

THE ROLES OF SERVICE-LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Author:

Li-Jiuan Lillie Tsay, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Implementing service-learning into curriculum has been given a strong emphasis and attention in higher education worldwide as research found that many university students, the so-called "Generation Me", have overlooked their social responsibilities (Shia, 2010). However, research on how to improve this phenomenon in education is absent from literature. According to Lewis (2009), higher education should highlight the value on the cultivation of citizenship. To help connect university students and the society and make them care more about the society they have lives in has become an important issue in higher education.

According to Tsay (2016), service learning helps enhance students' well-beings both psychologically and physically. Through discussing the effects of implementing service-learning into curriculum from previous literature, the goal of this research aims to find out the roles of service-learning in higher education. Seventeen participants from an Applied English Department of a private university in Taiwan formed a story-telling team in a two-credit hour TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language) practicum course. Students were required to come up with an English storyline to perform at some remote elementary schools to help promote young learners' English learning motivation, in particular for those underprivileged ones. Under the facilitation of the teacher, the team worked on the storyline, the props, and the worksheets and the activities. In order to create a dynamic learning environment for the young learners, theatre arts, English teaching and administration were taken into account as well while preparing for the performances. "The Gingerbread Man" was the first story chosen and then "Goldilocks and Three Bears" came as the second. During the process of preparation, students experienced a great deal of frustration and stress. However, they had great sense of achievement after completing the whole tasks and receiving positive feedbacks both from the children and the schools. From the data collected from the questionnaire, it was found that students gained not only teaching experience but also the abilities to conduct a whole project. Most importantly, their social responsibilities and self-confidence are enhanced through providing the social services. The roles of service-learning in higher education have turned over a new leaf.

Key words: *service learning, social responsibility, higher education, practicum*