

June 2022

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Recommended Citation

Loyola, Leandro (2022) "Understanding Holistic Development and Wellness: Experiences and Perspectives of Filipino Student Leaders," *Journal of Research Initiatives*: Vol. 6: Iss. 1, Article 6. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.uncfsu.edu/jri/vol6/iss1/6>

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

About the Author(s)

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Keywords

holistic development, student affairs, student leadership, student services, wellness



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Abstract

This study focuses on how student leaders coming from different Philippine higher education institutions (HEIs) understand Holistic Development and Wellness based on their experiences and perspectives. Literature underscores the clear role of HEIs in ensuring the holistic development and wellness of the students, whose responsibility includes creating programs and policies that promote the development of students in different aspects. This responsibility is being shared with the members of the community like the administrators, teachers, and even with the students. Student leaders, especially the active student ones, 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 in ensuring that these permeate student life. This qualitative study thus utilizes narrative inquiry as a method and approach in documenting and analyzing the student leaders' understanding of holistic development and wellness. Student leaders' stories are 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 their full potentials. Their experiences and perspectives as student leaders, data reveal, allowed them to propose to HEIs possible contributions and set action plans to ensure holistic development and wellness of students in their respective institutions. This understanding also allows them to reflect on the support that they will be needing from the members of the school community.

Keywords: holistic development, student affairs, student leadership, student services, wellness

Introduction

The landscape of higher education is continuously evolving as a response to the many factors like technological advancements, globalization, regional alignments, increasing connectivity, and the advent of the new generation in higher education institutions (HEIs). As the changing landscape continues to unfold at great speed, HEIs are drawn to establish and administer mechanisms to implement programs that will be responsive to the ever-changing and dynamic needs of their primary clientele, the students. The improvements that the HEIs institutionalize both in academic and co-curricular aspects should be geared toward 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 also be able to demonstrate skills in assuming personal and social responsibilities.

Dearing (1997) emphasized that the development of people and of a learning society is central to the aims of higher education. HEIs have accorded priority to the holistic development of the students—focusing on the moral, social, and emotional aspects of development that are increasingly evident in the school policies and documentation (O’Flaherty & McCormack, 2019). In the Philippines, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) issued Memorandum Order No. 9, Series 2013 or the *Enhanced Policies and Guidelines on Student Affairs and Services* to serve as guide in ensuring that all relevant aspects would be considered toward holistic development and wellness.

To fully achieve the aforementioned aim, HEIs share the responsibility of enacting programs and services for holistic development and wellness is being shared with the members of the academic community, including the administrators, faculty, staff, and the students. 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. made this the central topic in the 11th PAPSAS Interactive Youth Forum. With the theme “Harnessing Student Leadership Towards Holistic Development and Wellness,” the Association provided an opportunity for the

student leaders to individually and collectively share models of practice in attaining holistic development and wellness. The participants from more than 70 HEIs in the country were expected to be equipped with the knowledge and understanding of handling issues related to holistic development and wellness. They were also expected to engage in collaborative programs that are geared toward the promotion of the concepts. Further, the Association acknowledged the importance of being on the same page with the students; thus, there is a need to know their perspective and understanding of holistic development and wellness.

Holistic Development and Wellness in Philippine Higher Education

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, they must also discharge such responsibilities with good character. However, in recent history, the terms character and morals have 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 HEIs. In the United States of America, there has been an increased attention to the effects of university education on aspects of student development particularly on holistic student development (Braskamp et al, 2008). They have established clear strategies in ensuring that the students' development in almost all aspects are taken into consideration by HEIs. In the United Kingdom 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 being pulled away from their own personal value centers by the priorities that seem to dominate the current context.

However, in the Philippines, there is relatively little discourse on ways higher education, in general, can support not only the intellectual development but also the development of the

whole student. 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 United States showed that parents choose faith-based schools because they provide a strong foundation for whole student development through clear and 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, 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 institutions may also differ depending on the availability of resources and on the 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 (SAS) 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, 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 SAS division was described as the unit tasked to ensure that meaningful non-academic experiences and efficient services are abundantly available to provide every student various opportunities for total development (CHED, 2013). Because of this, SAS practitioners are expected to be creative and innovative in the field in order to ensure that the quality of programs and services are geared toward the holistic development and wellness of their primary clientele, the students.

Many, if not all, SAS practitioners are expected to perform multi-faceted roles in campus. These include managing student formation, student life, discipline, scholarship, residence halls,

campus ministry, international students, security, food, health, guidance and counseling, persons with disabilities, and 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, unleash their potentials, feel a sense of security, get better grades, and to complete their program (Sriram & McLevain, 2016).

Research Questions

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 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 responses to the following research questions:

1. What is the understanding of student leaders of 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 holistic development and wellness. The identified subjects and themes in this study pose great significance on several sectors. First, HEIs may 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. Second, HEIs' student affairs and services practitioners may be assisted in developing programs and services geared towards the growth and development of students. Third, student leaders will learn more about the two concepts coming from their fellow student leaders. The learning will help them appreciate their roles more as they discover their possible contribution to the attainment of the goals of their institution.

Finally, the Philippine society is 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 emphasizes the humanistic-existential family of theories as they are focused on the students' relationship with 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 recognized that dimensions of student development do not exist independently of each other. Identity development is intrinsically linked with psychosocial and intellectual development. And 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 proposed that students cannot develop psychosocially and intellectually without wellness which he defined 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 provide a framework for most HEIs to have particular focus on the development of programs and services for students. Through this framework, they have become more conscious in ensuring that each of the dimensions are being taken into consideration.

Method

Using qualitative approach, this researcher conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) after the learning sessions in the 11th PAPSAS Interactive Youth Forum and gathered 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. All are in the college-level and had been elected to an executive position in their respective student organizations in their institutions. They had also experienced being part of the development of programs and activities for their fellow students. Each participant served as the representative of the group and had initially shared stories and points related to holistic development and wellness.

The conversation was recorded and transcribed verbatim, serving as the bases for the emergence of relevant subjects and themes which focused on the latent level of the data set. In reference to 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 (2013) Data Analysis Spiral was followed in which the process of data collection, analysis, and report writing were interrelated and done simultaneously. The important statements from the narratives were highlighted and assigned a specific code. Also, thematic analysis was used 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 were responsive to the research questions.

Results and Discussion

The narratives of the participant student leaders served as the primary data. These were documented and analyzed 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	Provision of 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
	Role model	
	Service for fellow students	
	Conducive learning environment	Conducive learning environment
Safe spaces for students		
Support needed from the Higher Educational Institutions	Financial support	Provision of Resources
	Manpower and logistics	
	Clear policies	Streamlining and Clarity of Policies and Processes
	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 have anchored this on 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 have their take in interpreting the concepts.

Process of Personal Development and Self-awareness

The narratives of the student leaders who 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 his or her own pace in understanding the concept based on personal experiences

and situations. This validates the statement of Quinlan (2011) that holistic development also sees the student as people who need to grow and mature affectively and morally.

One of the participants said, “Holistic development and wellness refers to the mind, body, and soul of an individual. It provides not only academics but also support for sports, music, and the arts.” The student leaders view the concepts as the development of individual in all aspects. Another participant shared, “It is the continuous development and training of your body, spirit, and soul to be in a right state.” This emphasizes that it is 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 toward achieving totality or overall well-being. They also see it as a comprehensive learning system delivered in a practical approach intended to develop the different aspects of a student’s life. Holistic development in itself may also be considered as the process toward improvement of a person’s wellness and a gateway toward self-actualization. This is how one more participant puts holistic development: “a process of self-actualization and learning that combines an individual’s mental, physical, social, emotional and spiritual growth.”

This understanding of the concept compliments the function of the HEIs that 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 a process that has levels and progression, it becomes easier for the service units to focus on specific dimensions proactively and in a timely manner.

Integration of Different Dimensions of Student Life

Another emergent theme is that the concept 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. These concepts emphasize recognizing the healthy connection between the mind, body, and soul. As candidly described by one of the participants, “It is like the famous movies in marvel cinematic universe where it is all connected to each other which converges to one very focal point of time and that is YOU!”

Holistic development and wellness encompass the notion of academic learning of knowledge and development of technical skills. One participant shared that “its premise is that

an individual finds purpose and meaning in life through connections to the natural world.” Shaw (2019) also emphasized that students need to be not only academically competent in their field, but also, socially, psychologically, spiritually, and physically competent in their field.

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 toward 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), who opined 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 with the changes that life itself brings.

Student Support Services

The student leaders acknowledged holistic development and wellness as a support service that should be provided by the HEIs. A participant willingly shared that “holistic development is also about the talents and skills of the students. They need to be nurtured and supported by the institution.” 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), HEIs should put certain mechanisms in place. The students are aware of this need and one of the participants emphasized that “holistic development can be achieved by drafting policies not just for academics but for developing the totality of the student.” 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 CHED Memorandum Order No. nine series of 2013. The said 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 leaders acknowledged this fact and were, most of the time, the primary recipient of the developmental programs 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

Aware of their roles as student leaders, the participants were able to share what they had in mind on what can be done to ensure the holistic development and wellness of students in the campus. This is usually done through activities implemented by student organizations, which play an important role in the leadership development of the students. Bush et al. (2017) stated that for students, involvement in student organizations can promote the development of key professional and social skills and provide opportunities for relationship and network building. Poirier and Gupchup (2010) further argued that research studies 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. One of the participants mentioned that “as a student leader, you need to give yourself what you need first before you will be able to give others what they need.” 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 one thinks and his or her behavior. Behavior emphasizes understanding and improving one's 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. One of the participants mentioned, "identifying needs of students/peers, committees in different organizations, training other people on the advocacy, is necessary." They would want to have a feel and knowledge of the concerns that needed to be addressed. They intended to do this through conduct of surveys and consultations as a form of service of their respective organizations. They mentioned that awareness of the current situation and needs of their fellow students was key for them to have a strong basis for program development. The means of collecting information and putting pieces of the puzzle together would help create the picture of who the student really was. This can be referred to as the holistic approach, and it must consider all aspects of the students' emotional intelligence. Providing programs that will 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 & Taylor, 2009).

These student leaders were also willing to draft and lobby policy proposals that would give priority in upholding the well-being of the students for consideration by the school administration. They also mentioned that attendance to forums, seminars, and workshops related to holistic development and wellness is an important strategy to learn new knowledge 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

This researcher considered the narratives of the participants who also highlighted their role in the school community. A majority of them were aware that they must serve as role models to their fellow students. They believed that 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 true passion, the same student will inspire others to believe that they can also strive for excellence. This can be expressed through their ability to balance their academic and social life well and still manage to engage in community development activities. They also saw themselves as embodiments of servant leadership who is compassionate, respectful, and genuinely considers the needs of their fellow students. Further, they also saw themselves as “the voice of the student body,” according to one of the participants and as “the bridge that connects the gap between the school administration and the student populace,” said another.

The participants were well aware of their responsibilities as leaders. They knew that they must serve as the representative and voice of the student body. They ensured that their voices and perspectives were heard and considered by seating in the different school councils that make relevant decisions for the community. They were committed in performing their role of serving as a bridge that connects the rest of the student populace to the school administration. They valued 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 the expectations of the school community as well. 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 mentioned was the importance of having a conducive learning environment for all students. What they had in mind was not limited to the facilities, physical spaces, and infrastructures that are, ideally, present in the campus. They were more concerned with creating a positive school community that celebrates diversity and inclusion. They wanted to be able to understand individual differences and become appreciative of everyone’s uniqueness. One participant suggested that this can be done by “conducting

students' need assessment, crafting and implementing programs/projects that are suitable for the students' needs and sustainability, and maintaining programs/projects relative to the Holistic Development of students." They valued the importance of having a sensitive school community that made everyone comfortable and safe. They said that they also aspired to contribute in having a respectful student body who shows sensitivity to all its members that builds a friendly culture. Dallimore et al (2004) tell us that learners become more engaged within a supportive learning environment where people respect them and appreciate their responses. One of them advocates the need to "enable a friendly culture of comprehensive learning."

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, among others, 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), school leaders can create and participate in spaces that practice dialogue and that are 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 will contribute to ensuring the holistic development and wellness of the students. They will be needing the support from the institutions' 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 is only 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 were well aware of this and narrated their experiences of lack of or deficiency in this aspect. Most of the student organizations managed to organize and implement programs and activities by creatively

raising funds to support their logistical needs. Some of them relied on registration fees per activity, while others engaged with sponsors and benefactors who could finance the program. There are also those who were lucky to have been granted with seed money by their institutions which they could use as initial fund. Others were tapped to collaborate in the different service providing units in the HEI and acted as implementors or those who do the leg work. However, this kind of concern limits the student leaders in being able to do more and achieving more. Most of them will just have to make do with the available resources. This scenario would often times discourage them or would result to outputs below standards. If an organization fails 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 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 that their need for financial support as running a program or conducting an activity entails cost. They shared that they enjoyed raising funds to support their initiatives, but they also found it detrimental as it took a lot of time and effort. They also mentioned the need for human resources, which they addressed by encouraging more students to participate. They also needed to build their capacities as they acknowledged the fact that they could not give what they did not have. Indeed, they will have to be trained first to become good leaders and managers in order to ensure the successful execution of their plans. They believed that the HEIs where they belong must also consider these items as these HEIs set their expectations from them.

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 is the institutional policies and processes. The existence and even the lack of these guidelines adversely affect the student leaders' initiatives. The participants wittily expressed how these set of internal rules made or broke their plans and actions. They acknowledged and respected the need for the processes to ensure order. However, they were clear in voicing their experiences of bureaucracy that were misconstrued as lack of support from 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 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 experiencing the said solutions. The participants are certain about their request for the HEIs to have a more lenient and easy-to-follow process in approving activities. They would like to streamline the requirements or, better yet, introduce online platforms that can easily be accessed to hasten the review of the proposal, of the routing for signatories, processing of budget requests, and reserving venues.

Conclusions

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 of their lives by supporting them to reach their maximum potential and growth as a person for the world. 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 the other students in campus by becoming clear with their roles and functions of helping create relevant programs and enabling a supportive mentoring school community. The implementation of programs that complement 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. They highlight the importance for school leaders to understand key issues of holistic development and wellness

and embrace the purposes of these two concepts. This understanding 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 of interest to them and that will fit their 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 may 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.

Meanwhile, student affairs practitioners must 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 their diverse needs. They must promote an open community that facilitates learning while keeping in mind the purpose of holistic student development.

Student leaders may strengthen student initiatives by being empathetic 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.

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