

Discourses on Applied Ethics in a Service-Learning Partnership Project on Organic Agriculture

*Frederick F. Rodrigo**

Abstract

This qualitative case study explored the constructs of applied ethics in a service learning partnership (SLP) project via social marketing and mobilization on organic agriculture. Applied ethics was unpacked based on the lived experiences of 21 project partners like concerned undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and technology experts of the Mariano Marcos State University; administrators and staff of the Ilocos Agriculture and Resources Research and Development Consortium; clientele like the youth and farmers from Barangay Magnuang, City of Batac, Ilocos Norte; as well as subject matter specialists from the City and Provincial Agriculture Offices. Magnuang was the project site because the underground water of a relatively large portion of the barangay has been contaminated with nitrate due to the farmers' excessive use of inorganic commercial fertilizers.

Based on the transcripts of the documented activities, 34 ethical issues evolved, which served as bases for the in-depth interview guide. The interviews were documented and themes were drawn out from the transcripts. Among the more commonly-encountered dilemmas were conflicts involving one group of partners and others. The limited time for doing the project was the most commonly mentioned dilemma. Most of the ethical dilemmas were resolved through value- and purposive-rational actions, either strategic or communicative. Additionally, peer/collegial support and various groups' cooperation facilitated dilemma resolution. Meanwhile, time and resource constraints, personal limitations and biases, and power relations were among the impediments in resolving ethical dilemmas. The implications of the project partners' lived experiences in applied ethics were bases in recommending actions toward partnerships needed in sustainable organic agriculture.

Keywords: *applied ethics, service-learning partnership, social marketing and mobilization, ethical dilemmas, organic agriculture*