



Role of Higher Education Institution for the development of community through Service-Learning programme

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to assess the role of Higher Education Institution for the development of community under service-learning programme in Holy Cross College, Nagercoil. The study mainly seeks to identify the programmes conducted by the students through RUN (*Reaching the Unreached Neighbourhood*). A total of 150 students were selected from Holy Cross College in Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu by using purposive sampling method. The data was collected through direct interview method by using semi structured interview schedule. The study revealed that through service-learning program the students' get an opportunity to involve in community development activities. In addition, the students' satisfaction level had increased in conducting health related activities for community.

Keywords: *Higher Education Service-Learning, Community Development, and Students' Satisfaction.*

Introduction

The role of higher education institutions (HEIs) has historically been recognized as a public good, with unique social responsibilities in producing knowledge for community development and sustainability. In India, a region with so much disparity between rich and poor, between rural and urban, and with such diversities in religion, language and culture, inequality, poverty, insecurity and, social exclusion, the re-emphasis of principles of community engagement and participation should become the priority agenda for existing education. HEIs play a critical role in creating educated and responsible citizens. HEIs have been pressured to develop partnerships and co-create knowledge that serves humanity. Thus, education is merely no longer transference and learning, but also emphasizes how teachers and students engage in the community through various learning methods, such as community participatory research, civic engagement activities and service-learning programmes, to build a better community.

community engagement includes integrated service learning as a strategy of which the primary beneficiaries are the community and the students. The primary goal of service learning is considered to be the provision of service to the community and the enhancement of learning through the rendering of this service. Reciprocity should be the central characteristic of service learning and the service learning programmes

should be fully integrated into the academic curriculum. Additionally service learning programmes should be credit bearing.

Service learning in higher education

The teaching strategy needed for service learning differs from the strategy used in traditional classroom teaching. The need for such a strategy resulted in academics articulating what is known as the Service Learning Capacity Building Programme. The table below compares traditional learning and service learning:

Traditional learning	Service learning
1. Theory	1. Theory and experience
2. Others' knowledge	2. Personal knowledge
3. Spectator	3. Participant
4. Individual learning	4. Co-operative learning
5. Clear distinction between expert and ordinary teacher	5. Blurred distinction – we are all on a journey
6. Answers	6. Answers and questions
7. Ignorance avoided	7. Ignorance a resource
8. Objective	8. Transformationally connected

Distinctions between traditional and service learning

Table 1 (Adapted from Howard & Praxis, 1993)

Review of related Literature

Hlengwa (2010), views “service learning as having the potential to create a balance between service, which occurs in the community, and learning, which is thought to be the domain of the university, thereby enabling students to move between the everyday discourses of the community into the elevated discourses of the university.” The university can develop an intellectual foundation for such community engagement. It can do this and by integrating the key aspects of the university’s mission, teaching and research with service providers and communities. If these matters are in place then, hopefully, learning and constructive change will take place.

Watts (1996), service-learning programs are: (1) the work done by students that focus on addressing community, human, or environmental needs from a service perspective (2) programs that have components that actively foster, monitor and assess students' learning about the larger social or global issues behind the needs being addressed in the community; and (3) programs that are designed to respond in careful balance to the goals of the host or organization that it serves, the student, the instructor, and the school"

Vasilescu et al., (2010). University Social Responsibility (USR) encompasses many different areas including the following: i) the need to strengthen civil commitment and active citizenship ii) to provide services to the community through community engagement and outreach iii) to promote economic and national development; to promote ethical approaches to issues iv) to develop a sense of civil

citizenship by encouraging the students and the academic and administrative staff to provide social services to their local community v) to promote ecological or environmental commitment for local and global sustainable development vi) to develop local and global human resources vii) to expand human knowledge through quality research and education for the nation and for humanity.

Objectives

- to elicit the personal background of the respondents
- to indentify the programmes conducted by the respondents
- to analyze the level of satisfaction by students in conducting health related activities for community

Background of the study area

Holy cross college (*Autonomous*) of arts and science, Nagercoil is the first women's college in Kanyakumari District. It was inaugurated on 2nd August 1965. It is a pioneer college and has been doing various extension activities for the development of the community. The Institution developed the extension programme called RUN (Reaching the Unreached Neighbourhood) is undertaken by the students in their course of study. The activities will be organized outside of the regular working hours to instill social consciousness in students towards the community. The Institution mission and some core values for the better understanding for the society as follows:

Mission

The college stands for total liberation and development of the students' whole person in order to prepare them to take their rightful place and responsibility in the society.

Core Values

1	•Inculcating spiritual, cultural, and social and ethical values.
2	•Striving for academic excellence and global competency
3	•Promoting research and innovation
4	•Developing social consiousness and responsibility.
5	•Adopting practices for environmental sustainability and development
6	•Facilitating participatory leaderrship.

Method of the study

Holy cross college of arts and science from Kanyakumari District was selected purposively as the area of the study. Before conducting the study the permission letter was obtained from the Head of the institution. The respondents include 150 students from five different disciplines were selected randomly. Personal interview method was used for gathering the required information of the respondents. The tools of primary data collection comprised an interview schedule. The study used Percentages for analysis of the data.

Period of the study

The data presented in this study were collected during 2016 to 2018.

Analysis and Discussion

Service-learning has been advocated for supporting academic development because it allows students opportunities to actively practice in real-life settings what they have learned. Its benefits, such as improvement in interpersonal skills, socialization, and sense of civic responsibility, as well as its challenges, have previously been reviewed (Hebert & Hauf, 2015).

Through the extension program, the students get an opportunity to involve in community development activities. Holy cross college has adopted some neighbourhood village and engaging students to create an awareness campaign on health, hygienic and sanitation.

Major findings of the study

The major findings of the study are discussed here :

Personal Profile of the students

The personal profile of the Students' regarding age, community, religion, and programme of the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Personal Profile of the students

Variables	Number	Percentage
Age (years)		
17 to 19 years	96	64
19 to 21 years	54	36
Total	150	100
Community		
Backward (BC)	38	25.3
Most Backward (MBC)	43	28.7
Scheduled Caste (SC)	69	46
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	-	-
Total	150	100
Religion		
Hindu	30	20.0
Christian	110	73.3
Muslim	10	6.7
Total	150	100
Programme of the study		
Maths	20	13.3
English	30	20.0
Economics	40	26.7
Commerce	33	22.0
Computer Science	27	18.0
Total	150	100

(Source: Field survey, 2016 & 2018)

Out of the 150 respondents, 64 per cent belonged to the age group of 17-19 years and followed by 36 per cent in the age group of 19-21 years. The respondents belonged to Backward Community (25.3%), Most Backward Community (28.7%) and Scheduled Caste (46 %). The religion - wise breakup of the students shows predominance (73.3%) of students' belonging to Christians in the study sample, (20 %) were Hindus and Only 10 students (6.7%) were Muslims. and majority of the students belonged to economics background (26.7%).

Family Profile of the respondents

The family profile of the students depicted in Table 2 throws light on variables such as family type and family size.

Table 2

Family Profile of the students

Variables	Number	Percentage
Family type		
Nuclear	120	80
Joint	30	20
Total	150	100
Family Size		
1 - 3	90	60
4 - 6	30	20
Above 6	30	20
Total	150	100

(Source: Field survey, 2016 & 2018)

The data on type of family reveals a decline of joint family system in rural areas, as 80 per cent students belonged to nuclear families. Only 20 per cent hailed from joint families. Owing to the continuous and growing impact of urbanization, secularization and westernization, the traditional joint family system which was once the primary social force in the lives of most of the Indians has broken down to a very large extent and has paved the way for emergence of nuclear families.

The Family size of the respondents shows that 60 per cent families had 1 to 3 members, 20 per cent families had 4 to 6 members and above 5 members. The average size of a family in Tamil Nadu stood at 3.9 members in 2011. It continued to report the lowest average household size as well as the lowest total fertility rate of 1.7 in the country (Census, 2011).

Table 3**Programmes conducted by the students**

Sl.No.	Activities conducted by students
1.	Health Camps
2.	Awareness on open defecation
3.	Awareness on menstrual hygiene
4.	Awareness on gender education (STD, HIV/AIDS)
5.	Awareness on solid waste management
6.	Awareness on keeping the community clean and free from pollution
7.	Nutritional awareness for women

(Source: Field survey, 2016 & 2018)

We often read newspaper or see on television about the rapid spread of certain diseases in a particular area. Many people seem to get affected. This may not be an individual problem, but the problem of community and requires in need of attention. There are several organizations working towards good community health but still, there is a lack of awareness on community health issues. Therefore, the HEI's and students have been joined together to create an awareness on health-related issues thus preventing the spread of infectious diseases.

Table 4**Level of satisfaction by students in conducting health related activities for community**

Sl.No	Particulars	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Highly satisfied	110	73.3
2.	satisfied	40	26.7
3.	Not satisfied	-	-
4.	Dissatisfied	-	-
5.	Highly Dissatisfied	-	-
	Total	150	100

(Source: Field survey, 2016 & 2018)

Level of satisfaction by students

Table 4 shows the level of satisfaction by students in conducting health related activities for community. We can observe that 73.3 per cent of the students were highly satisfied, and 26.7 per cent of the students were satisfied. None of them expressed their dissatisfaction.

Conclusion

Service-learning is an experiential education strategy combining academic instruction with meaningful community service and reflection that has been shown to benefit students, communities, and institutions in many academic areas, including public health. Institution play a vital role not only in shaping the future by educating tomorrow's professionals, but also in creating a research base for sustainability efforts and in providing outreach and service to communities and nations, especially in relation to difficult sustainability issues (McKeown, 2006).

Suggestion

Health awareness campaigns consisting of posters, role plays, interactive sessions, door-to-door pamphlet distribution, and imparting of information can increase the awareness of people in the rural parts of the country about health, hygiene and sanitation.

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