

Service Learning- A Duty to Produce Responsible Future Citizens

Dr. Paul Newman

Associate Professor, St. Joseph's College, Bangalore

Abstract: *Service - learning is a teaching and learning methodology which fosters civic responsibility and applies classroom learning through meaningful service to the community. The strongest service - learning experiences occur when the service is meaningfully immersed in ongoing learning and is a natural part of the curriculum that extends into the community. Service - learning is an essential strategy in providing a rigorous and relevant curriculum which will prepare students to succeed in the 21st century. Research shows that service - learning experiences that incorporate the national standards and indicators result in positive academic, civic, and social - emotional outcomes. Service - Learning not only fulfills the institution's historic mission, but reinforces the concepts woven throughout the strategic plan. Teaching and advising, research and scholarship, outreach, and the institution's community can all be enhanced through student and faculty involvement in community service - learning.*

Keywords: Service, learning, critical thinking, students, teaching

Only a life lived in the service of others is worth living
– Albert Einstein

A majority of human beings in this world believe in God. They may believe in different religions or sects. There is no religion or sect that does not encourage human beings from serving others. The purpose of education is not just to earn a livelihood; it is also to be of some use to others as we are living in a world of interdependence.

Unfortunately, in this modern world, globalization has led to materialism and consumerism; they have made human beings materialistic and selfish. It is here that the modern system of education has greatly failed to inculcate the real-life values and ethics. We as educationists have encouraged in making machines out of students who are taught only to compete in the job market and earn a hefty salary.

How many of our education institutions have really pondered over teaching the young minds that they are part of this world, where there is a great disparity between the haves and the have nots? Can we be blind to the sufferings of the others, especially after being born in a country like India where nearly 40% of our countrymen are living below poverty line. World Bank figures show around 200 million people in India still lack access to electricity [1]. India with 17.5% of total world's population had 20.6% share of world's poorest in 2011 [2].

As of 2014, 58% of the total population was living on less than \$3.10 per day [3]. Over 12,000 suicides were reported in the agricultural sector every year since 2013 [4]. The National Crime Records Bureau data for 2013 and 2014 showed that the number of crimes reported against Dalits had risen from 39,408 to 47,064 [5]. India slipped down from 130 to 131 among the 188 countries ranked in terms of human development, says the 2015 Human Development Report released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) [6].

In this kind of an environment, where poverty of the masses is exploited by vested interest corporate and communalists,

what is the role of educational institutions? Is it to produce feeders to the corporate world or to produce human beings with a concern for fellow human beings is a question every educational institution needs to answer when they frame their vision and mission towards the enhancement of their institutions.

In this context what we are thinking in India today was already thought about in the USA during the 19th century and strengthened during the 20th century. The American developed the concept of Service Learning to inculcate the habit of contribution of the student to the community in which she or he lives. Every human is indebted to the past for what she or he has inherited and it becomes their duty to give back something to the same society or community.

The service - learning movement grew out of the concerns and activism of the 1960's and early '70's but with some roots that ran deeper into the earliest days of the twentieth century. Educators such as John Dewey and Paulo Freire provided the philosophical underpinnings for educational reform while social activists like Martin Luther King and Cesar Chavez provided the inspiration for citizen action. [7]

If our generation has to protest this planet for the future generations, all the educational institutions need to make Service Learning as part of their curriculum design as it benefits the students, community, the college which offers the programme and the teaching faculty too.

As young ambitious teenagers who step into to graduate studies, the young minds are looking for something new and fresh, there is a desire to conquer the world, a desire to do something different, to go out of the classroom where they had been confined for more than twelve years of their formal studies. By carefully orienting them towards Service Learning, the whole process could become extremely interesting and for sure students would learn more through experience than what is taught as theory in the classrooms.

It would help them to apply themselves to solve day to day problems in a more effective manner than seeking the help

Volume 5 Issue 2, February 2016

www.ijsr.net

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY

of paid counselors! Service learning certainly helps students to face the rough world on their own using the practical knowledge of the world they have gained. It helps them to analyze a real-life situation or a problem in a more scientific rational manner than looking at it from an emotional angle.

Service Learning helps them in making a decision and empowers them in solving problems leading to cognitive development, helping the process of maturing as human beings as well as build critical thinking along with a responsibility towards the society and making them think of the marginalized whom they would have seen in their practical life. It helps students to develop morally and spiritually, it gives them a sense of independence and responsibility as they need to act on their own with only advice coming from the faculty.

Every student learns to become a leader, develops leadership qualities as they need to execute decisions. They gain in self-confidence as the level of interaction with the community they deal with changes them for the better. Their interpersonal skills are sharpened, they learn to work with others and become good team players. They can develop into good listeners which most of us in the society lack. It helps them in developing good communication skills and as youngsters they can even pick up a language or two.

Moving with communities helps them to understand the multicultural social fabric we live and help them understand the secular values which our freedom fighters had cherished and incorporated into our constitution. It helps them to strengthen their resolve to uphold democracy and question the stereotypes with regard to the social beliefs and the ill treatment of women in particular.

The faculty in institutions which have Service Learning can also be greatly benefited as there is no monotony in what they do. Every student they meet is a new person coming with new challenges. Moulding them into responsible citizens becomes their responsibility. They can help foster a health relationship with the students.

Teacher involvement in the local community building and understanding is as important for student - teacher relationships and also to improve the connections between the institution and the community.

The institution too would have the pride of producing students who would contribute to the society in a more productive manner. Institutions can also immensely gain the good will of the community with which they are involved.

To conclude, one can state that Service Learning is a rich educational tool which every student entering into the portals of higher education needs to be empowered with, there are also potential dangers in this venture. If the planning and execution is not carried out properly, students can be misguided and will end up learning things which were not intended. Advance preparations, analytical skills, theory based leaning need to be imparted before the start of field work,

The roles of each player must be made clear in the planning stage to get the desired outcomes. The expectations of the students may be too high, but at the undergraduate level and post graduate level, Service Learning should inculcate the spirit of research with a proper pedagogy and internalization. Proper and timely evaluations need to be conducted time and again and for course corrections which would help students to understand their mistakes as well as areas where they have really done well. Learning should be the main goal of every student through service. There is no substitute for experience and experience comes through learning, joy and happiness come through service.

References

- [1] <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-43946049>
- [2] Homi Kharas; Laurence Chandy (5 May 2014). "What Do New Price Data Mean for the Goal of Ending Extreme Poverty?". Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution.
- [3] povertydata.worldbank.org.
- [4] <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/over-12000-farmer-suicides-per-year-centre-tells-supreme-court/articleshow/58486441.cms>
- [5] <https://theprint.in/report/its-2015-atrocities-against-dalits-still-reality/26260/>
- [6] <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-slips-in-human-development-index/article17566555.ece>
- [7] <https://dornsife.usc.edu/joint-educational-project/service-learning-theory/>