings published by Kim et al. are similar to the results obtained from the questionnaire part of AIIAS students' survey, but differ somewhat from the data obtained from the focus groups.

Some of the areas where AIIAS students expressed agreement and strong agreement were related with awareness of roles and responsibilities of other health professionals, understanding the culture of the community, personal

growth and perspectives for the future career. A study from Hawaii evaluates the aspects that students value when receiving education in a community setting (Oneha, Yoshimoto, Bell, & Enos, 2001). This study reports positive outcomes on all the previous variables on a group of students and graduates from different health programs. It also concludes that service-learning provides positive experiences for students: they value these experiences and they understand the impact these experiences have on their learning process.

Several studies demonstrated that service-learning on a voluntary basis as well as when it forms part of the degree requirements has a positive impact on students' learning (Burrows, Chauvin, Lazarus, & Chehardy, 2000; Cauley, et al., 2001; Elam, et al., 2004). Overall, the service-learning program of AIIAS Department of Public Health was seen as improving MPH students' educational experience.

Service-learning programs should be carefully planned and with sufficient time and resources in order to guarantee an optimum experience for students and community. These programs should have specific goals and objectives before the implementation. This is in line with one of the essential elements for effective service-learning set up by the National Service-learning Cooperative of the National Youth Leadership Council (Coverdelt, 2003). The AIIAS Department of Public Health should make sure that the students-before going to the community-have been equipped with teaching strategies, public health practical skills, knowledge of government bureaucracy, and an understanding of the local culture. Appointing a liaison officer who knows the leaders or can build a network between the community and the educational institution is a key component for a successful service-learning program.

The teachers should include the service-learning experiences in their examinations. This recommendation is in line with one of the essential elements for effective service-learning as prescribed by the National Service-Learning Cooperative of the National Youth Leadership Council (Coverdelt, 2003).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the data obtained from the questionnaires and the focus groups, the students, faculty members and, to a lesser extent, the community partners expressed their satisfaction with the program and gave positive feedback in general. However, they also expressed some specific concerns.

The teachers had good perspectives and positive attitude towards service-learning. They agreed that the service-learning was a helpful and useful experience to themselves, the students and the community. The programs helped them to develop their personality, profession, and skills, particularly communication skills and leadership skills. They agreed that through service-learning the students have learned more and the programs have brought benefits

to the community. They also indicated that they learned new things in the service-learning and as a result their teaching styles had changed.

The students agreed that the service learning experiences helped them to improve themselves and the community they served. Realizing that they had responsibility in the community, they said the service learning programs helped them build good relationships with their instructors and with God, as well.

Overall, the community partners had neutral positions in their attitude, personal reflection, and satisfaction with the roles and responsibilities. A few of them felt that they were valued as teachers by AIIAS faculty and were satisfied with their roles and responsibilities. Only some of them felt that the benefits of working with service-learning students clearly outweighed any burdens it may have added to their work. The community partners had similar reflections about their relationship with AIIAS students and faculty. They perceived the service-learning programs as helpful for the students' preparation for their future career and beneficial to their community, even though it did not necessarily produce social and economic benefit for their organization.

As a result of this survey and primarily based on the concerns expressed in the questionnaires and focus groups, the following recommendations are presented to the AIIAS Department of Public Health:

1. Service-learning programs should be carefully planned and with sufficient time and resources allowing programs to be implemented in a professional way.
2. In the planning stage, service-learning programs should have specific goals and objectives before the implementation.
3. The DPH should provide more opportunities for the students to acquire specific skills needed for community work.
4. The DPH should involve the community partners in planning and designing service-learning activities that would be beneficial to the community and would provide solutions for felt needs.
5. The DPH should consider the possibility of designating one of the faculty members to be a liaison officer between the institution and the community.
6. The teachers should include the service-learning experiences in their evaluations.

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