

# Environmental Service Learning- Experience of a few Indian colleges

Compiled & presented by

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# Academic Service-Learning

(in a nut shell)

- **Experiential education with reciprocal learning-** application of classroom knowledge to community and vice versa, mutually benefiting the service providers and the recipients
- Provides a venue (or platform) for critical thinking, analysis and group interaction with **structured time** for *reflection*-talk/write (both formal & informal)

# Key elements of Quality S-L

- **Integrated** into academic curriculum and apply academic skills to **solve real life problems**
- **Thoughtfully** organized to address **genuine community needs**
- A **Collaborative effort** of 'stakeholders' - students, teachers, administrators, NGOs and service recipients-in designing & implementation of service project
- Provides time for **reflection** before, during & after the service deliberately connecting curriculum, personal socio-cultural and civic aspects
- **Evaluation** by all partners to assess progress & realization of set goals

# Environmental Service Learning (ES-L)

## -an effective pedagogy

- Hits 3 mangoes at one stroke-
  - Effective learning
  - Meaningful service
  - Improved Environment
- Makes all the difference in learning, career options, life style & behavior, attitude & outlook of all involved
- Net result-**Better persons, Better world and Better society**

# Institutions (Indian) involved in ES-L

| <b>Institutions</b>                         | <b>S-L Environmental project</b>  |
|---|---|
| St. Ann's College of Education<br>Mangalore | Environment & health awareness through<br>community based S-L           |
| Stella Maris College, Chennai               | Eco initiatives for environmental<br>conservation and health management |
| Madras Christian college, Chennai           | Systemizing recycling methods & reviving life<br>of recyclers           |
| Women's Christian College,<br>Chennai       | Plastic bag menace-an assessment,<br>sensitization & mitigation program |
| <b>Union Christian College, Aluva</b>       | <b>Green campus Green minds</b>   |

# Profile of academic ES-L in institutions

| Participants & beneficiaries<br>S-L courses  | S-L activities   | Community benefits   | Student learning  | Remarks   |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| <p><b>St Ann's College Mangalore (Teacher training)</b><br/>Students, school children, parents &amp; rural community</p> <p><b>S-L courses-</b><br/>Geography, Environmental Education, Biol.Sci</p> | <p>Environment &amp; health awareness program-field study, rally-preparation of advocacy materials on SWM&amp; distribution, Demonstration of waste segregation, organic manure preparation, &amp; setting up eco-garden</p> | <p>Got convinced of the need for safe disposal of waste<br/>Learnt to convert waste into wealth-paper/cloth bags, organic manure preparation</p> | <p>Got sensitized &amp; convinced of the need for SWM<br/>Obtained practical skills in waste segregation, recycling, manure preparation and eco gardening<br/>Took initiative in planning &amp; execution of eco projects</p> | <p><b>Community</b> -very welcoming and supportive<br/><b>Students</b> were convinced of the need to promote healthy and clean environment in personal and public life;<br/>S-L an enriching experience</p> |

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|---|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Union Christian College, Aluva</b><br/>students &amp; faculty<br/>School children, campus &amp; neighboring community<br/>S-L activities coordinated by CES and Dept of Psychology-nodal centre</p>   | <p>-Installing vermin - compost units, rainwater harvest units<br/>-develop vegetable garden, medicinal &amp; ornamental plants collection,maintenance &amp; distribution of seedlings and campus greening</p> | <p>Campus greening &amp; beautification,<br/>Enhancing campus biodiversity<br/>Become aware of good environmental practices<br/>Gain monetarily by growing vegetable garden,ornamental plants</p> | <p>-Gain hands-on experience in eco action<br/>-Opportunity to know campus &amp; community needs and involve in fulfilling them</p> |
| <p><b>Madras Christian College Chennai-</b><br/>students &amp; faculty of Chemistry, NGO, formal &amp; informal recyclers , target village community<br/><b>S-L Course-</b><br/>Environmental Chemistry</p> | <p>Survey &amp; pilot study on SWM &amp; recycling plastics e waste<br/>Study of pollution levels<br/>Generating public awareness</p>  | <p>Know-how of sorting &amp; recycling waste<br/>Become aware of health issues and safety precautions</p>   | <p>SWM of local community-recycling methods to convert waste to wealth, socio economic and health issues of recyclers</p>           |

# Profile of academic S-L in institutions

| Participants, courses & beneficiaries  | S-L activities   | Community benefits   | Student learning   | Remarks  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Women's Christian College, Chennai</b><br>Students and target community<br><b>S-L course:</b> Env't.Biol, Env't.Studies,public Health & Hygiene | Survey on environment & health hazards of plastics among college and neighborhood community  | Very positive & cooperative  | Exposure to community living in simple houses yet greener spaces<br>Learnt stringent usage of water<br>Became conscious of reducing plastic carry bags | Community-initially reluctant later became more open and cooperative<br>Students' concerns-safety while working in the community |
| <b>Stella Maris, Chennai</b><br>Chemistry students, school children and local community<br>S-L course-Pollutants & adulterants                     | Environmental & health awareness to school children and families in neighborhood-skits, posters, pamphlets, discussions, lectures & quiz | Interaction with students triggered positive attitude towards safeguarding env't and spreading env't'al concerns | Real-time experience in water & food analysis to benefit the community<br>Improved communication skills<br>Gained knowledge on env't.health issues     | S-L activity in communities in which the institution has built a rapport is easier & effective                                   |

# Other environmental service projects

| Institutions   | Service projects  | Activities   | Community benefits  | Student learning  |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Christ University, Bangalore</b><br/>Participants- students volunteers</p>                                   | <p>Solid waste management</p>   | <p>Producing documentary and screening,<br/>Campus sorting &amp; segregation of waste, organic composting<br/>Paper recycling unit</p>     | <p>Nearby slum women get livelihood in paper recycling</p>                                | <p>Environmental consciousness, social responsibility, Contributes to carbon reduction - green campus initiatives</p>                           |
| <p><b>Scottish Church College, Kolkata</b><br/>Participants- campus community and neighborhood school children</p> | <p>Waste disposal management towards green campus<br/>School interface program(off campus) campaigns, exhibitions</p> | <p>Establishing Vermin composting units<br/>Setting up eco clubs<br/>Active campaigning for water conservation &amp; plastic free envt</p> | <p>College and neighboring school campus becoming greener<br/>Community eco-conscious</p> | <p>Personal life style changes in usage of resources-water, electricity, reduced use of plastics, students turned environmental campaigners</p> |

# Other Environmental Service projects

| <b>Institution</b>   | <b>Service project</b>   | <b>Activities</b>   | <b>Community benefits</b>  | <b>Student learning</b>  |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| <b>Bishop Heber College, Trichy</b><br>Students from various depts & faculty               | Community health awareness program<br>Campus air quality and SWM studies | Measurement air quality and noise levels on campus,<br>fluoride mapping,<br>carbon foot printing,<br>Vermin composting,<br>environmental action<br>Among self help women groups | Became aware of dental flourosis,<br>Plastic waste mgt, vermin composting and flourosis  | Hands on training to acquire skills in environmental methodologies irrespective of disciplines<br>Concern for envt and societal health |
| <b>Karunya University, Coimbatore</b><br>Faculty students, neighboring community, visitors | Solid waste management-developing a model                                | Data collection,<br>Analyzing type & quantity of waste and suggest strategies for reduction, recycling and conversion   | Awareness on solid waste mgt<br>Campus follow up action-waste segregation, and processing facility being set<br>Shop keepers sensitized on the issue | Problem of pollution and waste mgt relevant to the immediate context-change of attitude and sensitivity                                |

# Other Environmental Service projects

| Institution   | Service project          | Activities  | Community benefits   | Student learning  |
|---|--------------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>Christian College, Katakada</b><br>PG students, Faculty & health care agency | Water quality assessment | Analysis of water samples   | Became aware of health issues related to water contamination | Developed water testing skills<br>Concern for water quality   |
| Salesian College, Darjeeling College and neighborhood community                 | Solid waste management   | Awareness program- community & individual families<br>Water testing | Awareness of safe drinking water and Waste mgt               | Students became environmentally conscious and action oriented |

## ***Tender moments..touched hearts..making a difference...Impact of S-L on students***

- Became **environmentally conscious** to minimize water usage, live a simpler life style, reduce use of plastic carry bags and not to litter the campus
- Got **impressed** by families living in small houses yet having green spaces
- Took back the **local wisdom** of community to class room
- **Improved ability** to apply theoretical knowledge to life situations
- Started promoting **healthy environment** in their own household and neighborhood
- Became **concerned** of the waste strewn on the streets with swarming flies

## ***Tender moments..touched hearts..making a difference...Impact of S-L on *Students****

- Improved **leadership** skills-planning, organization, time management, sense of responsibility and accountability
- Got motivated for **hard work**
- Felt the **joy of helping others** and a sense of satisfaction
- Developed **positive values** –sharing, cooperation, tolerance
- **Developed human skill** to interact with people and greater self awareness
- **Developed specific skills** related to eco-action-water/food analysis, vermin composting, recycling methods etc

## ***Tender moments..touched hearts..making a difference...Impact of S-L on students***

- **Change** of negative stereotypes and accepting others who are different
- Better understanding of the **complexity of social issues** ie: poverty, illiteracy and unemployment
- Increased sense of connection to the target community
- Some developed concern for the elderly in the community & volunteered their time.
- Better understanding of the intricacies of Community service

# *Tender moments..touched hearts..making a difference...Impact of S-L on students*

Eventually

- Academic learning became more **meaningful and practical**
- **Deepened understanding** of the topics related to environmental service projects
- Widened their **career options**
- Became more **civic responsible**

# Challenges in adopting S-L Approach

- In some institutions, the system does not lend for incorporating S-L into curriculum with credits
- Both faculty & students find it hard to spare extra time outside class hours for service
- Lack of administrative support in few cases
- Safety of women students while immersed in community service ( in slums/ remote areas)
- Sometimes new teachers are not aware of S-L methodology (lack of orientation )

# Factors favoring S-L adoption

- All institutions are already engaged in Community service- what is missing is direct link to academic study and reflection on service experience
- Partnership with NGOs working in a given community
- Administrative support in terms of finance & personnel
- Cooperative effort of more departments-not single department or single teacher
- Leadership- encourages and recognizes the extra effort put in service- Institutionalizing S-L
- Committed & experienced faculty-periodic training of teachers and proper orientation of student leaders a must

# Factors retarding S-L practice

- Time constraints
- Resource crunches
- Lack of incentives / recognition and administrative support
- Accessibility & response of target community
- Networking with NGO's & Communities
- Political intervention

# A few practical tips to faculty for effective S-L

- Plan S-L as **optional** activity incorporated into a course or a project ( for interested or motivated students) with extra credits / certificate of recognition (Better not to make it compulsory)
- Take care to **link** S-L goal, outcome, reflection and assessment
- Take active part in planning, initiating and monitoring S-L activities,
- Be responsible to conduct **reflection sessions**, evaluation and remember to take back the community experience to the class room.
- Encourage students to lead, organize and work with flexibility, involvement and commitment

# Some glimpses of student reflection

- S-L experience was interesting since it was activity based
- Triggered my interest to involve in more such awareness programs
- Improved my communication skill and removed the fear of interacting with people
- S-L gave me a chance to disseminate my Chemistry knowledge
- I feel lucky to do this course
- Wonderful opportunity to get educated as well as to educate others
- Excellent experiential learning opportunity

# Finally to conclude.....

“Environmental S-L is a proven pedagogy for purposeful learning and meaningful service. It has the power to transform self & society and the physical world we live in”

Let us as educators and environmental activists commit to universalize S-L as an integral part of Asian Higher Education.

Thank you