Chapter 5

eService–Learning: Bridging Online Graduate Students’ Sense of Belonging With Community Engagement

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ABSTRACT

The service-learning pedagogy has flourished in popularity and student outcomes, and with the online student population expanding, institutions of higher learning must develop programs with similar content across both face-to-face and distance-learning applications. Institutions are using eService-Learning (eS-L) programs to address this divide. Commonly reported service-learning outcomes include student’s sense of belonging and community engagement, and this chapter aims to present a case with similar outcomes for graduate-level students enrolled in a distance learning course with a substantive service-learning component.

INTRODUCTION

With the increased focus on student outcomes, the service-learning pedagogy is gaining traction nationwide. Online education is one of the fastest growth areas across higher education, leading institutions to create educational programs with content consistent across both face-to-face and distance-learning applications (Allen, Seaman, Poulin, & Straut, 2016; Berry, 2019). One method utilized by universities and educational institutions to address this divide is eService-Learning (eS-L). The service-learning pedagogy has expanded its reach to be inclusive of online and
distance education students; this form of service-learning is entitled eService-Learning or electronic service-learning (eS-L). A review of the literature indicates student’s sense of belonging and community engagement are commonly reported service-learning outcomes. Therefore, the present chapter aims to present the progression of service-learning’s entry into academia through modernized e-Service-Learning, and a case study utilizing similar outcomes in unique population: graduate-level students, enrolled in a distance-learning course, with a substantive service-learning component.

Service-learning has been implemented across the world to allow students the benefit of serving their communities and has been proven to have multiple positive experiences for students (Walker & Walker, 2018). Defined recently as an educational experience leading to academic course credit which allows students to participate in activities that benefit the community (Warren-Gordon & Graff, 2018), service-learning aids in student personal and academic growth. Research indicates service-learning has many benefits for student participants: aiding in the development of critical thinking skills; gaining a higher level of confidence; increased organizational engagement; increased institutional engagement; improved professional socialization; and enhanced professional skills (Garcia-Romero, Sanchez-Busques & Lalueva-Sazatornil, 2018; Lu & Duan, 2018; Pak, 2018; Rincon & Castillo-Montoya, 2018). Kwenani and Yu (2019) posit service-learning projects create a greater sense of belonging and increased international student engagement, which in turn help break down barriers in the international student’s new prospective community (Warren-Gordon & Graff, 2018). Despite the plethora of benefits of social learning, many characteristics of service-learning projects must be met before students can experience those benefits.

BACKGROUND

Service-learning has its roots in Dewey’s (1933) Program for Educational and Social Reform: experiential learning, reflection, and reciprocal learning (Champagne, 2006). Dewey posited (1933) experiential learning would meet societal needs while also encouraging students to connect these issues with classroom learning for a deeper understanding of the material. He believed traditional classroom environments failed to create this student engagement within their local communities. Dewey (1933) argued that in order to truly understand something, one must spend ample time reflecting upon the topic. The final piece of Dewey’s trifecta was reciprocal learning: learning was multi-directional and involved students, teachers, and the organization in which acts of service occurred.
Opportunities and Challenges in Implementing Distance Learning and e-Learning: A Case Study
Handbook of Research on Educational Technology Integration and Active Learning (pp. 329-345).
www.igi-global.com/chapter/opportunities-and-challenges-in-implementing-distance-learning-and-e-learning/128053?camid=4v1a

Professional Skill Enrichment in Higher Education Institutions: A Challenge for Educational Leadership
www.igi-global.com/article/professional-skill-enrichment-in-higher-education-institutions/244208?camid=4v1a