

Research, Links and Resources for Service Learning

Service Learning in Higher Education (tab)



Community based experiential learning might take on different names and structures, including *work-integrated learning*, *service learning*, *professional placements* and *internships*. Each of these experiences, however, has similar characteristics in that they aim to integrate and apply academic learning in a community based context.

The [Local Global Learning Project](#) led by James Cook University, focused on higher education student experiences that require service in an intercultural community setting (local or global) that are supported by a structured process of preparation, sense making, engagement in social issues and reflection.

Service learning engages students with their own community. Successful community-based learning experiences allow students to challenge themselves, reflect on their learning, engage in meaningful participation with communities, and link their experiences to theory (McKinney *et al.* 2004¹; Rajaram, 2007²). Hall *et al.* (2004)³ found that students learn better, are more motivated, and demonstrate a greater understanding of social issues when they have a personal connection with their community. Service learning in intercultural environments promotes student engagement with global perspectives, increases intercultural competency and can challenge students' dispositions regarding their own contribution to local and/or global communities.

As Bringle (2010)⁴ asserts, using the image below, Service Learning brings together teaching and service in a community setting. Forms of service learning that offer professional services or involve students in participatory action research can bring together the three functions of universities – teaching, research and service.

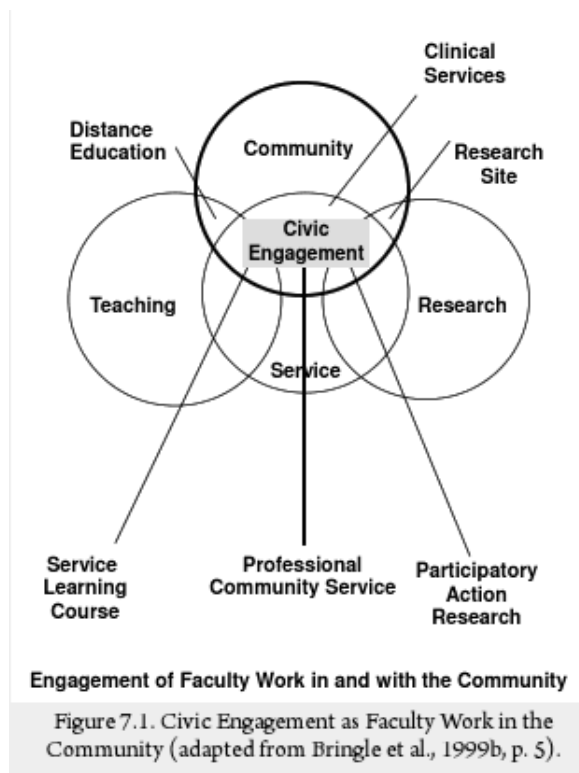


Diagram from Bringle, R. (2010) *The Teaching of Research and Other "Tools of the Trade"*. In: Cooksey, M.A. and Olivares, K.T. (eds.) *Quick Hits for Service-Learning: Successful Strategies by Award-Winning Teachers*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, United States of America.

There is a powerful rationale that service learning is one structure through which the university can contribute to the public good and more specifically to needs in the local and global community. Other rationales for service learning include improved academic engagement, retention, the application of broader attributes and capabilities including social and collaborative skills and enhanced transitions between university study and the world of work.

Service Learning in Australian Schools (tab)

What is Service Learning? (tab)

Service learning is a transformative pedagogy that seeks to integrate meaningful community service with academic content and skills, combined with critical reflection on service learning experience (Cairn & Kielsmeier, 1999 cited in Karayan & Gathercoal, 2005, p.79). It has emerged as a key element in supporting students to become active citizens and in enhancing the practical application of their studies (National Service Learning Clearing House, 2011).

The distinction between service learning and volunteerism is one that is often blurred. Lemieux and Allen (2007) offer the following clarification:

Although all service learning occurs in a community context, not all community-based learning is service learning. Service learning, by definition, is a collaborative relationship between the community and the classroom that equally prioritizes student learning and community service... Voluntary service also is distinguished from curriculum-based service learning in that the former emphasizes service over

learning. In summary, students...who volunteer in the community may be harvesting learning from the community, but they would not be engaged in academic service learning because of the different emphases placed on learning and service.

This suggests there is a clear difference between ‘service’ and ‘service learning’.

Glickman and Thompson | *Tipping the Tipping Point: Public Engagement, Education, and Service-Learning*

School-based service-learning is . . .

- a method of teaching that combines community service with curriculum-based learning
- linked to academic content and standards
- about students helping to determine and meet real, defined community needs
- reciprocal in nature, benefiting both the community and the student
- an effective way to encourage and foster active citizenship as part of a public education
- an approach to teaching and learning that can be used in any curriculum area as long as it is appropriate to learning goals
- for all ages, even the youngest children

School-based service-learning is not . . .

- a volunteer or community service program with no ties to academics
 - an “add-on” to the existing curriculum
 - logging a certain number of service hours in order to graduate
 - one-sided—benefiting either the students or the community
 - compensatory service assigned as a form of punishment by the courts or school administrators
 - only for use in social studies classes, civics, or American government
 - only for high school and college students
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Figure 1. From *Learning in Deed: The Power of Service-Learning for America’s Schools* (p. 15), National Commission on Service-Learning; published by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in partnership with the John Glenn Institute for Public Service and Public Policy at The Ohio State University, 2003. Available at www.wkkf.org/pubs/PhilVol/Pub3679.pdf.

Service Learning as a Pedagogical Framework (tab)

STAGES OF SERVICE LEARNING AS A PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK

PREPARATION

- identifying community needs,
- aligning the curriculum with community issues,
- determining resources,
- soliciting participation from parents, school personnel, community members, and appropriate businesses, agencies, or organizations

ACTION

- participating in service activities
- documenting the service as evidence of impact and student learning

REFLECTION

- reflecting to process the experience and learning
- aligned to learning goals including knowledge and skills
- reflecting on role as learner, citizen and agent of change

CELEBRATION

- publicity of the events,
- recognition of the participants,
- assessment of student learning,
- evaluation of the project
- school newsletters, bulletin boards, websites, community presentations, newspaper articles

As a pedagogical approach, Service Learning can be integrated across the curriculum to engage students in experiential learning that achieves conceptual understanding and broader capabilities. Service Learning strongly articulates with the knowledges, world views and skills evident in the *Sustainability Cross-Curriculum Priority*. It presents an opportunity for engaging content integration and experiential/inquiry Learning across all Key Learning Areas most commonly Science, Humanities, English, Physical Education and Civics and Citizenship. In addition, service learning fosters general capabilities such as *Personal and Social Capability* and *Ethical Understanding* and in working with diverse groups *Intercultural Understanding*.

The Australian Curriculum states that:

Education for sustainability develops the knowledge, skills, values and world views necessary for people to act in ways that contribute to more sustainable patterns of living. It enables individuals and communities to reflect on ways of interpreting and engaging with the world. Sustainability education is futures-oriented, focusing on protecting environments and creating a more ecologically and socially just world through informed action. Actions that support more sustainable patterns of living require consideration of environmental, social, cultural and economic systems and their interdependence. (ACARA, 2014)

Service Learning projects guided by social, ecological, political and economic sustainability aims give a profound rationale for the social action that students are involved in. There is a strong alignment between Service Learning and the General Capabilities for “successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens” (ACARA, 2014). The table below presents the alignment between the General Capabilities and Service Learning characteristics.

General Capabilities	Service Learning characteristics
Personal and Social Capability	Collaborating and building partnerships with students to achieve service learning projects involves “recognising and regulating emotions, developing empathy for and understanding of others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, working effectively in teams and handling challenging situations constructively”
Ethical Understanding	Students develop an understanding of ethical concepts and values surrounding community issues and needs and “develop an awareness of the influence that their values and behaviour have on others”.
Intercultural Understanding	An opportunity to experience and develop “growing knowledge, understanding and critical awareness of their own and others’ cultural perspectives and practices derived from learning area content”. This can be achieved by working on service project that address the needs of marginalized groups or work on projects that coalesce students from various backgrounds.
Literacy	Service Learning pedagogy involves communication and reflection skills and the potential to develop literacy

	through or as a product of the service-learning. Students would engage with and produce a range of texts.
Numeracy	Applying numeracy skills in real world contexts to solve problems. For instance, establishing a community garden may involve applying concepts such as area, finance and currency, density and volume.
ICT capability	ICT may be a tool for communication or a tool for engaging in indirect service learning.
Critical and creative thinking	Service- learning involves problem solving through creative and critical thinking. Creativity may also be an focus of service learning projects in the development of engaging texts and activities such as community arts projects.