STUDENT AFFAIRS AND SERVICES AMONG SELECTED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN BULACAN: A POLICY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to analyze and determine the extent of implementation and compliance of selected Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Bulacan based on the Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services (SAS) and its impact to the students and institutions. The results of the study revealed that the assessment of the student respondents and student personnel services produced similar results. They perceived that SAS programs among selected HEIs in Bulacan are “existing and implemented.” However, Student Housing, and Services for Students with Special Needs are perceived by both groups as “not existing but implemented.” Both groups consistently perceived that SAS programs are mostly implemented at “great extent” by their institutions and implemented within the minimum standard and its impact are perceived by both groups positively.

KEY WORDS: student affairs and services; policy study; student welfare programs; student development programs; impacts; higher education institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Student Affairs and Services (SAS) are the services and programs in any university or college that are concerned with non-academic experiences of students to attain total student development. The Manual on Student Affairs Services and Programs in Higher Education, developed by the International Association of Student Affairs and Services Professionals (IASAS) describes the purpose of SAS in the Higher Education Institutions which is to address the basic personal needs of students by providing a comprehensive set of out-of-classroom student services and programs commonly referred to as student affairs and services. These efforts should be designed to enable and empower students to focus more intensely on their studies and their personal growth and maturation, both cognitively and emotionally. They should also result in enhanced student learning outcomes [1].

In the Philippines, every HEI has a unique SAS program. They vary from one school to another and from different hierarchical level of formal education and based on the kind of values, interests, and social advocacies that they intend to support and develop for their students.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), through the efforts of Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the SAS programs among the HEIs have shown great improvement. This happened through the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) no. 21 s. 2006 otherwise known as The Guidelines for Student Affairs and Services Program. This memorandum delineates policy, guidelines and standards of implementation. SAS programs have two components, the Student Welfare Programs and Student Development Programs [2].
However, from the year of issuance of the Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services Program in 2006 to the present, a lot of issues on SAS have been emerging from various studies conducted. Tejido [3] and Villanueva [4] cited similar issues from their studies on the SPS in the Philippines. These are lack of funds, facilities, especially computer hardware and software to support student services, lack of personnel resulting in an overburdened student services practitioners, the student affairs practitioners are given a lower status than academic personnel and lack of trained staff as a result of heavy turnover of student affairs practitioners seeking “greener pastures” in other professions. Furthermore, Cortez presented in her study that the students perceived the student selection, admission and retention, guidance counseling and health services adequate and moderately efficient while the housing and facilities were both perceived by the personnel and students as missing and inadequate respectively [5].

These and more other issues on student affairs and services prompted the interest of the researcher to conduct a policy study to inquire on the real status of SAS programs when it comes to the implementation and compliance with C.M.O. no. 21 series of 2006 and the outcomes of these SAS programs to the students.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Generally, the objective is to study the policy on Student Affairs and Services based on C.M.O. no. 21 s. 2006 as by analyzing the extent of implementation, compliance, and outcomes of SAS programs among selected HEIs in Bulacan.

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

i. What are the existing Student Affairs and Services programs of selected HEIs in Bulacan as assessed by the primary and secondary stakeholders, in terms of:
   a. Student Welfare Programs and Services; and
   b. Student Development Programs and Services?

ii. How may the extent of compliance to the Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services Programs of selected HEIs in Bulacan be described in terms of the following SAS programs as perceived by the primary and secondary stakeholders, to wit:
   a. Information and Orientation Service;
   b. Scholarships and Financial Assistance;
   c. Health Services;
   d. Guidance and Counseling Service;
   e. Food Service;
   f. Career and Placement Service;
   g. Safety and Security Services
   h. Student Discipline;
   i. Student Housing;
   j. Services for Students with Special Needs;
   k. International Student Services;
   l. Admission;
   m. Research Monitoring and Evaluation of SAS
   n. Student Organizations and Activities;
   o. Student Council/ Government;
   p. Leadership Training Programs;
   q. Student Publication;
   r. Sports Development Programs;
   s. Cultural Programs;
   t. Social and Community Involvement; and
   u. Multi-Faith Services?

iii. What are the outcomes of the SAS programs to the students and to the institution as perceived by the SAS implementers and SAS beneficiaries?

iv. Is there a significant difference between the perception of primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders in the implementation and compliance with the Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services Programs of selected HEIs in Bulacan?

v. Is there a significant difference between the perception of primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders on the impacts of Student Affairs and Services Programs among selected HEIs in Bulacan?

vi. What measures may be proposed to the SAS program administrators based on the results of the study to continuously monitor the:
   a. students’ welfare and development;
   b. SAS staff performance;
   c. program components; and
   d. overall SAS program progress and success?

RELATED LITERATURE

Lewin’s Theory of Change served as the platform of this study, especially in proving that change plays an important role in transforming an individual’s personality. This theory gives light on the issue that change does not happen overnight. It has to pass through certain stages before the person or organization learns to accept the change [6]. In the same manner that an academic community, particularly the faculty members and students, adhere to the concept of change only after the intention is fully presented and understood. Driving forces, restraining forces and equilibrium are three stages, normally, are part of this process of change [7].

Change in one’s behavior takes place the moment an individual is exposed to a certain stimulus. Skinner expounded that learning is a function of change in overt behavior. Changes in behavior are the result of an individual’s response to events (stimuli) that occur in the environment. When a particular Stimulus-Response (S-R) pattern is reinforced (rewarded), the individual is conditioned to respond [8]. Watson extended study of Pavlov’s Classical Conditioning Theory to human being proved that a stimulus acquires the capacity to evoke a response that was originally evoked by another stimulus in a reflexive or automatic type of learning [9]. Similarly, applying these theories to the subject being studied, programs in student affairs serve as stimulus that generate reaction or response, thus change takes place to an individual’s personality.

The implementation of the CHED Memorandum Order 21 series of 2006 otherwise known as Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services Program provides guidelines and standards for the implementation of the SAS programs.
The details of the said policy clarify the input, the process, and output of the SAS programs among the students and HEIs. Hence, in this study, C.M. O. no. 21 series of 2006, otherwise known as Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services Program, depicts how certain policy changes the life of every student in the academic community.

The early concept of Student Affairs and Services started from the primary role of a teacher in the school. Evans (1998) discussed in his book that teaching and taking care of students’ welfare and development while in his custody during the learning process defines the concept that a teacher or instructor stands in loco parentis to his students. This was developed early in English common law. Under the paternalistic regimen enforced during the seventeenth century, students in the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge were expected to observe a long list of restrictions. Similarly, the early American colleges accepted responsibility for the student’s moral as well as intellectual life. The college presidents, usually members of the clergy, put strong emphasis on the religious life of the student body. Compulsory chapel attendance was quite common even in the early part of the present century and is still often the rule [10].

Soon, however, the types and number of students coming to higher education began to swell (many of them women who were being admitted to higher education for the first time in several centuries). Academics who were previously handling these functions, even though they knew next to nothing about administering such initiatives and counseling students, began calling for more assistance in carrying out these non-instructional duties.

Thus, the birth of a new profession came: student affairs and services. These staff members were now in charge of not only housing and feeding students, but also physical and mental health care became a necessity on many college campuses.

In the Philippines, Tejido (2006) mentioned in his study that the role of student affairs is very much one of in loco parentis, a role codified by law to meet its own national needs to provide nurturing and tender care to its students who are much younger than university students in Europe and the United States.

Moreover, Villanueva (2009) presented in her paper the status of Student Affairs and Services programs in the Philippines in an international convention hosted by International Association of Student Affairs and Services (IASAS) in cooperation by UNESCO, accordingly, as of December 2007, most of the 2,016 private and public HEIs have student affairs offices, albeit with different names. She mentioned that the mission of student affairs offices, generally, is to provide support to the academic and research functions of the university. The number of student affairs personnel varies according to the organizational structure.

Specific programs and services include supervision of student activities, counseling and guidance, scholarships and financial assistance, health services, food service, residence halls, learning assistance, international student services, student publications, testing and placement/career services, student discipline and student development programs.

No formal academic training in student affairs administration is available in the Philippines. In general, the head of a student affairs office is a dean or director of student affairs reporting to a vice-president or a chancellor, depending on the structure of the university.

In 2006, cognizant to the following conditions of SAS, the Commission on Higher Education issued CMO No. 21 or otherwise known as Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services Program.

The said policy orders all HEIs to adopt in their institutions the implementing standard for Student Affairs and Services Program. The CHED, on its part, set the guidelines aims to set the minimum standards on student services among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in order to improve the quality of Student Affairs and Services Programs among HEIs to promote access to quality, relevant, efficient and effective student affairs and services, support student development and welfare, and ensure that all HEIs provide holistic approach for Student Affairs and Services and comply with the minimum requirements for student affairs and services. Hence, the quality of SAS programs output and outcomes may now be measured based on the minimum standard set for the SAS program.

It defines Student Affairs and Services as the services and programs in any university or college that are concerned with non-academic experiences of students to attain total student development. Non-academic services are two-pronged: those that relate to student welfare and those that relate to student development. Implementation to these services can be unique to an institution. The Student Welfare Programs and Services are basic services and programs needed to ensure and promote student well-being. These are Information and Orientation Service, Scholarships and Financial Assistance, Health Services, Guidance and Counseling Services, Food Service, Career and Placement Services, Safety and Security Services, Student Discipline, Student Housing, Services for Students with Special Needs, International Students Services, Admission Services, and Research Monitoring and Evaluation of Student Affairs and Services. The Student Development Programs and Services refer to the services and programs designed for the exploration, enhancement and development of the student’s full potential for personal development, leadership and social responsibility through various institutional and/or student-initiated services which include Student Organizations and Activities, Student Council/Government, Leadership Training Programs, Student Publication, Sports Development Programs, Cultural Programs, Social and Community Involvement, and Multi-Faith Services.
RESEARCH PARADIGM

The research paradigm depicts Program Logic Model (PLM) of Kellogg Foundation. It graphically planned work and how that planned work leads to the program’s intended results or outcomes. PLMs create a roadmap for understanding how program resources are used to implement key strategies and activities and how their implementation contributes to expected short and long-term outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following are the findings of the study:

i. The six selected Higher Education Institutions in Bulacan namely, Bulacan State University, Baliuag University, Meycauayan College, St. Mary’s College Meycauayan, Bulacan Agricultural State College, and La Consolacion University Philippines have existing units of Student Affairs and Services which implement the SAS programs. Their existing SAS units and programs are based on the Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services Program.

ii. The HEIs in Bulacan complied with the Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services (CMO 21 s. 2006) at “great extent” or the SAS programs are implemented within the minimum standard.

iii. SAS programs have positive outcomes to the psycho-social development of the students. Relatively, the institutions are benefitted from the quality of clientele they produced. Prominent outcomes observed among the areas evaluated are those in the Student Activities and Organizations, Student Government/Council, Sports Development, Student Publications, and Cultural programs. While the impact or long term outcomes of the SAS programs analyzed and identified from the output and outcomes of the study are the following:

- Formation of peaceful academic environment brought by just and peaceful culture existing in the community.
- Establishment of partnership between administration and students in achieving excellence in the quality of education which realized from the confidence and respect gained by one another in school governance.
- Establishment of encouraging environment for campus journalism.
- Assume an active role in their personal wellness (emotional, physical, and spiritual) that supports a healthy lifestyle.
- Successful achievement in work-related skills in their social activities brought by good physical health which developed through Sports Program.
- After participating in the Department of Recreational Sports programs and services, students will be able to demonstrate positive leadership skills that contribute to the organizational effectiveness of their respective club sport.
- Discovery and development of talented students of different genre like music, visual arts, dance, theater, etc.
- Development of creative community and shape a commerce of ideas, artifacts, images and experiences brought by collaborative practice of SAS personnel and students.
- Building a value of cultural leadership in shaping the talents of the students in the 21st century.

iv. The Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services...
RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the foregoing findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations were made:

i. The institution should develop a program or produce information materials that will clarify the Student Affairs Services program to the students. This will address the uncertainty of the students on some aspects of Student Affairs and Services programs available in their institution. Hence, they will develop an awareness and later interest in involving themselves to various SAS programs to their benefits.

ii. The institution should revisit its policy on admission for the students with special needs and those migrating students who have housing needs. With the increasing numbers of universities which have growing population and diverse quality of learners every academic year, there is a need to re-assess whether these concerns of the students are addressed promptly.

v. The Student Affairs and Services Personnel or future researchers should pursue continuous research works similar to this study to further verify the consistency of the positive results of this study. The study may be leveled and focused on regional or national level to validate even more the findings of this study. In this sense, from the numbers of
findings on SAS program, better development on the implementation of SAS program may be adopted to improve the quality of service for the students.

vi. A provincial consortium of Student Affairs Practitioners among public and private HEIs in Bulacan should be established to create a venue for the discussion of issues, problems, and concerns on SAS and sharing of best practices on SAS which are more focused on unique cultural qualities of Bulakeños.

vii. The Commission on Higher Education should conduct an actual monitoring and similar evaluation of SAS programs of HEIs regularly. The results of their research study may be used in contrast with those existing.

viii. The Commission on Higher Education after realizing the positive impacts of the implementation and compliance of Higher Education Institutions on the Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services Program should incorporate in their monitoring program a special recognition scheme of granting an “Excellent Student Affairs and Services Program Provider” (ESASPP) award that may include monetary and non-monetary incentives to provide positive reinforcement to maintain and improve their SAS program. Hence, the institution that will be recognized becomes a model and the multiplicity effect will spread.

REFERENCES


