

Service Learning: What, How, and Why

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Definition of Service Learning. Service learning is a **course-based, credit-bearing** educational experience in which students (a) participate in **mutually identified and organized** service activities that benefit the community, and (b) **reflect** on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an **enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility.**

Academic Integrity. (1) enhanced academic learning; (2) student-oriented instruction; (3) social justice; and (4) civic and democratic learning. SI, sL, SL, S-L. Rationales for service learning: (1) enhanced academic learning; (2) student-oriented learning; (3) focus on social justice issues; (4) develop democratic skills.

Partnerships. Working **with** the community, not just in the community or on behalf of the community; reciprocity; community partners as co-educators. **SO FAR** model that identifies five constituencies who are typically involved in service learning courses: (a) **S**tudents, (b) staff at community-based **O**rganizations, (c) **F**aculty, (d) campus **A**dministrators (e.g., service learning staff, executive leaders, deans, or department chairs), and (e) **R**esidents of communities or clients served by community-based organizations. Partnerships should involve **democratic processes** that are fair, inclusive, and participatory. Partnerships between students and community members that contain democratic qualities, (e.g., just, inclusive, participatory, reciprocal) are critical and necessary to allowing civic lessons to be fully developed and academic learning to be clarified. Community partners value their role as co-educators in service learning courses.

Reflection. Clayton's **DEAL** model: detailed **D**escription; critical **E**xamination (across of academic learning, civic learning, and personal growth across the range of Bloom's taxonomy); **A**rticulating **L**earning.

Civic Education. Not only "serving to learn" (which is applied learning), but "learning to service" (which is civic education). **Battistoni:** (a) civic professionalism—civically-oriented business major, (b) social responsibility, (c) social justice—social work, (d) connected knowing and the ethic of caring--nursing, (e) public leadership—public affairs, (f) public intellectual--humanities, and (g) engaged or public scholarship--research. **Competencies for Democratic Culture: Values** (human dignity and human rights; cultural diversity; democracy, justice, fairness, equality, and the rule of law). **Attitudes** (openness to cultural otherness, to other beliefs, world views and practices; civic-mindedness; responsibility; self-efficacy; tolerance of ambiguity). **Skills** (autonomous learning skills; analytical and critical thinking skills; listening and observing; empathy; flexibility and adaptability; linguistic, communicative, and plurilingual; co-operation; conflict-resolution). **Knowledge and Critical Understanding** (of self; of language and communication; the world politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability).

Conclusion. Service learning versus internships: Good experiential education must include four attributes: (a) course content and learning objectives; (b) activities (e.g., in a community, in a laboratory, in a classroom); (c) systematic, structured, and regular reflection that connects course content to the activities; and (d) assessment of learning (not just monitoring participation in an activity). Deficiencies of internships: lack of course content, poor if any reflection, focus only on career preparation and not any focus on civic learning.

I dare each of you, as members of a discourse community, to explore the best ways in which the strengths and assets of your respective campuses can be developed to further engage your faculty, students, and staff in educationally meaningful community service in ways that continue to produce paradigmatic change on your campus and that set an example for the rest of higher education.

Resources

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