

Public-Private Interface in Resource Management: The Framework of Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University, Philippines

Dominga Victoria M. dePadua

Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University, Bacnotan, La Union, Philippines

Fax : 63-2425641

E-mail: vdepadua@eudoramail.com

Abstract

Concerned about the enhancement of productivity levels of State Colleges and Universities (SCUs) in the Philippines, the public-private partnership management innovation is explored. Cognizant of the significance, the Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU) as one of the 108 SCUs in the country, employs such innovation.

These development programs where the partnership is apparently manifested include:

- a) research and development
- b) training/continuing education;
- c) extension services;
- d) on-the job training of students;
- e) technology-based enterprise spin-offs; and
- f) industry-oriented university units.

The perceptions on the dynamics of partnership of the university with other foreign and local institution were critical considerations in the analysis. These perceptions were gathered from the DMMMSU annual reports and personal interview with recipients of international training and foreign funded projects.

Key words: Public-private partnership, DMMMSU, policy body, development programs

I. Introduction

With the mandate to provide quality education that is based on relevance, it is indispensable for an educational institution to enhance its capacity to be attuned with the realities and demands of the dynamic industry, society and scientific environment. UNESCO (1998) stressed that higher educational institutions should be able to live with uncertainty, to change and bring about change, to address social needs and promote solidarity and equity, should preserve and exercise scientific vigor and originality. Arising from such concerns are challenges related to financing, improved staff development, skills-based training, preservation of quality teaching, research and services, relevance of programs, employability of graduates, establishment of efficient co-operation agreements and equitable access to the benefits of international cooperation.

Just like the rest of the world, higher educational institutions in the Philippines face similar concerns and problems. To address these challenges, partnership and alliances that is based on common interest, mutual respect and credibility, is now explored. Public and private partnership is believed to be a powerful force in managing change because it opens a wider range of opportunities and privileges at the same time demands greater responsibility and accountability in the use of public, private, national and international resources. The economic stagnation in Asia and the advocacy of “people empowerment” in the Philippines, significantly contribute more pressure to higher educational institutions to adopt boldly the public and private co-operation in resource management. This advocacy that perceives the valuable contribution of the civil society in shaping and redirecting the structure and goal of the university, is a new dimension of public-private partnership.

The Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University (DMMMSU) as one of the 108 state colleges and universities (SCUs) in the Philippines recognizes the significant involvement of the stakeholders, business and industry, the public sectors of the economy, parliaments, media and community, professional organizations and society. It envisages bilateral and multilateral partnership co-operation programs with intergovernmental, non-governmental organizations and donor agencies in the country and in developed countries.

II. DMMMSU's Model of Public and Private Partnership

As a state university, DMMMSU is commissioned to promote advanced instruction in the arts, agriculture, engineering and natural resources as well as technological and professional fields. Aside from fulfilling its mission of maintaining quality and relevant instruction, it strengthens its research, extension and production programs. At present, it has 59 regular academic programs, broken down into six post graduate, 24 masteral degree, 25 undergraduate degree programs, with 65 specialization areas; nine secondary and laboratory programs. Besides the academic units which are responsible in administering the implementation of these academic programs, the university has Sericulture Research Development Institute (SRDI), Fishery and Training Institute (FRTI), Apiculture Research and Training Institute (ARTI), Piggery Extension and Research Farm (DPERF) and Open University. The programs of these Institute strongly compliment the academic programs of the university. It is sprawled on a 1,120 hectares, cozily splintered in its three major campuses.

In pursuit to its mission, the public and private partnership management strategy is explored. Such partnership is saliently observed in the organization of its policy body and execution of development programs (Exhibit 1). In the governing body, there is an active involvement of the private sector, parliament and other government institutions in the governance of the university. Out of the eleven (11) members of the Board, two are from the private sector,

two from the parliament, three from other government institutions and the rest from the university constituents (university president, faculty, student body and alumni associations). With this composition, the traditional belief that the orientation and governance of the university basically falls within the domain of the academicians, has now transcended into a holistic and comprehensive view. The presence of the private sector in the board widens the university's perspective on the market orientedness of its products and services. It redirects the educational programs in line with its coherence and responsiveness to the world of work. Moreover, the participation of representatives from other government institutions not only strengthens the local, national and international linkages, but, aligns and redirects the programs of the university in accordance to the development thrust of the government. The valuable contributions of the parliaments in the Board further lays the legal foundations of the policies, programs and priorities in accordance to the law.

Believing that a vigorous policy for staff development is essential, DMMMSU pursues establishing linkages with local and international education and research institutions. It embarks on trainings and post-graduate fellowship programs to other universities in the country and other countries such as Germany, England, Netherlands, Belgium, Holland, US, Canada, Israel, Australia, Japan, India, Indonesia, Taiwan, Korea and Thailand. Unfortunately, the scholarship grants is very limited that only less than one percent of the faculty enjoyed such privilege.

Linkages in the national and international communities is established in tapping the potential of its research and extension development programs. The linkage is not only viewed as an occasion to be involved in knowledge sharing mobilization but also to address the financial constraint of the university. The 32 international and numerous local linkages for research development are focused on sericulture, apiculture and livestock, farming system, agroforestry. Co-operative undertaking of DMMMSU with other research and higher educational institutions in the country include fisheries, horticulture, agroforestry, ecosystem and watershed, pollution and waste management, industry and energy. Moreover, collaborative undertaking with local government and non-government institutions is pursued for extension development programs such as continuing education of service areas, publication and communication, enterprise development, field operation services and technical assistance.

Public and private partnership is also observed in the conduct of student apprenticeship or on the job-training program. The students are deployed to different establishments in the locality for their on the job-training or field practice. Such training of students is a laudable opportunity for them to integrate theory and practice at the same be exposed to real business environment. They learn by working with practitioners and experts from industry. Fortunately, there are operating firms in the locality that open their doors to allow their companies to serve as laboratories. The complimentary partnership has been an avenue for resource sharing. Experts from the academe are looked up to in the preparation of industry studies. Significantly, the partnership is a functional strategy of the university in identifying the competencies that need to be developed for the students. In most cases, the faculty members and students are involved or exposed to real-life industry problems. In the process, they get ideas of possible areas for research and field of studies. However, the partnership on the students' apprenticeship between the university and private sector is only limited with those in the country.

To translate the technology generated into livelihood projects at the same time generate income from it, DMMMSU explores the establishment of technology innovation-based

enterprises. Such project which is another agendum for partnership with the private sector, could result in outcomes with commercial potential. The “Yam” research and development of the university is a collaborative project with other government and non-government institutions.

Realizing the need to augment the resources of the university for instruction, research and extension in view of the systematic reduction of the allocated budget for the university, highly viable and sustainable income-generating projects are pursued. These income-generating include crop, animal, fishery production and food services. The DMMMSU Pig Extension Farm (DPERP) is established not only as laboratory facility for instruction, research and extension activities but also to generate income for the university. It has a monthly inventory of 2,990 heads of pigs, 44 cattle, 80 sheep and 6 heads of horses. It disposes about 400 heads monthly. Besides production, the university enters into agribusiness projects with the private sector (e.g. B-Meg Private Agribusiness firm in the contract mixing of feeds at 800 bags per day for hogs and poultry).

III. Biases, problems and opportunities

The adoption of partnership resource management strategy among higher educational, research and other institutions worldwide is essential to encourage knowledge sharing and promote intellectual and scientific vigor which are crucial in building the future (Brauer,2000). The university gains from the partnership since it addresses its concerns such as relevant programs, staff development, research and extension mobilization, employability of graduates, financing, quality and efficiency in the delivery of services. Ideally, the partnership should equitably serve the interest of the partners and the value of sharing knowledge and resources shall be the governing principle of the relationship. In the process of executing the partnership, however, are underlying biases, problems and opportunities that need to be reviewed and acted upon.

While the partnership of the university with higher educational institutions in the world seem to cater its staff development program, however, it experiences some problems. The scholarship program is limited and had restrictive requirements in terms of age, language proficiency, work experience and culture. In some instances, the bias is more favorable for the donor or foreign university in the selection of problems which the student has to endeavor. The concepts on “think globally” and “think globally and act locally” principles are interesting arguments to be reconciled. The donor agency focuses its interest on areas related to its global or personal concerns while DMMMSU prefers a research undertaking that produces tangible and functional output in the locality. The more serious problem encountered in the partnership on staff development is the exercise of “brain drain” syndrome. The trained faculty preferred to stay behind with the foreign-host university because better privileges and opportunities were readily available to exploit his potential. Three trained faculty of the university migrated to the foreign countries (Canada, Australia, US) where they pursued their post graduate degrees. Despite the scholarship contracts imposed by DMMMSU in the observance of the faculty development program, it cannot dispense its absolute right over the rights of its staff. The “brain drain” syndrome which is usually the problem of developing countries, deprives the university for a high level expertise necessary to enhance its human resource capability needed for the socio-economic progress of the country. Besides the conduct of a vigorous campaign through the concerted efforts of the international community for academic solidarity, the institutions involved should campaign for the return of the scholars to their universities and home country. In the process of

enjoying the scholarship and training in developing countries, consciously or unconsciously the merge of different orientation from two different institutions somehow confuses the scholar. The mother university of the scholar like DMMMSU needs to provide the challenge and favorable working atmosphere that could encourage the scholar to exploit his potential. Exploring student and faculty exchange with other educational institutions outside the country is a potential training program to be explored. Such program has a synergetic effect on the sharing relationship which is expected to generate a lasting partnership.

Similar biases are observed in research and extension collaboration, but these are manageable. In most instances, the university needs to realign its proposal with the development thrust of donor institutions. Besides, the donor agency has limited flexibility in entertaining the bureaucratic management policies of government institutions like DMMMSU. Moreover, the university has limited accessibility in information and technology. The exporters of technology of developed countries benefit from the patent protection because it safeguards them from cheap competition. On the other hand, the technology importers from developing countries like DMMMSU, prefer that the patent protection does not erect monopolistic barriers. Contrastingly, the university is also bias in considering the donor agency simply as a financial source not as partners in the real sense of developmental co-operation. For a more sensible result of the partnership, the triangular co-operation is a potential scheme to be adopted (Brauer,2000). Such scheme encourages the involvement of another institution of another country to monitor the bilateral cooperation. Another institution from another developing country shall monitor the collaborative program between a developing and a donor country. In the spirit of partnership, the universities from developed countries shall continue extending the unconditional assistance of the universities to the developing countries like DMMMSU, and, for DMMMSU and other developing universities shall regard the partnership as an opportunity to contribute in actualizing the vision of the world higher education in building the future. Exploring student and faculty exchange in the conduct of research programs with other educational institutions outside the country is a potential resource sharing scheme to be explored.

In the conduct of student training, the university is viewed as a good supplier of cheap labor for the private or industry sector. It is a pathetic but realistic situation that the industry in some cases moves faster than the university. The competencies developed in the university are sometimes not congruent with what the industry requires, hence, unemployment or mismatch situation is apparently observed (Valismo, 1998 & Tan, 1992). While unemployment is the consequence of interrelated problems shared by the universities and the industry, ironically, the educational institutions assume most of the accountability. For the university to exercise as the frontier of knowledge and excellence, the principle of true public and private partnership in knowledge and resource sharing should be adopted as the governing advocacy.

Moreover, problems and biases are experienced in the conduct of technology-based enterprises. Because of the limited financial capability of the university to commercialize the developed technology, it heavily relies on the expertise and resources of its private partner. However, the focus of co-operation of the private partner revolves on the substantial benefits and not on the mutual sharing of resources. The private partner gains the fruits of the technology generated by the university, more than the benefits enjoys by the university in the long run. The patency law that grants the intellectual property rights to the innovator for seven years is more favorable for its private partner. Specific actions to observe the fair sharing of the benefits should be done.

The biased perception of the private sector on the government institution for having a lesser efficiency as compared with the private sector, the partnership in a joint industry related project is very limited. It is a fact that the government institution has to religiously observe bureaucracy in its operation and in the process efficiency is sacrificed. However, there are potential areas for co-operative programs that could be undertaken that recognize the uniqueness of the public and private institutions.

The establishment of the partnership is usually considered as an index of performance. DMMMSU is fortunate to have these partnership especially with the foreign institutions.. However, the partnership should go beyond the establishment of a simple linkage but an interface that has an emulsifying effect on the development of the developing university like DMMMSU. So far, the effect of the partnership is not significant enough to produce a great change in the university. The establishment of more and longer co-operative agreements is therefore recommended to be adopted. The proposal entitled “UNISTAFF Development Continuum in the Philippines” which was submitted by DMMMSU to ISOS-Kassel University through the office of the Director in 1999 is a potential area of partnership.

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Exhibit I DMMMSU's International Linkages

Name of Co-operating Agency	Area of Cooperation
Canadian International Development Agency Australian Center for International Research Food and Agriculture cooperation	Research and extension (Beekeeping) Research (Goat and Mite) Research and Extension (Sericulture and Apiculture)
German Academic Exchange Service(DAAD)	Sponsorship for Research Fellowship in Soil Biology, Veterinary Medicine & Staff Development (ISOS-Winzenhausen)
German Foundation for International Development (DSE)	Sponsorship of International Conferences (IAAE, Veterinary Medicine) Staff Development (ISOS-Witzenhausen)
Ford Foundation	Research(Social Forestry) Infrastructure Development
Japan International Cooperation Agency	Sponsorship for a training course in Japan and Indonesia
International Foundation for Science (IFS) International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) Monbusho	Research (Microlivestock, irrigation) Research (Horticultural crops) Staff Development Scholarship
SEAMEO Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA)	Staff Development
UNDP-FAO	Research & extension (Sericulture, Bamboo) Staff Development

DMMMSU's Linkage cont. . .

Name of Co-operating Agency	Area of Cooperation
Southeast Asian Fisheries Research and Development Center (SEFDEC) Georg-August. University University of Kassel-Witzenhausen) James Cook University (Australia) Cranfield University (England) National Agricultura college of Deventer (Holland) Kansas University (USA) Texas University (USA) Association of Canadian community Colleges (Alberta, Olds & northern Alberta Institute of Technology) Ehime University Monbusho StateOf Israel	Research (Fisheries) Masteral Degree (Horticulture) Staff Development (5 recipients) Master Degree Program (Veterinary Medicine) Staff Development Master Degree (Irrigation & Drainage) Staff Development Doctorate Degree (Adult Education) Staff Development Staff Development Doctorate Degree (energy) Scholarship Trainings in crop processing, irrigation, meteorology, cooperative, rural development, rural-extension, communication, beekeeping, floriculture, farm machineries) Research and extension (potato)
Southeast Asian Program for Potato Research & Devt. (SAPRAD) United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Colombo Plan	Sponsorship for International conferences to Netherlands and Belgium Sponsorship for training in sericulture and Ag.Engineering (India and New Zealand) Sponsorship to world congress in Forestry in Finland
International Union of forestry Research Organization Winrock International (F-FRED) Deakin University (Australia) Universities of South Africa	Research grants (4 MPTS projects) Open University/distance Education Open University/distance Education