Changing the Lives of the Filipino Teachers and Students: Participants' Perceptions of the PLDT Infoteach Outreach Program

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Abstract: As part of its role in serving the nation, the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU) has collaborated with various institutions in implementing projects that support community development. One of which is the PLDT Infoteach Outreach Program. To enable the participants to acquire the essential digital skills for 21st century teaching, learning, and working is the program's goal while changing the lives of Filipino teachers and students is the program's aspiration. This study focused on the third phase of the PLDT Infoteach Outreach Program and sought to present the participants' perceptions of the PLDT Infoteach Outreach Program. Applying a case study method, this research made use of various available data that were gathered from messages, focused group discussions, and participant observations. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The results of this study showed that the participants have positive perceptions of the project; they feel grateful for the knowledge gained and the extended assistance. A complete list of the participants' comments and recommendations on improving the modules, training, schedule, quiz, and program were included in this paper. Constant communication among partner institutions, conduct of FGDs, and cascading the training were the best practices identified by the participants.

Background of the Research Problem

As service to the nation is at the core of its mission, the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU) contributes to efforts in achieving national development by providing greater access to quality education for Filipinos worldwide. With this in mind, the UPOU has partnered with various institutions and engaged in a host of public service, extension, and volunteer activities (UPOU in the Digital Age 2007-2009).

One of these undertakings is in partnership with the nation's largest telecommunication company, the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT). In 2015, the UPOU and PLDT, in collaboration with the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Technical Education Skills and Development Authority (TESDA) implemented its third phase of the said program. The goal of the PLDT Infoteach Program is to enable the participants to acquire digital skills for 21st-century teaching, learning, and working. These participants include teachers and students from public high schools.

While this project is now in its third phase, it is therefore important to find out how the project is being implemented. All this information can be used by those who plan to execute a project like this.How its participants perceive the program and their recommendations on how to further improve the project implementation will also be of great importance in the future implementation of similar projects.

Theoretical Background

Major corporations around the country are undertaking numerous CSR projects, as Taylor (2015) explains: "corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to a business practice that involves participating in initiatives that benefit society." Businesses look for opportunities to support communities in order to further their corporate missions.

In a blog posted by Forman-Ortiz (2013), well-known corporations like Cisco, LinkedIn, and Dell are included in the top 10 socially responsible companies that know how to make an impact beyond their headquarters. Forman-Ortiz (2013) affirmed that "Cisco's initiatives cover every aspect of daily life." Education, healthcare, economic empowerment, and disaster relief to areas in need complete Cisco's global projects. Cisco asks their employees to, "be a part of the equation. You + Networks= Impact Multiplied."

Moreno (2015) cited Google, Xerox, and Targetas three outstanding CSR examples. According to Moreno, "The concept that businesses should both self-regulate and benefit their communities goes back to before the 1800s." Further, he confirmed that "For many people, their first exposure to a corporation working for "good" was related to Google." In its efforts of making aggressive moves toward good citizenship, Google Green has become part of their CSR. It is a corporate effort to use resources efficiently and support renewable

power. Through this, Google has seen an average of 50 percent drop in power requirements for their data centers.

In a paper titled Consumer Perceptions on Corporate Social Responsibility: The CSR Halo Effect, Smith, et. Al. (2010) suggested that "consumers may well make inferences about company CSR performance based on very limited information." "This suggests that consumer awareness of one set of company CSR actions (e.g. recycling) will influence their perceptions of company CSR performance in other areas in the same domain."

Objectives

Many studies regarding CSR activities and how corporations and companies are doing them were found but very few materials on the participants' perceptions of CSR were available. It is therefore the general objective of this research study to present the participants' perceptions of the PLDT Infoteach Outreach Program.

Although a related paper has recently been written by the investigator, this paper differed in its approach. This study concentrated on the third phase of the aforementioned program. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:
1. How do the participants perceive the PLDT Infoteach Outreach Program?
2. What are the participants' recommendations for improving the project implementation?
3. What are the best practices applied in implementing a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Project?

Methods and Analysis

A. Study Design

This study, which focused on the PLDT Infoteach Outreach Program and the activities undertaken by the project management team, was a descriptive single-case study.
1. Data Collection

   Multiple sources of evidence were used in this study: documentation, focused group discussions (FGDs), and participant observation.

   To answer the first objective, the data on the participants' perceptions of the program were gathered from the documented messages that were delivered by the teacher and student representatives during the graduation program.

   The participants' recommendations were collected from the focused group discussions which were conducted among the participants. From these FGDs, the participants were able to share all their experiences on the program and the researcher was able to get more personal insights from them. These data answered the second objective.

   For the third objective of identifying the best practices, this study adopted a participant observation method. Since the author was working on this project, direct participation and observationswere done. All observations were documented.
2. Sampling Technique

   This study made use of non-probability sampling methods. All available recordings of messages/speeches were used in this study. Then all those that parts of speeches that talked about their perceptions of the program were quoted.

   For the FGDs, all participants present during the quiz contest were involved. The FGDs were done right after the quiz contest. In this case, a convenience sampling was applied.

B. Data Analysis

In this study, which was mostly descriptive, thematic analysis was applied. It was found that this method of analysis was the most appropriate for this study, which tries to understand experiences and concepts from the complete data set.

The author familiarized herself with the information contained in the transcriptions. The recurring themes were identified and looked at after the first codes were formed. The themes were then derived from the data. For a more expansive analysis of data, this study employed an inductive approach. This method was used in this study because it offered a wider, more thorough analysis of all data.

Results and Discussion

Participants' Perceptions of PLDT
Infoteach Outreach Program

The following perceptions on the PLDT Infoteach Outreach Program were quoted from the speeches rendered by the DepED IT Officers and training participants during the graduation ceremonies which were held in their respective divisions.

"We live in a global community where each one of us is challenged to analyze information, collaborate and communicate ideas using fast-changing technology. My co-educators, I am 100% sure that with all the materials provided to us by our stakeholders, you are all ready and prepared to help our students to develop the higher-order thinking skills they need to realize their full potential. With all the innovations involved in the teaching-learning process inside the classroom, I am confident to say that our students could flourish in the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century. Thus, our students are truly winners. Students, use your acquired knowledge in facing the next chapter of your high school life which is Senior High. With the knowledge and skills obtained from this program, life in the Senior High School would be more enjoyable and interesting."-IT Officer, DepED Division of Capiz

"It is not every day that we have organizations who invest in ICT in the public academe. We need all the help we can get to upgrade the high clamor for Digital Literacy among our students and for our teachers to keep in pace with our millennials - our so-called Digital Natives. We're so fortunate to be part of this year's Infoteach and we hope to be recipients again as we've seen its indelible impact on our students and faculty." - IT Officer, DepED Division of Tuguegarao City

"Spread the virus of knowledge in your respective schools. Now that you have the skills and tools, spread the knowledge that you gained from this program and facilitate this to your neighboring schools because the DepED Quezon, as well as PLDT, UPOU, and other stakeholders, will support you and guide you through all the way." - I T Officer, DepED Division of Quezon

It has come to this point that we will have to put an end to what we have started. However, in this endeavor, the Infoteach Outreach Program's impact gave each one the most significant part to take this opportunity as a courier of e-knowledge with joy in our hearts to serve our students to become more competitive in the learning they will get from you/ us. Nevertheless, no one can ever take it or steal it from you. To our partners, we will assure you that what you have planted shall never become futile and dormant. Indeed such learning shall bear more prolific and dynamic fruits and these eventually, our students." – IT Officer, DepEd Division of Davao City

"For the very first time in the history of San Pablo City, we experience this division-wide training of teachers and students in response to the immediate call of our curriculum to produce 21st-century teachers and learners." - IT Officer, DepED Division of San Pablo City

"It motivates us to be globally competitive in the field of technology. Now, I know what I wanted and what I'm passionate about. PLDT Infoteach will help me achieve success." - student-participant, Antique

"The PLDT Infoteach Program is confidently awesome with a heart. Primarily because, the module does not only discusses the fundamentals and the procedures but also emphasizes student-centered learning approaches." - principal/teacher-participant, DepED Division of Antique

"Infoteach is a very good grass-root for ICT education especially for our students who will then be going for the senior high school. With this program, they have been equipped with the ICT learning needed for their new curriculum. The program serves as a part of a continuing ICT literacy learning to our teachers including ourselves and it enlightened our learners on the values towards the 21st Century learning."- IT Officer, DepED Division of San Fernando, La Union

"The teachers who became part of this event are very much grateful to the PLDT, to the UPOU, and all partners to this endeavor. They see this as an opportunity to keep themselves abreast of the important trends in 21st-century teaching methods and skills. With training like this, they feel confident that they are globally competitive and well-informed of the changes of the times. Technology today is so fast changing that sometimes those who belong to the older generations feel that they will not because they cannot keep up with it. Training like this one is very timely so we hope that those who head PLDT will continue in their advocacy to help the education sector." - IT Officer, DepED Division of Muntinlupa City

"The Intel Teach Skills for Success and Getting Started course provides students and teachers with the opportunity to do tasks that suit their needs. The importance of creativity was given importance using basic ICT skills. Creativity and skills will always be in demand, regardless of what you're working in. It's one of those things that will give teachers and students the edge that makes them ready to take on the challenges of the 21st century in our local set-up. All activities and projects in the module involve a four-step process. The process of using the book involves planning, completing the task, reviewing your work, and sharing it with others. What struck me is the process of sharing it with your peers. This would give the opportunity to develop innovative approaches and new processes to accomplish key tasks. Presenting the best practices of the output and improving it by being a critical friend significantly helps improves the work of everybody." - IT Officer, DepED Division of Bacolod City

Participants' Comments and Recommendations in Improving the Project Implementation
The following recommendations were gathered from the focused group discussions conducted among the training participants in the divisions covered by the program.

On the modules. The participants' comments and suggestions on the improvement of the module are the following: 1. Include assistance in Microsoft Office/tools; 2. Easy to understand; 3. Please add publication; 4. The module is very helpful to us students because we learned more knowledge to enhance our skills; 4. The module is basic, thus training was not at all difficult; 5. Although the contents are familiar, new skills were learned; 6. New knowledge gained on Green IT, cyber law, and social media; 7. Very, very useful; 8. The module is step-by-step, anyone can work with it even without a trainer; 9. Easy to follow; 10.Some office applications are outdated like Microsoft, some features are not anymore available on their computers; and 11. Excel, PowerPoint, and Paint are useful for regular classes; for advanced classes, Paint should be replaced with Photoshop.

On the training. The participants' comments on the training are the following: 1. Effective because the students have learned a lot; 2. Internet problem during the training; 3. Not enough computers; 4. Computers do not have the required specifications; output lacks features; and 5. Trainers' approaches encouraged the students.

On the schedule. The participants mentioned their comments on the training schedule as follows: 1. It's hard to schedule the training, training was done in between classes; 2. Suggestion to hold the training on Saturdays or during summer vacation; 3. Participants are always in a hurry to go home because the training was during the late afternoon; and 4. Problem with the availability of time/not enough time.

On the quiz. The participants shared their comments on the quiz: 1. The quiz was hard; 2. Time constraints; 3. The average questions are difficult; 4. I feel rattled especially on the enumeration; 5. Enjoyable and 6. Confusing.

On the program. When asked about their comments on the Infoteach Outreach Program as a whole, the participants mentioned the following: 1. Gained so much knowledge, especially on online courses; 2.It's just a review of what had been previously learned; 3. Teaching approaches were learned; 4. A good project which helped the teachers and students; and 5. The program was good because the basic needs of teachers on computers were catered. For students, the program served as their review.

Other comments from the participants include the following: 1. Internet problem; 2. Problem with the availability of internet lines in remote areas; 3. Students performed well than teachers because they have the time for individual exploration and they are more curious about technology than adults; 4. For improvement, there should be a showcase of outputs that could be presented in the community; and 5. The opportunity for immersion and the possibility of involving other people in the community must be considered.

Best Practices Applied in
Implementing a CSR Project
The best practices which were applied in implementing the Infotech Outreach Program are the following:
Constant communication among partners. This project has been made possible because of the partnership among different institutions and this necessitated coordination between and among these institutions. All activities required by this project were successfully attained because of the constant communication among the collaborating agencies. The use of communications technology was maximized.

The illustration below shows the communication process among the partner institutions.
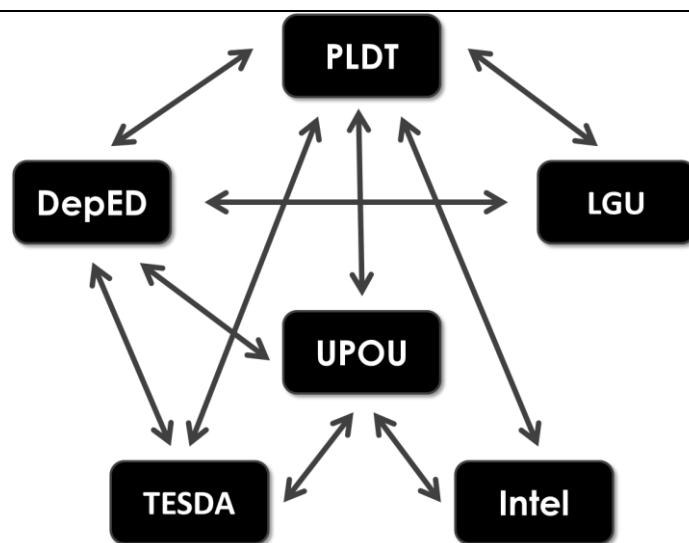
Conduct of focused group discussion (FGD). To improve the project, the conduct of FGDs was done. It was through this activity that the project management team was able to gather the comments and recommendations of the training participants. The basic guidelines for conducting the FGD were followed by the facilitator.

Cascading the training. By cascading the training, the number of participants was multiplied and the desired number of participants was easily realized. From thirty-six Master Trainers who were trained by the UPOU Resource Person/Expert, a total of three hundred trainers from eighteen divisions were trained by these Master Trainers. These trainers then trained a total of 5,850 teachers and students in their respective schools.

Summary and Conclusion

The participants' opinions of the PLDT Infoteach Outreach Program were quoted in this report. The majority of these participants gave the program favorable reviews. They are content and grateful to have been includedin the program. They are appreciative of the information and knowledge they have gained and the help they have received. They urged their fellow participants to cascade the training in the hopes that this advocacy for the education sector would continue.

For the improvement of project implementation, the participants provided detailed feedback and suggestions on the modules, training, schedule, quiz, and program. This article contains a comprehensive list of these suggestions and comments. The best practices identified are constant communication among partner institutions, the conduct of FGDs, and cascading the training.

Taking part in CSR initiatives is not just about generating positive press coverage. It is not just about improving reputations and building relationships with local authorities to make doing business easier. CSR means giving inspiration to the community so that citizens become more responsible in doing their part to help build a better nation. It is about the company's sincere concern about helping the community.

Working for the PLDT Infoteach Outreach Program has been very challenging. Implementing a CSR project like this is not as easy as it may seem. It requires time, patience,perseverance, good judgment, attention to detail, a strong sense of responsibility, and a sincere concern for others. It is indeed a tedious job, but getting positive responses from the participants alone is more than enough to realize self-fulfillment.

This CSR project has had a significant impact and truly made a difference.It will continue to help in changing the lives of Filipino teachers and students.

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