



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

International Review of Economics Education

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/iree



A practical guide to incorporating service learning into development economics classes



Julia Paxton*

Ohio University, 329 Bentley Annex, Athens, OH 45701, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 September 2014

Received in revised form 28 December 2014

Accepted 18 January 2015

Available online 28 January 2015

JEL classification:

A2

O1

Keywords:

Service learning

Teaching pedagogy

Development economics education

ABSTRACT

Service learning has been proven to increase learning outcomes and can provide an effective teaching pedagogy for applied development economics classes. This paper discusses three different types of service learning used in an Economics of Poverty course including volunteerism, class field trips, and field experiments. Pre and post-course evaluations of service learning show strong student enthusiasm and positive learning outcomes. The paper provides a set of practical guidelines that help to enhance the service learning experience. By taking into account planning, logistics, communication, and follow-through, the instructor can help mitigate many of the problems that can arise with service learning.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

On the first day of class, professors of development economics are always thrilled to see returning Peace Corps volunteers and students from the developing world in their classrooms. These students not only are able to share interesting insights with the rest of the class, but they are more motivated to learn and understand economic theories related to development. However, most of the students in class do not have international experience and seem unable to relate to many of the concepts taught in class. Service learning is a teaching pedagogy that gives students real world experience, providing much needed context to all students.

Numerous studies highlight the benefits of incorporating a community service experience into a traditional classroom setting through service learning. From the student perspective, these advantages include higher course satisfaction, higher academic performance, enhanced critical

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 740 597 1249.

E-mail address: paxton@ohio.edu.

thinking skills, more time spent on theoretical course content, and better engagement, motivation and attendance (Evangelopoulos et al., 2003; Eyster and Giles, 1999; Billig, 2000). Despite these benefits, service learning is rarely utilized in economics classes. Drawing from over a decade of experience utilizing service learning in an Economics of Poverty class in the Appalachian foothills, this paper provides a practical guide for incorporating service learning into a class designed to teach concepts related to poverty and development economics. The paper discusses various types of projects and guidelines for effective service learning with an application to development economics.

1. Service learning pedagogy in economics

Service learning is a curricular-based teaching pedagogy that incorporates experiential learning through community service and traditional classroom lectures and activities. The Kolb (1981) learning cycle divides the learning process into four distinct stages: (1) a concrete experience, (2) reflection and observation, (3) abstraction and generalization, and (4) application and testing of implications in different contexts. McGoldrick (1998) argues that most traditional classroom training in economics focuses on stages three (lecture) and four (exams and assignments) of the Kolb learning cycle. In contrast, experiential learning encompasses the first two parts of the Kolb learning cycle. Recent research suggests that learning is enhanced not only by “learning by doing,” but that learning performance is enhanced even more when combined with “learning by thinking” (Di Stefano et al., 2014). Not all experiential learning is service learning. For instance, a class on poverty may incorporate certain types of experiential learning through poverty simulations or classroom experiments. Service learning, on the other hand, usually involves a community partner and incorporates an element of volunteerism to serve the greater good. As Fig. 1 illustrates, service learning combines experiential learning and traditional classroom activities to provide a complete learning experience that can be superior to traditional lectures in economics (McGoldrick, 1998; Elliott, 2009).

Within the field of economics, development economics is particularly well suited for service learning. Elliott (2009) contends that service learning works best in applied policy oriented disciplines. Development economics analyzes appropriate roles for governments and institutions in addressing poverty and economic growth. Microeconomic models focus in on micro-level, human-centered incentive issues for individuals, institutions, and governments. These issues are highlighted in a tangible and clear manner when students have the opportunity to work with institutions engaged in poverty alleviation efforts. A reflection component of the service allows students to develop their critical thinking skills by considering the limits and contributions of economic theories and models that seek to explain the complexities of poverty and economic development. Research has shown that in addition to the service hours, service learning increases the amount of time that students spend learning the concepts taught in lecture.

Service Learning as the Sum of the Kolb Learning Cycle

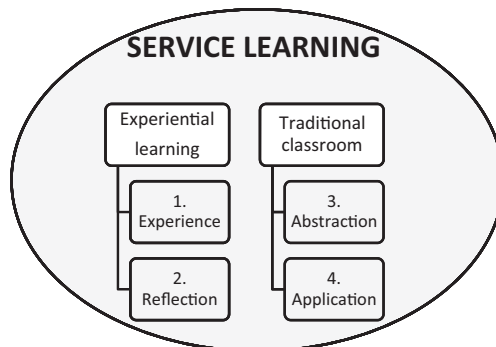


Fig. 1. Service learning as the sum of the Kolb learning cycle.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6841889>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6841889>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)