Academic Community Partnerships in Digital Governance: An Agile Action Research Model for Teaching Innovation and Digital Inclusion

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Abstract

Higher education institutions are increasingly challenged to integrate service-learning, information technology, and action research into both teaching practice and community engagement. This study explores how a faculty-student collaboration with a local government unit in Manila, Philippines applied Agile Scrum and Participatory Action Research (PAR) to co-create a mobile-friendly governance platform designed to improve transparency and accessibility of public services. This research examines three intertwined dimensions: educational outcomes, technology adoption, and action research processes. From the educational perspective, students enhanced competencies in project management, teamwork, and no-code ICT development, while faculty translated community service into pedagogical innovation and scholarship. Initial survey data from 45 stakeholders revealed strong approval of usability, clarity of content, and service convenience, while highlighting the value of bilingual design and mobile-first accessibility for digital inclusion. Iterative PAR cycles—planning, action, reflection—enabled stakeholders to contribute feedback, ensuring the platform's relevance, sustainability, and community ownership. Findings confirm that service convenience and participatory co-design were decisive factors in both user adoption and community impact. Beyond technical outcomes, the project advanced digital literacy among barangay staff, fostered civic engagement, and demonstrated the viability of academic-community partnerships as laboratories for community digital transformation. This study contributes a replicable Agile Action Research model that unites teaching, technology, and governance. It recommends embedding PAR into curricular design, expanding mobile-ready digital governance tools, and scaling academic-community co-creation frameworks for broader educational and societal benefit.

Keywords: Education, Information Technology, Action Research, Service-Learning, Digital Literacy, Philippines