EUROPE ENGAGE

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING

WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE

GUIDELINES FOR INSTITUTIONALIZATION
OF SERVICE-LEARNING

2017

CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Aim of these guidelines

Universities in Europe are increasingly taking into account their role in facing and solving social, civic, economic, and moral problems of our time. This happens through research and teaching, but also **through engagement in active, deliberate collaborative partnerships.** This approach is included in the Bologna Process and Declaration (1999), which states the following:

> '*A Europe of knowledge is now widely recognized as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competences to face the challenges of the new millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space. ... The importance of education and educational co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies is universally acknowledged as paramount...*"

Europe Engage is a 3-year Erasmus+ project (2015-2017) including 12 European universities[1]. It aims in promoting the above-introduced agenda through service-learning in Europe. Service-learning (S-L henceforth) is a pedagogical approach that embeds and develops civic engagement within higher education. This project aims also to be the start of a European network of universities carrying out S-L.

S-L can be institutionalized in two ways: top down and bottom up. In reality, elements of both approaches are often mixed. Institutionalization through a 'bottom up' approach proceeds through individual faculty starting to use the method. A need for synergy and common structures and policy is then noticed, and institutionalization and policy are then developed to university (and/or society) wide programs or policies. Institutionalization is increasingly common in countries with a longer history of S-L such as the US and Ireland, and UK, but it is likely to benefit also institutions in countries that are starting with S-L. Institutionalization through a 'top down' approach means providing the structures and policy for S-L before it is well known by faculty, and in this way also encouraging and helping teachers to use it. Institutionalization can advance the use of S-L, bring quality to it, and save resources of individual faculty starting out with this pedagogical approach.

In the last decades, scholars have addressed the administrative processes and resources needed to support S-L and have generated research-based indicators and models that serve as best practices and describe the most effective methods for successful S-L programs. In these models, S-L is viewed as an ongoing, expected, valued, and legitimate part of the institution's intellectual core and organizational culture (Klentzin & Wierbzbowski-Kwiatkowak,

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1. Partner Universities in the project are: Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain, University of Zagreb, Croatia, Erasmus University of Rotterdam, Netherlands, Ghent University, Belgium, Instituto Superior de Psicología Aplicada, Portugal, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland, University of Applied Science-Krems, Austria, University of Bologna, Italy, University of Brighton, United Kingdom, University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany, University of Helsinki, Finland, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania.

2013). In addition, as S-L includes the work and goals of several stakeholders, the viewpoints of students and community partners also need to be included as institutionalization is developed.

This document provides guidelines for institutionalization of service-learning based on research and models of institutionalization of this methodology. The guidelines have been developed in the Europe Engage project in collaboration with the partnering universities. First, we will briefly introduce S-L and its benefits (section 2), then the essential standards of high quality S-L will be described (section 3), and finally the actual guidelines for high quality institutionalization of S-L will be presented (section 4).

2. SERVICE-LEARNING: WHAT AND WHY

> *"Service-Learning (sometimes referred to as community based or community engaged learning) is an innovative pedagogical approach that integrates meaningful community service or engagement into the curriculum and offers students academic credit for the learning that derives from active engagement within community and work on a real world problem. Reflection and experiential learning strategies underpin the process and the service is linked to the academic discipline"* (McIlrath et al., 2016, p. 5).

The importance of civic engagement and community involvement to individuals, communities, and society has been widely acknowledged in research and political decision-making during the last decades. The benefits for young people are considered to be personal development, career opportunities, increased confidence as well as pro-social attitudes and behavior. Community involvement is also a means of promoting trust and cohesion in communities, as well as a psychological sense of community (Eley, 2003; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2008; 2011 State of the World's Volunteerism Report, 2011).

Educational institutions worldwide have included this methodology in their education, recognizing the individual and societal level benefits mentioned above, as well as its positive impact in learning. This is the case in countries like the United States, Australia, and Malaysia, where S-L programs have become a common trend[2]. In Europe, there are some pioneering countries in S-L such as Ireland and Spain, but the approach is not widely used in most European countries and universities (McIlrath et al., 2016).

The benefits of S-L have been the object of numerous studies, and although further studies are called for, conducted research has shown that it enhances students' sense of civic responsibility, life skill development, as well as academic development, and contributes to learning and cognitive development in social issues (Astin & Sax, 1998; Parker-Gwin, 1996; Raskoff & Sundeen, 1999). Also students themselves have evaluated that S-L increases their confidence and self-esteem, and make them feel proud of their achievements, thus adding to their personal development and citizenship. The benefits of enhancing different skills, such as communication, leadership and entrepreneurship as a result of S-L have also been shown

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2. For example, the Talloires network, an international association of institutions committed to strengthening the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education includes members in 77 countries as well as regional networks (http://talloiresnetwork.tufts.edu/what-we-do/regional-partnerships/)

(e. g. Eley, 2003). Skills related to the specific field of study with which S-L is combined can also develop through applying theory to practice, and students gain work experience and social contacts (Van der Voort, Meijs & Whiteman, 2005). S-L can enhance students to choose the right vocation and improve their resumes and opportunities as they leave the university and seek jobs (for summary on research results see Haski-Leventhal et al., 2010). Thus, integrating S-L into curricula **has proved to be a powerful pedagogical method.**

While optional S-L programs have yielded the above positive impacts, compulsory programs have received criticism. In some cases, mandatory S-L programs have failed to develop positive community attitudes and active social behavior (e. g. Warburton & Davis Smith, 2003). Instead, they may even weaken the civic identities of individuals. Other studies have also showed that S-L –both mandatory and optional– can have other negative impacts, especially if not done well (e.g. Hollis, 2002; Miller, 1997; Niehaus, 2005). Students may become frustrated and feel unable to make a difference. Thus, S-L has many positive outcomes for universities to claim, but as the above summarized studies show, **quality of S-L is key in claiming its benefits** and it has to be done in an effective and professional manner.

The guidelines provided in this document offer a research based approach for European higher education (and societies) to develop and institutionalize high quality S-L in their institutions.

3. QUALITY STANDARDS OF SERVICE LEARNING

Researchers and pedagogues in the Europe Engage Erasmus+ project have identified the essential features and quality standards for S-L (for the full document and detailed description of the quality standards see Stark et al., 2016). Essentials of S-L activities are **indicators shared by scholars and practitioners both on a global scale and in different kinds of higher education institutions**, and they may serve as a ground rule for S-L quality.

The essential features of S-L are:

1. Meeting actual community needs so that S-L meets both real world challenges of the community/relevant community partners and will be meaningful to student participants as well.

2. S-L is linked to curriculum, that is to say relevant to the study program. This requires active involvement of teachers/academic staff, systematic integration in study programs and the option to be recognized for students.

3. S-L facilitates active, regular and ongoing student reflection guided by teaching personnel and/or community partners. Reflection should lead to the understanding of diverse perspectives inherent to challenges.

4. The main learning setting in S-L is located outside the classroom in real world settings of community partners (such as schools, community centers or initiatives).

The **quality standards of S-L** are (Stark et al., 2016):

1. The service component meets a real civic need.

2. Service-Learning is meaningful and relevant to community partners and students.

3. It explores issues that are vital to social, civic, cultural, economic and political society.

4. The community partners have been consulted.

5. Community organisations are valued as partners.

6. There is a flow of knowledge, information and benefits in both directions between the University and its community partners in activities.

7. Every individual, organization, and entity involved in the service-learning functions as both a teacher and a learner.

8. Defined goals are reachable and measurable, for the specific S-L project.

9. Goals and values are discussed with the community partner.

10. S-L is linked to the curriculum/study program of students.

11. Teachers/academic staff are actively involved,

12. S-L is integrated in the study program in a systematic way.

13. S-L has credit recognition.

14. Civic learning relied to personal and social competencies, is an important category of students learning goals (beside academic learning goals).

15. Academic theory is viewed in a real world context.

16. S-L offers opportunities to learn and deepen understanding for all participants (students, faculty and community partners).

17. Students have a strong voice in planning, implementing and evaluating the S-L experience

18. S-L facilitates active, regular and ongoing student.

19. Reflection is guided by teaching personnel.

20. Reflection is guided by community partners.

21. Reflection leads to understand diverse perspectives of challenges.

22. There is a mechanism that encourages students to link their service experience to the academic curriculum.

23. There is a mechanism that encourages students to reflect upon the effects of the service.

24. Support and coaching for students is ensured from academic staff.

25. Support and coaching for students is ensured from community partners.

26. S-L offers adequate time frames for making experiences effective and sustainable.

27. S-L offers adequate time frames for learning in community settings/with community partners.

28. Evaluation is included as an integral part of the S-L activity.

29. Documentation is included as an integral part of the S-L activity.

30. Service work is presented to the public.

31. S-L makes an opportunity for the community to enter into a public dialogue.

32. The service-learning activity is transdisciplinary.

33. It is expected that the activity will have an impact in the community after its closing.

34. The Project has the resources to continue running in the future.

35. The community is engaged in sustaining the program for the long-term.

All of the requirements may not be fully achieved in all S-L, but the quality standards can serve as a guideline of indicators when one is about to design or to evaluate S-L activities.

4. GUIDELINES FOR INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SERVICE-LEARNING IN EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES

The goal of institutionalization is to provide institutional support for S-L. A Europe Engage report (McIlrath et al., 2016) identified six main groups of barriers of establishing S-L as an approach in partnering countries, and they have been used as contextual knowledge in sketching the following guidelines for institutionalization. The recognized barriers indicate areas in which faculty need support as they establish S-L in their universities. The barriers can, to a large extent, be tackled with institutionalization. The barriers recognized in the Europe Engage report (McIlrath et al., 2016) were: Time; knowledge and expertise; funding, national and institutional prioritization; coordinating unit; and reward and recognition.

Time - Almost all respondents mentioned time as a major barrier towards the implementation of S-L. All acknowledged the need for time and energy to establish partnerships (with community members) and coordinate logistics related to S-L. Release time from other duties was one possible solution offered towards the implementation of S-L.

Knowledge and expertise – in some responses a lack of knowledge and expertise in SL was acknowledged as a barrier. It was also detailed that the name SL is a barrier.

Funding - A deficit of funding, cuts in university funding and the recession were acknowledged as having a negative bearing on the adopting of S-L as an approach.

National and Institutional Prioritization – it was noted in some responses that other areas such as research or key new national and institutional priorities such as employability overshadowed the importance given to S-L. There was a concern that as a result S-L could remain on the periphery.

Coordinating Unit – it was acknowledged that the absence of a dedicated coordinating unit or team of people designated to S-L is a major barrier.

Reward and Recognition – a lack of internal and external rewards and recognition are seen as major barriers towards the embedding of S-L.

4.1. Guidelines for institutionalization

The following guidelines of institutionalization battle these challenges as they aim in making the use of S-L easier for individual faculty. They take into account issues which should be considered when institutionalizing S-L. The guidelines have been extracted and combined from research and practical tools developed for institutionalization of S-L in different contexts. The following publications were used: Bringle & Hatcher (2000), Furco (2003), Holland (1997), Jeandron & Robinson (2010), and Klentzin & Wierzbowski-Kwiatkowak (2013).

The guidelines include short 'questions for reflection', which can be used to evaluate the level of institutionalization or to plan concrete steps or goals for the institutionalization of S-L. As education and institutional features vary in different organizational and cultural contexts, **these guidelines should be used as a starting point and supporting tool for planning and evaluating specific steps for institutionalization in each context**.

4.1.1. National and institutional prioritization of S-L

Indicators

- Chosing the definition of S-L and committing to it (Quality standards as a tool, which helps in defining S-L)

- Philosophy of S-L: the 'why' of S-L or, more broadly, community engagement

- Understanding the possibilities of S-L, and integrating it in educational policy (e.g. in funding, including S-L in evaluation)

- Understanding the possibilities of S-L and integrating it in the strategy of the university

Questions for reflection

- What is our definition of service-learning?

- How is S-L included in the educational policy?

- How is S-L included in the institutional mission statement/strategic plan?

- How are S-L and its evaluation linked with the institutional goals?

4.1.2. Institutional support for S-L

Indicators

- Inclusion in strategies at all levels (e.g. department, faculty, campus, university)

- Integrating S-L to the structures and processes of the institution (developing teaching, planning curricula, etc.)

- Resources for staff to learn and utilize S-L (time, knowledge, materials, tools, training)

- Budgets and financial incentives

- Other incentives (releasing time for developing S-L, recognition, awards, including S-L in evaluations for wage, promotion, tenure)

- Centralized support (a responsible resource unit in the organization, can be an office dedicated to community engagement/SL in contexts where S-L is (or is planned to be) widely used

- Communication inside and outside the organizations, to students, faculty, community partners (i.a. about the opportunities, experiences, methods, and results of S-L)

Questions for reflection

- Are internal funding and physical resources, including space, available for S-L activities?

- Who are the contact persons for faculty to go to if they have questions about S-L?

- How can we provide curriculum and instructional support for the service-learning pedagogy?

- What training/development opportunities regarding S-L are there for the staff?

- Who maintains a collection of service-learning syllabi that is accessible to all teachers?

• What logistical support is offered to faculty (i.e., agency placement, student forms, tracking hours, pre-and post-service evaluation)?

• How is service-learning included in new grant proposals?

• Should we have a service learning advisory committee?

• How do our new employee orientation sessions and materials feature service-learning information for faculty and staff?

• By what means is S-L presented to the students?

4.1.3. Cooperation

Indicators

- Including students and partners in implementing, advancing and planning S-L: organization level plans for implementing S-L, advisory boards, assessment, designing courses, communication etc.

- Focusing on leading partnerships (quality over quantity), building and maintaining reciprocal relationships with selected S-L partners

- Establishing national networks for support (learn form each other and share knowledge, experiences and expertise)

Questions for reflection

• Does the student government support service-learning? In what ways?

• How do we create opportunities for student involvement and leadership?

• Who decides which agencies, organizations, or schools are official service-learning partners? What are the criteria?

• How wide is our national network on S-L and how well does it function?

• What is our stand on having a centralized S-L office (local, and/or national)?

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