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# Developing Citizenship through Service

## A Philippines initiative

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### SUMMARY

In response to the recent introduction of public policy on civic alternatives to military service, the University of the Philippines has developed a citizenship course that has the potential to broaden students' perspectives on service, society, and civic consciousness.

The course is being offered by the university as part of the National Service Training Programme, which is mandatory for tertiary level education students, both men and women. The university has used the opportunity to develop civic consciousness not only in national terms, but also in terms of global civic rights and responsibilities. In this way it hopes to combat fundamentalism and parochialism. Given the reach of the new policy, the course could have enormous impact on the students as well as other universities which look upon the University of the Philippines as a premier institution.

This chapter describes how the course is structured and how the service programme component is designed, managed and evaluated. Initial findings from the pilot phase suggest that students' notion of the relationship between the state and the people has changed and that the service opportunities have been a core means for learning how citizenship is applied.

A public policy that supports civic consciousness and service is valuable for major institutions such as universities. There is the danger, however, that its mandatory nature might reduce students' interest in community service and thereby contradict the very purpose it is intended to serve. Edna Co concludes that the new law should be seen as a window of opportunity and that the University should make the most of it through regular evaluation, participatory modes of teaching and learning, and effective community partnerships.

## Introduction

The Philippines recently took a major step towards the development of civic service as an alternative to military service. The Republic Act No. 9163 establishes a mandatory National Service Training Programme (NSTP) for tertiary level students, and enables both male and female students to render personal or civic service instead of military service.

The new legislation sees the youth as partners of the state in promoting civic consciousness, and aims to develop their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual and social wellbeing through civic service opportunities. The policy also hopes to inculcate patriotism and nationalism in the youth, and advance their involvement in public and civic affairs. Prior to the passage of RA 9163, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports required one year of mandatory military service for all male students in tertiary level education.

The law is an enabling one that enjoins students and young people to strengthen their civic awareness and to engage in civic action. It requires all universities and institutions of higher learning to design programmes that support the National Service Training Programme. The National Service Training Programme is taken in two semesters or in one summer with at least 54 training hours and carries a total student credit load of six units. There are two courses: one which provides the theoretical component and one which supplements theoretical learning by service extension. Agencies have been designated to design and carry out aspects of citizenship training. Furthermore, the law provides for the creation of a National Service Reserve Corps, composed of graduates of the non-military training who may be tapped by the state for literacy and civic welfare activities.

To carry out the new policy and take up the challenge of promoting civic consciousness and service by students, the University of the Philippines devised a new curriculum framework on citizenship and civic consciousness. The course, named 'Citizenship', provides a theoretical framework and a vision for students engaging in civic service and community work as an alternative to military service. It equips students with an understanding of citizens' rights, duties and the role of citizens in a civil society, and provides both theoretical and practical learning opportunities for civic-mindedness, service, and engagement.

**The course provides a theoretical framework as well as a vision for students engaging in civic service and community work as an alternative to military service**

## Broadening the notion of citizenship and service

Educational institutions have a crucial role in shaping the minds of the young, and particularly in promoting an understanding of cultural diversity, civic awareness, tolerance, and universal values. Whilst the new Act specifically challenges the patriotism

and nationalism of young people, the university's thinking behind the construction of the course on citizenship is broader.

The course is based on the assumption that civic consciousness should embrace a wider view of humanity and service than comes from a purely national perspective.

**The rationale for a course on citizenship was to broaden the students' worldview and thereby combat fundamentalism and parochialism**

Citizenship cannot and should not be confined to the national boundaries of one's country or to patriotism and loyalty to one's own homeland. On the contrary, an intense focus on nationalism and patriotism alone can stand in contradiction to a broader notion of humanity, which is inclusive of all varieties of race, creed, gender, age, colour, class, and national affinity. The rationale for a course on citizenship was thus to broaden the students' worldview – from a love of country, nation and community, to concern and action for others beyond nationalism – and thereby

combat fundamentalism and parochialism.

As the university is open to various approaches to civic service and learning under the National Service Training Programme, the idea of a course on citizenship was welcomed by the university authorities. The course was developed and piloted among students in the National College of Public Administration and Governance as an initial step to understanding civic service and service options. The idea was to incorporate the theoretical underpinnings of citizenship as a backbone to civic service learning, and to allow for practical learning through service extension by students in selected sites and communities.

## Integrating 'citizenship' into the learning process

Under the law, university students of second year standing, whose average age is between 17 and 18, are required to go through the National Service Training Programme. These are the students targeted by the course on citizenship. The course gives the students credit for NSTP1 which is followed by community service during the second phase of the programme (NSTP2).

The course was piloted as an elective amongst students majoring in public administration and governance. In the first semester that it was offered, the class was packed, and during the following semester, the number of students applying to take the course exceeded the class limit. Students from other disciplines such as sociology, economics, and community development were eager to enrol in the course.

As mentioned earlier, the course is in two parts: a theoretical component with a post-modern orientation that examines the history and current manifestation of notions of citizenship, and an applied component.

The theoretical component starts by differentiating the legalistic approach to citizenship (the kind held by most students and citizens themselves) from one which emphasises rights and duties as an indicator of membership in a political community.

This is followed by the history and evolution of citizenship from the Athenian model, Greek politics, and the birth of religions such as Islam, Judaism, and Christianity to modern society and citizenship in England, the push for equality, social fraternity, and allied citizenship in the French Revolution, to the influence of Durkheim, and current discourse on citizenship triggered by TH Marshall. The latter emphasises the rights and duties of members of a community.

The exploration of the relationship between citizens and state is deepened with an examination of citizenship in various countries, cultures, and contexts in which citizenship takes different forms. In this way the course enhances the values of humanism, tolerance, mindfulness of others, universalism and plurality. This approach combines the concept of global citizenship and so-called 'earth' citizenship. The global citizen is someone who is aware of the wider world and has a sense of her/his own role as a world citizen, who respects and values diversity, and has an understanding of how the world works economically, politically, socially, culturally, technologically and environmentally (Oxfam 2001). Global citizenship is the willingness to act in order to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place. The course provides students with the opportunity of researching case studies of how citizens take action.

**Global citizenship is the willingness to act in order to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place**

The practical component of the course is called 'Project Citizenship'. It comprises activities that challenge students to apply modes and expressions of citizenship in a context which they themselves choose – in the university, local government, social club, community, and so on. The following options are available for students to choose from:

- Habitat for Humanity (helping build homes for the homeless);
- Kyte (a programme that provides moral support to young cancer patients);
- Quezon City Jail (visit, assistance, and moral support to prisoners at the Quezon City Jail, most of whom have no proper, legal charges filed against them but continue to languish in jail);
- Community Library and Literacy under the Pahinungod Programme of the University;
- COSE (helping the elderly obtain Senior Citizens' Cards so that senior citizens have access to special privileges for transport, entertainment, and the purchase of medicines); and
- Empowering Civic Participation in Governance (ECPG) which enables students to participate in the process of ordinary citizens engaging with government at the local level through village planning, budget preparation or project implementation.

As the National Service Training Programme grows, these programmes are likely to expand so that students have a larger menu of projects from which to choose.

Through Project Citizenship, the course impresses upon the students that citizenship is not only an academic exercise, but also an ethos or set of values by which one lives as one takes action and contributes to the wellbeing of the community and the world. The students are given the opportunity to show creatively how they might express citizenship based on their interests and choice. At the end of the immersion

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and service extension, students talk about what they did in Project Citizenship, how they benefited from it, and how others might have been benefited as well.

The second phase of the programme (NSTP 2) is an entire semester devoted to integration and working with a particular agency engaged in community service. The students choose an agency that provides a service to members of a community. The choice of agency and community service requires an appropriate matching of students' interests and agency needs, as well as the community's ability to absorb the student volunteer. The management of matching and placement is carefully handled by the professor and the host agency working with the community.

## Service programme design and management

The service programmes are run either by the University Pahinungod or non-governmental organisations with a long-standing working relationship with the community. After choosing their project and with proper matching, the students are placed in the programme through the collaborative efforts of the professor and the host organisation/agency. An orientation to the project is given prior to placement to ensure an overview of the project and the activities, an understanding of the community and the host population, and for the students to have realistic expectations from the project. The average number of students in an agency ranges from seven to ten depending on the students' preferences and interests.

The host agency, usually a non-governmental organisation, plays a crucial role in the placement, monitoring, and assessment of the students' performance. A representative of the agency comes to the university for the initial orientation, and a liaison person from the same agency takes charge of monitoring and assessing the students' activities, as well as dealing with any problems of adaptation to the project. The liaison person works closely with the professor who regularly visits the students. Usually a team of two or three students, chosen by the group from amongst themselves, operate as group leaders and facilitators, providing moral support within the team and liaising between students and the host organisation.

On average, students are engaged in service activities for a period of 17 to 20 hours within the semester. The students are asked to play with young cancer patients, to teach functional literacy through reading stories or teaching basic mathematics to out-of-school youth in the community, to help build a community reading centre or

library, to visit prison inmates and help them rebuild links with family members or follow up legal cases with the local court, or to help build homes for the homeless.

During the second semester, the students are immersed full-time in service to the community. After the initial immersion, there are usually at least five to seven students who carry on providing services either through these programmes or as part of a new literacy programme, serving as voluntary school teachers in a mountain municipality.

The sequence of the service programme is illustrated in Table 1.

**TABLE 1** Service programme design

Phase	Activities responsible	Key person/unit
1 Orientation to the service programme and community	Host agency orients students to the service needs, the community and expected responsibilities and behaviour in the community	Host agency, faculty-in-charge
2 Placement	Students assigned to the community based on matching scheme (students' interest vis-à-vis community needs and service programme)	Host agency, faculty-in-charge
3 Immersion and service	Students perform assigned extension	Students' responsibilities
4 Monitoring	Verification with the community of service performance, regular visits and consultations by faculty-in-charge	Host agency, faculty-in-charge, community leaders
5 Reflection session	Team assessment on outcomes of service extension host agency	Students, faculty-in-charge, community leaders,
6 Final evaluation	Rating and assessment by the entire class leaders	Faculty-in-charge, students, host agency, community

Student volunteers presently work within the existing service design identified by the community and the intermediate host agency. In future, however, the course on citizenship anticipates expanding the design of service programmes in collaboration with the community and the host agency, to include areas that are not currently addressed. These could include inter-faith and Christian-Muslim partnerships in community undertakings, or environmental sustainability projects collectively pursued by the community, the host agency, and the students, or the inclusion of retired and senior citizens in building lifelong skills and capabilities. These programmes should expand the forms of civic service and the dimension of citizenship.

## Evaluation

Performance evaluation is done in a number of ways: through students' self and peer evaluation, as well as by the community members through their leaders, the host agency, and the faculty in charge. The weighting of each evaluation component is as follows:

- Student evaluation 20%
- Community evaluation 30%
- Agency evaluation 25%
- Faculty evaluation 25%

Evaluation criteria include students' adaptability to the situation (10 per cent); co-operation and team work (20 per cent); service output based on assigned tasks and responsibilities (40 per cent); attitude towards members of the host community (15 per cent); and special contributions or impact on the community (15 per cent).

The community and host agency assess the contribution made by the students on criteria such as:

- reviving a spirit of community and working together among themselves;
- inspiring community efforts and cohesion when there are 'outsiders' who work with them;
- being positive about self-help rather than demanding services and facilities from government all the time;
- being heard by authorities (especially by the courts) when there are literate and middle-class students who assist in the following up of legal cases; and
- instilling moral support and inspiration for those terminally ill with cancer, or in raising the self-esteem of youth through learning new basic skills in reading and problem-solving.

The overall impact on the community has yet to be evaluated in depth, but in general, community leaders and intermediate host agencies that work within these communities have indicated appreciation for the initial efforts of NSTP community service, and look forward to its continuation.

## Course impact

Some students find that the course offers them a novel way of approaching cultures, relationships, action, and participation, but most find the course interesting and

interactive because they are given the option to learn by doing. Most of them realise the power of citizens to take upon themselves whatever might contribute to their wellbeing, instead of always relying on the state and perpetually demanding that the state act to change people's lives. They realise that through the community's own efforts, people restore their self-confidence and esteem. According to the students, their notion of the relationship between the state and the people has changed. The notion of community power, the exercising of rights and responsibilities and the experience of service extension become core means for learning how citizenship is applied.

**Service extension becomes a core means for learning how citizenship is applied**

The immersion of students into a community of a different social class and social background to their own has proved to be a tremendously rich source of learning that converges with the theoretical discussion on equity, fraternity, tolerance, and universal humanism. The habits, attitudes, ways of doing and thinking that are different from their own, challenged students to be tolerant and patient and built a resilient attitude among them. Students say they realise, 'how human beings can work together in spite of their differences'.

The community impact of the service programmes is difficult to ascertain because the citizenship course has only recently been introduced. It will be important to monitor and assess the impact of the course in future.

The course is currently being reviewed in terms of content and methodology. Particular concerns relate to the difficult issue of standards or criteria for judging student performance, the preparation for host communities and service programmes, and the staffing resources that may be required should the National Service Training Programme expand. There is also a possibility that the course will be recognised as a General Education (GE) course, in which case it will be open to a larger number of university students and should challenge more professors to become trained in order to teach citizenship.

## A concluding assessment

A public policy that supports civic consciousness and service is valuable for major institutions such as universities. Without such policy it would be difficult for higher education institutions to instil social values such as mindfulness of others, sensitivity to differences, and service extension.

The National Service Training Programme allows no exception for any university or institution of higher learning to avoid service. Every college or school within the University is expected to design a programme supportive of the National Service Training Programme, and this will eventually mean that the promotion of citizenship and civic service is scaled up among universities across the country. That is the advantage of a civic service programme that is backed by public policy.

Precisely because it is a mandatory requirement of university education, the educational institutions are expected to guarantee that there are sufficient resources

allocated for this programme. The university's implementing guidelines provide that each college or academic unit may charge a fee that shall not exceed 50 per cent of the tuition per unit, following established university procedures for the collection of fees. The college or unit shall also help arrange group accident and health insurance, with insurance fees paid directly by students to insurers.

In future, teachers who handle the citizenship course related to the National Service Training Programme, will be given a credit load of 3 units for each semester – a total of 6 units in handling NSTP 1 (theoretical component) and NSTP 2 (immersion and service learning component). Ideally the same teacher should handle NSTP 1 and NSTP 2 to lend continuity to the learning process; giving the course a teaching credit load ensures that there will be teachers available. As yet there is no provision for additional staff for the programme and therefore, the university and the professors rely on networks and contacts such as non-governmental organisations or local community groups that have service programmes. The idea is that the university will expand and strengthen its own Pahinungod service programme, especially when the National Service Training Programme, as a mandatory requirement of university education, engages larger number of students.

Despite the benefits of this public policy, however, the policy is also the source of its own weakness because the institutionalisation of service tends to engender routine

**The policy may be the source of its own weakness because the institutionalisation of service tends to engender a routine approach which lacks creativity and innovation**

and the lack of creativity and innovation. Institutionalisation may also be a threat to the students' freedom of choice, because institutions tend to be resisted by their constituents.

Some critics might question the mandatory character of the policy; that being mandated by law, citizenship becomes a contradiction in itself because the voluntary desire to engage in and be part of a community, group, or society is diminished by the imposition of a policy to do so.

Nevertheless RA 9163 should be taken as a window of opportunity, rather than a policy that imposes compliance to a civic virtue. The voluntary character of service is still embedded in the choices offered to students based upon their interests, and in the range of options for civic service that will be available in the future.

Before any loss of creativity and innovation occurs, university policy-makers and administrators, teachers and students, will have to cushion the possible ill-effects of institutionalising citizenship. In this regard, strategies such as regular evaluation, flexible and innovative forms of learning, inclusion of participatory modes of teaching and learning, and effective partnership between the university and host agencies or communities, among others, should be considered.

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