

Proposal for a Paper Presentation:

Student-Generated “Can-Do” Lists for Service Learning Seminars

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1. Introduction

Assessment is oftentimes a difficult task for faculty members. One reason of course is that though goals for Service Learning may be quite evident, each individual student through their participation will contribute as well as obtain or acquire many different things, both objective and subjective, through each activity. In order to help in the assessment process of a Service Learning seminar, students were asked to help the faculty members by generating a “Can-Do” goal and objective list. This presentation will examine student generated “Can-Do” list as well as examine the overall assessment process used for these courses.

2. Background of Course

Over the past three years, students from the Colleges of Economics, Science and Engineering and Architecture and Environmental Design at Kanto Gakuin University in Yokohama, Japan have participated in a joint seminar for Service Learning with a focus on Ethnic and Cultural Diversity. Each year, the students participated in the reflection and assessment process. Unfortunately, due to the newness of the concept of “Service Learning” for the students, their ability to assess their own personal effort and process seem to be hampered. Furthermore, Kanto Gakuin University is in the process of revising its syllabus and assessment guidelines, and the need for more definitive goals and assessment guidelines have become necessary. In order to help students better understand the objectives and goals of the Service Learning seminar as well as fulfill the requirements of the university for course assessment, students were asked to help make assessment guidelines for the course.

3. Importance of “Can-Do” lists in Educational Environments

“Can-Do” lists are used quite frequently in learner-centered language courses to help students concretely recognize the goals of each session as well as the course in general, and by using “Can-Do” lists students can assess whether they have been able to master the content of each lesson. When incorporated in other courses, such lists can help students reflect on each session’s content. Moreover, “Can-Do” lists help students feel in control of their learning environment as well as hold them accountable for their learning and participation in the course. From the very first session, students were informed that they would be helping in the assessment process by making “Can-Do” lists at the end of each session.

4. Student-Generated “Can-Do” Lists

“Can-Do” lists were collected at the end of each session, and the faculty members had a chance to review the students’ lists prior to the next session. What became apparent after some sessions, in particular the lecture-centered sessions, was that some students were unable to grasp fully the content of the lectures. The lectures were used to help students understand the concept of Service Learning versus volunteering as well as the ethnic, multi-cultural diversity as well as the refugee situation in Japan. The generation of these lists after the lectures helped the faculty members recognize the need to reinforce some of the key points and ideas in additional lectures and sessions for the students understanding.

At the end of the course, students were once again asked to generate a large “overall” “Can-Do” list to help summarize the overall goals and objectives of the course. These lists and objectives can be grouped into the following areas: individual flexibility towards new environments and situations, cross-cultural communication skills, international mindset / outlook, assuming roles of responsibility, and active participation. Beyond these student-generated can-do goals, the faculty has also made can-do goals for the lectures prior to the service-learning activities.

5. Assessment Process and Future Use of “Can-Do” Lists

At the end of the semester, students and faculty worked together on individual assessments and evaluation. Each student spoke with the two faculty members involved. Students were given adequate time to discuss their own personal evaluation as well as their own goals for the coming year. Students also were given a chance to discuss their “Can-Do” lists and through the discussion, the faculty were able to understand better what each student was able to contribute in the course

throughout the semester as well as what areas need to be improved in future courses.

The students' "Can-Do" list will be incorporated in the coming year to help improve the course as well as help direct the students in their Service Learning activities with others from ethnic and culturally diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, through an examination of the "Can-Do" lists, a Rubric will be devised and presented to students in the coming year to fulfill the syllabi requirements being implemented by the university.

6. Conclusion

It is hoped that by sharing the student-generated assessment tools, we can also learn from others present additional good practices to enhance student participation as well as learning from the Service Learning courses offered to our students.

Keywords:

1. "Can-Do" list
2. Assessment
3. Student-generated

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