

Understanding Holistic Development and Wellness: Experiences and Perspectives of Filipino Student Leaders

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Abstract.

This study focused on how student leaders coming from different higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines understand Holistic Development and Wellness based on their experiences and perspectives. Literature tells us about the clear role of HEIs in ensuring the holistic development and wellness of the students. It is part of their responsibility to create programs and policies that promote the development of students in different aspects. This responsibility is being shared among the members of the community like the administrators, teachers, and even with the students. Active student leaders are believed to play an active role in leading the implementation of programs and activities promoting holistic development and wellness. Given this, it is very crucial for them to understand the value of the two concepts as well as their role. This qualitative study utilized narrative inquiry as a method and approach in documenting and analyzing the student leaders' understanding of holistic development and wellness. Their stories were captured after engaging in an interactive youth forum. Their narratives showed clear understanding of the concepts and regarded holistic development as being integrated with wellness that allows individuals reach full potential. Their experiences and perspectives as student leaders allowed them to propose possible contributions and set action plans to ensure holistic development and wellness of students in their respective institutions. This also allowed them to reflect on the support that they will be needing from the members of the school community.

Keywords: development; higher education; leadership; students; wellness

Introduction

The landscape of higher education is continuously evolving as a response to the many factors like the technological advancements, globalization, regional alignments, increasing connectivity, and the advent of the new generation in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). As the changing landscape continue to unfold at great speed the HEIs are drawn to establish and administer mechanisms that would be responsive to the ever changing and dynamic needs of its primary clientele, the students. The improvements that the HEIs institutionalize both in academics and co-curricular aspects are geared towards the achievement of its purpose of developing the students holistically. Quinlan (2011) poses that while students need to be able to demonstrate key skills and knowledge related to their degrees, they must be able to demonstrate personal and social responsibility as well. In doing so, the wellness of the students is also taken into consideration.

As emphasized in the Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997), the development of people and of a learning society is central to the aims of higher education. HEIs have afforded priority to the holistic development of the students--focusing on the moral, social, and emotional development, which is increasingly evident in the school policies and documentation (O'Flaherty and McCormack, 2019). In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) have issued Memorandum Order No. 9, Series 2013 on the Enhanced Policies and Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services. The issuance and updating of policies and standards were meant to serve as guide in ensuring that all relevant aspects are being considered towards holistic development and wellness.

In order to fully serve its purpose, the responsibility of enacting programs and services for holistic development and wellness are being shared by the HEIs to the members of the academic community. This includes the administrators, faculty, staff, and the students. The students leading the different organizations and volunteer groups play a vital role in supporting and promoting the two concepts. That is why it is very important for these students to be on the same page with the HEIs or at the minimum have a clear understanding of what holistic development and wellness is all about.

Having in mind the importance of these concepts, the Philippine Association of Practitioners of Student Affairs and Services (PAPSAS), Inc., have concentrated in making this as the central topic in the 11th PAPSAS Interactive Youth Forum. With the theme "Harnessing Student Leadership Towards Holistic Development and Wellness," the association aims to provide an opportunity for the student leaders to individually and collectively share models of practice in attaining holistic development and wellness. The participants of the forum that comes from different HEIs in the country are expected to be equipped with the knowledge and understanding of handling holistic development and wellness related issues. They are also expected to engage in collaborative programs that are geared towards the promotion of the concepts. However, the association acknowledges the importance of being in the same page with the students thus the need to know their perspective and understanding of holistic development and wellness.

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The students of today will become the nation's future professionals. Given this, it is important that while they manage to perform their roles effectively through the skills and knowledge that they develop in higher education, it is also of relevance that they demonstrate such responsibilities with good character. However, in recent history, the terms character or morals has rarely been invoked in higher education (Quinlan, 2011). As argued by Barnett and Coats (2005), the moral and social aims of higher education have been overshadowed by the emphasis on instrumental and economic goals, including employability skills and preparation for the workplace.

The concept of holistic development and wellness of students is very clear as a reference or foundation in the practice of student affairs and services. Majority, if not all, student affairs and services administrators and practitioners have prioritized the total development of students through the various programs and activities that they institute in their respective higher educational institutions. Despite this, there is relatively little discourse in the Philippines on ways higher education in general can support not only the intellectual development but also the development of the whole student. In the USA, there has been an increased attention to the effects of university education on aspects of student development particularly on holistic student development (Braskamp, Trautvetter, et al., 2008). They have established clear strategies in ensuring that the students' development in almost all aspects are taken into consideration by the higher education institutions. In the UK context, Quinlan (2011) highlighted that universities are under pressure of demonstrating their value by translating the outcomes of education in economic terms or the return on investment and increasing employability of graduates. This economic discourse, as explained by Bolden (2011), is often disheartening for academics as many of them feel pulled away from their own personal value centers by the priorities that seem to dominate the current context.

The current Philippine scenario poses a timely opportunity for HEIs to focus on holistic student development and wellness and address the different challenges related to it. The research made by Glenn (2005) on school choice in Europe and the USA showed that parents choose faith-based schools because they provide a strong foundation for whole student development through clear, distinct commitments to a set of well-articulated guiding values, rather than the religious content per se. The same is true in the case of the Philippines. Private Sectarian and Non-Sectarian HEIs appear to have a more comprehensive program for holistic development and wellness that is usually anchored in their schools' philosophy and beliefs. This strategy is known to be an effective branding or marketing exercise as it provides opportunity for these HEIs to genuinely articulate institutional core values (Quinlan, 2011). This somehow clarifies how the institutions help the students create a meaningful integrated life. However, for the public institutions that offer free education, and where many of the Filipino students are, rely mainly on the provisions set by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in terms of curriculum and school policies. The priorities for the different types of educational institution may also differ depending on the availability of resources and institutionalization of relevant programs and services for students.

Student Affairs and Services and Student Leadership

Considering the auspices and guidance of the student affairs and services division, student leaders who are active in organizations and volunteer groups are believed to play vital roles in leading the implementation of programs and activities for holistic development and wellness.

In the same manner, student Affairs and services (SAS) plays a significant role in ensuring student development in various areas: from academic to personal, socio-cultural, and in some instances, even in areas of political participation and citizenship (UNESCO, 2002). In the Philippines, the student affairs and services division were described as the unit tasked to ensure that meaningful non-academic experiences and efficient services are abundantly available, to provide every student various opportunity for total development (CHED, 2013). Because of this, the student affairs practitioners are expected to be creative and innovative in the field in order to provide and assure the quality of programs and services that addresses the holistic development and wellness of their primary clientele, the students.

As SAS practitioners, many, if not all, of us are expected to perform multi-faceted roles in campus. These include managing of student formation, student life, discipline, scholarship, residence halls, campus ministry, international students, security, food, health, guidance and counseling, persons with disabilities, job placement (CHED, 2013). In the performance of these roles, the SAS practitioners contribute to learning by way of enhancing and complementing classroom experiences in an environment where skills, values and attitudes necessary to achieve academic and life success are developed (Pineda-Baez, 2014).

I believe that as SAS practitioners, it is our duty to engage students in experiential learning mostly through student-initiated activities outside the classroom. These activities stimulate the students to feel that they belong; to get engaged in learning; to unleash their potentials; feel a sense of security; to get better grades; and to complete their program (Dukart, 2017; Sriram, R. & McLevain, M., 2016; Meyers, et al., 2014; Pineda-Baez, C., 2014).

Research Questions and Objective

The main objective of this study is to document and analyze the understanding of the student leaders on the concept of holistic development and wellness. Their narratives have provided categories and emergent themes that generally assisted in the better understanding of the concepts from the student leaders' perspective. The development of knowledge was facilitated by their response to the following research questions:

1. What is the understanding of student leaders on Holistic Development and Wellness?

2. What can be the contribution of student leaders in ensuring Holistic Development and Wellness of students in the campus?
3. What kind of support will the student leaders be needing from the institution in order to promote Holistic Development and Wellness?

These questions assisted in culling-out the perspectives of the student leader participants on their understanding of holistic development and wellness.

Significance of the Study

The identified subjects and themes in this study have shown great significance on the following:

Higher Educational Institutions as they get to know the level of understanding of the student leaders on the value of holistic development and wellness which can contribute to the achievement of the goals of the institutions.

Student Affairs and Services Practitioners as they develop programs and services geared towards the growth and development of students.

Student Leaders as they get to learn more about the two concepts coming from their fellow student leaders. It will help them appreciate their roles more as they discover their possible contribution to the attainment of the goals of the institutions.

Philippine Society as the ultimate beneficiary of graduates who are holistic and integrated. This kind of graduates are believed to make a difference that will contribute to the betterment of the society.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study gives emphasis on the humanistic-existential family of theories as it is focused more on the students' relationship to others and to society. *Humanistic-existential theories* describe how students make decisions that affect themselves and others. Counsellors and other student affairs professionals engaged in helping skills heavily use these theories (Long, 2012). These theories emphasize more the conditions for healthy growth and development and less the development itself. Balance, harmony, and purpose are significant values that underlie humanistic-existential theories.

Student affairs professionals engage humanistic-existential theories frequently in situations that require helping, counselling, or mentoring of students. In 1976, Hettler's Model of Wellness recognizes that dimensions of student development do not exist independently of each other. Identity development is intrinsically linked with psychosocial and intellectual development—it is difficult for a student to reflect on his or her cultural identity without also reflecting on the social dynamics of race relations or the social constructs of race and ethnicity. Hettler (1976) proposed that students cannot develop psychosocially and intellectually without wellness. Hettler defined wellness as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. He developed a holistic model of wellness that integrates six dimensions of a student's life: physical, intellectual, social/emotional, spiritual, environmental, and occupational.

The dimensions of a students' life provided a framework for most HEIs to have particular focus on the development of the programs and services for students. They have become more conscious in ensuring that each of the dimensions are being taken into consideration.

Research Method

Using qualitative approach, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted after the learning sessions in the 11th PAPSAS Interactive Youth Forum in order to gather relevant data from the selected student leader participants. Purposive sampling was used to ensure diverse voices. The FGD participants were students from private HEIs, state colleges and universities, and local universities and colleges. Twelve (12) participants were invited for the FGD. Each participant served as the representative of their group who have initially shared stories and points related to holistic development and wellness.

The conversation was recorded and transcribed and the transcription served as the bases for the emergence of relevant subjects and themes which focused on the latent level of the data set. In reference with the narratives of the participants, narrative inquiry, as a method and view of the phenomenon, was applied in the documentation and analysis.

To systematically and strategically process and analyze the collected data, Creswell's Data Analysis Spiral (Creswell, 2013) was followed in which the process of data collection, analysis, and report writing are interrelated and go on simultaneously. The important statements coming from the narratives were highlighted and assigned a specific code. Also, thematic analysis was treated as a primary descriptive strategy to establish patterns of understanding within the data that were coded. The patterns and the emergent, iterative concepts helped in identifying the themes that are responsive to the research questions.

Results and Discussions

The narratives of the participant student leaders served as the primary data of this study. It was documented and analyzed in order to collectively interpret the responses on the posted key questions related to their understanding of holistic development and wellness. Table 1 shows an overview of the sub-themes and major themes that emerged after the analysis of the data.

Table 1: Summary of Findings and Emergent Themes

Factors	Sub-themes	Major Themes
Understanding of Holistic Development and Wellness	Self-awareness	Process of Personal Development and Self-awareness
	Personal growth and capacity	
	Continuous process	
	Balanced well-being	Integration of Different Dimensions of Student Life
	Building connections	
	Totality of the person	
	Institutional support	Student Support Services
	Internal mechanisms	
Contribution of student leaders in ensuring the holistic development and wellness of Students in the campus	Program development	Creation and Implementation of Student-led Programs
	Capacity building for students	
	Policies for Holistic Development and Wellness	
	Representative of the student body	Playing an Active Role in the School Community
	Serve as role model	
	Service for fellow students	
	Conducive learning environment	Enabling a Conducive Learning Environment
	Safe spaces for students	
Support needed from the Higher Educational Institutions	Financial support	Provision of Resources
	Manpower and logistics	Streamlining and Clarity of Policies and Processes
	Clear policies to follow	
	Easy processing of activities	

Student Leaders' Understanding of Holistic Development and Wellness

The different HEIs have developed their own interpretation of the concept of holistic development and wellness. Most of them have anchored this in their institutional core values and some followed the framework addressing the different dimensions of a student life –

physical, intellectual, social/emotional, spiritual, environmental, and occupational. The student leaders who serve as partners of the HEIs in the implementation of programs and services for holistic development and wellness also has their take in interpreting the concepts.

Process of Personal Development and Self-awareness

The narratives of the student leaders that directly responded to the question revealed that they view holistic development and wellness as a process that each individual must undergo in order to achieve personal development and self-awareness. It cannot be achieved overnight as each person has their own pace in understanding the concept based on their personal experiences and situations. This validates the statement of Quinlan (2011) that holistic development also sees the student as people who needs to grow and mature affectively and morally.

The student leaders view the concepts as the development of individual in all aspects. It must be a continuous process of developing and training the body, mind, and spirit in order to be in the appropriate state. It is about the timely progress of a person towards achieving totality or over-all well-being. They also see it as a comprehensive learning system delivered in a practical approach intended to develop the different aspects of a students' life. Holistic development in itself may also be considered as the process towards improvement of a person's wellness and a gateway towards self-actualization.

This understanding of the concept compliments the function of the HEIs who must strategically develop institutional programs and services mainly through the student affairs and services division. Student affairs and services, being a cluster of units designed and devoted to serve all students and to make sure that the learning and living environment is conducive to attaining institutional goals (Songco, 2000) must be on top in the execution of the process. By means of making it as a process that has its levels and progression, it becomes easier for the service units to focus on specific dimensions in a timely and proactively.

Integration of Different Dimensions of Student Life

Another emergent theme out of the understanding of the student leaders of holistic development and wellness is that the concepts is about the integration of the different dimensions of student life. This viewpoint matches how Hettler (1976) defined wellness as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. They give emphasis in recognizing the healthy connection between the mind, body, and soul. Holistic development and wellness encompass the notion of academic learning of knowledge and development of technical skills. Shaw (2019) further emphasized that students need to be not only academically competent in their field, but also, socially, psychologically, spiritually, and physically competent in their field.

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The integration of the different dimensions of student life promotes student development which, according to Ridley (2012), is the integration of academic learning programs with the larger issues of personal improvement and individual growth. This approach is student centered and focuses on understanding and demonstrating values, nurturing skills, and moving towards knowledge. An integrated individual is a balanced individual who manages to cope with the different situations and stay in course. This is relevant to the explanation of Gialamas and Pelonis (2015) that holistic approach means understanding and successfully combining academic, emotional, physical, intellectual, and ethical components to ensure a healthy, balanced, individual, an individual who will successfully cope with the changes involved when entering higher education as well as the changes that life brings.

Student Support Services

The student leaders acknowledged holistic development and wellness as a support service that should be provided by the HEIs. Considering the continuous evolution in the landscape of education where institutions of higher learning are taking a holistic approach to preparing men and women to life after college (Shaw, 2019), certain mechanisms should be in place. The HEIs are expected to provide support services that will promote the holistic development and wellness of the students. This is where the role of the student affairs and services practitioners are taken into major consideration.

HEIs can easily respond to this by being compliant with the CHED Memorandum Order No. 9 series of 2013. The said CHED Memo states that in order for the students to develop life skills and values, the student affairs and services “must systematically and deliberately address this end of producing citizens suited to the aims of the country and of humanity. Higher Education Institutions must provide a set of student centered activities and services in support of academic instruction intended to facilitate holistic and well-rounded student development for active involvement as future responsible citizens and leaders. These shall be collectively known as student affairs and services” (Section 4, CHED Memo No. 9, Series 2013).

The student leader acknowledges this fact and are most of the time the primary recipient of the developmental programs being organized and implemented by the SAS practitioners. This is in reference to the role of the student leaders as partners of the institution in advocating holistic development and wellness. The student leaders become more confident in spearheading programs with support from the school community. Sussman (2015) stated that students attain leadership development as well as self-confidence and self-esteem through accomplishment and processes of collaborative change.

Student Leaders' Contribution to Ensure Holistic Development and Wellness of Students

Being aware of their roles as student leaders, the participants of this study was able to share what they have in mind that can be done in ensuring the holistic development and wellness of students in the campus. This is usually done through activities implemented by student organizations. Student organizations play an important role in the leadership development of the students. Bush et al (2017) stated that for students, involvement in student organizations could promote the development of key professional and social skills, provide opportunities for relationship and network building. Poirier and Gupchup (2010) further argued that researches suggest that engagement in student organizations can improve altruism, accountability, honor/integrity, organizational skills, and relationship skills. Student organization involvement also remains an important aspect of a postgraduate application (Bookstaver, et al., 2013).

Creation and Implementation of Student-led Programs

The narratives of the participants emphasized the creation and implementation of programs and activities related to holistic development and wellness as one of their possible contributions. However, they also raised the need for them to be ready and well-equipped in creating and implementing student-led holistic development and wellness programs. One way of doing this is through leadership trainings and capacity-building. Leadership skills development programs focus on the attitudes of students in 3 different dimensions. These are knowledge, behavior, and action. According to Rosch and Anthony (2012), the *knowledge* dimension emphasizes knowing yourself and others and the knowledge directing the way you think and your behaviors, *behavior* emphasizes understanding and improving your personal characteristics and *action* emphasizes improving interpersonal skills. Focusing on these dimensions would help the student leaders to be more integrated and conscious on the total development of their fellow students.

The next step that they voiced out is to identify the needs of their fellow students. They would want to have a feel and knowledge of the concerns that needs to be addressed. They intend to do this through conduct of surveys and consultations as a form of service from their respective organizations. Awareness of the current situation and needs of their fellow students is key for them to have a strong basis for program development. The means of collecting information and putting pieces of the puzzle together will help create the picture of who the student really is. This can be refers to as the holistic approach and it must consider all aspects of the students' emotional intelligence. Providing programs that would expose the students to new experiences and perspectives and opportunity to dialogue with others can offer powerful learning experiences that shape people's development (Mezirow and Taylor, 2009).

They are also willing to draft and lobby policy proposals for consideration of the school administration that would give priority in upholding the well-being of the students. It was also mentioned that attendance to forums, seminars, and workshops related to holistic development and wellness is an important strategy to learn and improve their skills. They also highlighted the possibility of adapting best practices from other institutions and fellow student leaders. Moreover, the participants noted the need to be sensitive and compassionate in the development and implementation of programs for the students' holistic development and wellness.

Playing an Active Role in the School Community

In consideration of their narratives, the participants also highlighted their role in the school community. Majority of them are aware of the fact that they must serve a role models to their fellow students. They believe that by setting a good example reflective of an integrated and holistic student would inspire others to be just the same. Fulton (2019) stated that if one student is working hard and shows a true passion, they will inspire others to believe that they can also strive for excellence. This could be expressed through their ability to balance their academic and social life well and still manage to engage in community development activities. They also see themselves as embodiments of servant leadership who is compassionate, respectful, and genuinely considers the needs of their fellow students.

The participants are well aware of their responsibilities as leaders. They know that they must serve as the representative and voice of the student body. They ensure that their voices and perspectives are heard and considered by seating in the different school councils that make relevant decisions for the community. They are committed in performing their role of serving as a bridge that connects the rest of the student populace to the school administration. They value the importance of remaining true to their promise of performing their duties for the welfare of their fellow students.

It is very clear to them that they are expected to serve and to assist the HEIs where they belong in promoting and ensuring holistic development and wellness of the students. Awareness of their role enables them to have a clear grasp of their function and to manage also the expectations of the school community. Given this, student leaders must nurture their inner lives, be reflective, and hopeful, and enable others around them to be the same (Quinlan, 2011). Clarity on the leadership qualities such as integrity and trustworthiness, as mentioned by Bolden (2011), must be developed as they are particularly essential to holistic development.

Enabling a Conducive Learning Environment

Another possible contribution that the participants have mentioned is the importance of having a conducive learning environment for all students. What they have in mind was not limited to the facilities, physical spaces, and infrastructures that is, ideally, present in the

campus. They are more concern in creating a positive school community that celebrates diversity and inclusion. They want to be able to understand individual differences and become appreciative of everyone's uniqueness. They value the importance of having a sensitive school community that makes everyone comfortable and safe. They also aspire to contribute in having a respectful student body who shows sensitivity to all its members that builds a friendly culture. Dallimore, et al., (2004) tells us that learners become more engaged within a supportive learning environment where people respect them and appreciate their responses.

The participants can become enablers of conducive learning environment by establishing certain mechanisms. This includes consideration of national laws pertaining to bullying, safe spaces, gender and equality, etc. in the development of their programs. They can take the lead in ensuring that the students' rights are protected and considered. They can propose policies that will prevent discrimination and violence in the campus. Another challenging action is to educate the school community in becoming more tolerant of current trends in attending to the concerns of the youth without compromising the schools' policies and identity. This will require strong support from the school administrators to establish ways of creating an ideal learning environment. According to Parks (2000), the school leaders can create and participate in spaces that practice particular dialogue and supportive mentoring community for students.

Support Needed by Student Leaders from the HEIs

It takes a village to raise a child. The participants cannot, on their own, institute plans that would contribute in ensuring the holistic development and wellness of the students. They will be needing the support from the institutions and its administrators in carrying out their plans. Primarily, it is the institutions' responsibility to provide strategies and machineries that will develop students holistically. The role of the student leaders is just secondary and would only be to assist in the implementation of the institution-wide goals.

Provision of Resources

Running a program entails cost and the need for resources. The participants are well aware of this and have narrated their experiences due to lack or deficiency in this aspect. Most of the student organizations manage to organize and implement programs and activities by creatively raising funds that will support their logistical needs. Some of them rely on registration fees per activity while others engage with sponsors and benefactors who can finance the program. There are also those who are lucky to have been granted with seed money by their institutions which they can use as initial fund. Others are tapped to collaborate in the different service providing units in the HEI and they act as implementors or those who does the leg work. However, this kind of concern limits the student leaders in being able to do more and achieve more. Most of them will just have to make do of the available resources. This scenario would often times discourage them or would result to mediocre outputs. If an

organization failed to raise adequate resources, it means that it will not be able to fulfill its mission, and it is up to the schools' leadership to ensure that those resources are available in any possible ways (Kiiru, 2010).

Their narratives have clearly sounded off the need for the provision of resources in order to create and implement programs and activities that promote holistic development and wellness. They emphasized their need for financial support as running a program or conducting an activity entails cost. They enjoy raising funds to support their initiatives but they also find it detrimental as it eats up a lot of time and effort. They also mentioned the need for human resources to serve as manpower by encouraging more students to participate. They also need to build their capacities as they acknowledge the fact that they cannot give what they do not have. They will have to be trained first to become good leaders and managers in order to ensure the success of their plans. They believe that the HEIs where they belong must consider also these items as they set their expectations from the student leaders.

Streamlining and Clarity of Policies and Processes

Another factor that limits the student leaders in promoting holistic development and wellness of students in the campus are the institutional policies and processes. The existence and even the lack of these guidelines adversely affects the student leaders' initiatives. They have wittily expressed how these set of internal rules could make or break their plans and actions. The participants acknowledge and respects the need for the processes to put order. However, they are clear in voicing their experiences of bureaucracy that can be misconstrued as lack of support from the side of the school officials.

The set of rules must not be detrimental to the development of the students. They must be put in place for purposes of assisting and training the students to become diligent and responsible. Danielson (2002) emphasized that school policies must be designed with the students' active learning in mind. She further stated that he school administrators must ensure that the policies they put in place will reinforce their goals for the students. The officials must always consider finding solutions that will address the concerns of the students and at the same time allow them to learn from. The participants are certain about their request for the HEIs to have a more lenient and easily followed process in approving activities. They would like to streamline the requirements or better yet introduce online platforms that can easily be accessed to speed up the review of the proposal, routing for signatories, facility for budget requests, and venue reservations.

Conclusion

The narratives of the participants have become instrumental in drawing out their perspective and understanding of holistic development and wellness. For the student leaders, holistic development and wellness is a process of integrating the different dimensions by supporting students to reach their maximum potential and growth as a person for the world.

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The perspective evidently suggests the importance of development and well-being not only for the self but also for others. It is now within the responsibility of the HEIs to strengthen the relationship between students and society.

Student leaders can contribute in ensuring the holistic development and wellness of students in campus by becoming clear with their roles and functions of creating relevant programs and enabling a supportive mentoring school community. The implementation of programs that complements academic are important for the students to develop their identity and purpose. However, this cannot come to fruition without the support from the HEIs and the other members of the school community. The student leaders clamor for availability of resources and the smooth flow of transactions. This will enable them to come up with more noteworthy programs and encourage more students to participate.

The perspectives of the student leaders contextualize the kind of leadership that should be existing in HEIs – educational leadership for holistic development and wellness. It highlights the importance for school leaders to understand key issues of holistic development and wellness and embrace such purpose. This will be the driving force in aligning the institutional goals and acknowledge the contribution of the student leaders in the school community. Understanding student leaders perspectives is crucial for planning programs that will be attractive to a wide range of student interests and abilities.

Recommendations

This study aimed to provide an understanding on holistic development and wellness based on the perspective of the student leaders. Considering the literature, qualitative findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are presented to the different stakeholders involved:

Higher Education Institutions – to institutionalize Holistic Development and Wellness by creating a framework or process that will enable the integration of the different dimensions of students' life in the curriculum. They must establish mechanisms in the provision of support services by empowering the student affairs and services sector as well as the student leaders to influence the organizational processes to enable a holistic learning environment.

Student Affairs Practitioners – to continuously embrace their mission of molding the youth to become future leaders who are integrated and whole. It can be done by understanding the students that are under their care and enhancing their skills to be able to attend to the diverse needs of the students. They must promote an open community that facilitates learning while keeping in mind the purpose of holistic student development.

Student Leaders – to strengthen student initiatives by being emphatic to the needs of their fellow students. They must recognize their role in the school community and their capacity to make a difference. Their perspectives may be crucial for planning programs that will be attractive to a wide range of student interests and abilities.

Acknowledgment

This paper is an output of the conversations with the student leaders who participated in the Philippine Association of Practitioners of Student Affairs and Services (PAPSAS), Inc., Interactive Youth Forum. They have candidly shared their experiences and perspectives on their understanding of holistic development and wellness in the campus.

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