

Evaluation of Romblon State University's Adopt-a-Reviewee Project for Certified Public Accountant Licensure Examination

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Abstract – This study is part of a bigger evaluation research about the Adopt-a-Reviewee Project for Certified Public Accountant Licensure Examination (ADOPT) of the College of Business and Accountancy of Romblon State University. The project was assessed using Stufflebeam's Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) evaluation model. This paper however, focuses only on CIPP's product evaluation component which is essential in making decisions as to the continuation or abortion of the project. A mixed method research was employed in gathering information from 16 beneficiaries and their respective families using two parallel forms of validated evaluation questionnaire complemented with interviews. These data were triangulated in a focus group composed of beneficiaries, benefactors, administrative officials, college dean and accounting teachers. To determine the effect of ADOPT on RSU's passing performance in the CPA Licensure Examination (CPALE), a series of comparative tests was done. Results reveal that ADOPT is an effective intervention in improving RSU's performance in CPALE as well as the socio-economic condition and well-being of the beneficiaries and their families. Workable measures are advanced in order to sustain the project despite challenges in fund sourcing and generation.

Keywords - prosocial behavior, CPALE performance, CIPP Evaluation Model

INTRODUCTION

In June 1996, the Bachelor of Science in Accountancy (BSA) program of Romblon State University (RSU) opened. Since then, it has been attracting bright entrants who cannot afford the cost of an accountancy degree from higher education institutions (HEIs) out of the province. It had its first graduates in 2000 and its first Certified Public Accountant (CPA) in May 2002. As of April 2014, the program had already 126 graduates, 83 of them took the Certified Public Accountants Licensure Examination (CPALE) of which 44 or about 53 percent successfully passed. Unlike other HEIs in the country which already adopted the five-year BSA curriculum, the program at RSU is still squeezed into four years with three required summer classes, making it one of the highly regulated programs in the University. The program is Level II Accredited by the Accrediting Agency of the Chartered Colleges and Universities of the Philippines (AACUP) until 2019.

In the Philippines, CPA Licensure Examinations (CPALE) are some of the few enduring and difficult

professional examinations both in terms of coverage and depth of testing one's knowledge of technical concepts and applications which posted low national passing rates [1]. Records from the Professional Regulations Commission (PRC) show several colleges and universities offering the BSA program suffering from poor passing performance, including even high profile academic institutions in the country. This suggests that a thorough preparation is needed in order to get licensed. This makes exposure to CPA review courses imperative, a fact which has given rise to the proliferation of CPA review schools in different parts of the country.

However, for most BSA graduates of RSU, the cost of going to the review center is beyond their means. A rundown of the BSA student profiles show that most of their fathers are farmers and laborers while their mothers are just plain housewives. This could have been the reason why many BSA graduates opted to find work after graduation than take the CPALE which can cost them about P50,000 to P60,000 on the average. This issue was brought to the fore in 2007 when the CPALE

performance of the school plummeted to zero which eventually gave rise to the birth of ADOPT.

ADOPT is a teacher-initiated prosocial-based intervention which is packaged as a P10-peso donation a day for six months. But some give any amount and any form of help. Recruitment of donors is done in varied ways. Some are approached personally, through text messages and e-mails while others are inspired during testimonial events. The project espouses the 'ripple effect model', the idea that in order to initiate socio-economic change, the best way to start is with a family member, for if one succeeds, the effect would trickle down to one's family and community. This logic, as applied to ADOPT, gives the speediest returns on investment for anybody who wants to help. Top graduates without financial means are helped to reach a dream, an act which is termed in social psychology literature as prosocial behavior – the core value and the lifeblood of ADOPT. Prosocial behavior is a voluntary behavior carried out to benefit another without anticipation of external rewards [2]. The social science literature refers to donating as a type of prosocial behavior which may be driven by a mix of altruism and self-interest [3].

Of the many program and project evaluation models reported in literature, Stufflebeam's Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) evaluation framework was adopted. CIPP is a decision-focused model that provides a framework for detecting unexpected defects and strengths [4],[5]. The evaluation's purpose is to establish and provide useful information for judging decision alternatives, assist an audience to judge and improve the worth of some programs or objects, and assist the improvement of policies and programs. It is also believed that the aim of evaluation is to determine the merit, worth, or significance of a product or service [6]. Although the model has its share of limitations, it has been argued that CIPP is the best decision-making model there is [7].

In the CIPP model, product evaluation is done as an aid in identifying and assessing outcomes, those intended and unintended, short-term and long-term [4],[5],[8]. By measuring the actual outcomes and comparing them to the anticipated outcomes, decision makers are better able to decide if the program should be continued, modified, or dropped altogether. Formative evaluation question asked is usually, "Is it succeeding?" Summative evaluation question is, "Did the effort succeed?" [9],[10]. Results of product evaluation serve recycling decisions by determining the

degree to which objectives have been achieved and by determining the cause of the obtained results [4].

ADOPT has been existent for years, but no formal attempt has been made to assess how it is working. The project is not fully structured and institutionalized putting at stake its sustainability. Thus, an evaluation of the project, with focus on the outcomes, is current and relevant.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study evaluated the effect of ADOPT on RSU's performance in the CPALE, on the beneficiaries, on their families and on the community. Specifically, the effect of ADOPT was analyzed against the counterfactuals. The passing performance of the University in the CPALE from 2002 – 2014 was also compared with the national passing rate as well as with other state universities and colleges in Regions IV-A and B.

METHODOLOGY

The design of the study is a mixed method research. This method combines qualitative and quantitative data collection and data analysis within a single study [11]. It is a class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study [12].

Of the 20 recipients of the Adopt-a-CPA Reviewee Project, only 16 (9 females and 7 males) returned the administered questionnaires despite efforts to reach them. Their age ranged from 22 to 31 years old. Only one was married and the rest were single. Fifteen families of beneficiaries participated, seven of them were interviewed face to face due to proximity of their residence to the researcher station. Sixteen members comprised the focus group disaggregated as follows: three administrative officials of RSU, CBA Dean, three accounting teachers, four beneficiaries, and five benefactors.

Two parallel forms of validated Evaluation Questionnaire which was a combination of closed and open-ended questions were used in collecting information about the effect of the project on the beneficiaries, their families and their communities. The first form was administered among the beneficiaries while the second form was filled up by one of the members of the family, which in some cases were interview-guided. Another tool used was the validated focus group guide, which was also composed of open-ended questions asked to members of the focus group.

Focus group is a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher and involves a group of participants and one or more moderators [13]. The core theoretical elements of focus groups include topical focus, group interactions, in - depth data and a humanistic character [14]. Prospective participants to the focus group were formally invited in a focus group session on September 16, 2014 at the Community Outreach Center of RSU. A moderator facilitated the discussion consistent but not limited to the focus group questions. The whole discussion was audio recorded. Other data used in this study were sourced from the on-line archives of the Professional Regulations Commission, BSA admission records, and ADOPT account books. This research was approved by the Ethics Review Committee (ERC) as it satisfied the ERC guidelines for social science research at Romblon State University.

Qualitative data were analyzed and discussed according to themes consistent to the conceptualized areas within the CIPP evaluation framework. Numerical data were analyzed with the aid of the following statistics software: Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16, Paleontological Statistics (PAST) Software version 1.34 and Google analytics. T-Test for Two Independent Samples was used in testing the difference between the school's CPALE rating during two periods: with and without the Adopt-a-CPA Reviewee Project. This was also used in (a) testing the difference between the school's CPALE passing rate when the percentage due to ADOPT was considered and the passing rate when it was removed, and (b) comparing the RSU CPALE performance to the national passing rate.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effect of ADOPT on the University

As to the average passing performance of RSU in CPALE, the years covering the period when ADOPT was instituted and being implemented (2008 – 2014) posted a higher passing rate (52.48%) than the years prior to ADOPT (2002- 2007) which was only 26.01 percent (Table 1). However, the ADOPT management did not attribute this to ADOPT alone because along the way, they also instituted several interventions like revision of curriculum, observance of strict admission policies, revision of retention policies, conduct of Comprehensive Accounting Examination (CAE) before graduation, linkage with CPA review centers, and graduate tracer

study.

To estimate the effect of ADOPT on RSU CPALE passing rates, a significant difference (18.74%) was obtained when the passing percentage due to ADOPT was removed (33.74%) and compared to the actual performance of the university (52.48%) as shown in Table 1. This profoundly established the effect of ADOPT on RSU's CPALE performance as supported by statistics.

Another aspect presented in Table 1 was the comparison of the CPALE passing rate of RSU to the national CPALE passing rate during the two periods: years prior to the institution of ADOPT (2002-2007) and period during its implementation (2008-2014). Data confirm significant difference (15.22%) between the average CPALE national passing rate (37.26%) and the average performance of RSU (52.38%) from 2008-2014. The difference (1.68%) between national (24.34%) and RSU passing rate (26.01%) on years prior to ADOPT was not significant. Further analysis shows that the mean passing percentage of RSU when ADOPT is removed is 33.74 percent while that of the national is 37.26 percent. There is a difference of 3.53 percent in favor of the national. The *t*-test conducted shows no significant differences between the two observations. However, the basis of CHED in assessing program quality is based on the performance of graduates in the licensure exam given by PRC. When percentage due to ADOPT were removed RSU's performance was below the national and was construed as a poor performance, despite absence of significant difference.

The findings motivated the researchers to further analyze the ranking of RSU in CPALE relative to other schools in the country and in the region that took the CPALE (Table 2), limited to the traceable periods. Data show that RSU belongs to the upper 24% schools (94 schools) out of the 131 schools whose average performance was above the national, and out of the 389 schools that took the CPALE since May 2010. In Region IV (Table 3), RSU's average performance from May 2009 was 56.56 percent placing it on third spot relative to other SUCs which is responsive to its vision statement. The average performance was also six notches higher than the objectives set by the BS Accountancy program of RSU which is at least 50 percent. This only imparts that ADOPT has helped RSU attain a competitive performance in CPALE which is seen as a good indicator of instructional quality [15].

Table 1. Comparison of RSU CPALE Passing Performance Prior to and During ADOPT against Counterfactuals (2002-2014)

Prior to ADOPT (Counterfactual)			During ADOPT			
Date of CPALE	(A) RSU Passing Rate (%)	(B) National Passing Rate (%)	(C) Date of CPALE	(D) RSU Passing Rate (%)	(E) National Passing Rate (%)	(F) Passing Rate Without ADOPT (%) (Counterfactual)
May 2002	100	19.04	May 2008	33.33	27.26	16.67
October 2002	0	21.3	October 2008	33.33	36.65	16.67
May 2003	50.00	22.8	May 2009	50.00	28.88	33.33
May 2004	14.29	19.59	October 2009	83.33	42.00	66.67
October 2004	33.33	20.87	May 2010	60.00	39.52	40.00
May 2005	16.67	23.78	October 2010	55.56	48.36	44.44
October 2005	12.50	25.2	May 2011	100	40.5	100
May 2006	33.33	23.56	October 2011	50.00	47.7	0
May 2007	0	30.21	May 2012	33.33	37.54	33.33
October 2007	0	37	October 2012	50.00	47.78	12.50
			May 2013	33.33	27.42	16.67
			October 2013	50.00	40.84	33.33
			July 2014	50.00	19.98	25.00
Mean	26.01	24.34		52.48	37.26	33.74
Mean Differences	A – D	-26.47	$t = -2.49$	$p = 0.010$	(one-tailed)	
	D – F	18.74	$t = 2.06$	$p = 0.025$	(one-tailed)	
	A – B	1.67	$t = 0.17$	$p = 0.868$	(one-tailed)	
	D – E	15.22	$t = 2.51$	$p = 0.001$	(one-tailed)	
	E – F	3.52	$t = 0.46$	$p = 0.650$	(one-tailed)	

Source: www.prc.gov.ph

Effect of ADOPT on Beneficiaries' Families

Socio-economic outcomes such as employment status, nature of work and monthly salary of the beneficiaries, and the various assistance they extended to their families were also explored. Of the 16 tracked beneficiaries 15 were employed and eight were earning P20,000 and below, three were earning between P20,001 to P25, 000, and the rest were earning as follows: P25, 001 to P30, 000 (1), P30, 001 to P35,000 (1), and above P40,000. The ADOPT recipients' salary ranged from P15,000 to P40,500.

Table 2. Relative Rank of RSU in CPALE as Compared with other HEIs (2010-2014)

CPALE Date	RSU Belongs to TOP	Number of HEIs	Nos. of Schools > National %
July 2014	36 (9%)	386	130
Oct 2013	99 (24%)	398	118
May 2013	100 (26%)	378	119
Oct 2012	131 (32%)	407	136
May 2012	177 (47%)	378	147
Oct 2011	122 (31%)	391	124
May 2011	24 (6%)	370	146
Oct 2010	92 (24%)	390	122
May 2010	62 (17%)	357	140

Source: www.prc.gov.ph

The top five ways by which beneficiaries helped their families are as follows: sending siblings to school (75%); giving monthly allowance to parents (69%); providing financial help to other relatives (50%); buying

appliances (44%); and buying gadgets and clothes for siblings and parents, and financing house construction or repair (38%). From the perspectives of the parents and family members, the top three ways by which the beneficiaries helped are as follows: sending siblings to school, and giving monthly allowance to parents (80%); buying appliances (60%); financing house construction or repair, buying gadgets and clothes for siblings and parents, providing financial help for other relatives, and others (53%).

Of those who responded that they gave monthly allowance to their parents, on the average, parents received P2,501 to P5,000 (36.36%; 33.33%) regularly (81.82%; 83.33%). The minimum amount a parent received was P1,500 – P2,000 while the maximum is P15,000. As to the employment status of parents, respondents reported that many are still working but some stopped working already due to old age and health problems while some chose to take care of the family.

For those who were sending their siblings to school, most of the recipients' siblings were in college (12) and of these four already graduated while eight were still in-school. From the perspectives of the beneficiaries, the top three expenses they shouldered are tuition and miscellaneous fees (75%); transportation allowance (44%); and books (38%). From the perspectives of the parents, the top three expenses shouldered by the recipients are tuition and miscellaneous fees (80%), uniform (60%), books and transportation allowance (47%).

Table 3. RSU's CPALE Performance (%) compared with SUCs in Region IV offering BS Accountancy Program (2009-2014)

CPALE Date	RSU	SUC 1	SUC 2	SUC 3	SUC 4	SUC 5	SUC 6
July 2014	50	50	28.75	33.33	33.33	13.33	23.08
Oct 2013	50	100	60.98	57.14	66.67	32.53	17.14
May 2013	33.33	0	80	62.50	36.36	43.48	13.04
Oct 2012	50	90	86.21	83.33	72.22	61.19	8.33
May 2012	33.33	-	71.43	40	33.33	45	17.56
Oct 2011	50	60	50	87.50	28.57	56.90	0
May 2011	100	-	62.50	80	50	29.19	27.78
Oct 2010	62.50	66.67	68.75	50	83.33	55.56	18.18
May 2010	60	0	0	89	-	50	25
Oct 2009	83	-	64	71	-	41	15
May 2009	50	-	50	50	-	46	67
Mean	56.56	52.38	56.60	63.98	50.48	43.11	21.11
Rank	3rd	4th	2nd	1st	5th	6th	7th

Source: www.prc.gov.ph

The respondents reported that through ADOPT, they were able to achieve some sort of financial empowerment that allowed them to support their needs and wants as well as of their families making their lives a little more comfortable than before, and extending help to others. They also gained respect from their relatives and friends.

"Through Adopt, I am now earning for my family's needs and for myself. I can now buy what I want and interact with various people especially with the nature of my job. The economic status of my family was improved."

"I was able to send my brother and sister to school and provide for our daily living and contribute some help to other people."

"Being financially capable to support my family and shoulder household expenses, and to extend some help to others are the best parts after the CPALE."

These reflections are corroborated by the narratives of parents and family members of ADOPT beneficiaries who have been relieved from the burdens of income uncertainties.

"Today, we do not resort to loan sharks anymore. Our daughter bought me and my husband a cell phone each and a television. A cable TV was also installed. I do not gather bamboo shoots in the wild anymore. We feel the high regard of the community. We now also experienced eating at fast foods in town."

"Our life has indeed changed greatly. Our daughter is now shouldering all the household expenses. Life is more comfortable because she is helpful and generous, even to street children. We do not resort to loans anymore, in fact, sometimes we got the chance of helping

those who were in need. We are very proud of our daughter."

"My son's younger sisters are so fortunate that they did not experience what their brother did in the past. Their boarding house payment is always in advance. He is shouldering all their school expenses. We are now tending some properties that were loaned to us. Before, no sari-sari store gave us credit, but today they are the ones coming to us to get groceries from their stores. Life has become happier that is why we really thank the people who helped and guided our son. The fruit is really good."

It can be implied therefore that the effect of ADOPT is immediately felt and seen on the socio-economic status of their families. Almost all of the beneficiaries were employed and earning modest salaries which gave them the opportunity to help their immediate families. However, it was observed that those beneficiaries who were working and staying with their family gave bigger amount to their parents as compared to those who were working in the city and sending their siblings to city schools. This was because they still had to spend for house rentals and other household needs. This concern for immediate members of the family is rooted in the evolutionary psychology of prosocial behavior reported in literatures and is called kin selection, an idea purporting that behaviors that help a genetic relative are favored by natural selection [16]. By helping their immediate families, their chance for fitness and survival increases. Considering the ways by which the recipients helped their families plus the moving accounts of how their lives changed and became more comfortable, the ADOPT's "ripple effect to family" is attained.

Apart from the intent of the project to provide

financial provision, the respondents reported that the experience of being adopted helped them gain higher self-respect, self-worth and self-regard. It is also instrumental in helping them become more confident, more optimistic, independent, more inspired, more mature and courageous. This is because high self-esteem is partly the result of good performance [17]. The account below reflects some of the outcomes described previously.

"It strengthened my self-confidence. Before, I was a timid person and lacked self-confidence but after passing the examination, I became confident because I realized that there are people who have confidence in me, so I must have it."

The respondents were in concert in saying that ADOPT has opened doors of possibilities for them, possibilities that would have never come their way if they did not get their CPA license. Some landed jobs in multinational companies, others in the government service. However, what was interesting was the diffusion of ADOPT's values to their respective workplaces as depicted in the following narratives.

"I put in my resume that I am a beneficiary of ADOPT. I remember the HR asking me about it. I explained what it is, who the people behind it are, and how they choose the beneficiaries. I think it gave her an impression that I have the abilities and skills fit for the job in the auditing firm. More importantly, I believe it gave her an impression that the firm can trust me."

"For me, it became harder to earn because of pressure of meeting my pledger's expectations. So I now perform my job ethically and willfully afraid of losing my hard-earned license."

Through their experiences with ADOPT, the recipients and their parents developed a profound concept of human goodness, hope, faith, social development and gratitude. They were also of single mind in saying that the best way to give back is to "pay forward." They also wanted the project to continue. Their accounts below are full of those reflections.

"After being adopted, I came into the realization that there are still good persons who are willing to lend help to those in need. It strengthened my belief that God will not abandon us. He will always be there to rescue using other people."

"The way I picture our society is now different. Before, I didn't even care about the people around me."

But now, it's just a great feeling to see people helping each other in our society in meeting our goals and achieving our dreams."

"The best way to give back is to pay forward. In that manner, the generosity received by one will have a domino effect to the community. I realized how blessed I am to be a part of the program: as an adopted reviewee and now as one of the pledgers."

Effect of ADOPT on the Community

While the outcomes of ADOPT are evident to the University and to their immediate families, its effect to the community is yet to be seen because at the time of the study, the means by which beneficiaries helped the community were limited to donating to church works, their barangays and their school. Their remittances to their families however, have empowered them to actively participate in the economic activities of their communities. Interestingly, most of the adopted beneficiaries are helping back to ADOPT. This is when social exchange theorists view helping to be a rewarding experience because it increases the probability that someone will help back in return [16].

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study evaluated the ADOPT, a teacher-initiated project, to address the low performance of RSU in CPALE. While there were some curricular interventions introduced apart from ADOPT, findings of the study provide ample evidence on the effectiveness of the project in helping improve the RSU CPALE passing performance from 2007-2014 as shown by the good ranking obtained by RSU relative to other schools in the country and region. ADOPT has also helped improve the socio-economic condition of the beneficiaries and their families consistent to the espoused ripple effect model. It has also enhanced the self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth of the beneficiaries and the well-being of their families. Likewise, ADOPT has helped propagate among its beneficiaries and their parents the ideals of goodwill, gratefulness, hope, faith and paying forward. Results strongly vouch the continuation of the project considering some improvements on its management and implementation. Thus, the project can be a model for other SUCs to emulate and a testament of the agentic roles teachers can play in achieving the national goal of poverty alleviation and human capital formation.

However, people's awareness about the project must be enhanced in order to generate more funds by considering the following: produce flyers and distribute

them to many people as possible; send donor-friendly solicitation letters where benefactors can write their preferred way of remitting their pledges and others; put up a website or publish a coffee book that would contain testimonies of adopted reviewees; enjoin those who have been benefited by ADOPT to donate; present the project in relevant school affairs, fora and conferences; send grant proposals to multi-national companies and political figures; and establish as many linkages as possible.

ADOPT should also try other means of sourcing funds like fun run, raffle draw, bingo social and others not only to augment funds but also to raise people's social awareness and responsibilities. The Department may likewise organize the alumni association of RSU's BS Accountancy and encourage them to consider ADOPT as one of their priority projects.

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