# ADVOCACY AS A STRATEGY IN TEACHING IN THE TERTIARY LEVEL

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## ABSTRACT

This paper was in response to the thrust of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines on how teachers can achieve multimodal ways of the presentation. The researchers offered a research-based alternative to creating an advocacy-based teaching strategy at the tertiary level in this paper. The researchers chose random students' outputs to present how the advocacy has been done. The researcher offers an epistemological justification that suggests advocacy in education is compatible with the concept of open-mindedness and may serve as a vehicle for the realization of a university's tripartite function: instruction, research, and community service in the form of service-learning.

**Keywords:** Advocacy, Research-based, tertiary level, Service learning

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

As a professor in the tertiary level implementing the new General Education curriculum, strategizing the teaching and learning process to foster critical thinking skills has been a tall order. With the course syllabus stipulating, among others, the use of multimodal presentation and service-learning, not to include the university's tripartite function of instruction, research, and community service, each educator is left with a challenge of how teachers can address curricular demands.

With this, the advocacy framework has been introduced. This framework allows students to communicate in a meaningful channel using different starting points based on their interests. Designing strategies in this regard requires that the teacher ensure the different factors that come along with the design process. Many strategies may address these factors, and teachers should make choices based on the content, student needs, and context. In this teaching strategy, students can have the opportunity to apply what they have learned from an academic program to develop a proper understanding (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006, Beacham and Shambaugh, 2017).

Researchers support that teaching decisions center around what is to be learned, student differences, how a teacher assists learners to learn, and how they determine whether they have learned (Shambaugh & Magliaro, 2007 in Beacham and Shambaugh, 2017).

Meanwhile, in the New General Education Curriculum, the emphasis on multimodal presentation is one of those strategies listed in the course syllabus. As a teacher of communication arts for quite some time, I deem it proper to explore how students of today can take a more challenging route to the realization of their course requirements. With this, advocacy as a teaching strategy has been explored as the main focus of this study.

## 2.0 THE PROBLEM

Academic institutions offering tertiary education have incorporated more research, community service, and service-learning apart from instruction. Service-learning in the university offers students hands-on opportunities in the real world, these are avenues for them to explore in the typical classroom structure and can promote an attitude of understanding and advocacy for individuals within the locality.

Taylor & Pancer (2007); Schumer (2005) assert that student involvement in the community is made possible by service-learning. They will be able to take part and immerse themselves with the members of the community in a service-learning context. This also increases student engagement and commitment to individuals and groups outside of their typical sphere of contact. The research supports that as student diversity in university communities grows, the interest in expanding the groups helped by this community service (DiMaria, 2006).

1. What is advocacy as a strategy in teaching at the tertiary level?
2. How was advocacy done?
3. How is the higher education institution's tripartite mission realized through the advocacy framework?

## 3.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Purposive Communication is a course offered at the tertiary level. Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum Order No 20 series of 2013 defines it as the application of writing, speaking, and presenting to different audiences and for various purposes. Students are expected to communicate effectively and appropriately to a multicultural audience both in a local and global context in this course. Likewise, students are equipped with the tools for critical evaluation of various texts and focus on the power of language and the impact of images to emphasize the importance of conveying messages responsibly. In this regard, English teachers at the tertiary level explore the different strategies that may bring about successful learning in Purposive Communication. In this light, the researchers brought the advocacy framework to the fore.

Figure 1 displays the framework of the study starting from the tertiary students who were the participants of the study and who were the advocacy makers as a culminating requirement in the teaching of Purposive Communication.
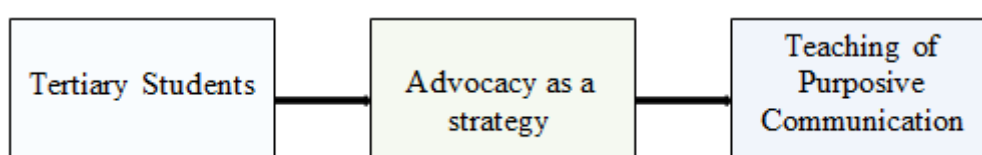
**Figure 1: The schematic presentation of the different variables involved in the study**

**3.1 Purposive Communication in the Tertiary Level**

Campillan (2017), in her column in the local newspaper, writes about Purposive Communication for 21st Century Learners. She discusses Purposive Communication as a new general education subject expressed in CHED Memorandum No. 20, series of 2012. She said that Teachers should train 21st-century learners in only one skill, but they should showcase expertise in listening, reading, and writing.

In this new GE subject, she said students would be exposed to activities that sharpen their skills. These activities include conversing intelligently on a subject of import, reporting on group work and assignments, writing and delivering a formal speech, writing minutes of meetings and other similar documents, preparing research or technical paper, and making an audio-visual or web-based presentation.

Aside from those, the same Memorandum includes the criteria for effective communication as discussed and used as the basis of peer evaluation of communication exercises in the class and for judging communication techniques used by public officials, educators, industry leaders, churches, and private individuals. According to CMO No. 20, the purpose of these collaborative activities is to provide students the opportunity to practice communication with a clear purpose and audience in mind, guided by the criteria of effective communication and the appropriate language.

At the end of the semester, students in Purposive Communication are expected to be able to listen, comprehend, critique, and respond to live or recorded conversation, speak in public with confidence, explain extended texts using their words, and write texts ranging from a simple report to a full length technical or research paper, as well as prepare audio-visual or web-based presentation on an assigned topic.

**4.0 METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized the reflective research strategy. According to Groenwald (2010), a reflective strategy deals with interpreting one's suppositions about one's practices. Then, one looks at one's perspectives from those of others. After which, they subject their own assumptions to critical review (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). Likewise, in doing reflective research, two levels are involved: doing research and paying attention to own theoretical suppositions about practices—"careful interpretation and reflection" (p. 5). Often, interpretation is scant and occurs after data collection and categorization in the research process. In contrast, reflection is seldom mentioned and usually limited to conclusions, study limitations, and technical matters.

Moreover, he adds that reflection is firstly aimed at a heightened awareness of theoretical suppositions, language, and pre-understanding, but secondly, at the innermost of practitioners, narrative, and context. Reflective research involves systematic reflection on numerous levels. It is doing an "interpretation of interpretation" (p. 6). The researcher does reflective research in the (re)construction of reality in which practitioners perform, and in between, critically interpreting and reflecting. Utilizing reflective research, the researcher

reflects on the prevailing conditions and how underlying theory, cultural values, and political perspectives impact interaction. In doing reflective research, it can be difficult because it requires pondering about the premises of thoughts.

In this study, three classes in Purposive Communication used advocacy both as a teaching strategy and as a learning outcome. Students created nine (9) advocacies during the second semester of 2018-2019. These were: Promoting Oceans, Romanticizing Disability, Coastal Awareness, No to Revenge Porn, Healthcare Now, Travelling, Not to Teenage Pregnancy, Conquering the Rock, A Helping Hand Makes the World Smile. These were the students' outputs using the Advocacy framework. The researcher analyzed the Advocacy Projects as to the objectives/outcomes raised by the proponents. The researcher also prepared rubrics for the presentation for this purpose.

The rubrics for the advocacy were based on the course objectives stipulated in the GE 5: Purposive Communication course. As a General Education professor, I believe that the overarching concept of advocacy as an activity is to improve people's lives in the areas where the students are assigned.

## 4.1 Advocacy as a Teaching Strategy

Advocacy is a strategy where the teacher introduces an activity. Here, one or more individuals actively work toward the betterment of people, living things, and the physical world. It becomes a teaching strategy when used to directly support student learning outcomes (Beacham and Shambaugh, 2007). The use of advocacy as a teaching strategy sharpens the focus of the student activity throughout the course. Students are likewise allowed to make decisions by themselves in their performance of their course requirements following at least three elements: instruction, research, and community service through service learning. These elements are embodied in the advocacy chosen. In this paper, the researcher did advocacy through service-learning. This strategy offered students real-world, hands-on opportunities not available in the typical classroom structure. This strategy also promoted understanding and advocacy for individuals within their locale. Through the advocacy, students are also allowed to develop a practical stance through their internalization of some values and acting upon such values as a way of improving the world's condition in some way.

As a teaching strategy, the researcher has learned that advocacy can be used as a strategy to:

1. Measure general education students' communicative skills.
2. Provision a deeper understanding of themselves and the world in which they live.
3. Advocacy has become an affective engagement rather than a complete activity.
4. Working collaboratively promotes the Augustinian values of Unitas, Veritas, and Caritas.

## 4.2 Advocacy Framework in the Context of GE 5: Purposive Communication

Research shows that student involvement occurs when they are exposed to the advocacy framework. They are given opportunities to help others within the service-learning context. With this framework, student engagement is increased and their commitment to individuals

and communities (Taylor and Pancer, 2007; Shumer, 2005). The researcher utilized a research-based strategy to formulate, implement, and translate the advocacy chosen.
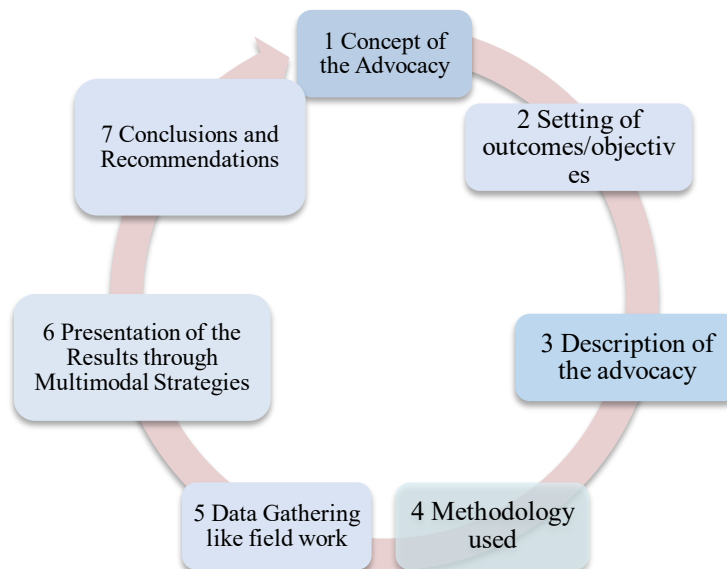
**Figure 2 shows the procedures.**



**Figure 2: The Advocacy Procedure**

## 4.3 University's Tripartite Mission Realized through the Advocacy Framework

The advocacy framework is necessary as a pedagogical strategy. It is a way for Purposive Communication teachers to design lessons in ways that may empower student decision-making. Such experiences are vital in connecting instruction, research, and community service.

This strategy utilized advocacy in purposive communication may be reified on a pedestal to channel the development of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) necessary for the 21st-century world. The apparent success of the advocacy strategy is that it promotes service learning projects done through community service and exposes the students in the community. Figure 3 shows the realization of the university's tripartite function: instruction, research, and community service through SL.
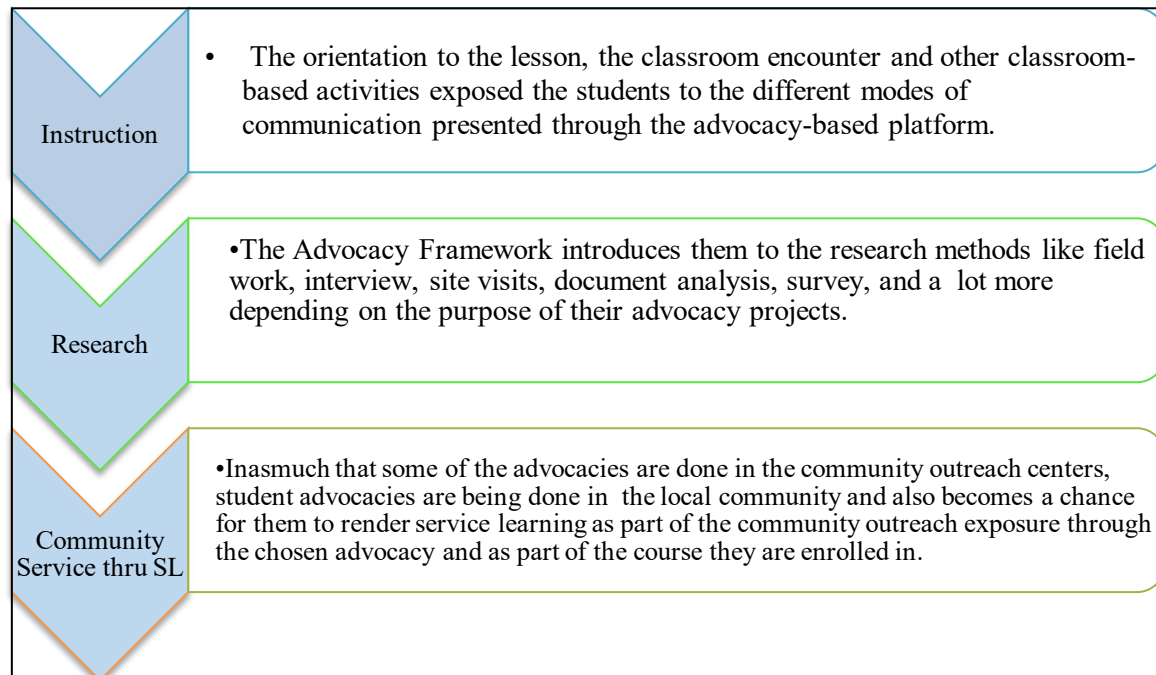
**Figure 3: The University's Tripartite Mission Realized through the Advocacy-Based Project**

**Instruction:** The teaching of Purposive Communication realizes the University's function to instruct students through advocacy-based activities. Through instruction, this experience helped the researcher to provide accommodation and implement strategies that allowed students to focus on what to learn based on the competencies provided for and required in the Purposive Communication curriculum.

**Research:** Through the advocacy-based strategy, activities through advocacies require the utilization of research strategies to realize the goals of the advocacy-based activities. The students conduct their project using data-gathering strategies like surveys, interviews, focus-group discussions, documentation strategies, and site visits, among others.

**Community Service through SL:** These are advocacy-based activities that go beyond immediate community service in service-learning to promote a long-term commitment to advocacy for different causes among the students. This academic move can also reflect the interests shown within the professional world to advocate for disadvantaged populations in some of their project choices.

In summary, the advocacy framework is supported by the philosophy 'Focus on what students CAN do, not what they CAN NOT.' In the inclusive classroom, this is also appropriate as this strategy will differentiate learning among the diversified nature of students. A year later, teachers revealed the positive outcomes of using student advocacy: students are empowered to find their voice and realize their needs. Advocacy focuses on students' efforts in learning more about themselves, their needs, and the community in which they live, not counting how this can impact their learning in purposive communication. This

strategy bridges the gap between students and teachers to communicate what they need. It increases their confidence and self-esteem because they are more aware of their strengths, and they were provided with the tools that they need to be successful.

## 4.4 Implications

It is recognized that advocacy as a framework has been crucial in the classroom. The strategies in which advocacies are supposed to be done and the contexts in which they rest may have implications for teachers and how they teach. However, for teachers to use advocacies in their teaching, the dimensions in which advocacies are anchored must be familiar to them. And that they may be able to recognize how advocacies can make a difference in the way they teach. Only then can the results of this study find their significance in the teaching of purposive communication.

## 4.5 Final Words

Advocacy provides a context for students to engage in hands-on activities. As a strategy, it was a platform for students in Purposive Communication to realize the University's tripartite mission of instruction, research, and community service through SL. It was also a venue for them to translate their advocacies. In this investigation, the researcher explored advocacy as a teaching strategy. This strategy provided students with independence and empowerment. If planned well, a lot of advocacies can be created by students giving appropriate instructions and time to decide best for themselves, their learning, and their social responsibility.

## 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Advocacy is a process that teachers can execute in many different ways. They may also explore its diverse ways and comprehensiveness.
2. Planning and organization of advocacy-related activities can be a solid base for practitioners in academic institutions. Thus, a genuine desire for its advocates can impact instruction, research, and extension.
3. Teachers can explore other strategies to use advocacies in the academe with the cooperation of the social advocacy and extension office.
4. Within the school community, teachers and other members may consider a better and more informed advocacy engagement to sustain linkages promoting the University's charism and institutional change.
5. Whatever steps can be undertaken, the quality and power of individual action can make a difference in the University's advocacies.

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