Learning Experiences in Community Involvement

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Abstract-Part of the responsibility of a Higher Educational Institution (HEI) is about community involvement. This is giving an opportunity for her members to extend their help to a certain community that needs it. This research aims at constructing a standardized tool of learning experiences in the participation of community involvement activities. The researchers drafted 80 significant statements about learning experiences in the form of rating scale questionnaire and fielded it to the participants. After interpreting the results, 64 items were retained. These items were categorized into personal, cultural, social and spiritual learning experiences. Therefore, this tool can be used for further research on gathering the significant experiences of the individuals who participated community involvement activities.

Keywords- Learning Experiences, Quantitative Research, Community Involvement, Factor Analysis, Learning Experiences Assessment Tool, Philippines

I. INTRODUCTION

Part of the areas of development in the academic community is a venue where the individual members in it can extend their helping hands and can have an impact on other people's lives. A school community must have a Community Involvement program. This program is being actualized by all the members of the academic community from the employees to the students. The initial result of this is the good that it can bring to the lives of others. Moreover, community involvement activities can also be meaningful activities for them who are offering their help. Many individuals find meaning in helping and touching the lives of others. Just like after the terrorist attack in the US in 2001, many global firms devoted time and resources supporting community involvement projects (Hess, Rogovsky, & Dunfee, 2002). This activity promotes interaction among members in the community (Naparan, 2017).

It is important for a certain program to be evaluated so that its impact on the ones doing it would be determined. One of the

manifestations that the program is good as a whole is because of the good impact that it can bring to the community as well as to the ones reaching the community. When the employees, for example, are happy to share their blessings to others, they will not be tired of traveling to difficult and far places just to share what they have. In the study of Charnley and Engelbert (2005), they evaluated the participation in environmental decision-making: EPA's Superfund community involvement program and one of the sources of evaluation is about sharing the experiences about the program. Thus it is also better to dig on the experiences of the people who have participated in the institution's community involvement programs.

Getting feedback of a particular program can be a good basis for evaluating the program that will lead to some improvements and innovations for the following times. If a particular program is not effective, for example, then it can be replaced to maximize its utility for the benefit of the recipients. Meanwhile, if the program has a positive impact, it will then be recommended to be sustained and enriched in the future.

Thus, this academic endeavor aims at assessing the learning experiences of the employees of Saint Columban College. The researchers want to generate summative themes of learning experiences that are true to most individuals who have undergone community involvement activities. This would then become a common experience to the community as well as to other communities who also have the same programs.

Another aim of this study is that of assessing the feedback of the on-going programs of the school as to their contributions to the ones conducting them. This study can provide information as to which aspect of CIP has a positive magnitude to the employees.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study assessed the learning experiences in the community involvement. This is done during the Academic

Year 2016 – 2017. Particularly, this tries to seek answer for the following questions:

1. What are the learning experiences of the SCC employees who have undergone community involvement activities?

2. What are the patterns of learning experiences among them?

3. What assessment tool on learning experiences of community involvement program (CIP) can be developed?

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study on learning experiences inquired quantitatively about those common experiences of the research participants. Particularly, this study utilized a descriptive cross sectional research design. By being descriptive, the researcher aimed to describe a particular characteristic on the common experiences of the SCC employees. It focused on what particular experienced being undergone by the research participants. The data also of this study were being retrieved in one time.

IV. SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The researchers employed automatic inclusion for this study. All employees who have been part of the CIP were chosen as participants of the study.

V. DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

The researchers initially crafted the questionnaire that would reveal the common experiences of the SCC employees along the course of community service. Upon completing the set of statements of the questionnaire and allowing it to be checked and reviewed by a research expert, the researchers made a letter asking the school president if the researchers are allowed to conduct the study. After being granted the President's permission, the researchers asked the permission of the SCC employees if they would freely agree to become the participants of the study. A letter of permission was given to them, and they were asked to sign first the consent form as proof that they were willing to participate in the study. They were approached formally by the researchers in their respective offices and places and were asked to answer the questionnaire during their convenient time.

VI. STATISTICAL TREATMENT

The analysis of the data for this study involved the utilization of Social Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). After the data were encoded, a particular test on factor analysis was conducted. This was utilized to look for common patterns of experiences in community involvement.

VII. RESEARCH ETHICS

The researchers ensured that the "should" and "should not" of research were observed. First, the researchers assured that

the responses of the research participants would remain confidential, and thus, they will not be used against them. The writing of their names in the questionnaire was done voluntarily.

The participation also of this study was voluntary. The researchers did not force the participants to answer the questionnaire. There was a consent being asked before they were asked to participate in the study.

VIII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results for Exploratory Factor analysis (EFA), the overall results yielded by the tool on learning experiences in the Community Involvement Program is valid and reliable. Table 1 presents the result on Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity.

TABLE I.   KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.887
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square df sig.	11535.666 3160 0.000

MSA Scale: 0.5: minimum, Between 0.5-0.7: mediocre, Between 0.7-0.8: good, Between 0.8-0.9: great

Sampling Adequacy and Test of Sphericity. The learning experiences of community involvement tool has obtained an overall KMO result of 0.887 that means "Great". Thus, it is suitable and sufficient for exploratory Factor analysis. According to Basto & Pereira (2012), the measures given by the overall KMO statistics show that variables are adequate to factor analysis. The result is greater than the cut off that is 0.50. Field (2009) said that KMO values ranging from 0.80 to 0.90 are suitable and very good for Exploratory Factor Analysis.

As to Bartlett's test of sphericity, it posted a value of 11535.666 (df = 3160, p-value < 0.05). This indicates that there are relationships among the 80 items included in the analysis, and therefore, factor analysis is appropriate. The items of the questionnaires were analyzed using the exploratory factor with the 80 items subjected to principal component analysis.

Construct Validity and Reliability. The Scree test is used to determine the number of significant factors to be extracted. Considering the natural bend or break point in the data where the curve flattens out, the Scree plot is a suitable tool for determining and verifying the number of factors to retain in an analysis. Figure 1 shows a point of inflection after the four factors; therefore, four meaningful factors were kept in the analysis. Further, a series of tests in the factor analysis established the retention of four factors or domains and that 64 items out of the initial 80 items in the survey should be retained.
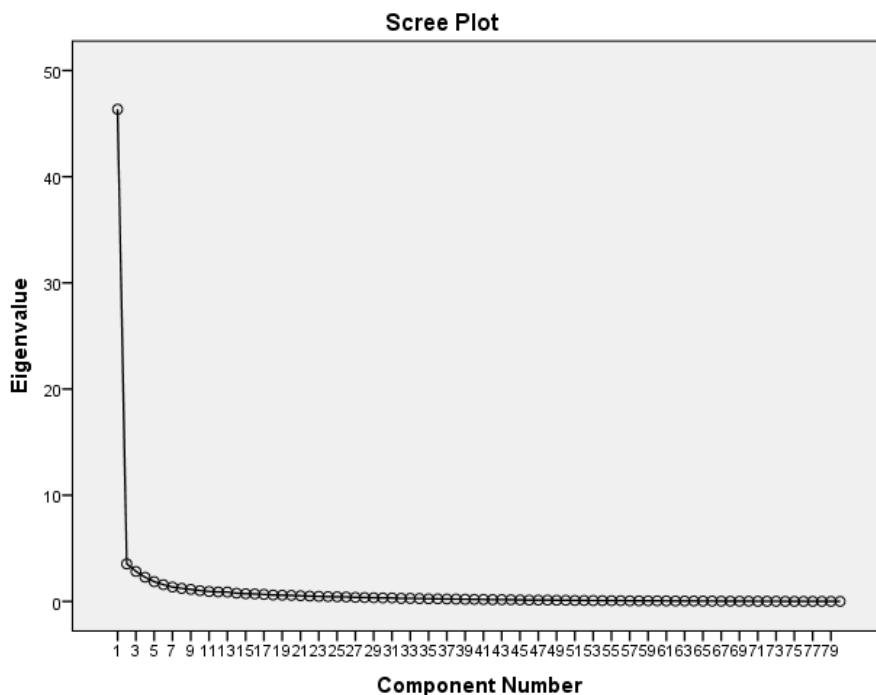
Figure 1. Scree Plot showing that the data have four factors

Table 2 shows the psychometric properties of the factor analysis of the 80 items retaining four factors for the proposed learning experiences in community involvement scale. The 80 items of the scale were subjected to principal component analysis (PCA). By suppressing small coefficients, the factor loadings that are above 0.32 with more than three items or variables for every factor show fairly desirable values. According to Costello and Osborne (2005), a factor with five (5) or more strongly loading items (0.50 or better) are desirable and indicates a solid factor. Thus applying the said assertion, factor loadings below 0.50 were deleted. Consequently, fourteen items were removed as they have factor loadings below 0.50. On the one hand, there were 64 items that were retained as they register factor loadings higher than 0.50.

Using an Eigenvalue cut-off of 1.0, there were four factors that rank above it, namely: factor 1. Personal Learning Experiences *(Initial Eigenvalues = 46.354)*, factor 2. Cultural Learning Experiences *(Initial Eigenvalues = 3.536)*, factor 3. Social Learning Experiences *(Initial Eigenvalues = 2.833)* and factor 4. Spiritual Learning Experiences *(Initial Eigenvalues = 2.284)*. The measure of sampling adequacy indicates that factor 1 *(MSA = .947)*, factor 2 *(MSA = .946)*, factor 3 *(MSA = .921)* and factor 4 (MSA = .939) consistently have great sampling adequacy.

To measure the internal consistency reliability of each factor, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed. Factor 1 *(α = .974)*, factor 2 *(α = .958)*, factor 3 *(α = .956)*, and factor 4 *(α = .962)* obtained high level of reliability. Hence, all the constructs, along with the scores on the instrument indicating satisfactory parameters, are considered valid and reliable. The Learning Experiences in Community Involvement (LECI)

scale is, therefore, an acceptable measure of students' engagement in learning Science.

TABLE II. PSYCHOMETRIC PROPERTIES OF THE FOUR FACTORS

Factors	Initial Eigenvalues	MSA	α
Personal Learning Experiences	46.354	0.947	0.974
Cultural Learning Experiences	3.536	0.946	0.958
Social Learning Experiences	2.833	0.921	0.956
Spiritual Learning Experiences	2.284	0.939	0.962

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

MSA Scale:

0.5 – minimum

Between 0.5 - 0.7 – mediocre

Between 0.7 - 0.8 – good

Between 0.8 - 0.9 – great

Above 9 – Superb

Cronbach's Alpha Scale:

0-No Reliability

0.1-0.39-Low

0.40-0.69-Moderate

0.70-0.99-High

1.0- Perfect Reliability

The constructs for Learning Experiences in community involvement. Upon using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Orthogonal Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalization as extraction and rotation method respectively, Table 2 shows the 64 items grouped into four constructs or themes according to its rotation component matrix. In this analysis, only those items with a factor loading of at least 0.50 on their construct were retained on the Students' Science Engagement Scale (SSES). The factor loading of all items ranging from 0.526 – 0.704 indicated that all items are strongly related to their factors.

Factor 1 – Personal Learning Experiences. As one of the constructs in the learning experiences of community involvement, the research participants affirmed that as they participated in the activities with regards to community involvement, there are personal learning experiences that they possessed. Personal learnings like appreciating beauty of sharing, realizing their blessedness, realizing the needs of others, learning to share their time, loving their neighbors, finding life in giving, helping build God's kingdom on earth, actualizing Christ's mission through CIP activities, being an instrument of God's Grace and Love, and Learning to be thankful to God were some personal learnings of the participants. This factor comprises 19 statements in the tool.

Factor 2 – Cultural Learning Experiences. The second factor centers on the learnings of the research participants in terms of culture. This factor relates to the people or group of people whom the participants served in their CIP activities. This factor comprises 18 items in the tool.

Factor 3 – Social Learning Experiences. The third factor pertains to the experiences related to interpersonal relationships. This involves 13 statements in the tool. Experiences like camaraderie among fellows were common in this aspect of the tool.

Factor 4 – Spiritual Learning Experiences. In participating in the activities of the community involvement, spiritual learnings were also possessed by the research participants. This involves 14 statements. As they helped others, their faith also was strengthened.

TABLE III. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Construct	Mean	SD	Remarks
Personal	5.38	0.82	Always Practiced
Cultural	5.10	0.92	Very Frequently Practiced
Social	5.39	0.82	Always Practiced
Spiritual	5.17	1.00	Always Practiced
Overall	5.26	0.89	Always Practiced

Table 3 displays the Learning Experiences in Community involvement. As a result, the students posted an overall mean of 5.26 interpreted as always practiced. The overall standard deviation of 0.89 appeared to be low which means that their ratings learning experiences are less dispersed and seem to be homogeneous. Strikingly, all constructs namely Personal Learning Experiences *(M = 5.38; SD = 0.82)*, Cultural Learning Experiences *(M = 5.10; SD = 0.92)*, Social Learning Experiences (M = 5.39; SD = 0.82) and Spiritual Learning Experiences *(M = 5.17; SD = 1.00)* consistently displayed means interpreted as always practiced.

IX. CONCLUSION

This study aimed at identifying the learning experiences of those employees who have participated in community involvement activities that were organized by the Community Involvement Program (CIP) office. A valid and reliable tool in assessing these experiences is being realized as an end product of research. It is composed of four constructs that capsulated the categories of experiences. Therefore, community involvement experiences can still manifest certain patterns. In this study, patterns such that of personal, cultural, Social, and spiritual learning experiences emerged.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proposed by the researchers based on the findings of this study:

1. Other higher educational institutions may use the Learning Experiences Tool to assess the impact of their community involvement activities to their employees.

2. The learning experiences of students who participated in community involvement activities such that of adopt a community program and community outreaches summoned by National Literacy Training Program (NSTP) may also be assessed using the assessment tool.

3. For researchers, that they may dig on qualitative learning experiences on community involvement activities.

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