SERVICE LEARNING CURRICULUM - A MEDIUM TO INTEGRATE TEACHING, RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY: LOYOLA COLLEGE, CHENNAI – A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Service-Learning as a co-curricular activity blends teaching and research can create comprehensive academic activity in higher education mission all over the world. Depending on the curricular framework on par with institutional vision and mission, each educational institution differs in conducting service-learning course in the neighborhood community through students. Service Learning as outside the classroom experience provides an opportunity for students to learn and exercise social awareness and leadership. The field experience and feedback learned by the students are discussed in the classroom wherein the faculty, researchers alike participates in the analysis. The need for community service calls the attention of students, researchers and faculty members. It also mobilizes staff resources at colleges and universities level for volunteering, which has been referred to as academic charity. This becomes the main component of co-curricular activity in many academic institutions in India. Loyola College, Chennai had been a harbinger in conducting in service learning programme for four decades holds scientific exposure which has been already utilized for many researchers and public policy framework by the state government, particularly on urban slum management and poverty alleviation. This study verifies whether this Loyola College Chennai model can be a suggestive model for all higher education institutions in India.

KEYWORDS: *Service Learning, Service Learning Models, Neighbourhood Community, Volunteering, Academic Charity, Outside Classroom Experience And Scientific Exposure*

INTRODUCTION

I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve. (Schweitzer, A. 2005). One of the key roles of higher education is developing the students to become responsible citizens of the country and also promoting civic engagement. (Arthur and Bohlin, 2005).

Loyola College, Chennai insists service learning to be the part of the academic curriculum which provides faculty and students the opportunity to integrate academic work with service through responsible and reflective community engagement. NACC in India Since 2000, as one of the indicators, evaluates ranking of colleges and universities by service-learning and civic engagement which gains a good amount of recognition in the mission of the higher education system. Recently CSR projects

of the reputed organizations in India also utilize the service learning department of the institutions to render community service through systematic and scientific research. Therefore it has gained market relevance.

Practitioners of service learning from many universities and colleges of excellences in India have started organizing service learning conferences to disseminate advances of the practice of service learning and community engagement. Christ University in India is the pioneer in discussing the service learning and encouraging other institutions to learn the best practices of service-learning from other institutions (http://csa.christuniversity.in)

The Context of Service Learning and Definition

Service learning becomes an essential pedagogy for building connections between campus and community while enriching learning for students (Sullivan W.M, 2000)

Service Learning is a driving force for civic engagement and service learning in higher education (Butin, D. 2010).

Service-Learning is defined as "teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (Learn and Serve America; National Service-Learning Clearing House, 1993)

Research Service Learning (RSL) connects traditional service learning with the research mission of universities to develop new and sustainable knowledge that, like traditional service learning, has mutual benefits to university and community partners. (Hart Leadership Program, Duke University, 2009).

Honnet & Poulsen (1989) says that Service, combined with Learning, adds value to each and transforms both.

Parameters of Service Learning

The parameters of service learning in many of the leading educational institutions in India also brought the construct of community-based participatory research (CBPR) into the orbit of interest. This is evident that even many schools, particularly schools of CBSE, have incorporated the service-learning as one of the compulsory agendas of their learning and doing for the benefit of the community.

The college campus is trying to build strong community partnership around an engaged research agenda in the community that befits the research mission of their institution, as well as the needs of the community. Loyola College, Chennai is known for it. Community health (mental health) programme and widow empowerment programme, scholarship programme and promotion of slum women entrepreneurs are good examples of Loyola Model of Service Learning.

Through Loyola College service learning department, students while going for service learning focus on connections among research, teaching, and service, as well as the concept of community engagement that has gained strategic importance in higher education today. This type of service recognizes Loyola as one of the leading educational institutions in the country in terms of outreach and community engagement by NACC.

Overarching theme of Service Learning

As of now, Service learning is the Overarching Theme in India; it is the Need of the Hour to Address Several Topics of the following:

- The conceptualization of Service Learning

- Service-Learning pedagogy

- The nature and challenges of the college campus–community partnership that derives from service learning

- Benefits, and challenges of service learning for faculty members, students, and community

- a framework for and a questioning of the traditional pedagogy of service learning

- Expanding the focus and impact of Service Learning to the community and institutional development and change.

- Sustaining service learning approaches

- Thus, Service Learning: Community Engagement and Partnership for Integrating Teaching, Research, and Service, is an appropriate in today's world which expects students to become leaders of tomorrow.

Loyola College, Chennai has been trend setting in providing both a framework for and a questioning of the traditional peda- gogy of service learning that expands the focus and impact in the community in promoting development and change.

Literature Review on Service-Learning Practices

In talking of service learning in the community by the student community with the guidance of service learning faculties, (Swords and Kiely, 2010) explain the challenges the overemphasis of service-learning on student learning and enrichment. Comparing case studies from national and international service-learning programs, they discuss challenges for developing, implementing and sustaining service-learning approaches that, although addressing traditional learning pedagogy, strive to advance social movement learning and institutional change.

With Norris-Tirrell, Lambert-Pennington, and Hyland's article (2010), the authors address service learning as integral to an engaged scholarship at Memphis University. Using their university and its Strengthening Communities Initiative as a case study, they trace the evolution of service learning to community partnership building and institutional level change that also reflects on building a critical mass of faculty and student engagement toward meaningful social movement and sustainable cultural and philosophical change in institutions of higher education.

Chupp, M. G., & Joseph, M. L. (2010) provide another challenging discussion on how service learning has been measured and treated in the literature. They propose a more intentional model with more intentional impacts on students, institutions, and community, and they discuss lessons learning in implementing such a model in their School of Social Work at Case Western Reserve University. Finally, in a Notes From the Field article, Rosing, H., & Hofman, N. G. (2010) helps establish the importance of community-based research in service-learning pedagogy. The case study of the DePaul University's

Community-Based Action Research initiative in Chicago's Humboldt Park neighborhood shows the link of community-based research to service learning and addresses the challenges faculty face most in developing and maintaining a multidisciplinary community-based research partnership. Their case study underscores the importance of institutional investment and capacity building support for such service-learning activities, as well as the impact of this work on building student social consciousness and awareness of the need for social change around critical community issues. (Rosing, H., & Hofman, N. G. 2010)

Our substantial second section focuses on a series of articles that address the state of service-learning initiatives as they involve student learning, community partnerships, interdisciplinary engagement, and/or community-based and participatory research.

In Service learning's impact (Knapp, T., Fisher, B., & Levesque-Bristol, C. 2010) argue that as community, political, and institutional leaders challenge higher education to do more to build civic and political engagement among students, service-learning pedagogy is critical to increasing community involvement in today's college students in order to strengthen the social fabric of society.

Petracchi, H. E., Weaver, A., Engel, R. J., Kolivoski, K. M., & Das, R. (2010) present that service-learning experience enables students from many disciplines to expand their community boundaries beyond campus, gain valuable exposure to community leaders and organizations, and enhance their image of and comfort with the larger urban landscape that makes the city is their campus.

Kolomer, S., Quinn, M., & Steele, K. (2009) said that service learning promotes community wellness and prepares future allied health professionals to work together to address community needs.

CBPR has become a strong complement of service-learning pedagogy at colleges and universities. (Soska, T. M., Sullivan-Cosetti, M., & Pasupuleti, S. 2010).

Stoecker, R., Loving, K., Reddy, M., & Bollig, N. (2010) raise a critical question with the purpose of service-learning—whether we are using communities to serve students or engaging our students to effectively serve communities? The authors discuss their experience with implementing an alternative service-learning model focused on building community development along with community-based research practices, which engaged faculty, student and community stakeholders in maximizing community outcomes. Notes From the Field article, (Ross, Laurie 2010) addresses community-based research can help foster cultural humility among students in their community practice.

The authors, (Howard, D. E., Rao, C. R., & Desmond, S. M. 2010) recount case studies of classroom pedagogy using service-learning practicum experiences that promote public health. Moreover, they note that such service-learning experience in community-based participatory practices require both objectivity and cultural immersion that creates a dilemma of balance may be addressed through reflective and mindful activities that connect their work to larger social justice concerns and discussions of ethics and equity, a lesson that public health educators can draw from social work practice.

Community-based research and community service learning are vital mechanisms for fostering partnership and engaging peoples across communities and national borders. (Austin, D. 2010)

CONCLUSIONS

The articles that are reviewed by the researcher add to the literature of service learning within the context of students' engagement in the community. The various activities and programmes carried out by the educational institutions through service learning departments or centers have all recognized the importance of connecting service to teaching and research, and, in their own academic work have sought and found how to serve.

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