

Relationship between university functions and community service at Divine Word University

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Abstract

The common functions of faculty in universities across the world include teaching, research, and service to the institution, the profession, and the external community. The extent to which faculty are expected to accomplish any one of these functions depends upon how the particular institution defines its vision or mission. As a Christian university, Divine Word University's vision introduces a fourth function that is to maintain a Christian presence in the higher education. In this article, the President of DWU is exploring the synergy amongst those four functions describes how community service and effective administration of community service activities work together for the common good.

Introduction

Divine Word University (DWU) and its staff are involved in a variety of community services activities, consisting of service to the university and service to the external community at the local, regional, state, national and international levels. This involvement is important for the University staff, their professional and personal development, and the community itself because the university's teaching and research programs generate relevant and quality results in the community. Through the community service, DWU wants to make a useful indirect and direct contribution to society. This article discusses the relationship between DWU's functions and community service (Czuba J. 2004).

Defining Community Service

Community service at DWU has its origin in the University's Charter. Community service at DWU includes these commercial and non-commercial activities and programs, offered by members of the University, which involve interaction with individuals, groups and institutions external to the University at the local, regional, state, national and international levels. Hence community service takes the form of intellectual, educational, cultural, scientific, religious and other services. It contributes to social progress, economic growth, spiritual or cultural development of individuals, groups, institutions or the community as a whole. It depends on individual interest and the needs of the community, which are constantly changing therefore, community service at DWU must be flexible to allow for these changes. Overall, DWU's community services aim at contributing meaningfully to the common good (Societatis Verbi Divini (SVD) 1977).

Community service at Divine Word University consists of activities, which are carried out by members of the DWU Community. Those activities:

- engage contacts with individuals, groups and organizations, external to the University, enabling them to share in the benefits of university expertise and/or facilities
- contribute to the spiritual growth, social progress, economic and cultural development of individuals, groups and organisations and/or the community in general
- are offered as a service through the teaching function, the research function, the sharing of expertise, the provision of access to facilities and/ or through special programs and services
- are linked with the Charter, vision, mission statement, goals and objectives of the DWU.

In order to place this understanding of community service within a meaningful context in PNG's complex and unique environment, several aspects of community service need to be explored to better understand its relationship with the University's vision, Charter and functions. However, first of all let us discuss the purpose and justification for community service.

The purpose and justification for community service

The purpose of DWU in its community service, as stated in DWU's vision and mission statements, is to uphold and enhance the University's standing as an authentic model for national unity and a significant contributor of intellectual, educational, cultural, spiritual and other services to the local, regional, national and international communities. Thus DWU wants to contribute meaningfully to the common good.

Community service activities create dynamic interaction between the University and its external environment; placing the University in the center of 'real' life and moving us toward the University vision and mission This was a purpose of the institution as stated by the founders.

The Christian way of life puts emphasis on the value of work, on self-reliance and on service. These values will, therefore, find expression in the university and will flow out from the institution into Papua New Guinea society.

(Societatis Verbi Divini (SVD) 1977)

DWU as a Christian university is committed to serving as its leader Jesus served and following the example of quality service laid out by Him. Therefore, community service is considered an integral part of the work of DWU at all levels. Accordingly, community service is strongly encouraged in all aspects of DWU's operations and is appropriately recognized in relevant

policies. Community service at DWU is developed and will be sustained on the basis of the following Christian and university values.

- Always linked to the vision, mission statement and objectives of DWU as set out in the University Charter, Act and all official documents.
- Conducted proactively, in terms of the active assessment of community needs and the development of programs aimed at meeting those needs, within the broad scope of the University's areas of expertise.
- Rooted in the Christian cultural heritage, teaching and research functions of the University (John Paul II 1990, p.3).
- Built on the already extensive community service activities that exist within DWU. These can be categorized as follows service:
 - through the teaching function
 - through the research function
 - through the sharing of expertise
 - through the sharing and making access to DWU's facilities
 - through offering religious acts
 - through offering special courses
 - through organizing symposia, workshops and conferences
 - to each other within the University's community.
- Managed at the faculty or departmental level with liaison and coordination across the University, and with an emphasis on management processes that ensure sustained quality of service delivery.
- Always appropriately recognized by the Academic Board or Cabinet. Such an approach to community service sets out a cooperative commitment to community service by the university. As a consequence of such an approach to community service, the external community should be able to recognize it as an institutional commitment (Lim David 1996).

Reward and recognition

Before beginning a discussion on reward and recognition, it is important to point out that the most important recognition a person receives from community service is the personal recognition and the personal gratification s/he receives from doing a good work to benefit others. Community service is a means to focus outside oneself on the needs of others, and in that way enrich oneself personally.

The successful implementation of the community service policy requires continual development of a culture that considers service as an important and integral part of academic activity. Two of the most useful methods for encouraging this cultural transformation within our organization is the development of appropriate reward and recognition systems and the offering of incentives. Therefore, all outstanding service will be recognized, according to

the University policy. Community service activities will also be considered in staff applications for promotion.

University functions

Traditional functions (I understand 'function' as the purpose of a university) at most universities are teaching, research and service. However DWU's vision introduced a fourth function, which is 'to assure in an institutional manner a Christian presence in the university world confronting the great problems of society and culture' (John Paul II 1990, p.3). DWU, as a Christian university by institutional commitment, brings to its mission the inspiration and light of Christian message (John Paul II 1990). Thus Christian values, ideas and attitude engage in dialogue with and penetrate the three other university functions: research, teaching and community service.

Divine Word University's vision is to be a Christian University open to all, serving society through teaching and research in a Christian environment.

Divine Word University has four functions that make up the purpose of a Christian university. They are to teach; to do research; to offer community service and to maintain a Christian presence in the world's higher education community. Through these four functions, the vision and mission of DWU will be accomplished. The University's Charter has given clear guidelines to DWU's Council and management for the meaningful implementation of DWU's functions.

Many academics can question the fourth function, of DWU, maintaining a Christian presence. Thus, I wish to explore its purpose more fully. Due to globalization and industrialization, human beings are challenged every day by new and/or different approaches towards life, values and sharing of resources. These approaches do not necessarily protect human life or human dignity. In response, DWU seeks to actively and creatively assist in the development of and protection of the dignity of every human person. This position flows from Christian belief that human dignity is rooted in the image and likeness of God (Good News Bible 1976).

Inherent in the blessing of human dignity is the responsibility of every person to fulfil her/himself by participating in the creation of goodness. Therefore, it is essential for the President of a Christian university to create conditions that allow each individual staff member to freely direct her/himself towards the fulfilment of their Christian duty by encouraging staff to undertake community service. By these deliberate and free actions, the person contributes to the common good. This contribution to the common good is a response to God's invitation for human beings to participate in the creation of goodness in this world. We are making our own contribution to the common good by conscious and deliberate use of our knowledge or skills or sharing of our resources.

The University Charter states: 'Let there be established an institute of higher learning. This institute will have as its objective the conservation, extension and diffusion of knowledge by means of its schools, faculties and other resources, thereby promoting primarily the development of students as creative, intellectual persons in a religious environment (Societatis Verbi Divini (SVD) 1977, p.1).

The objective of the fourth function is to create a religious environment. This function enables DWU to give witness to Christianity. DWU aims to be a living demonstration of what Jesus Christ can do for human person through means of services offered by the DWU community. Such service is not easy, but it does promise to make each staff member of the DWU community a better person. The Charter says: 'Let this institute be dedicated to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity - the Divine Word (Societatis Verbi Divini (SVD) 1977, p.3). This means that Divine Word University is committed to Christ and His mission becomes DWU's mission.

Participation in community service is voluntary, as it is one's free engagement in social interchange. Hence, it is necessary that conditions are in place that allow the whole DWU community to participate, each according to his/her position, skills and role, in contributing to the common good. The responsibility and potential to contribute to the common good is inbuilt in the dignity of every human person.

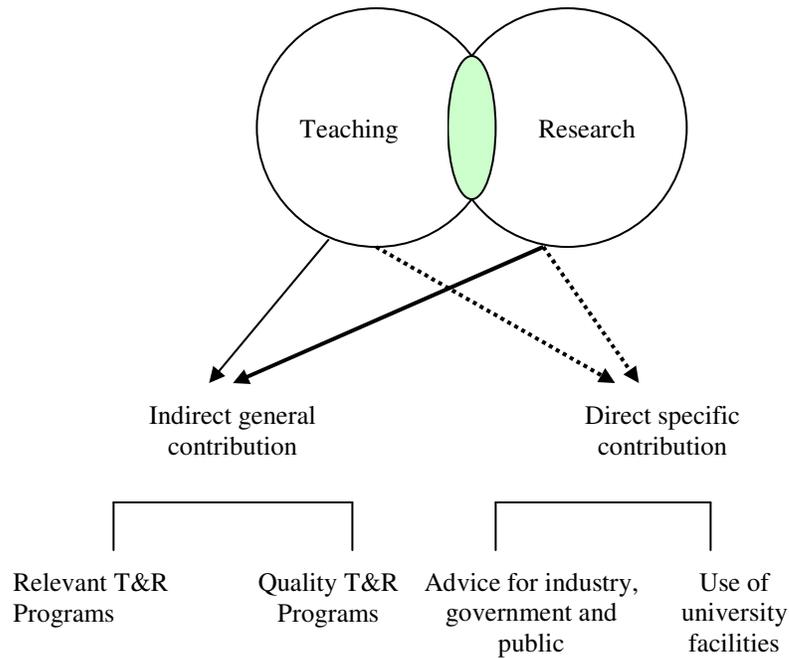
Therefore, DWU staff ought to participate in community service. to advance her/his dignity and accomplish tasks by being in charge of areas in which they have assumed personal responsibility through taking an active part in public life. Because community service is based on individual skills and knowledge, the manner of participation in community service will vary from one staff member to another.

A study by Bradley and Lim in 1977 assisted to clarify the relationship between teaching, research and community service. Bradley and Lim explained this relationship as indirect and direct community service.

The indirect contribution is general and is made through research and teaching. If a university's academic programs are 'relevant to society's needs and carried out well, the graduates will be prepared for the workforce and the research findings produce immediate and future benefits' (Lim David 1996, p.17.) There are also 'the direct and specific contributions a university makes through the use of its academic and administrative expertise and facilities' (Lim David 1996, p.17) The direct contribution can have different forms like advice to industry or government; holding workshops or symposia; or use of university's facilities (Bradley G. and Lim D. 1977).

In figure 1 Lim illustrates the relationship between teaching, research and community service. The two circles represent the function of teaching and the function of research. They are the same size, as they are equally important. The overlap in the circles represents the valuable nexus between teaching and research through the synergies created by their contribution to each other (Lim David 1996).

Figure 1: Contribution of university to society

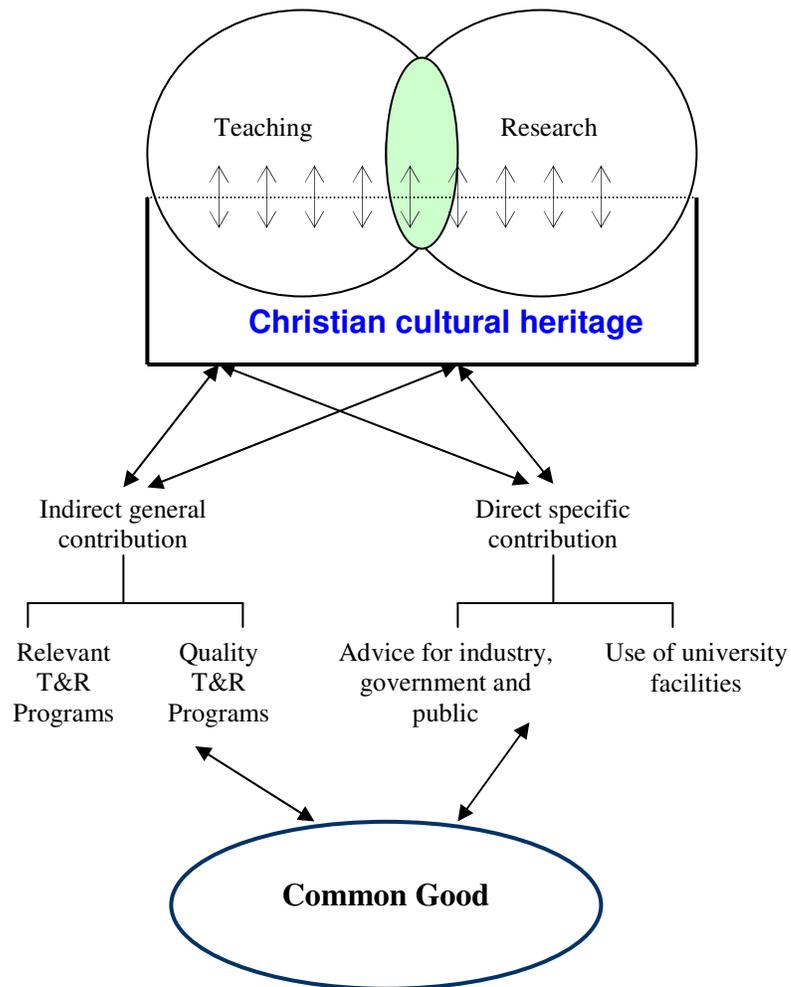


Bradley and Lim clarified the relationship between teaching, research and community service, however they did not explore other functions of different universities, and what a university receives in return for its services. As the relationship between teaching, research and community service has not always been clear, adding one function more can create more confusion over how to define, manage and measure a university's contribution to the common good.

Unlike most universities, DWU has four functions: to teach; to do research; to offer community service; and to maintain a Christian presence in the higher education community. This is illustrated in figure 2. This figure illustrates the relationship between DWU's four functions. In a Christian university, teaching, research and community service are penetrated, nourished and inspired by the Christian cultural heritage. This allows Christian universities to participate actively in the world's higher education community and to contribute meaningfully through community service to the common good. At the same time a university is giving, it is also receiving in the form of new experience and/or new knowledge.

The center of the two circles is where the dynamic relationships of the university's functions are illustrated. The overlap in the circles represents the valuable nexus between teaching, research and the presence of the Christian message. Service to society flows from the synergy created by the overlap of these three functions. The nexus illustrates the involvement of the intellect in many activities, guided by Christian values, and pushing research forward to create new knowledge and make new discoveries. There is a creative tension between the human mind and the Christian faith that leads to new discovery, new knowledge and more valuable community service.

Figure 2: Contribution of DWU to the common good



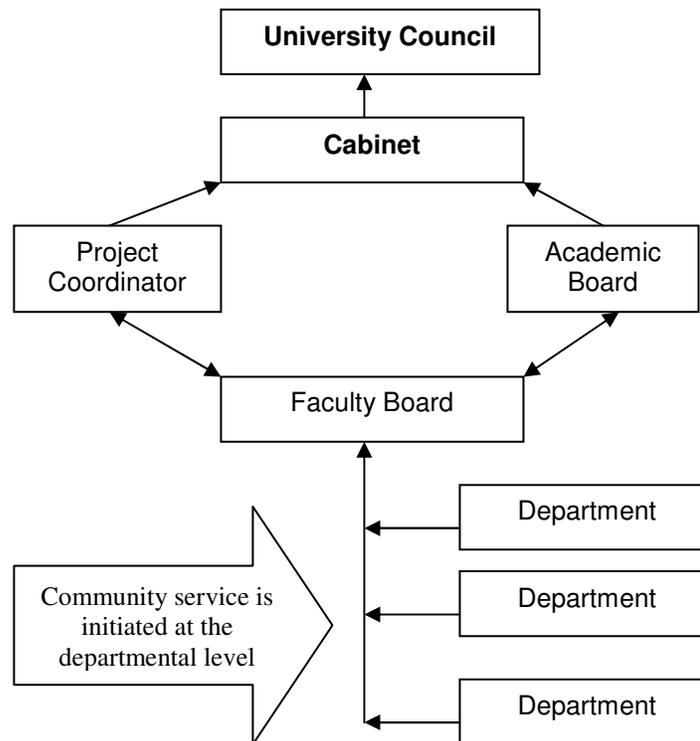
An important product of indirect and direct community service is the new knowledge gained during the community service where academic knowledge collides with reality. This collision creates new knowledge and new discoveries. Figure 2 illustrates this tension. While contributing to the common good through community service, an individual or a faculty can create new knowledge through reflection of this experience. This is the cooperative wisdom often needed for further academic inquiry. Such relationships can be seen as a productive dialogue between those four university functions leading towards a contribution to the common good.

Administration of community service

Universities around the world have different ways of managing community service. Some universities have a centralized management system that requires establishment of special structures to coordinate the university's activities with the community. Some universities have a decentralized management system for undertaking community service. A decentralized system is the combination of informal contacts developed by individuals or departments. This approach provides little institutional involvement or commitment to community service. The type of management and structure used for community service activities shapes strategies for its implementation (Perry Pauline 1991), so it is important to choose the type that will enable successful implementation.

Community service at DWU is partly centralized for coordination and information purposes and is called the liaison system. Through the liaison system, the DWU community knows who is doing what and who is involved in what kind of activities. This system engages established structures across the university to interact with each other and allows every individual staff member to be responsible for a chosen community service activity. Such a management system creates opportunity for the DWU Community to meet regularly and jointly plan for service activities. In a developing country like Papua New Guinea, this type of management system can be implemented without much difficulty as it is based on systems already in place.

At DWU, the process for community service begins at the departmental level. The faculty board approves proposals from departments and obtains the endorsement of the Academic Board for community service activities taking place at the departmental or faculty level. However, before information is sent to the Academic Board, it has to be forwarded to the Project Coordinator. The office of the Project Coordinator synchronizes the community service proposals, making certain there is no clash of activities. After endorsement by the Academic Board, the proposed community service activities are forwarded to the Cabinet for management purposes as illustrated in figure 3.

Figure 3. Administration of community service at DWU**Strategic planning**

The responsibility for strategic planning and delivery of community service is based on delegation of responsibility to the operational level, normally that of the faculty or department. At the same time, the University wide liaison system coordinated by the Project Coordinator, is strengthening the service culture across the University; building links and sharing information about community service activities; facilitating the sharing of resources; promoting the University's service activities to the community; providing clear linkage points between the University and community; and assisting with quality assurance processes in the community service activities.

Quality management of community service is also based on delegation of responsibility, using the faculty or department as the focal point, although some activities are managed at the level of the individual staff member and some at higher levels. All organizational units should be aware of the range of community service activities within their area of responsibility, and develop quality management procedures accordingly, based on a range of appropriate quality measures. Quality management of community service at the institutional level will also be based upon standards established through

benchmarking. As a part of strategic planning and delivery of community service at DWU, the liaison system of community service was explained to the DWU Community in a one-day workshop during the Resumption of Duties Week at the beginning of an academic year.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to mention a few elements I have not explored in this article that are necessary for successful implementation of community service, specifically planning and policy evaluation. These elements have to be in place before community service can be implemented.

Planning in relation to community service at DWU is regularly taking place every year in October during the Infrastructure Week. At that time the DWU Community has the opportunity to re-examine the objectives, targets and strategies designed to achieve the University's goals in community service. In addition, this policy needs to be widely communicated; management systems need to be established; quality procedures need to be instituted and new directions in community service assessed.

This policy will be reviewed by the DWU Community every three years. It is important that evaluation of DWU's community service focuses particularly upon the extent, the nature of the links with teaching and research, and its contribution towards the common good. Divine Word University through the Academic Board and the Promotions Committee is tasked to make clear the University's priorities in terms of community service and suggest the appropriate emphasis for purposes of promotion. Thus DWU's approach to community service sets out a cooperative commitment to the common good by the University community.

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