

Student Assistance Program (SAP) among Private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

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ABSTRACT

The Student Assistance Program (SAP) among the Private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines has played a remarkable role in curving the country's economic problem. It is of no doubt that Cagayan de Oro City has also benefited the offshoot of the program lodged by these HEIs. It has provided CDO trained and skilled graduates that are employed elsewhere in the area. The study therefore aimed to describe the profile of the Student Assistance Program (SAP) among the Private HEIs in CDO and how well it helped the community stakeholders –students and parents to access quality education. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to describe the efficiency and effectiveness of SAP in their respective HEI. Documentary analysis was used to interpret data that are gathered through Data Mining. A validated researcher-made questionnaire was used to gather the data needed. Data collected were from among the seven (7) HEIs with 210 respondents selected randomly by the researcher. The study revealed that the Student Assistance Program (SAP) was largely anchored on their respective Mission/Vision/Goals or VMGO. It has been found out that those who availed of the program were either academic or non-academic beneficiaries. Also, noticeable in the result is the significant helped of SAP among students pursue their studies which later became the economic advantage or opportunity net of Cagayan de Oro City.

Keywords – Education, Student Assistance Program (SAP), private HEIs, descriptive study, Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of private higher institutions in the contemporary world has challenged institutions to reassess and ensure quality education. The study of Levy (2004) found out that the new concept of institutionalism does not prepare enormous, distinctive characteristics of education because it is overshadowed by the sharp growth of private higher institutions. This would mean that the many private HEIs, the more the educational system is in need to create mechanism to ensure quality standard and accreditation is one. In Bangladesh, PHEIs are considered business goods rather than public goods. Although, knowledge is a public property, but private providers/ entrepreneurs are commercializing it making the public to cautiously select PHEI that would suit/match the skills and training they need. State regulations have to be immensely monitored to track indiscriminate abuse and excessive gains. However, the distinctive experience of Latin America reverted the former notion since in that region PHEIs has instead balanced the monopoly of the public educational institutions. It has surprisingly improved regional educational quality.

In the Philippines, Private Higher Education Institutions are established under the Corporation Code and are governed by the special laws and general provisions of this Code. Hence, there are two types of such kind. These are the non-sectarian private HEIs which are duly incorporated, owned and operated by private entities that are not affiliated to any religious organization while the other is the sectarian private HEIs are usually non-stock, non-profit, duly incorporated, owned and operated by a religious organization. In 2013, there were 1,643 private HEIs with an average student per HEI of 1,320. This .48% student population growth would likewise shares 71.47% of the entire higher education system in the Philippines.

Mtey and Sulle (2013) argue that education is an important means for poverty. The success of Tanzania has challenged the world to make education an effective tool for poverty reduction. Emphasizing on the significance and the need for proper management of education breaks the vicious cycle of poverty in the area. In fact, the Success of Students' Loans in Financing Higher Education in Tanzania was attributed to the government effort on democratizing education (Nyahende, 2013). Like Tanzania, Cagayan de Oro is also called to respond in

this new challenge of the millennium. Also similar is the study of Milligan, 2005 stating that with the strong faith in school and with excellent Educational policy, ethno religious conflict in the southern Philippines could be possibly resolved.

Veaser and Blakemore (2006) found out that SAP is a new approach for student success in addressing behavioral health and life events. Regardless of the kind of HEIs whether private or public for as long as they availed of the Student Assistance Program (SAP) offered by their respective HEIs, they can be helped in coping their individual stresses.

Educational program in the Philippines is not exclusive only among the public HEIs but also includes the private HEIs. Republic Act 8545, an act amending **REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6728**, otherwise known as “AN ACT PROVIDING GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN PRIVATE EDUCATION AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFORE,” establishing a fund for the purpose of subsidizing salaries of private school teachers, and appropriating funds therefor on the other hand, encouraged private HEIs to provide the Student Assistance Program (SAP) on top of their regular expenditure for curriculum, physical plant, staff development, policies, procedures, and testing which are usually the priorities of every educational institution. Private HEIs often had SAP their problems since this is a school based program which would require a budget whose income is forgone. On the other hand, success of SAP does not depend on the models but on the kind of support and involvement of the personnel, administrators and the community gave to the program itself. The minimal supervision and jurisdiction of the state on the private HEIs operators over the implementation of SAP is nonetheless the cause the concurrent SAP fail. However, the seven (7) Private HEIs in Cagayan de Oro City if SAP if seriously enforced, it can assist very well and help reduce poverty in the Philippines particularly Cagayan de Oro City. Unfortunately, there has been no previous study done in the Philippines yet that looked into the neither profile nor impact of SAP as it can help define how the success of the beneficiaries could also become a potential contributory factor in the macro economic success of the nation. Hence, this study is more likely an inventory study of the existing SAP adapted by the seven (7) Private HEIs in Cagayan de Oro City.

FRAMEWORK



Figure 1. Framework of the Study

Student Assistance is a collaborative framework that creates opportunities for all students and families to be healthy, successful and connected. As a framework, it is a powerful resource program intended by an educational community to provide help for those in need of support.

Beneficiaries of the SAP among private HEIs are of varied categories. There are those institutionally financed, and those of government sponsored programs which would both require grades. Student Assistance Program (SAP) such as Athletics, Cultural diversity intervention, Guidance and Counselling Services, Health (medical and dental), Legal Aid/Assistance, Loan Grants, Scholarships based on Academic Merits, Working students/student assistants, Tutorial, Other Forms of Student Assistance (Tuition Discounts, Dormitory, Meals etc.) are sustained despite budget constraints. These are their initiatives for them to contribute in the reduction of poverty related problems in Cagayan de Oro City.

This study was anchored on the thrust of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) particularly on the Universal Primary Education, which is second of the eight agenda of the world deliberated during the 2000 Millennium Summit. A commitment of forging partnership, the world would achieve the 2015 Millennium Development Goals which is pivotal in breaking the vicious cycle of poverty. Hence, the Dakar Framework for Action, which is ***Education for All***, becomes the world's Collective Commitments to promote EFA policies as a sustainable and well-integrated sector, a framework which would clearly link to poverty elimination and development strategies.

The OECD report in 2009 found out that tertiary education increases the prospect of being employed. This would mean that they have greater chances of better employability than those people whose education is stunted. However, the level of poverty of the Philippines is difficult to explain if it would be based from the level of education of their workers. Although, education in the Philippines may not have a significant macro effect but if treated individually it would create micro impact on the economy in terms of family income.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is purposely intended to find out the role of private HEIs in CDO through their Student Assistance Program (SAP) in curbing poverty in the area. The number of HEIs in CDO, the type of Student Assistance Program (SAP) offered; the sources of assistance availed by the Student –beneficiaries and the efficiency; and effectiveness of SAP as perceived by them are among the queries covered in the study.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This is a descriptive study that uses documentary analysis from secondary sources like student handbook, and administrative manuals to develop a list of SAP offered respectively. HEIs that were unavailable to provide were hooked through Data Mining. On-line references were used instead and considered them as primary materials in the study.

Research Instrument

A researcher-made questionnaire was validated by conducting a survey to non-participant HEIs in the study. Among them were St. Michael's College, an RVM School in Iligan City and the Mindanao University of Science and Technology (MUST) in Lapanan, CDO. The pre-validation survey proved that items therein were reliable. Using the Likert scale, and with the reliability index of questionnaire is 82.90% (Cronbach's Alpha=0.829), the instrument, therefore, is highly acceptable.

The instrument was both open ended and objective type which would delineate prejudice of the respondents. Their being beneficiaries of SAP would somehow bring favorable attitude towards the private HEIs they were serving which would likewise manifest impact on their responses.

The Respondents

The seven (7) HEIs covered in the actual survey were based on the years the HEIs were established. Hence, only those founded before 1990 were considered.

The 210 participants of the study were selected randomly. Only student beneficiaries from 2007 – 2012 were chosen to answer the questionnaire. The five-year period is covered to accommodate those student beneficiaries that chose

the degree programs of such term. The researcher obtained informed consent from respondents in compliance to research ethics protocol. Each of the seven (7) respondent HEIs in Cagayan de Oro City was given thirty 30 qualified student-beneficiaries of varied degree programs, year level and type of SAP to answer items in the questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

UNESCO World Heritage Centre (2014) provides online list of Higher Education Institutions maintained by participating countries to provide not just transparency but also links/access on the information and national processes on the quality of programs offered respectively. Commission on Higher Education Institutions (CHED) in the Philippines provided the A-Z online and hard copy directory including accredited HEI's available locally as per request.

Table 1 shows that Cagayan de Oro City as a charter city of Misamis Oriental has only 15 HEIs. The list shows that only Mindanao University of Science and Technology (MUST) is a public HEI while the other 14 schools are private HEIs. Lourdes College, St. John Vianney Theological Seminary, Oro Bible College, Pilgrim Christian College and Xavier University are sectarian HEIs while AMA Computer College, Blessed Mother College, Cagayan de Oro College, Capitol University, Golden Heritage Polytechnic College, Liceo de Cagayan University, Southern de Oro Phil. College, STI Colleges of Mindanao, STI Colleges of Mindanao, Vineyard International Polytechnic College are the non-sectarian HEIs in Cagayan de Oro City. All are situated in the metropolis of CDO, which is the business center in the city. Except for Southern Philippines College (SPC) and COC-Phinma, HEIs like Lourdes College, CU, Liceo de Cagayan University, XU, Pilgrim Christian College, and Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan are accredited respectively, and that programs offered are deregulated. In other words, all HEIs in the CDO passed through the Quality Assurance of CHED, tasked to supervise the operations of HEIs all over the Philippines as mentioned in the study of Ruiz (2012) entitled "Quality Assurance in Higher Education in the Philippines."

Table 1. List of Higher Education Institutions in Cagayan de Oro City

Name of HEIs	Address	Director/President	Contact Number
AMA Computer College	Cagayan de Oro City 9000	Mr. Peter C. Bacaling	(088) 857-4846
Blessed Mother College	Iponan, Cagayan de Oro City 9000	Dr. Elma G. Duenas, MD	(08822) 735593
Cagayan de Oro College	Max Suniel St., Carmen, CDO	Melliton B. Salazar, Jr., PhD.	(088)858-3881/ (08822)722010
Capitol University	Corrales Ext., Cagayan de Oro 9000	President: Atty. Casimiro B. Juarez, Jr.	(08822) 726136/ (08822) 8561272
Golden Heritage Polytechnic College	Vamenta Blvd., Carmen, CDO 9000	President: Capt. Tito P. Dichosa	(088)8587326
Liceo de Cagayan University	Carmen, Cagayan de Oro City 9000	Dr. Mariano M. Lerin	(08822)727044/ (088)8564093
Lourdes College	Capistrano St., Cagayan de Oro 9000	Sr. Ma. Nora R. Joson, RVM	(08822)72-34-64/ (088)8571487
Mindanao University of Sci. & Technology	National Highway, Lapanan, CDO 9000	Dr. Ricardo E. Rotoras	(088)856-3811/856-4696
Oro Bible College	Carmen, Cagayan de Oro City 9000	Mrs. Nely A. Gamayon	(088)858-3209
Pilgrim Christian College	Tiano- Akut Streets, CDO 9000	Mr. Pio D. Baconga	(088)856-4232
Southern de Oro Phil. College	J. Pacana St., Licoan, CDO 9000	Mr. Guido Alfredo A. Delgado	(088)856-2610/856-2609
St. John Vianney Theological Seminary	Camaman-an, CDO 9000	Rev. Fr. Celerino Ignacio M. Reyes, SJ, Dmin	(08822)72-41-35, 72-79-04
STI Colleges of Mindanao	Cagayan de Oro City, 9000	Mr. Noel SC Bobis	(08822)72-84-08/ (088)8573788
Vineyard International Polytechnic College	Mabulay Subd, CDO 9000	Amelita P.Padilla	(088)856-8646
Xavier University	Corrales Ave., CDO 9000	Fr. Roberto C. Yap, SJ	(08822)72-2725/858-3116/ local 2015

Source: CHED Office of Student Services, CDO

Education is a universal right. The Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone has the right to education.” Education is not only a right but a passport to human development. It opens doors and expands opportunities and freedoms. It also contributes to fostering peace, democracy and economic growth as well as improving health and reducing poverty. The ultimate aim of Education for All (EFA) is sustainable development. In 2000, the world drafted the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), where two of the most important frameworks are in the field of education which is the priorities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It is in these objectives that the world is shaped until 2015. Honing from these initiatives of UNESCO, regardless of race and social status, an individual can freely choose where he wants to study. In the Philippines selecting PHEI would mean financial constraints but RA# 6728, government is thereby providing subsidy) and RA# 8545 encouraging PHEIs create Student Assistance Program (SAP) for those students who need financial assistance.

Student services are an integral part of every institutional planning and operation for a student to attain maximum self-actualization and become effective players of their respective community. That it should complement with the academic program of the institution. This is why every PHEI is encouraged to develop a program that can address students’ problems.

Ideally, student services such as guidance and counseling, co-curricular activities, alumni, research and evaluation, campus ministry, scholarship grants and financial aid, health, food, transportation (if applicable), housing facilities i.e. dormitory and foreign student assistance is under tuning of the institutional VMGO.

In the Thai Press Reports (2013), it mentioned a similar case in Laos that surprised the region when in the year 2000, 14 additional private HEIs were opened which has increased the enrolment growth giving Laotians greater access of earning the degree programs dramatically.

Athletics, Guidance and Counselling, Health (medical and dental) services, scholarship based on academic merits, working students, tutorials, tuition discounts are programs similarly offered among the HEIs in Cagayan de Oro City. However, except XU which has offered Legal Aid/Assistance not just among the student beneficiaries of SAP, but it cut across the entire student population in the University makes the description different from the other private HEIs. SPC has the least SAP offering because the college is highly concentrated on its marine transportation offering which would require thorough trainings instead.

Table 2. Type of SAP offered by the Private HEIs in Cagayan de Oro City

Type of SAP	CU	XU	SPC	COC Phinma	PCC	Liceo U	Lourdes College
Athletics	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Cultural diversity intervention	x	x				x	
Guidance and Counselling Services	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Health (medical and dental)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Legal Aid/Assistance		x					
Loan Grants	x						
Scholarships based on Academic Merits	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Working students/student assistants	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Tutorial	x	x		x	x	x	x
Other Forms of Student Assistance (Tuition Discounts, Dormitory, etc.)	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

The study of Epstein (2013) has then proven the importance and need of developing a student assistance program that can protect readily the legal rights of the students in and out of the school premise.

Table 3. Reasons why students availed of the Student Assistance Program (SAP)

Reason of Availing SAP	Number of Responses	Percentage
Financial Problem	183	87.14
Peer Influence	21	10.00
Prestige and Popularity	6	2.86
Total	210	100

The table suggests that of the 210 student beneficiaries who availed of SAP, 87.14% said that they availed of SAP because of financial problem. It constraints them from pursuing college degree program, but the Student Assistance Program (SAP) of their respective schools has significantly helped them continue college.

On the other hand, Hughes et al. (2013) admitted in their study that counselling like periodic session with the student- beneficiaries is an effective mechanism for them to succeed.

HEIs in the Philippines consist of 1,726 colleges and universities (AY 2007-2008), shares only 16% of the national budget goes to education which is trifocalized. There are 1,222 private non-sectarian HEIs and 301 private sectarian. In other words, 88% of the Philippine educational system is private HEIs. Enrolments in tertiary continuously increase each year. For example, SY 2007-2008, enrolment reached 2,565,534 while for SY 2006-2007, enrolment reached 2,541,405 registering a slight increase over the previous year's enrolment of 2,451,238 (SY 2005-2006), (CHED, 2009).

Table 4. List of courses taken by the students who have availed of the SAP

Courses	Number of Responses	Percentage
Business, Management, IT, Communication, Marine Transportation	76	36.19
Education	54	25.71
Nursing, Social Work	38	18.10
Engineering	25	11.90
Agriculture	13	6.19
Arts & Sciences	4	1.90
Total	210	100

Data show that 36.19% were from the Business, Management, IT, Communication, Marine Transportation while only 4% of the student beneficiaries were from the Engineering courses. This would mean that Cagayan de Oro City is indeed the commercial hub in the Southern part of the Philippines which is the reason of their preferred courses. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez (2010) admitted that low rate on the perception among the student beneficiaries is caused by inadequacy of information dissemination.

Table 5. Perception of the student beneficiaries towards the program they availed

	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent		
	1.00 – 1.50	Strongly Disagree		
	1.51 – 2.50	Somewhat Disagree		
	2.51 – 3.50	Somewhat Agree		
	3.51 – 4.00	Strongly Agree		
Item	Mean	SD	Descriptive Equivalent	
1. I feel good about the Assistance Program I availed.	3.71	0.58	SA	
2. On the whole, I am satisfied by the benefits I received.	3.58	0.60	SA	
3. I am proud as a beneficiary of the SAP of my college/university	3.71	0.53	SA	
4. I heard I have better job opportunities than those who are not beneficiaries of the SAP	3.28	0.77	SWA	
5. I can tell/encourage other financially challenged students to avail of the SAP.	3.66	0.62	SA	
6. I feel tired most of the time in school.	2.46	0.91	SWD	
7. I am overworked yet I have no other benefits receive except my honoraria/tuition discounts.	2.13	0.92	SWD	
8. I am deprived of the co-curricular activities of my college/university	2.15	0.98	SWD	
9. I do not have time anymore with my friends and family.	1.80	0.93	SWD	
10. I do not have the choice in life.	1.64	0.99	SWD	
11. I know I'll be able to cope with the requirements ask of me by the SAP	3.41	0.75	SWA	
12. I am thankful of the SAP awarded to me by my HEI where I am currently enrolled.	3.60	0.64	SA	
13. Through SAP, I am confident that I can finish my study.	3.63	0.68	SA	

14. I feel like my self- esteem is improved	3.66	0.56	SA
15. I get enough support from the SAP I availed.	3.34	0.70	SWA
16. I have difficulty in doing the course requirements due to a hectic schedule	2.54	0.92	SWA
17. I am not thankful of the SAP awarded to me by my college or university.	1.46	0.88	SD
18. I have a structured, boring life causing me to fail in my subjects.	1.59	0.83	SWD
19. I feel like I am always on a hurry of time.	2.41	0.95	SWD
20. The SAP I availed is not enough for my student needs.	2.11	1.01	SWD
Overall (Positive)	3.56	0.66	SA
Overall (Negative)	2.03	1.00	SWD
Overall	3.27	0.90	SWA

Legend:

- SA- Strongly Agree
- SWA- Somewhat Agree
- SWD- Somewhat Disagree
- SD- Strongly Disagree

Using the Likert scale, the data suggest that student beneficiaries have strongly agreed that they are satisfied and thankful of the SAP they availed from their school. Heavy work load, grade requirement, time management, and personal related problems caused burden among the student beneficiaries pushing them to say “somewhat disagree” on the negative questions ask in the survey. The overall response which is “somewhat agree” would mean that they are grateful but pressure of the task /expectation or requirement set for them.

However, despite the validated instrument used in the study, .05 is still the expected as margin of errors hence, respondents have different experiences as recipient of the SAP. Their viewpoints on the questions may vary which would affect reliability of the results.

The table above indicates the mean of the student-beneficiaries for all the 20 items of the perception questions. Their overall perception for the positively

stated statements (1–5, 11–15) is ‘strongly agree’ while they ‘somewhat disagree’ on the negatively stated statements (items 6–10, 16–20). However, for the overall mean, the student-beneficiaries generally answered ‘somewhat agree’ on the perception items, where the negatively stated statements were coded in reverse so that the overall perception is based on all positively stated statements.

The recent political drama on pork barrel/PDAP and the Napoles issue have greatly affected the responses of the respondents. It has virtually averted the trust of the student beneficiaries especially those dependent from the politicians which has caused significant dropouts from among the seven (7) private HEIs in CDEO.

CONCLUSIONS

The student beneficiaries are grateful but also pressure of the task and expectation assigned to them. Time management and grade requirements are among the hardest points in their student life. Nevertheless, they withstand all the tribulations in life to have a better way ahead. It is in this regard that availing the Student Assistance Program (SAP) of their respective HEIs has helped them succeed and improved their lives. Earning college degrees would lead them to find job that would impact the economic need such as skilled and career professionals of Cagayan de Oro City.

It is indeed noteworthy that these student-beneficiaries are earning their diplomas in the Private HEIs and whose sources of funds are either institutionally financed or sponsored by external benefactors. These would definitely cut across the annual expenditure of an HEI but nonetheless has brought good social output especially to the people of Cagayan de Oro City. SAP is an initiative done by the private HEIs to help address the poverty issue in the country. It may not bring macro impact but in any way contribute in the reduction of poverty.

Therefore, results affirmed the theory of Baum (2010) in the book of Laura Perna (2010) showing that SAP like student work and financial aid received has significantly helped student beneficiaries pursue their studies. It is in this light that the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) on the Universal Primary Education has been efficiently translated into action by the private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) in the Philippines. The experience of Cagayan de Oro City has become the catalyst of the old dictum,

Education for All. It is in this regard that the 2000 Millennium Summit where the world would achieve these 2015 Millennium Development Goals has forged collective commitments and partnership that would indeed break the vicious cycle of poverty. Thus, promoting education is the key to poverty elimination as cited by Mtey and Sulle (2013).

The Dakar Framework for Action (EFA) would succeed if and only if education is availed not just by few privilege individuals but by the greater majority. Creating legislation on the Student Assistance Program (SAP), making it an operational requirement, correct implementation and proper monitoring of the program would thereby strengthened the chance of all in accessing education for the later economic gains.

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