

Proposal for a Paper Presentation

Connecting the Dots: Multifaceted analysis of Students, Faculty and Community in Life Frontier Engagement of Lady Doak College, India

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Abstract:

This study Life Frontier Engagement is a mandatory service-learning course for the undergraduate students of Lady Doak College, India, in their final year of study. The relationship stakeholders ultimately influences the growth and development of entities in either constructive or challenging. This study is conducted through an exploratory, mixed-methods design. The authors explore the formulation of a strong action plan for planned development, strengthen partnerships and deepen commitment thereby accomplishing the goals of the institution for engaged scholarship and development.

1. Introduction

Higher Education around the world is refocusing attention on holistic student development by enabling academics to reconnect with the core values and helping students foster spiritual, intellectual, humane, social and physical development. One of the potent tools for making this happen in Lady Doak College is Life Frontier Engagement (LiFE), a Service-Learning, community based experiential learning and research programme, which without doubt fuses the best of all disciplines, expanding the faculty and student boundaries, creating stronger, more seamless institutional practices. It is important to evaluate and explore the impact of this programme as a pedagogical tool. The purpose of the study is to understand, analyze and address the complex roles and needs of all the stakeholders, the students, faculty and community partnerships.

2. Theoretical framework/literature review

Research shows that service-learning benefits students, faculty, communities, and colleges; indeed, many studies report incredible transformative experiences as a result of service-learning and community engagement. One common underlying theme is the notion that socially active and academically alive environments can encourage participation of all stakeholders which enrich students' educational experiences, promote civic and social responsibility, and strengthen

surrounding communities by addressing unmet needs and establishing reciprocal relationships with community partners.

3. Methods and analysis

Using a three-phase, exploratory, mixed-methods design, the present study traces the service-learning process of the Life Frontier Engagement Course through qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative phase of the study involves a 360 degree course evaluation, pre and post service questionnaire which explores the factors which encouraged or impeded their involvement. The qualitative component examines the student's and faculty's experience with service-learning through in-depth study to understand the meaning they assigned to those experiences and to identify key themes that affected their engagement.

4. Results and Discussion

This research studies the connection between the students, faculty and the community during the process of Life Frontier Engagement. It discusses the personal challenges the students face when they are suddenly pushed to do community focused academic program which requires them to apply their theoretical learnings practically in the community and it also discusses the challenges faculty face to facilitate a dynamic course that requires a theoretical and practical understanding of the subject to work with the community. For young Indian women students who hail from conservative family backgrounds and who have had limited social interactions, this initiative is an eye opener for some while for others it is a first time exposure to reality.

Undertaking research in the community is also documented as a challenging process as the community receptiveness varies with every issue and at times, the student teams face hostility from a community and these varied experiences also teach students to understand the necessity of community involvement and participation at all points in this process. For the faculty, it is an enriching experience with its own set of challenges for the facilitation of a service-learning course. For the community, it is a process of hostility, doubt, understanding, acceptance and change. The students' and faculty's engagement, with the community in partnership, is a contribution towards the growth, development and change of a society by the educational institution.

5. Conclusions and contributions to theory and practice

Increased understanding of student and faculty experiences will help promote their implementation of service-learning as well as identify and anticipate barriers so that colleges and Service-Learning administrators can proactively develop solutions and implement supports that encourage engagement in Service-Learning. Awareness of the challenges associated with service-learning projects and the ways in which to overcome those challenges will ensure an effective service-learning experience for all participants. However, when these challenges are met and overcome, Service-Learning allows students, faculty, and communities to experience profound growth. It can lead to the formulation of a strong action plan and guidance for planned development, strengthen partnerships and deepen student and faculty commitment thereby

accomplishing the goals of the institution. As the society is defined by the dynamic social, economic, political, and demographic change, Life Frontier Engagement of Lady Doak College stands as an effective strategy for intellectual contribution to social, scientific, and economic development through Service-Learning pedagogy.

Keywords: Service-Learning, Higher Education, Life Frontier Engagement, Stakeholders'

Engagement, Social Responsibility

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- i. Last name followed by first name: Dr. A. S. Priscilla
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- iii. Short biography:

Dr. A. S. Priscilla is presently Assistant Professor in Zoology and the Coordinator of Centre for Life Frontier Engagement of Lady Doak College, Madurai. While bone health and osteoporosis is her frontier area for work and research, Service-Learning is her pedagogy of choice for engagement. She is instrumental in taking forward the College's service-learning activities and promoting it in the region. Her scholarly contributions to the arena are numerous.

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Mathangi Kalithas, a graduate of English and postgraduate of Social Work, works with Lady Doak College to promote and strengthen the Service-Learning programs of the college and in the region. She was the student participant of Cross-Border Service-Learning Summer Institute (SLSI) 2015, Lingnan University, Hong Kong and was the Project Coordinator of SLSI 2016. She has presented a paper and chaired a session in 6th SLAN conference in Indonesia, 2017.

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