

The Effects of Employing Service Learning of Phanakhon Rajabhat University

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Abstract

The objective of this action research project was to study the effect of employing service learning procedures in the subject Communication in Rural Development. The target group comprised 40 third-year students, majoring in Communication Arts (regular curriculum), who were purposively sampled from those signing up for 3013205 Communication in Rural Development subject in the second semester of the 2012 academic year at the Faculty of Science Management, Phranakhon Rajabhat University. The statistics used in this research were descriptive statistics; frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The inferential statistic used to test the hypothesis was One-Sample t-test. Group discussions were conducted to study the effect of employing service learning procedures. The learning achievement was higher than 60 percent. The students had positive attitudes and could apply communication tools in real situations. The students were very satisfied with the service learning technique.

Keyword: Service Learning, Communication in Rural Development, Action Research

1. Introduction

Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with classroom learning. The learning is focused on critical analysis, reflective thinking and civic responsibility. Service learning is a form of experiential education. Students use their newly acquired classroom academic skills to solve real-life problems or to meet the needs of the community. Through hands-on experiences, students can have a better understanding and better community service skills after dealing with the real situations. Moreover, service learning is another appropriate pedagogy for ethical and moral education courses (Wasalee Chatsuthipan, 2013).

Communication in Rural Development is a subject of the Communication Arts Program at Phranakhon Rajabhat University. The program was designed to prepare the students become more responsible and contributing members of the community. The students work with other people in the community, solving the community problems, through a process of applying what they have learned in the class to the real situation. As the students seek to achieve the real objectives for the community, they have a better understanding and increased their community service experiences and skills (Eyler and Giles, 1999 cited in Wasalee Chatsuthipan, 2013). This effective practice offers strategies that instructors can use to integrate civic responsibility concepts and activities into their courses so that students go away with a greater understanding of what is expected of them as citizens in our society (Gottlieb and Robinson, 2002 referred to Wasalee Chatsuthipan, 2013). Examples of researches on service learning are as follows:

In 2004, Narumon Maneengam conducted research on 'A Development of the Program to Promote an Energy Saving Mind through Service Learning Concept for Prathom Suksa Six Students'. The research aimed to develop a program to promote the energy saving mind through service learning concept for Prathom Suksa Six (Grade 6, elementary school) students. The result found that Prathom Suksa Six students who participated in this program had more energy saving mind. 90 percent of the students had the critical reflection level 3 of the energy saving mind, whereas, ten percent of the students had reflectivity level 2. The post-test arithmetic mean score of the students' awareness of energy saving was higher than the pre-test at the .05 level of significance. After the program, the students had shown more energy saving behaviors than before at the .05 level of significance.

In 2007, Kittiya Phakongkham conducted research on 'The Effects of Employing Service Learning Procedure on Social Service Awareness, Achievement, and Attitudes toward Learning in the Social Studies, Religion, and Culture Learning Substance Group of Prathom Suksa 4 Students (Grade 4, elementary school students) at Ban Phomphaeng School under the Office of Sakon Nakhon Educational Service Area 3'. This research found that the post-test average score of the students' social service awareness, learned through service learning procedure, was higher than the pre-test average score at the .05 level of significance. The post-test average score of the students' learning achievement, learned procedure through service learning, was higher than the pre-test average score at the .05 level of significance.

In 2007, Patcharin Setajan conducted research on 'The Effect of Service Learning on Social Adjustment in the University of Students at Assumption University in Bangkok'. The purpose of that research was to study the effect of service learning on social adjustment in the university students at Assumption University, Bangkok, in the academic year of 2006. The results found that the working on social adjustment in the university students exposed to the Service-Learning program was significantly better than before the experiment at .01 levels.

In 2008, Pantip Lao-hakote conducted research on 'The Development of Learning Activity through Service Learning for Enhancing Awareness of Forest-Resource Conservation among the First Year of the Secondary Students'. The objective of this study was to develop a learning activity through service learning among the first year secondary students. The findings revealed that after the service learning was administered, the students had significantly higher awareness of forest-resource conservation than that before it was implemented at the .05 level. Those who undertook service learning had significantly higher learning achievement of forest-resource conservation than that before this kind of activity was implemented at the .05 level. Based on service learning activity, it was found that the students had a significantly higher ability of problem solving than that before the service learning was implemented at the .05 level.

As the significant results mentioned in the above research, the instructor was interested in implementing the service learning for students in Communication in Rural Development subject. Research results will also be used to develop the future subjects for this program.

1. Research Objectives

This research consisted of two objectives:

1.1 To study the learning achievement of the students participation in this service learning procedure in Communication in Rural Development subject.

1.2 To study the effect of employing service learning procedures of the students participated in this service learning procedure in Communication in Rural Development subject.

2. Methodology

The objectives of this research were to study the learning achievement and to study the effects of employing the service learning procedure of the university students, Communication in Rural Development subject, Communication Arts program, Phanakhon Rajabhat University. This action research lasted for four months in the second semester of the 2012 academic year from the beginning of October 2012 to the end of January 2013. This action research used mixed methods research. The research instruments were an evaluation form to study the learning achievement and focus group discussions to study the effect of employing service learning procedure in Communication in Rural Development subject.

3.1 Samples

The population is 40 third-year students, majoring in Communication Arts (regular curriculum), who registered for the Communication in Rural Development subject. They were purposively sampled from students who signed up for 3013205 Communication in Rural Development subject in the second semester of the 2012 academic year at the Faculty of Science Management, Phranakhon Rajabhat University.

3.2 Research Instruments

An evaluation form was created to be an instrument for this research. To qualify the research instrument, the evaluation form was submitted to three experts who assessed and made the appropriate recommendation as to its thoroughness.

The statistics used in this research were descriptive statistics: frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The inferential statistic used to test hypothesis was One-Sample t-test. In addition, group discussions were used to study the effect of the employing service learning procedure.

3.3 Data Collection

The following were stages of data collection:

3.3.1 The instructor explained the processes of human learning and the project evaluations.

3.3.2 The instructor lectured concepts and theories, related to communication, for the students to understand the local development.

3.3.3 Students were divided into groups. The process of learning was follows as:

3.3.4 Selecting the community problems, related to communication problems.

3.3.5 Analyzing those community problems.

3.3.6 Planning projects to solve the problems. Students then had a chance to apply what they learned in the classroom to the real world for hands-on experiences.

3.3.7 Evaluating and concluding the learning. The students are asked to summarize the results and to report them in the classroom.

3.3.8 The instructor evaluated the project and the students discussed the benefits of service learning.

3.4 Data Analysis

The statistics used in this research were descriptive statistics: frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The inferential statistic used to test hypothesis was One-Sample t-test. Group discussions were used to study the effect of employing service learning procedure.

4. Research results

The results were presented according to the research objectives as follows:

4.1 The learning achievement of students in Communication in Rural Development subject were shown in table 1

*Table 1
Mean of Scores of students in Communication in Rural Development subject*

Group	Frequency	Mean	SD.	t
Students who registered in Communication in Rural Development subject learned through service learning procedures	40	79.53	0.54	36.44*

* p< .05

As shown in table 1, the inferential statistic used to test hypothesis was one-sample t-test. The learning achievement was significant higher than 60 percent at the .05 level of significance.

4.2 The instructor used focus group discussion technique to study the effects of employing service learning procedures in Communication in Rural Development subject. From the discussions, the participated students found several benefits from the implementation of the service learning procedures. The benefits of the service learning procedures can be summarized as follows:

- 4.2.1 Giving the students a chance to understand and to analyze the real problems of the community
- 4.2.2 Developing the students' self-development
- 4.2.3 Increasing the students' positive thinking toward the community
- 4.2.4 Giving the students a chance to apply the theories, learned in the class, to the real situations.
- 4.2.5 Developing the students' communication skills

5. Discussion

The following points based on the research results were discussed:

5.1 This finding is consistent with Pantip Lao-hakote (2008), Kittiya Phakongkham (2007), and Narumon Maneengam (2004) who said that students who learned through service learning had significantly higher learning achievement.

5.2 Through the service learning procedures, the students were able to learn and to analyze the problems of their community. They interviewed people on the

community problems such as the global warming, environmental problems, and the dirtiness in the community after the flood crisis in 2011, etc.

The students developed self-confidence and courage to talk to people in the community. Meanwhile, they built good relationships, supporting and sharing, in the team.

In addition, the students were given a chance to do hands-on experience projects. They analyzed target groups, selected media (such as printed media), demonstrated and set up activities in the community. They applied communication tools, learned in the class, in the real situations.

This finding was consistent with Pantip Lao-hakote (2008) and Kittiya Phakongkham (2007) that the students' awareness and attitude were higher than the post-test. Beside, Pacharin Setajan (2007) said that working in social adjustment in the university of students exposed to the service learning program was significantly better than before the experiment at .01 levels.

6. Conclusion

Preang Kitratporn, the former president of Phranakhon Rajabhat University (2012) said that from the present and the future trends, the higher educational institutions emphasize more and more social and community problem solving. Teaching, learning and conducting research are more likely been done outside classrooms or in the local communities, aiming that the students will be able to integrate the problem with the action and experimental research. In principles of service learning, first, the students must choose the activities and survey problems of the community themselves. Second, the problems should be real-life problems or should meet the needs in the community. Third, the evaluation should measure the learning objectives (Narumon Maneegnam, 2004). Overall, the result revealed that the students were very satisfied with the service learning techniques. Therefore, service learning is an appropriate pedagogy in Communication in Rural Development subject.

7. Recommendation

The following are some recommendations based on the research results:

7.1 The study of service learning can be used to teach the students in other subjects. It is the real world, which students will learn by themselves.

7.2 The further studies should compare the other studying technique.

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