

Developing a Higher Sense of Public Responsibility in the Philippines: The Barangay (Village) Immersion

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Structural and behavioral reforms are prerequisites to development. The need for behavioral reforms has been expressed by Filipino heroes and leaders since Rizal. Such a need can be met by a system of training that provides the necessary skills and leads to the development of proper attitudes in achieving organizational goals and objectives. At present, Barangay or Village Immersion is being used to develop a higher sense of public responsibility among public officials. It can be described as a module in management education and training programs where participants live in rural villages. The Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), the Philippine Executive Academy (PEA), the Civil Service Academy (CSA), the Institute of Public Health (IPH), and the Institute of Social Work and Community Development (ISWCD) adopted Barangay Immersion as a strategy for developing commitments to serve the poor. There are issues and problems, however, which are associated with Barangay Immersion, namely: (1) amount of time required to effect behavioral change; (2) moral and ethical aspects of barangay immersion; (3) absence or inadequacy of follow-up activities on projects identified during the Barangay Immersion; and (4) relevance of the field exercise to the need of the people. In spite of these issues, Barangay Immersion should be further explored as a strategy to develop a higher sense of public responsibility.

Introduction

It has been widely recognized that development calls for the reform of structures and organization with the

corresponding reform in attitudes and behavior. Development requires both structural and behavioral reforms.

Development among developing countries means the conquest of mass poverty and the improvement of the quality of life of the people. To achieve these goals, governments have to restructure their political systems as well as develop among government officials and functionaries a higher sense of public responsibility and ethical standards. There is a need to develop commitment among public servants to the basic purposes and values of the society. Oftentimes, behavioral reforms are even a sine qua non or a requisite for genuine structural reforms.

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It is only after a person is committed to a cause that he begins to question and change existing structures to make them responsive to development goals.

The need for behavioral reform to change society has been the concern of Filipino heroes and political leaders for a long time.¹ Jose Rizal believed that people should be educated before they would be worthy of freedom. He recommended the study of civic virtues for our redemption. Apolinario Mabini saw the need and the imperative to change our thinking and behavior. He coined the term "internal revolution" which means "the moral transformation of man, a change from within; a change of attitude, habits, and orientation."² Mabini considered internal revolution essential if institutional or structural reforms are to succeed. Ferdinand Marcos also considered as an essential part of his democratic revolution, internal revolution which he described as "reorientation of the individual system of values, attitudes and beliefs, a social regeneration, a change of our ways of behaving."³

One basic strategy by which behavioral reform can be attained would be a system of training that could effectively and efficiently provide the neces-

¹For the following example, see Cesar Majul, *The Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1967), pp. 28, 36-37.

²*Ibid.*, p. 37. See also, Ferdinand E. Marcos, *Five Years of the New Society* (Manila: Marcos Foundation, 1978), pp. 176-187.

³Ferdinand E. Marcos, *Today's Revolution: Democracy* (Manila: 1971, p. 61. See also, Ferdinand E. Marcos, *Five Years of the New Society*, Chapter 6, and *An Ideology for Filipinos* (Manila: 1980), Chapter 6.

sary skills and lead to the development of the proper attitudes important in achieving organizational goals and objectives. In the Philippines, management education and training programs have been utilized in order to develop a commitment among the public servants and prospective employees to serve the poor.

Value commitment constitutes the frame of reference of administrators in evaluating their behavior vis-à-vis the goals of society.⁴ Values that leaders hold make a difference in what they do, and hence, in their effectiveness as agents of development, and social development is at least in part a function of political leadership. Value commitments that may influence the behavior of administrator towards development include change orientation, action propensity, commitment to economic development, concern for economic equality, concern for public participation, concern for conflict avoidance, concern for the nation, and selflessness.⁵

This package of commitments has been used to define development orientation in several studies both in the Philippines and abroad. In the Philippines, management education and training programs have been utilized in order to develop these commitments among the public servants and prospective employees to serve the poor. Many of these training programs are incorporating a period of living in rural villages as one of their modules.

⁴Raul P. de Guzman and Ma. Aurora A. Carbonell, *Development-Orientedness of Filipino Administrators* (Quezon City: National Science Development Board-University of the Philippines Integrated Research Program, 1976), p. 9.

⁵*Ibid.*

Called barangay or village immersion, this training technique is becoming one of the main strategies for developing a higher sense of public responsibility among public officials. Because of its growing popularity, the Management Education Council of the University of the Philippines convened in July 25-26, 1980 a seminar-workshop to discuss the types, problems faced, and the potentials of this techniques as an innovation in the methodology of training civil servants.

The exposure of the public servants to the problems of the poor and deprived countrymen in the rural areas is designed to produce an awareness of the problems of poverty in the country, and, more importantly, a sympathy and commitment to help the poor. Barangay immersion is being used as a training technique not only among civil servants but also in training private executives and students. The Philippine government also requires civil servants and graduates of medical and nursing schools to undergo rural service for a given period of time.

Among the training and educational institutions that have adopted the barangay immersion as a strategy of developing commitments to serve the people are the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP), the Philippine Executive Academy (PEA), the Civil Service Academy (CSA), the Institute of Public Health (IPH), and the Institute of Social Work and Community Development (ISWCD).

These training and educational institutions require their training participants and students to live in the rural areas for a certain period of time in order to develop commitment among

the training participants and students to serve the people, particularly the disadvantaged members of society. This service consists in developing the capabilities of the people to plan and implement projects and to develop closer linkages between the government and the people.

Training Programs with Barangay Immersion

Barangay Immersion of the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP)

Barangay immersion serves as the practicum of the Planned Change Module of the Career Executive initially tried in the CESDP Phase II in 1978. It was part of the Planned Change Module, one of the five (5) modules of the CESDP. The Planned Change Module then consisted of three (3) weeks of theoretical inputs and nine (9) weeks of experiential learning called the Barangay Immersion. Later the Barangay Immersion was also incorporated in the later Phase II sessions and in Phase I, a 17-week course for incumbents of CESD positions. The immersion has also been reduced to four weeks.

Barangay immersion aims to develop commitment among the participants to serve the poor, develop capabilities of the people for community self-management, and to forge a closer link between the government and the people.

⁶Ledivina V. Cariño and Emma B. Viñeza (eds.), *The Indang Experience: Lessons from the First Career Executive Service Development Program Barrio Immersion* (Makati: Academy Press, Development Academy of the Philippines, 1979), p. 10.

In the initial immersion session, the training participants were required to live and interact with the people in the rural areas for nine (9) weeks (5 days a week). The group of fourteen (14) persons (12 participants and 2 staff personnel) live in pairs with a host family chosen by the barangay leaders. They were to live as the hosts live: eat the same food, bath in the same pump, spring or river, and sleep wherever they sleep.⁷

An initial assessment of the program by the faculty of DAP shows that the participants develop awareness about the nature of rural poverty and rural life and endorse the barangay immersion as a training technique for developing commitment to serve the poor.⁸ Many participants at the end of the CESDP training requested that the Career Executive Service Board place them in agencies where they could most directly plan and implement programs to serve the poor.

With respect to the second objective of developing self-reliance among the people, the assessment is that more time is needed to develop the capabilities of the people for community self-management.⁹ The need for leadership to monitor and direct the situation was also identified as one of the critical variables in developing self-reliance among the people. It was also observed that projects identified and formulated by the residents even before the participants arrived were completed after their departure through the efforts of the residents themselves.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁹*Ibid.*

As to the last objective of developing closer relations between the government and the people, the local people learned how and where to get resources in support of priority projects of their communities. They also realized that in order to effect better service delivery from the government, they have to play an active initiating role. The barangay immersion also gave the people insights into the problems faced by the government—that resources were not enough and all barangays could not be served all at the same time.

Barangay Field Exercise of the Philippine Executive Academy (PEA)

The two (2) weeks Barangay Field Exercise is part of PEA Senior Executive Development Program, a ten-week training program for executives coming from both the public and private sectors.¹⁰

The Barangay Field Exercise aims to provide an opportunity among participants to interact with the people in rural areas in order to better understand the country's conditions and to transfer planning and management technology to the barangay leaders.

Participants are divided into panel groups and assigned a cluster of barangays (3-4 barangays) where they are required to live and work. They meet with the local leaders chosen by the residents in a seminar workshop to formulate the plan for the barangay cluster. The finalized cluster development plan are presented to the members of the municipal council for

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 14.

endorsement and legitimization. Copies of the plans are then distributed to the municipal and barangay leaders.

Barangay Immersion of Civil Service Academy (CSA)

Among the various training programs of the Civil Service Academy, two have a one-week barangay immersion component. These are the Executive Leadership and Management Program (ELM) and the Scientific Service Development Program (SSDP). ELM is a four-week training program for public enterprise executives, while SSDP is a six-week training program for scientists.

The rural immersion aims to provide a working knowledge of planning and implementing rural improvement projects and to provide opportunities to work within the barangay and the community as extension and change agents through the implementation of rural development projects.

Field Practice Program of the U.P. Institute of Public Health (IPH)

The IPH Field Program is a three-unit course required for all Master of Public Health (MPH) candidates. It serves as a practicum of graduate students in the IPH. The Field Program aims to apply public health theories in community diagnosis, work with the health team and the people and mobilize the community in the identification and solution of health problems.

Graduate students devote 6 to 8 weeks (3 days a week) in rural areas assisting the health teams and the residents to identify health problems in the area.

Field Exercise of the U.P. Institute of Social Work and Community Development (ISWCD)

The Field Exercise is a requirement in the undergraduate program of the ISWCD. The Field exercise aims to develop commitment among the students to serve the people and to help the people by developing their capability to solve problems. Among the units undertaking barangay immersion, ISWCD has the longest barangay immersion program. A set of faculty and students live in the rural areas for one year and assists the people in developing their capabilities to solve their own problems.

Rural Service Program of the Philippine Government

Barangay Immersion as a strategy to develop a higher sense of public responsibility is not only confined to training and educational institutions. The Philippine government has two programs similar to this training method. These are the Rural Health Practice Program started in 1976 and the Rural Service Program started in 1977.

The Rural Health Practice Program. The Rural Health Practice Program was conceived of and designed to meet the demands for increasing health services in rural areas. The objectives of the program are:

(1) to augment existing health services and medical manpower in the rural areas;

(2) to provide opportunities for new graduates to render service to the

medically indigent and to improve health conditions in the rural areas;

(3) to expose new medical and nursing graduates to the essential aspects of the rural health delivery system; and

(4) to give new graduates a better perspective of their roles in the socio-economic development of the government.¹¹

The program calls for the assignment of new medical and nursing graduates to serve in the rural areas for a period of six (6) months prior to licensure. To ensure effective implementation, President Marcos issued Letter of Instructions No. 377 (March 3, 1976) requiring all successful examinees of the medical and nursing board examinations to present to its Professional Regulation Commission a duly signed certificate of completion of said six-month rural training program as a prerequisite to their registration with the Commission.

As of 1978, 25,696 medical and nursing graduates have served in the rural areas and a total amount of P44.5 million has been spent for the program.

An evaluation of the Program, made in terms of its appropriateness, adequacy, effectiveness, efficiency, and other unintended side-effects, shows that it has provided services that would otherwise not be received by people in the rural areas. In this aspect, the program can be judged a success.¹² It has also fulfilled its task of giving additional and important training to

underboard doctors and nurses by allowing them to work in rural environments. However, the program needs to overcome problems of administration, deployment and demoralization if it is to truly meet the health needs of the rural Filipino.¹³

Rural Service Program (Paglilingkod: Bagong Lipunan). Paglilingkod: Bagong Lipunan (or Service in the New Society) was introduced on June 23, 1977 through Letter of Instruction 559 requiring government employees to perform rural service for fifteen days each year.

Government personnel were required to proceed to the municipality/city for their assigned barangay. They participated in various activities, such as agrarian reform, cooperative, crop production, infrastructure, nutrition, rural work, and other projects of the government. Upon completion of their tour of duty, they returned to their home office bringing with them their accomplished service report signed by the barangay captain and attested to by the mayor. However, due to the international energy crisis and the need to support the housing program of the government, the Rural Service Program was made selective as provided in LOI No. 941 dated October 12, 1979.

Under the revised guidelines, preference is given to senior officers and technical personnel who can be depended upon in terms of perspective, maturity, and special skills. Participation of national government employees in the rural service program is limited to bureau directors, assistant directors, chiefs of division, or their

¹¹Mila A. Reforma, "The Rural Health Practice Program: An Evaluation of the Rural Service Requirement for Health Professionals," *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XXI, No. 2 (April 1977), p. 175.

¹²*Ibid.*

¹³Cariño and Viñeza (eds.) *op. cit.*, p. 35.

equivalent. Participation of employees of government-owned or controlled corporations and local governments are limited to third, fourth, and fifth levels of said organizations.

Barangays may also request the Secretariat to organize a rural service team consisting of personnel from agencies with specified skills and talents. Similarly, staff members of a particular office or group of offices with specialized technical competence may propose a rural service project which they can undertake as a group in a specific barangay or group of barangays.

Summary

As may be noted, there is a wide range in participants and practices among the units undertaking some form of barangay immersion. Table I presents the differences for convenient comparison.

The DAP requires training participants to live in rural areas for nine (9) weeks, PEA for two (2) weeks, CSA for one (1) week, and the students are required by IPH to stay in rural areas for six to eight (6-8) weeks, and ISWCD for one (1) year. The government requires medical and nursing students to serve in the rural areas for six (6) months and the civil servants for fifteen (15) days. Participants include largely managerial-level civil servants or students, depending on the clientele of the agencies concerned.

The ratio of the Barangay Immersion to the entire training course ranges from 10% to 25%. Most of the Barangay Immersion Modules cover 20-25% of their respective training programs.

Issues and Problems in Barangay Immersion

The Barangay Immersion Programs are primarily training devices to make participants more aware of and more responsive to the needs and problems of the people in the rural areas. Although they differ in style and form from one agency to another, the problems they face are similar. The following are among those brought forward by their organizers and others concerned individuals during the seminar-workshop on Barangay Immersion sponsored by the Management Education Council:

- (1) amount of time required to effect behavioral change.

Barangay Immersion Programs are also designed to change the level of awareness as well as the behavior not only of the participants and students but also of the people in the rural areas. It is not yet a settled issue what the most appropriate time frame is to effect the desired changes. The appropriate duration probably would primarily depend on the objective of the training or educational program. The objective of some institutions is to develop awareness among the trainees and students while others focus on the community assistance aspect of the program; still others adopt both the awareness and assistance objectives. The awareness objective might require a relatively shorter time than the assistance objective. One might in fact caution sponsors against overly ambitious objectives in the light of the time constraints. A feasible and reasonable objective of Barangay Immersion may be to develop in the participants some awareness of the problems in the rural areas and

Table 1. Profile of Programs with Barangay Immersion

<i>Name of Institution</i>	<i>Program</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Duration</i>		<i>Percentage of Total Hours</i>
			<i>Training Course</i>	<i>Barangay Immersion</i>	
Training Institutions					
Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP)	CESDP (Phase I)	incumbents of CES positions	17 weeks	4 weeks	24%
	Career Executive Service Development Program (Phase II)	middle managers	38 weeks	9 weeks	24%
Philippine Executive Academy (PEA)	Senior Executive Development Program (SEDP)	for those coming from the upper middle to the lower top levels of government and business organizations	10 weeks	2 weeks	20%
Civil Service Academy (CSA)	Executive Leadership and Management Program (EIMP)	corporate executives	4 weeks	1 week	25%
	Scientific Service Development Program (SSDP)	scientists	6 weeks	1 week	17%
Academic Institutions					
Institute of Public Health (IPH), U.P.	MPH requirement	MPH students (2 semesters)	10 mos. (2 semesters)	1 mo. (6-8 weeks) 3 days/week	10%
Institute of Social Work and Community Development (ISWCD), U.P.	undergraduate program requirement	undergraduate students	4 years	1 year	25%
Other Training Programs					
Philippine Government	Rural Health Practice Program	new medical and nursing graduates	40 mos. (4 yrs.)	6 mos.	15%
Philippine Government	Paglilingkod: Bagong Lipunan (Rural Service Program)	senior officers and technical personnel		15 days	

help provide a climate conducive to social change. It has been suggested that focus should be made on facilitating factors of behavioral change for the people and the trainees, as well as on indicators to measure the effected change in the barangay immersion area.

- (2) Moral and ethical aspects of Barangay Immersion: Using the people for agency objectives.

The fact that training participants and students are primarily concerned with completing their training courses and course requirements and only secondarily with serving the rural areas raises an important ethical issue, that is, the use of the people and rural areas as social laboratories.

Barangay Immersion almost inevitably creates a disequilibrium in the rural community. Its negative effects include the following:

- (a) It unduly raises the expectations for more assistance of the people, and
- (b) it exploits the time and resources of the barangay hosts in subjecting them to the ordeal of being interviewed and asking them to cooperate in the program, without being given any remuneration or reward.

Attention was also called to the fact that some trainees as well as trainers look at the exercise as something that goes with the course, something to be gotten over with and commitment to assist in rural development is lost.

In this light, it was recommended that the involved institutions should be judicious and should exercise discretion. They should not unduly raise the expectations of the people. They

may also compensate the hosts by giving them minimal honoraria for responding to an interview or questionnaire or contribute some amount for community projects or award some certificates of appreciation upon the completion of the course.

It has also been pointed out that there are always costs to the community but benefits could also be derived. Institutions should weigh the cost and benefits for the trainees and for the community. If the benefits derived by the trainees as well as the community are greater than the costs then it should be preserved; otherwise, alternative strategies may be used.

At its best then, Barangay Immersion could be a two-way process wherein the trainee learns from the people and in the process also assists them.

- (3) Absence or inadequacy of follow-up activities or projects identified during the barangay immersion.

Barangay Immersion being primarily a training and educational technique is not designed to fully implement all the projects during the field exercise. Because of limited time in the villages, training participants only formulate the plans but may not participate at all in its implementation. This leaves the people on their own to implement the projects identified. However, the villagers do not always implement the projects identified by the training participants and students. Monitoring of those activities started is very limited, if not absent. Moreover, even if the training agencies and educational institutions want to implement the projects, they do not have the resources and furthermore, it is not their main purpose.

The shortness of the immersion and the lack of monitoring do not necessarily add up to a total loss for the village in terms of new projects if linkages between the people on one hand, and local government and/or some line agencies on another hand who are in a position to coordinate or implement the projects beyond the immersion period are established. The people may also internalize the community organization principles espoused by the training participants and may implement the projects by themselves.

The need for follow-up has been recognized and the following approaches have been suggested. First, follow-up can be undertaken by having the people who had been trained or by the indigenous organizations in the area carry through the activities started. Second, there should be coordination among government agencies involved. These agencies should be involved from the beginning during the formulation of the program or at the time the participants are engaged in the data-gathering or problem identification phase. This involvement should continue up to the implementation and evaluation of the community exercise. This collaboration can promote the establishment of more effective linkages. Third, there should be coordination with private organizations concerned with the development of rural areas or with those which can identify and fund viable projects. Fourth, there should be fielding of regular staff who will monitor what is going on in the community after the Barangay Immersion. In the case of ISWCD, students are assigned in the same community during the time that the preceding batch of students are

about to pull out, so that by the time the first group withdraws, another group will have settled in to follow up the program initiated by the previous one.

- (4) Relevance of the field exercise to the needs of the people.

There is also the possibility that projects identified during Barangay Immersion may not reflect the needs and aspirations of the people. It is also doubtful whether the people's representatives in the councils, workshops, and rural organizations organized during the Barangay Immersion truly express the will and needs of the people.

Barangay Immersion seeks not only to make the participants aware of the problems of the poor but also to raise the level of consciousness of the people and help them identify their real needs through interaction with the trainees. Some participants recommend a thorough study of the sites for barangay immersion, taking into consideration the social, economic, political, and anthropological characteristics of the place. To solve the problem of limited resources of training and educational institutions and also to promote self-reliance, it was suggested that participants and students focus on projects which could be undertaken by the people themselves or through the local governments even without the assistance of the line agencies of the national government.

The concluding observations on the problems and limitations of Barangay Immersion appear to be primarily the conflict between the validity and rationality of its objectives and

mechanics against the resources of the training and educational institutions. For instance, lengthening the period of the Barangay Immersion could improve or strengthen the effectiveness of the exercise but considering the resources of the training and educational institutions, they might be constrained to extend the Barangay Immersion portion of the training program. The same predicament applies to the need for evaluation and follow-up activities to ensure the attainment of Barangay Immersion objectives.

All training is based in the belief that men even in their mature years have

the capacity to change. When trainers choose the rural areas as the situs of this transformation, they are also hypothesizing that the environment influences one's ideas and actions and that by exposing the training participants and students to the realities, constraints, and opportunities found in the rural areas, the commitment to serve the poor will be developed. Despite its problems, Barangay Immersion certainly should be further explored as a strategy for developing this higher sense of public responsibility.