

Practicing diversified services to enhance students' professional knowledge application

Chwo, Miao-Ju¹; Kung, I-Min²; Chiu, Hui Ming³

¹Department of Nursing, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan, R.O.C.
Email address: 071471@mail.fju.edu.tw

²Service-Learning Center, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan, R.O.C.
Email address: 134367@mail.fju.edu.tw

³Service-Learning Center, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan, R.O.C.
Email address: 041818@mail.fju.edu.tw

Abstract

Introduction

Service learning is a combination of “service” and “learning”. In addition to the spirit of volunteerism, it also attaches importance to the skills of solving problems, rethinking and cooperating with others. The concept of experiential learning stems from John Dewey’s concept of “learning by doing”.

Theoretical framework/literature review

John Dewey emphasizes the learner-centered education, placing the individual in the position of the learning subject, and focusing on the individual’s psychology and experience (Li, Chen, & Shu, 2011; Wang, 2006). David Kolb points out that learners absorb experience in the practice, reflect on the experience, and then conceptualize the results of the experience, and finally apply it in life, and continue to cycle the above four stages in the experience education. Kolb’s experiential learning circle theory is also the most commonly used learning model in Taiwan (Kolb, 1984; Guo, Liao, & Shi, 2010; Hsieh, Wang, & Zhuang, 2014). In addition, the studies found that service practices can enrich students’ knowledge and experience learning, leadership, interpersonal relationships and civic responsibility, and thus promote an all-around development; and the service learning motivates students to continue to practice society care or social justice action (Lin, 2016).

Methods/analysis

The study was conducted in a northern private university in Taiwan. The targets included 25 classes, 15 classes of the second semester of 2017 academic year and 10 classes of the first semester of 2018 academic year. The research materials are curriculum design and teacher’s reflective journal for the “service-learning”. The qualitative analysis is used as a main method. The “Curriculum Design” and “Teacher Reflective Journal” are openly coded to further find the same sub-themes. These sub-themes are further categorized to form different subject areas, and the analysis results of the above three steps are regularly discussed by two analysts until the consensus of the subject classification is obtained.

Results and Discussion

1. The significance of integrating professional courses into service learning

(1) To enhance the student's communication skills through the service process.

"Learn to treat patients as family" (Life and Death Studies), "Through interacting with people of different ages, it increases the expression ability." (Analytical Chemistry).

(2) To practice what the students learned when serving others.

"Students apply the professional tax knowledge they have learned to practice, and let them re-clarify the concept of tax law while counseling and serving the people." (Independent Study), "To discover, compose and take action when serving, it puts the theory and learning in the classes into practice and operation." (Social Resources).

(3) To learn more about the objects of future work, and promote the empathy, respect and tolerance.

"Understand the needs of new immigrants, vulnerable children and adolescents, so that they can be more respected and cared for in the future." (Multiculturalism and Family), "To find out the needs of the English-learning disadvantaged: From the interaction, students understand the English-learning situation of children in the remote area." (English Conversation).

(4) Some important abilities in future work need to be learned by "practical experience", such as the death preparation and the ability to turn ideas into execution.

"To understand the preparations for death and trust, I hope to assist students in their professional career ability in the future." (Life and Death Studies), "To discover, compose and take action when serving, it puts the theory and learning in the classes into practice and operation." (Program Design and Evaluation).

2. How to motivate students to participate

The followings list the effective curriculum design and skills for participated motivation according to the time series:

I. Before the service: The relevant capabilities, the necessary professional knowledge and interactive skills, are needed to provide. Also through simulation exercises, it reduces the uneasiness of students facing the service targets, increases the familiarity of the application, and stimulates the learning motivation.

(1) Simulation exercises: use the mentorship or peer feedback method to allow students to practice and improve the service process in advance, helping to reduce the mistakes in service and the feeling of uneasiness.

"Using the Layer teaching method, two senior students lead sophomores to observe what happens when the experiment is conducted. After discussion, in addition to deepening the understanding of the experimental principle, it can also avoid the possible accidents in experiment." (Analytical Chemistry), "Every group designs lesson plans and makes a trial teaching in the classroom and give back to each other." (Family and Elderly Life)

(2) Construction of professional knowledge: invite expert lectures, make special explanations, or invite volunteers and graduates to share service experience.

“To conduct curriculum description, volunteer experience sharing, social service organization visit, volunteer service meaning and ethics, volunteer service preparation, it enhances students’ cognitive concepts and establishes the right attitude and method for service.” (Voluntary Service)

(3) Increasing the interactive ability and skills to help students have better interactive quality when facing the service target.

“In the first half of the course, the speaker is invited to let the students learn to make a pamphlet before they visit the patient. After the interview, they can give the patient a memory.” (Life and Death Studies), “To explain the curriculum with some stories, videos or activities, it promotes the atmosphere of discussion and interaction, and then directly use activities or games to guide students to perform on stage, let them stand in front of the public and perform more naturally.” (Multiple Intelligences Development and Learning)

II. During the service: When students are in service process, it is inevitable that they will encounter various difficulties or emergencies. Teachers need to provide professional knowledge and interaction assistance. It is also needed to practice experience reflection and interaction under the supervision of teachers and group discussion.

(1) Teachers help students integrate professional knowledge with service experience.

“Regularly assist students in group discussions and help them learn how to integrate professional knowledge with the service application.” (Program Design and Evaluation)

(2) Teachers should provide the real-time assistance and guidance to students.

“When students encounter the difficulties or unexpected situations in service, teachers should provide immediate assistance and guidance.” (Community Occupational Therapy)

(3) Assist students to exchange, reflect and integrate their experience under the supervision of teachers and group discussion.

“When four group supervisors share their experiences, other members give recognition and encouragement. Through experience sharing and mutual learning, they can enhance self-worth and recognition and recognize other institutions, volunteer services and problems. Exchanging different perspectives and opinions, following the leadership of supervisors and stimulating students' expressions and experiences, it provides different perspectives, opportunities for multiple reflections, and peer interaction enhancement.” (Voluntary Service, English Conversation)

III. After the service: The teachers explain the problems encountered by the students and guide them to learn and think.

“The second half of the lecture, through the lecturer’s explanation, allows students to learn and think about life and death with more different perspectives.” (Life and Death Studies)

3. Skill for inducing motivation:

(1) The teachers guide the students to think about their value in the contribution when students interact with the service targets. The positive feedback from the target can stimulate the enthusiasm and learning motivation of the students.

“By face-to-face contact with children of poor English-learning environment, we interact with them and provide our majors to stimulate their interest and motivation.” (English Conversation), “I received a lot of feedback, learned a lot of experiences, and also had higher expectations for my knowledge and communication skills.” (Analytical Chemistry)

(2) Let students have full control over service learning planning, so that students have a sense of mission and responsibility.

“Value students’ spontaneity, autonomy, service interest and institution preference. Encourage students to find service organizations and interviews on their own or provide the previous organization lists, relevant volunteer service platforms, and volunteer recruit information from institutions.” (Voluntary Service)

4. Skills for leading students to reflect

(1) Starting from students’ experience, use multimedia and multi-form courses to lead students to reflect on their own and service experience.

“The life experience sharing, group debate, film situation worksheets, book reading, class discussion, sharing, reflection reports, role-playing, film and TV teaching material productions, etc., can experience the service-learning, the leadership and influence to others and the connotation of service issues.” (Service and Leadership)

(2) Use structured discussion to guide students through a comprehensive reflection.

“Rethink at the end of the service. After the four-week service is completed, the students will be guided to rethink by the four-F (fact, feeling, finding and future) worksheet.” (Family and Aging)

Conclusions and contributions to theory and practice

The student’s motivation for participation plays a key role in the service-learning curriculum. The challenges faced by the teachers involve how to induce students to actively learn, reduce the uncertainty and improve the self-identity and value. Let the “service” be able to be “learned”. In addition to the implementation, reflection in the process and after class is also an important part of guiding students to observe and discuss issues that arise during the service process, including the performance of the target, the review of the implementation and inspiration in the students’ minds. Teachers can use the multi-curricular model to guide the reflection.

Keywords: service-learning, professional course, reflection, motivation

References:

- Guo, T. Y., Liao, S. H., & Shih, H. Y. (2010). *Experiential education: Theory and practice*, 2nd ed. Taipei, Far Du Publishing.
- Hsieh, C. M., Wang, J. Y., & Zhuang, X. W. (2014). *Experiential education: Learning from 150 games*, 5th ed. Taoyuan County, Asia Association for Experiential Education.
- Kolb, D.A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

- Li, C. C., Chen, C. H., & Shu, B. H. (2011). Experiential learning as a teaching strategy to cultivate humanity: An example of service-learning course. *Journal of Medical Education*, 15(2), 134-142.
- Lin, L. J. (2016). Students' involvement and community support for service engagement in online tutoring. *Journal of Education Media & Library Sciences*, 53(2), 245-268.
- Wang, C. S. (2006). The concept of experiential learning and its application in educational situations. *Taiwan Education Review*, 640, 32-36.

Biographical sketch of each presenter

Presenter 1:

Chwo, Miao-Ju

Assistant Professor, Department of Nursing/ Director, Service-Learning Center, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan, ROC

Miao-Ju graduated from Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, USA and got her PhD in 1999. Miao-Ju is the Director of Service-Learning Center and also the Assistant Professor in Department of Nursing, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan. Miao-Ju's specialty is pediatric nursing, life development, chronic disease self-management and professional service-learning. Miao-Ju has been the Leader teacher of the International Service-Learning team at Mother House, Kolkata, India from 2011 to 2018.

Email: 071471@mail.fju.edu.tw

Address: 6F, 23, Lane 190, Guang-Fu North Road, Taipei 10579, Taiwan, ROC

Presenter 2:

Kung, I-Min

Staff, Service-Learning Center, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan, ROC

I-Min Kung graduated from Department of Library and Information Science, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan. She is the Secretary of Service-Learning Center and in charge of the Professional Service-Learning Courses. She is also the Leader teacher of the self-directed students' team to help the children recognize their characteristics and establish their confidence in Lashio, Myanmar from 2014 to 2018.

Email: 134367@mail.fju.edu.tw

Address: 510, Zhongzheng Rd., Xinzhuang Dist., New Taipei City 24205, Taiwan, ROC

Presenter 3:

Chiu, Hui Ming

Staff of Service-Learning Center / Fu Jen Catholic University/ Taiwan, R. O. C.

Hui Ming Chiu graduated from Fu Jen Catholic University, Master of Global Entrepreneurial Management Program (EMBA) in 2008. She participated in oversea service-learning team to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia as the Leader teacher of the self-directed students' team to help the children recognize their characteristics and establish their confidence from 2014 to 2018.

Email: 041818@mail.fju.edu.tw

Address: 510, Zhongzheng Rd., Xinzhuang Dist., New Taipei City 24205, Taiwan, ROC