

Service Learning: A Study of Relevancy in Nepal

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Abstract

Service learning is one of the lately introduced curriculum as well as method of teaching in the world. In practice, it is applicable in both school and higher level. The curriculum is partial one which is made based on students' direct participation in community. The theory of service learning is basically learning through experience. Many education provider institutions around the world have developed it as mandatory curriculum with objective of making students active and community friendly. The relevancy of the curriculum corresponds with ultimate objective of education. The offered curriculum can have insight to strengthen reciprocal relation between students and society, and let them know about society, knowledge and social issues. As such direct involvement of students in community changes their perspectives toward society and nation.

Keywords: *Service-learning, voluntarism, pedagogy, experiment, institution.*

Introduction

The theory of service learning is considered as the latest and effective way of teaching method. Its fundamental concept is learning by doing. With meticulous discussion of traditional method of teaching-learning, it developed as an optional way and it came against rote learning and authoritative teaching. This concept was introduced in America in early twentieth century. The concept initiated from voluntarism and social service and later on it was applied in teaching field. The grounding perception of service learning is explained as, "In the 1980's, service learning emerged on the educational scene as a viable solution to bridging the gap between academic achievement and the value of service and volunteerism" (*Los Angeles Country Office of Education*, p.2). Till ending point of twentieth century, the hypothesis was applied in field of teaching. Few numbers of people worked under the idea and disseminated it throughout world. By studying its result and impact in society, the concept was enlarged and practiced in many educational institutions. The basic norm of service learning is compatible with objective of education which is corresponding with ultimate objective of education. Any educational

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institution aims to product efficient manpower in society, but it is very much practical in this new method. Kerrissa Heffernan adds her concept, “Service-learning is a reflective, relational, pedagogy that combines community or public service with structured opportunities for learning. Servicelearning is premised on experiential education as the foundation for intellectual, moral, and civic growth” (p.2). The concept as to service learning clarifies it as an experimental practice however, it is practical and behavioral. It always targets society and community. It works forsociety and people. The core value of education is to make society civilized. In the same way service learning refers to community oriented education and students involvement in society which enables them to find, deal and solve existing problems and issues of society.

Review of Literature

Howard (2003) identified three essential elements of service-learning to better help define the experience: 1) a community identified need which the participant responds to; 2) academic learning for the student must be strengthened by participating in the opportunity; and 3) commitment to the community and awareness of civic responsibility and citizenship is advanced for the student participant.

Novak, Markey, and Allen (2007) conducted a meta-analysis to evaluate the cognitive outcomes of service-learning in higher education. They examined nine studies and found an overall positive relationship between service-learning and learning outcomes. However, there were some limitations to this study. One, it only included published data and two, it didn't take into consideration self-reported learning.

Billig et.al. (2008) assessed pre-post changes in values development among 840 middle and secondary school students over a three-year period. Students who participated in service learning character education programs had significantly less diminution in value attainment, which suggests that service learning may help students retain their character assets as they mature. One of the most important sources of variation in students' experience with service learning and service learning effects was the quality of implementation.

Simons and Cleary (2006) conducted quantitative surveys to measure changes in students' personal and interpersonal development, academic learning and civic. They also used qualitative research methods to explore the processes linked with students' re-

duced stereotyping and increased community involvement. This was one of the first studies to use an exploratory methods design to demonstrate that participation in service learning affects academic learning and personal and social development. Their study showed that service learners increase their political awareness, diversity attitudes, civic engagement, community self-efficacy, and affiliation preferences for community involvement. Almost all the respondents (96%) reported academic learning as a benefit of service learning, career development was as a second benefit, consistent with previous research that suggests service learning is a vehicle for confirming and modifying students' career decisions. Almost all (97%) of the coded data identified self-efficacy or self-knowledge as a third service learning benefit and personal development as a fourth benefit of service learning.

Robinder (2012) discusses and analyzes findings and analysis demonstrates service learning has the potential to achieve the civic mission and democratic purpose of higher education; yet this potential is largely unrealized. To achieve this potential additional faculty development, leadership, and coordination beyond the classroom is required. Community college administrators need to recognize this need and provide the leadership, support, and direction required to achieve this mission; not just the administrative oversight or technical assistance faculty may need to implement individual, episodic service learning assignments. Integrating specific academic content learning with broader general education outcomes such as civic engagement and empowering students as citizens and leaders is critical to achieve the democratic ideals of higher education.

Kicinski (2014) asserts that the community college is a uniquely American institution. Joliet Junior College in Illinois opened in 1901 and remains the oldest continuously operated junior college. Forty years prior to the opening of Joliet Junior College, the Morrill Act of 1862, which established land grant institutions, provided the basis for creating an American higher education system to provide access to more than just the privileged elite. Junior colleges emerged as an opportunity to couple liberal arts education with vocational training for the growing needs of the work force. These special institutions served as an opportunity to educate students who sought higher education but were not accepted to the land grant or other private institutions. Junior colleges helped meet some of the needs of the changing production within the economy.

Methodology

This study is based on secondary data from textbooks, e-library and internet. It is qualitative research approach which borrows ideas from different scholars, researchers and thinkers who have already discussed on topic. It is not field oriented research but most of the data used here are reliable and trustworthy.

Discussion and Result

Regarding application of service learning in Nepali society must be our prime focus because our society needs efficient and qualified human resources to change or reform societal practice. The significance of this method is effective teaching and learning because effective and relevant education can change our societal malpractice. Tanka Natha Sharma (2014) discusses relevancy of community center learning that Nepal's rural communities over the years are facing poverty, deprivation and ignorance. Education and skills for life are particularly important to combat rural poverty and deprivation by developing capacity of rural people to take advantage of available opportunities for reducing economic and non-economic poverty (p. 87). Today, this question has been debatable issue in Nepali community because as such practice can change. Heffernan reinforces significance of this practice, "Adopting service-learning pedagogy often surfaces issues related to faculty roles and rewards and the connection of the faculty role to that of the institutional mission and the needs of the wider society" (p.2). Due to having social roles of learners, it lets them experience and face real knowledge and social issue. It is a student centred teaching learning method. It can strengthen personal relation with society and creates strong bonding between society and individual. It envisions and prospects long lasting impact for creating ideal society. In this way, national as well as ultimate goal of education is to correct society is fulfilled by this method of learning.

Service learning in Nepali society is relevant because the practice of this method can be helpful to tackle with social problems and make realization social ground to upcoming generation. Having just lecture method in teaching is insufficient to produce quality students. It is already overused technique which contributes only for making unskilled human resources. The notion of teaching is not only delivering lecture but should make students active and participatory. Therefore, Kedar Bhakta Mathema (2007) opines about decline of quality in Nepal that University classes mostly consist of lectures, and learning is simply the passive absorption of facts rather than any active intellectual

discourse, participation or research. Seminars and discussions rarely take place and reading assignments, drafting term-papers, project work, and case studies are unheard of. University campuses provide neither the rigor nor the challenge of university life (p. 44). Mathema argues here that quality education and its status in Nepal is very poor due to the method of teaching and traditional method. It is based on lecture method or teacher centric in which teacher is authoritative but students are passive. This method cannot produce effective and skillful human resource. The teaching method is almost out of date. He indirectly suggests student centric method of learning from which student can learn and experience good things and it will be practice and useful for individual and society. Deanna Milne (2014) discusses that action research project investigated the qualities of the critical thinking skills students' developed through the Doha-based and Nepal-based service learning experiences. She acknowledged that both types of experiences had the potential to challenge students to practice critical thinking, but hypothesized that the experience of community service in an unfamiliar place and culture would stimulate and require deeper critical thinking (p. 2).

Milne recommends service learning method which can bridge cohesive social relation and students can experience and know their own society. This active participation in society always stipulates them to work with society and people. It is strong and effective teaching pedagogy because it can change and develop students' perspective and social relation. The research taken earlier in another country justified effectiveness of the method.

In practice, service learning must have student centric benefits because the technique is learning by doing. If it is made mandatory curriculum, it brings positive attitude and change among students. Students think it as social responsibility and they work with people in smaller community. From many points of view, this method can have benefits and more importantly, it is relevant to fight against social evils. But, the method can be the best weapon to find out smaller problems in society.

Community learning centers as the local educational institutions outside the formal structure can create various learning options and opportunities, responding to the diverse needs of the rural communities living in a complex situation. Referring to a case study, the paper has advocated that CLCs can be instrumental in rural transformation by offering diverse programs in education and community services

such as: early childhood care and development, good quality primary education for all children, second chance basic education for youth, literacy and post literacy programs, women education program, vocational skill development, income generating programs and community development services for improving the quality of life of rural people(Sharma, 2014, p. 88).

His idea directly reinforces community based learning enhances quality and capacity among learners. Because of being experimental learning, it focuses on problem based teaching with finding social issues and problems. The modern education curriculum intends to work with community because it is core objective of it, if education fails to product community friendly generation, it will be fatal for society and entire humanity.

Christine J. Villani and Douglas Atkins (2002) emphasises that today's society needs to embrace the ideal of attaining and maintaining community-based relationships. Simple values like caring about the quality of life and striving for unconditional love of the human race must be manifested. Community cohesiveness is a natural human goal for which we should all strive. To do this, local communities must embrace their schools, schools in which students learn and grow into productive citizens (p. 121).

Therefore, implementation of course in our country Nepal can be effective to develop responsive, responsible and society oriented citizens and minimize social indifference and individualism. The direct involvement in society makes them responsible towards society. More importantly, the learning of focused group is effective whose learning is based on experience and realization. As such learning definitely will be sustainable and effective and student can develop team work, collective work and realise responsibility toward society. Even, student can have patriotic sentiment when they undergo and feel society, people and excising problems.

Conclusion

Above mentioned discussion vividly clarifies and justifies service leaning method and its strength is durable for the sake of society. The way of delivering through teaching-learning activity can be effective, if the learners experience, feel and realise its values in own life. The service learning method creates opportunity to experience value of education in relation to society and immediately can apply knowledge in practice. This opportunity consolidates the learner thought and knowledge. Normally, every ed-

educational institutions aim to imply knowledge in society. In this context, even national educational aim of Nepal as well as every country is to produce capable, friendly and society oriented manpower. The service learning practice in our society and nation can be effective and relevant. The objective of the course is to produce responsive and responsible manpower who are expected to be associated with society while working.

Recommendation

Our Nepali society is supposed to have been lame in the field of education. Many criticism and debate as to ineffective of education are sufficiently discussed and is blamed to have been impractical one because of our traditional practice even in post-modern society. Therefore, service learning program can be a good option to reform our educational weakness. Our delivery system is one way feeding or rote learning which matters only for result but not focus on capacity building. This method is reliable and practical for learners because it reconciles knowledge with social values and bridges relation between older generation and newer generation. To make society friendly manpower and kindle light of education in society, service learning is one of the best alternatives like our society. The technique or method of teaching can have effective impact upon society, therefore community schools or colleges should apply it as a portion of curriculum which can strongly make good relation with community. Community based school and college depends upon community and its positive interference with surrounding, therefore it develops two way relations as well as creates trustworthy environment between institutions and publics.

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