

Service Learning: An Integration of the Head, Heart and Hands towards shaping the Whole Person

INTRODUCTION:

Whole Person Education involves a student's holistic development by making individuals to be intellectually competent, spiritually mature, morally upright, psychologically integrated, physically healthy and socially acceptable. Service Learning (S-L) is shaping up as an important concept of teaching-learning practice in Indian Culture, whether in the Gurukula or the much-evolved higher education scenario. Learners carry with themselves, lifetime experiences that shape their thought-processes and in some cases, career aspirations too. The application of one's learning directly to the benefit of society, observing critically the challenges and finally reflecting on the practice go a long way in shaping one's inner conscious leading to complete self-manifestation. The concept is to develop an individual with intellectual, moral, ethical and social values thereby bringing about an integration of the Head with the Heart and the Hand and creating human beings who will bring the lessons learnt in their classrooms to the benefit of the larger society with a touch of compassion in their actions. The intellectual capacity, which is the perspective of the Head should have a connection with the Heart, bringing in elements of selflessness and compassion, following which the Hand should render the appropriate service to the society. The elements of reflection and reciprocity provide opportunity for introspection and spiritual development, thus enabling the brain to adopt newer measures when planning for the future. Such learning elicits critical thinking thereby guiding one in the process of decision making and framing action plans. With this backdrop the proposed paper tries to explore the status of S-L programs in Indian context highlighting the role of government and educational institutions in introducing S-L initiatives in higher education institutes and how this has helped the primary stakeholders—students and community to learn and thereby evolve. The structure of the paper highlights the processes through which S-L is or can be introduced as a good practice in academic pedagogy. The paper also highlight the S-L programs being adopted in some of the institutions in India including Scottish Church College (SCC).

METHODOLOGY:

As part of the process of putting this paper together, a few examples from different colleges that applied S-L to their curriculum were chosen on the basis of their commitment to the future of S-L in the curriculum and the level of impact seen thus far. These include Lady Doak College, Christ (Deemed) University, Kristu Jayanti College and Scottish Church College. Regarding implementation of S-L program at Scottish Church College, an online survey was conducted from 5 October 2021 to 6 October 2021 to collect the information. A structural questionnaire link using 'Google form' was sent to students through WhatsApp to understand the various facets pertaining to the concept and philosophy of community service as envisioned by them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

India has included extension and outreach programs in its schools and higher educational institutions as early as 1969 through National Service Scheme (NSS). These include services to community with elements of reflection. But a structured framework pertaining to S-L program was lacking. However many colleges in India, particularly from the southern states and Scottish Church College from eastern part under the guidance of UBCHEA have taken initiatives to incorporate S-L programs into curriculum (or in the form of a certificate course) and practice the same. Notable amongst them is Lady Doak College, Madurai which

has a S-L curriculum integrating elements of evaluation and reflection to their S-L programs supported by UBCHEA and University Grants Commission (UGC). This is published in the form of a manual Footprints of LiFE @ LDC . Christ (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru have he motto "Excellence in Service". The University exercises its commitment towards S-L through programs like E-SAIL (Engineering in Service Assisted Integrated Learning), Green Steel Project by School of Architecture, Legal Aid by School of Law, Contemporary Social Problems by Sociology department and Financial Literacy by PG School of Finance Management. These programs are successfully implemented by the University. Loyola College Chennai claims to have integrated S-L program for past 4 decades. Community health (mental health) programme and widow empowerment programme, scholarship programme and promotion of slum women entrepreneurs are some examples of Loyola Model of Service Learning. Kristu Jayanti College, Bengaluru through their Jayantian Extension Services (JES) and Institutional Social Responsibility Initiatives (ISRI) carry out various S-L programs for not only their students but also students from abroad. Students are at regular intervals taken to rural areas for service programs.



Students from Scottish Church College Engaged in Community Service

Established in 1830, Scottish Church College, Kolkata with the vision and mission of creating intellectually sound and morally upright and socially aware students is a cradle of community services and extension programs. Being an affiliated institution the college has designed S-L programs to be introduced in the form of Certificate Courses for the students. A survey was conducted by the college among 958 students to understand the philosophy they nurture on S-L or community service/ extension programs and their willingness to participate in such programs. More than 67% of respondents are aware of the term S-L while around 85 % respondents are aware of community service. Almost 80% of the students shared their willingness to participate in such programs.

The survey gave a positive approach for successful implementation of S-L programs in our college. Among the 958 respondents almost 91% firmly believes that they have a responsibility towards their community and 80% of them consider interaction with community enhances learning experiences and help manifestation of one's inner self. More than 90% of our students think that service in the community will enhance their ability to communicate in a "real world" setting. 80% of our students would like to enrol in S-L courses.

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Service-learning as a contribution to whole person education: hands, head and heart

BHATTACHARJEE, SAMRAT¹ & ROY, VARBI²

¹samrat@scottishchurch.ac.in

²vrphil@scottishchurch.ac.in

Scottish Church College, India

Department
958 responses

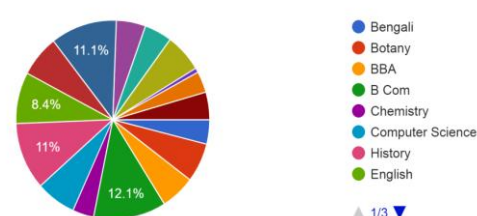


Fig 1. Percentage of students from 17 departments participating in S-L survey

SEMESTER
958 responses

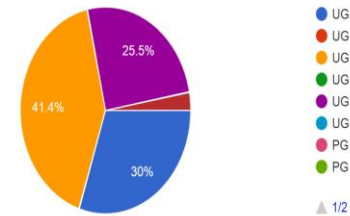


Fig 2. Percentage of Students' from Sem 1, 3, 5

I am willing to explore and participate in Community service/ Service Learning programs
958 responses

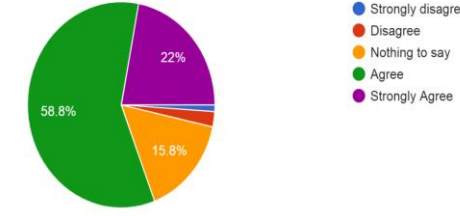


Fig 3. Willingness to participate in S-L programs

Conclusion: Consistent with the changing face of service, Indian Educational Institutions are fostering commitment to community service by actively engaging faculty and students to meet identified community needs. The service and the learning are designed to be integrated which evolve the students and the community. Through reflections and reciprocity students' inner self is manifested and help them address social issues more practically. We are hopeful that community service/ outreach programs will be designed and integrated in a more structured way in accordance to the salient features of S-L and more institutions will adopt and align their curriculum in tune with the framework of the institution. We look forward to continue the tradition of service and support the development of enriching educational experiences that foster civic responsibility by integrating the Head with the Heart and the Hands.

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