

Academic Service-Learning: Current Findings and Future Directions

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This paper seeks to provide university administrators and faculty who may be considering the implementation of Academic Service Learning (ASL) with a comprehensive 360 degree viewpoint so as to aid in the decision making of whether ASL may be appropriate as a learning tool for their particular college or university. The article does this by exploring the research literature on Academic Service Learning (ASL) and identifies the prevalent streams of current research. The initial stream deals with the reasons and evolution for the creation of academic service-learning. Further streams of research identify factors that make academic programs a success, reveals the benefits students and community organizations derive from service-learning as well as the drawbacks of service-learning. In discussing each stream examples are provided on how colleges have used ASL. A preponderance of methodological deficiencies are identified in terms the current research and recommendations for improvement are proposed with the utilization of better quasi experiments that will reduce the number of threats to internal as well as the external validity. Eight research proposals are stated to guide future academic service-learning research.

The search for new and better ways to impart knowledge dates back to the beginning of time. In the quest to expand methods of teaching this article seeks to explain and explore the relevance ASL can have in teaching students and improving the lives of those less fortunate who may benefit from the academic input of college students. It seems that in an age where harsh weather events and pandemic viruses exist never has it been more apparent the interconnectedness and interdependence of all organizations within society. Consequently ASL, where students engage service activities which emanate from or build upon classroom learning, is one such way to connect the brain power of colleges to assist non-profits in need while also enhancing learning retention. This research outlines the development of ASL from its origins to what is now widely accepted as a constantly innovative way to teach students through hands-on class projects that help non-profits and society in general. The applicability of this style of teaching is global in nature and not confined to national norms. It is the hope of the authors that through this article any educators considering adoption of ASL as a teaching method first familiarize themselves with relevant research in the area and to also gain knowledge of the different ways ASL can be implemented across numerous academic domains. This is done in the context of ASL being a university initiative which supports mission and academic goals.

Prevalent Streams of Research

This literature review seeks to identify current streams of research so as to provide a sense of direction to program developers as to where research on ASL is focusing. In our search through the literature we found very little in terms of research which offered pause for reflection on the

development and uses of ASL, however articles by Sternberger, Lee, and Ford (2005) and Gibson, Hauf, Long and Sampson (2011) do broach the topic somewhat. Hence, we feel there is a need to take stock of where ASL has been, its uses, and where it is going in this attempt at a 360 degree perspective to address this gap in the literature. While this research does not claim to be exhaustive it does select choice studies to discuss those which would best serve in advising any academics seeking knowledge and direction about ASL and where its practices and research are headed.

The methodological structure of exploring the available research follows a natural progression exploring ASL origins, structure, how it works, learning integration, benefits, and drawbacks to students; these are the areas that would be of primary interest to faculty and university administrators exploring ASL as a vehicle of learning and mission. Then, in each area the authors sought a variety of examples of research across numerous academic domains in an effort to exhibit relevance to a diverse academic readership. To this end, six streams have been identified as follows:

Service-Learning Origins and Mission Relatedness

Academic service-learning can be explained as a university response to changes in the social environment whose origins can be traced back to the mid-1960s (Beatty, 2010). It was an effort by the university community to address criticism that it was inward looking, professor centered, utilizing methodologies that did not succeed in meeting the needs of the new large and diverse student body enrolled in universities under the Higher Education Act of 1965. This law provided Pell grants for needy students and as such wanted to see these students engage and improve disadvantaged communities. Consequently, in 1966 the University of Tennessee gave credit for the first “service-learning” internships and since then service-learning applications have been developed and expanded across numerous academic disciplines.

In terms of delivery, research by Beatty (2010) shows that there are three separate models of service-learning. The first model is the “professional model” that emphasizes career training with cognitive training goals. The second model is the “civic engagement model” that stresses the development of energetic and engaged citizens with affective learning goals. The third model is the “social change model” that focuses on empowerment and social justice with affective learning goals.

In terms of framing and defining service-learning Susan Madsen (2004) defines service-learning as “a form of experiential learning that is integrated within a credit earning course containing an organized, thoughtful, and meaningful community related project” while the *Journal for Civic Commitment* describes service-learning as ‘connecting academic curriculum to service and civic engagement in communities’. *The National Youth Leadership Council* which is a service-learning focused organization states that “service-learning is an approach to teaching and learning in which students use academic and civic knowledge and skills to address genuine community needs.” Essentially, these definitions impart that in service-learning students are paired with community organizations that have needs related to the learning objectives of a certain course. Students fulfill the community service requirement by utilizing the course content and reflecting on their experiences for enriched learning.

Another reason for the adoption and development of service-learning is the drive of universities to fulfill their mission. For example, Sinatra and Maher (2013) describe how St. John's University dealt with Pope John Paul's II call to Vincentian institutions to serve the poor and the needy. The university introduced a required service-learning component to a required core course; it developed the Vincentian Institute for Social Action to enhance, support and bring together faculty, student service, and research with community philanthropic organizations. It also created a 4-year undergraduate Scholar Program for student engagement in service and research while also establishing collaborative relations with community associates whose mission was in accord with that university's Vincentian values.

A further example of how service learning can satisfy a university's mission by Whitmer (2004) describes how the Daniels College of business at the University of Denver has incorporated service-learning into one of its core graduate courses. The philosophy of the service learning is explored as a vehicle to achieve the college mission. The service-learning component of the course is a one day eight hour community based project with a reflection component at the end. Various studies were conducted that showed that students had a positive experience, and that it also enhanced student commitment for community service in the future. Interestingly, they also found that there were gender differences and that international students were less affected from community service and also less prone to future community service.

Components of Successful Service-Learning

The success of service-learning is based on a variety of factors. Gujarathi et al. (2002) identified five factors for a successful service-learning environment. These are the university mission and values, the establishment of successful relationships with community organizations, proving the value of service-learning, energizing the professors and students about the rewards of service-learning, and finally choosing appropriate service-learning projects. They illustrate these principles in an application of an intermediate accounting course. Andrews (2007) examines successful university programs where universities implement service-learning into one of three forms - first implementation by course section, second the development of a center for service learning, and third the creation of a service-learning consortium. Factors affecting the success of the programs include the existence of an infrastructure to connect the faculty with the not-for-profit client, faculty and student assistance, and faculty recognition with grants and course releases. The researcher investigated the implementation of service-learning in business curriculums and found that though some disciplines such as management have extensive service-learning projects others such as finance have limited involvement in ASL. This may suggest that service learning is better suited to certain disciplines. At the graduate level the author examined overall MBA service-learning team projects and discovered that some included community service as leadership, others imbedded academic service-learning in the capstone course while others engaged in project management for low-income families.

McKinnon and Ealy (2011) describe the importance of global service-learning programs where nursing students serve marginalized communities in developing countries. They prescribe seven Cs for best practice in these situations. These Cs include compassion, curiosity, courage, collaboration, creativity, capacity building, and competence. Chuang et al (2013) describe a service-learning project implementation in an undergraduate system analysis and design course

where students enrolled in the course cooperated with the local Chamber of Commerce to develop an information system utilizing Microsoft Access database. The authors highlight the significance of establishing clear planning, analysis, design and thoughtful implementation of service-learning projects. Cooper (2013) presented a case where students were involved in a service-learning internship which Utilized student reflections at the end of the internship. She found that students felt that they learned more with service-learning than if they had solely been in a traditional classroom environment and, they believed, that classroom learning should complement the service-learning activity. Table 1 summarizes the literature review findings pertaining to the reasons of adaptation of service-learning and the success factors of service-learning.

Table 1
Reasons and Success Factors of Service-Learning

| Reasons for Adaptation & Models of Service-Learning | Success Factors of Service-Learning |
|--|---|
| Social Expectations and pressure (Beatty, 2010) | Institutional Mission and Values (Gurathi et al. 2002) (Sinatra, Maher, 2013) (Whitmer, 2004) |
| Institutional Mission and Core Values (Sinatra, Maher, 2013) (Whitmer, 2004) | Relationships with Community Organizations Proving Value of Service-Learning Energizing Professors and Students Choosing Appropriate Projects Creating a Support Infrastructure, student and faculty assistance, faculty recognition awards and course releases (Andrews) |
| Models of Service-Learning Professional Model-Career training with cognitive training goals. | 7 C factors of best practice in international settings: compassion, curiosity, courage, collaboration, creativity, capacity building, competence (McKinnon et al. 2011) |
| Civic Engagement Model-Development of energetic and engaged students with affective learning goals. | Clear planning, analysis, design and implementation of the service-learning projects (Chuang et al. 2013) |
| Social Change Model-Empowerment and social justice with affective learning goals. | It should complement classroom learning. (Cooper, 2013) |

Student Benefits of Service Learning

The benefits of service-learning to students is the topic of another stream of research. Scales et al. (2006) analyzed three data sets and found that principals of schools in low socioeconomic minority areas believed that high levels of service-learning had significant correlational positive relationships upon students’ grades, attendance, and overall academic success. Angelidis and Ibrahim (2004) describe how the embedding of a service-learning project in a strategic

management class benefits student learning while Weber, Schneider and Weber (2008) also showed how students in a strategic management course had a preference for real life strategic issues as a method of learning strategy. Lopez et al. (2012) examined the utilization of service-learning of the University of the Incarnate Word of San Antonio as a means to assist students' understanding of the university's mission. The authors studied the perceptions of students who participated in service learning and they found that there is a moderate positive relationship between the students' perceptions of service learning and understanding of the university mission.

Lawler (2008) examined the development of nursing values through service-learning. She utilized reflective essays as responses to six questions and found that students enriched their academic knowledge, personal development and social responsibility. Marques (2016) studied 156 students participating in undergraduate and graduate management and managerial ethics courses that included a moral and social awareness project. Forty-five not-for-profit organizations participated in the span of two years. The researcher found that 35% of the students continued their involvement with the not-for-profit organization that they worked with, even after the project was over and sometimes family members became involved. The author found that some MBA students had a transformational experience and changed their careers to more socially involved ones.

Service-learning can also provide students with cultural sensitivities and improve their critical thinking. Puri et al. (2013) examined the impact of international service-learning upon student perceptions regarding healthcare practices adaptation to cultural diversity. Nine students participated in a trip to Morocco where they provided oral and general health services. The researchers interviewed these students and utilized qualitative methods for their analysis. The findings showed that international service-learning enhanced the perceptions of growth among students, it helped them to see the association between theory and practice and finally learn from the diverse cultural and local practices. Su and Chi (2016) describe how they and fourteen students from two different subject classes participated in a service-learning project at a Junior High School in Inner Mongolia. Utilizing student reflections and qualitative methodology the authors reveal that service-learning benefited the students by learning first to interact with students in other areas of expertise, second by providing service to enthusiastic host-country students, third by acquiring a hands-on professional experience and, fourth by enhancing their critical thinking while helping others.

Service-learning can also be utilized in preparing student professionals for their perspective professions. Hallman and Bohnenbeger (2004) propose the utilization of service-learning as a preparatory tool in preparing new pre-service teachers to teach English. The authors examine three themes, the first theme explores service learning as a pedagogical third space for English teachers, the second theme studies service learning as a tool promoting the disruption of a teaching mythology, and the third theme is service learning as a method promoting New English Education. Further research by Peters (2011) describes the benefits and drawbacks of a service-learning component in a course that is part of the undergraduate communication sciences and disorders curriculum. She highlights the experiential benefits service-learning provides the students by allowing them to deal with real life situations thus preparing them for the workplace. It also gives the students a better understanding of the theoretical concepts learnt in class and

allows them to create a better integration of knowledge acquired in different courses. In addition, Leon, Pinkert, and Taylor (2017) state through their research that learning outcomes achieved through ASL are not just for students but also for faculty in terms of course delivery.

Knowledge Integration

The literature reveals another benefit of service-learning, the integration of knowledge. Buchanan (2014) describes the implementation of service-learning in a middle level finance class by describing the importance of financial literacy and its role in the financial crisis of 2009. To rectify the lack of financial literacy she has incorporated a service-learning component in her class where students develop seminars to educate the financial illiterate. Not-for-profit organizations serve as clients and the students develop appropriate integrative workshops. Topics and depth of the workshops vary according to the nature and knowledge of the clients. Students learn that there is not a universal method of service-learning but that it has to be adapted to the particular needs and motivation of the clients. Lampe (2016) describes how the University of Michigan has utilized service-learning in a master's level of a Citizen's Interaction Design program. Students of Human Computer Interaction are engaged in developing computer aided solutions with the local government of Jackson, MI, USA. It is a semester long program with excellent results for the students and the various government agencies. The clients are satisfied with the innovative solutions the students have given while the students enjoy the opportunity to put their knowledge into practice.

Service-learning provides students a broader field of thought and experience than regular classroom teaching. Although more commonly used at the undergraduate level service learning has also been utilized at the graduate level. For example, Coffey and Wang (2006) provide a descriptive study of an MBA capstone course offered in China where student groups participated in service-learning experiences with trade associations, hospitals, charitable organizations, etc. At the end of the service-learning, questions were asked from the students, community organizations and the professors as to their impressions of service-learning. Students reported that at the beginning they were apprehensive but at the end they were satisfied with participating in the projects. The community organizations were satisfied as well as they had the opportunity to have professional recommendations as solutions to their needs. Faculty provided positive feedback because it allowed the students to expand their learning horizons beyond the classroom. Similarly, research by Hart, Plemmons, Stultz, and Vroman (2017) describes how service learning was successfully utilized in team-based work at the graduate MBA level and that graduate students felt it facilitated better interpersonal communication and returned better results. Furthermore, research by Prina (2017) describes how a service-learning project by MD/MBA students successfully brought medical care to individuals living in remote areas of Colorado, USA. These examples at the graduate level serve to illustrate how ASL can facilitate knowledge integration across various realms and also promote learning.

Service-learning also enhances student career interest. Schlesinger and Cohen (2009) describe the initial phases of how the Century Program linked 100 rural and inner city schools, with students from families who have not attended university, with colleges and universities. The purpose of the program is to increase student higher education awareness and motivate them to go to college. They specifically discuss how the program was implemented successfully at

Ithaca College and the Spencer-Van Etten middle school. The service-learning project involved one hundred college freshmen students which were trained with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC Mentoring Manual) and were assigned a Middle School student as a mentee. Research by Mausco et al. (2010) describes how the utilization of andragogy by two Historical Black Colleges and Universities in New Orleans resulted in positive results. In one instance the students were high school teachers being trained on-line in the principles of entrepreneurship. The trainees were involved in the planning, content, assessment, goals, strategies, and evaluation of their own curriculum. In another case University students were helping entrepreneurs to develop business plans and they showed high school students the fundamentals of entrepreneurship. Hernandez and Newman (2006) utilized a survey to find out the impact of service learning upon middle-school students, their mentors, and teachers in an entrepreneurship class. The students self-reported a greater interest in a career in entrepreneurship, owning their business, going to college, and joining a summer program. The mentors increased their vocational interests as it increased their propensity to do community service and work with children. Also, the class performance was improved with lower class absenteeism than the control group. Table 2 summarizes the service-learning student benefits.

Table 2
Service-Learning Student Benefits

| | |
|---|---|
| Underprivileged high school students showed a positive relationship of ASL upon their grades, attendance, and overall academic success (Scales et al, 2006) | Better preparation for the work environment. (Hallman et al. 2011; Peters, 2011) |
| Students understand the university mission (Lopez et al. 2012) | Better integration of knowledge learned in different courses. (Peters, 2011; Buchanan, 2014; Lampe, 2016) |
| Students enhanced their academic knowledge, personal development and social responsibility. (Lawer, 2008; Marques, 2016) | Expand horizons beyond classroom (Coffey et al, 2006) |
| Student learning is improved (Cooper, 2013; Puri et al. 2013) | Increase student career interests. (Schlesinger et al, 2009; Mausco et al, 2010; Hernandez, 2006) |
| In international settings it improves cultural awareness and sensitivity. (Puri et al. 2013; Su et al. 2016) | Improve student propensity for community service. (Hernandez, 2006) |

Service-Learning's Benefit to Participating Organizations

A fifth stream of service-learning research deals with the benefits the community organizations derive by participating in the projects. Calvert and Kurji (2012) describe how they implemented a service-learning project in their managerial accounting course by helping nine entrepreneurs. At the end of the project the clients enhanced their business plans by incorporating financial forecasts and budgets prepared by the students. Because the development of budgets was interactive the managers were able to understand financial statements and budgetary processes

that may lead to efficiencies that would improve business performance. Jordan and Schraeder (2011) describe a service-learning project of a business leadership course. Students performed a needs analysis of sixty community organizations to identify the three major leadership training areas that most needed attention. The students developed and administered the appropriate workshops with positive feedback from managers as to the value of the workshops to employees and the quality of student participation. Olberding and Cencula (2016) analyzed surveys from community clients to reveal the short-term and long-term impact of service-learning projects. They analyzed the short-term impact by administering end of semester surveys to community representatives and found that they were satisfied with the service-learning experience. Another survey was conducted by surveying the clients from 1-8 years after the completion of the project. The respondents indicated that their organization benefited from new information, new ideas, enhanced program offerings, and better management which the service-learning project delivered. As previously mentioned, Lampe (2016) describes how the University of Michigan has utilized service-learning in a master's level of a Citizen's Interaction Design program. The students of Human Computer Interaction are engaged in developing computer-aided solutions with the local government of Jackson, MI, USA. The government agencies in this project expressed satisfaction with the students' creative solutions.

Service-Learning Drawbacks and Challenges

A sixth stream of research deals with the drawbacks of service-learning. Egger (2008) rejects the concept of service-learning and he states that it is an effort to "promote a communitarian, anti-individualistic social agenda, and that the attempt and agenda are educationally harmful." Morrin (2009) examined a business communications class that pertained to academic service-learning where students were interviewed before the project was given and also upon conclusion. Qualitative research was utilized to analyze the results which found that participating students had issues in the areas of (a) schedule conflicts due to jobs, families, class, and extracurricular activities; (b) in the unreliability of partners who did not fulfil their work; (c) in scheduling meetings with the client; (d) in communication issues with the professor and finally (e) in communication issues with their classmates. Crews and Stitt-Gohdes (2013) provide insights into a service-learning project of business communication students. They conducted before and after surveys and found that student attitude toward service-learning improved, but student expectations were not met as they hoped and, the students believed that the service learning did not benefit the community. Dienhart et al (2016) surveyed students who took a class that was a part of a program to be accepted to a university versus students that took a service-learning class that was part of the program they were enrolled. The findings indicated that the first category of students were less enthusiastic in participating in future service-learning projects and were less prone to recommend their class to other students. From a faculty perspective Volchok (2017) outlines how a faculty member is obligated to teach students while also helping a non-profit organization. However, students quite often do not produce professional caliber work and therefore the faculty member may feel obligated to intervene to deliver something of value for the non-profit organization. Table three shows the service-learning benefits to the client organizations and the drawbacks of service-learning.

Table 3***Service-Learning Client Benefits and Drawbacks***

| Service-Learning Client Benefits | Service-Learning Drawbacks |
|---|--|
| Clients are provided with professional recommendations and training (Calvert et al. 2012) (Jordan and Schraeder, 2011) | It is educationally harmful (Egger, 2008) |
| Organizations benefited by new information, new ideas, enhanced program offerings, and better management (Olberding et al. 2016). | Student schedule conflicts Unreliability of partners not fulfilling their work Communication issues with the professor and the classmates (Morin, 2009). |
| Organizations benefited from innovative solutions (Lampe, 2016) | International students were less prone to future community service (Witmer, 2004) Students don't believe that service learning benefited the community (Crews et al. 2013) Students tend to be less enthusiastic participating in future service-learning if they are required to take service learning in order to enter the university and less prone to recommend their classes to other students. (Dienhart, 2016) |

Future Directions

The findings of the current literature should serve as a beacon as to where the future direction of research in the area of service learning should go. Future studies need to be more rigorous in terms of not just referencing individual examples in specific academic disciplines, but by utilizing larger samples and better methodologies to return a measure of effectiveness of ASL. Yet, the vast majority of the research involves case studies, interviews, and qualitative methodologies. These are appropriate for providing insights and the development of hypotheses, but they cannot rigorously test hypotheses and thus they cannot establish causality and valid generalizations. To address this, better quasi-experimentations could help in improving research in this area and help in the generalizations of results. While we accept that ASL is a unique micro-experience in each class and its corresponding external setting we feel exploration of the utilization of the untreated control group design with pretest and posttest could be a vast improvement from the ones that have been utilized up to now while threats of history could also be reduced (Cook and Campbell, 1983). This echoes the sentiments of Fuco and Root (2010) who call for an increased focus on experimental studies. We feel this will serve to improve the quality of inquiry into service learning and should be encouraged by such stalwart publications in this domain such as the *Journal of Service Learning in Higher Education* and the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*.

The longevity of online magazines such as *Community Works* and *Campus Compact* as well as conferences such as those of *Engagement Scholarship Consortium* show how campus-community engagement has a sustainable place in learning and scholarship. However, we accept that from an academic-rigor perspective further studies are needed to bolster its place as a valid teaching and learning tool. While the next paragraph points to the overall positive effect of ASL, it remains that tighter, more controlled research must be conducted to support the validity of ASL as a teaching and learning medium.

To date, tantalizing information is pointing towards the value of service learning. For example, Marques (2016) in her findings shows that 35% of students who took a service-learning project continued to work with the community organization even after the project was finished. She reports that MBA students had a transformational experience and changed their careers to more socially oriented ones. Also, Hegarty and Angelidis (2015) found that service-learning had an impact on the emotional intelligence of the student participants. The vast majority of the literature points to positive effects of service learning. However, the existing findings highlight the need for further investigation of the impact of service learning upon students.

Future research should examine the impact of service learning upon students by considering the following:

1. The duration of academic service-learning. There is no research done examining the impact of the duration of the service-learning project upon the student benefits or the client benefits. The research has shown that there is a variety of service-learning projects. Some of them last a few hours while others last a whole semester. A service-learning project that requires the students to deal with a not-for-profit organization for a whole semester may have a greater impact than a project that requires students to spend a few hours with the same organization.
2. The number of service-learning projects taken. There are universities and programs that require their students to take multiple service-learning projects in a variety of courses. There are universities or programs where service-learning is a part of a single course. Future research should examine whether there is a difference in the impact of the number of service-learning projects upon the student benefits.
3. The degree of student involvement. Current research has not addressed the impact of the degree of student involvement in service-learning. There are projects that require high student involvement in the project, in these cases the student has to immerse him/herself with the community organization, while there are projects that involve little student involvement. A high involvement case could be the development of a sophisticated computer program with continuous interaction with the site versus manning the reception office of a community organization.
4. Type of student service-learning involvement: Direct versus Indirect. No research has examined the impact of the type of service-learning involvement upon the student benefits. There are projects that require students to do service-learning on the community site of the organization (direct involvement) while there are projects that do not require students to be on-site (indirect involvement). Examples of on-site projects could be

serving meals to needy people in a church, off-site projects could be developing a strategic plan in class for a community organization.

5. Another area of research should involve the focus of the service-learning. Is the focus of the service-learning project a human as in the case of visiting sick older persons, or is it a community organization as helping the development of an accounting system for a community organization, or the society at large as volunteering at the U.N.? The type of service focus may have a different impact upon the students.
6. Another area of investigation concerns the impact of the course subject upon the student benefits. Courses in humanities, sciences, engineering, business, education, law may have different impacts upon student benefits. Assisting in end of life patients of a hospice may have a more profound effect upon the students than providing advice how to structure a financial portfolio of a community organization.
7. The degree of alignment of student interest with the purpose of service learning is another area that needs investigation. Dienhart et al. (2016) reports that students who had to take service-learning as part of a program to be accepted to a university were less enthusiastic and less likely to recommend these classes than the students who took service-learning as a part of a class in their regular curriculum. Students taking service-learning as a part of a program to enter a university is focused more on the acceptance to the university rather the service-learning. Students taking service-learning as part of a course for their degree see how they can utilize the knowledge learnt in class to the community organization. Thus, student interest is aligned more in this case than the first one.
8. The type and depth of reflection upon student benefits. There are many types and multiple points where reflection may occur. The question that needs to be asked is what is the impact of various types of reflection upon student benefits? Does the number of times reflection is asked from the students affect their benefits?

Conclusion

This article sought to offer clarity to university administrators and faculty on the purpose and use of ASL as a teaching method. It did this by exploring the relevant literature on service learning at the college level so as to better understand its development and benefits as well as identifying areas where future research needs to explore. It also served to give those considering ASL as an alignment with organizational mission a strong foundation in its purpose and areas of applicability. In doing so, six streams of research were identified as well as positing eight further areas for examination.

With the field of study of service-learning expanding exponentially in the last decade there is no question that the plethora of results point to a positive impact upon both students and the community at large. In a world of increasing interdependence and change, academic service-learning allows students to see themselves as sensitive, active members of society where they discover the creative link between classroom knowledge and its application in providing solutions to social problems, thus creating a better world.

The literature has described the reasons service-learning was introduced in the curriculum. It also showed that though it began as an institutional response to social pressures it proved to be a tool where unexpected benefits accrue to student learning and creates a beneficial link between society at large and the university.

To be successful academic service-learning has to be carefully planned and executed. The role of the service-learning infrastructure has been highlighted because it provides contact with the community and allows the adaptation of appropriate projects, training and support of faculty who include them in their classes, and assistance in project execution. However, serious problems can occur if attention is not paid to every detail, because it occurs in a dynamic environment. The potential of academic service-learning cannot be overstated, for this reason the impetus that has occurred in the research has to continue.

In this article we have highlighted research that shows how ASL can be an effective tool in student learning. However, despite discussing numerous articles that show learning has occurred it is difficult to pinpoint 'how much' learning and the strength of that learning. In order to move scholarship forward we therefore propose that new more vigorous methodologies need to be applied using control groups. However, we are aware that dividing a class of students and providing an 'experience' to one half may result in operational difficulties. To address this, better designs of quasi experimentation could possibly provide the answer to this problem by returning correlational relationships indicating strengths of associations (Fuco and Root, 2010). Future research has to be able to refine and point out which aspects of service-learning affect what type of benefits to students, the community organizations and society at large. The proposal of eight hypotheses are offered in this paper as a means to offer future direction for research inquiry which we encourage researchers to consider.

While there is no definitive way to recommend the implementation of service learning as each university and community organization is different, it was the hope of these authors to identify ways in which the benefits of service learning can be increased through identifying already successful service learning programs while also pointing towards areas of research that need to be addressed. In conducting this research we discovered that ASL is a highly beneficial tool in the arsenal of teaching methods while also acknowledging that it serves to build and tighten relationships with community organizations. Consequently, we also find it to be a very viable vehicle of a university's mission should community engagement be a part of said mission.

Author Notes

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