Intercultural Service-Learning as Crossing Borders: Experiences in the Philippines and India

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Introduction

Networking across borders, e.g. Service-Learning Asia Network (SLAN) helps increase S-L popularity in the region.

SLAN members:

International Christian University (Japan)
Silliman University (Philippines)
Lady Doak College (India)
American College (India)
Payap University (Thailand)
Petra Christian University (Indonesia)
Chung Chi College (Hongkong)
Seoul's Women University (South Korea)
Soochow University (Taiwan)
Amity Foundation (China)

International or intercultural service-learning

Pioneered by International Partnership in Service-Learning and Leadership (IPSLL)

- more complex engagement; crossing of all borders
- foreign students are engaged in situations having greater demands:
  - 1. relating with multicultural students
  - 2. working with unfamiliar communities/places
  - 3. negotiating economic and cultural differences

Replicated by SLAN through the International Service-Learning Model Program (ISLMP)

- **Silliman University (Philippines in 2006)**

- **Lady Doak College (India in 2007)**

Aims of this presentation

- to examine if ISLMP had achieved multi-cultural symbiosis despite methodological differences in the approaches of SU and LDC in engaging students to service-learning

- to articulate how the coming together for service-learning of individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds can benefit them given their peculiarities and diverse abilities

Theoretical Considerations

Intercultural service-learning

- A higher level of engagement when students are brought to another country where to serve for a given period of time.

- Students are not only expected to academically learn but also culturally because of their exposure to a diversity of students and peoples.

- Skills to learn include:
  - technical skills- related to chosen careers
  - personal skills- how to manage one self
  - social skills- how to relate with culturally diverse peoples

Cultural learning

- inevitable result of international service-learning
- possible despite the limited days students work and live in another culture
- influenced by quality of students' community engagement
- how they make use of their time in relating and working with the locals

Learning as a two-way process

- not a unilateral exercise (reciprocal)
- students have to be creative
- makes any social activity or encounter an opportunity to learn or unlearn about another culture

Multicultural symbiosis

- **an added-value of intercultural service-learning as crossing borders**

- **students can be taught to overcome ethnocentricity and appreciate cultural differences or diversity**

- **give them the opportunities to live with other students and serve communities that are new or foreign to them**

- **they can learn to appreciate their own culture upon seeing and experiencing others**

Methods

2006 ISLMP hosted by Silliman University
- 20 students (4 males and 16 females)
- ICU, SU, LDC, Chung Chi, Seoul's WU, and Soochow

2007 ISLMP hosted by Lady Doak College
- 24 students (5 males and 19 females)
- SU did not send students
- new participants from Payap University (Thailand) and American College (India)

Variables and Indicators to Measure the Impacts of Service-Learning Upon Students

Variables	Indicators
Awareness of community	Knowledge of community history, strengths, problems, definitions
Involvement with community	Quantity and quality of interaction, attitude toward involvement
Commitment in service	Plans for future service influenced by community exposure
Career choices	Influence of community placement on career values and opportunities
Self-awareness	Changes in awareness of strengths, limits, direction, role, goals
Personal development	Participation in additional courses, extra-curricular activities
Academic achievement	Role of community experience in understanding and applying content
Sensitivity to diversity	Attitude, understanding of diversity, comfort and confidence
Autonomy and independence	Learner's ability to act and learn by oneself
Sense of ownership	Learner's role in contributing new ideas and activities
Communication	Quality of interaction with co-learners and community

- students rated to what extent their experiences, of living and serving their respective host communities or agencies during different periods, made them realized or not these indicators

- done after a week (initial) and third week (final) of community engagement

- students rated 0 if the experiences did not help and from a range of 1 (lowest score) to 5 (highest score) if these had changed them

- number of indicators students experienced significant improvements were compared across hosts or countries

Results

Approaches of the two ISLMPs

Common practices:

- orientation about socio-cultural, economic, and political situations

- tips how to get along with other students and to live in another culture

- students were grouped by teams-a mixed composition

- a local student was assigned in each team

ISLMP hosted by SU: Community-based

- students were directly placed in farming and fishing communities and in urban housing resettlement projects

- practically lived with host families in the communities where they were assigned

- had a wider range of social engagement but took time to find how they will serve the community

ISLMP hosted by LDC: Agency-based

- students were assigned to various service agencies working with low income residents, little children, mentally challenged persons, and marginalized families

- billeted in venues provided by the host agencies

- confined to certain groups of people and venues

- immediately focused on the activities according to the program of host agencies

Experiences of all students under the program

- all students rated higher in all indicators comparing initial and final community engagement

- suggest positive impacts

- differ in what specific indicators that the students registered significant improvements

SU: significant improvements in 11 out of the 22 indicators

LDC: significant improvements in 21 out of the 22 indicators

Common indicators students expressed significant improvements:

1. involvement in the economic activities of locals
2. involvement in the social activities of locals
3. commitment to share with others in the future
4. preparation for future career
5. awareness of personal goals and social roles
6. ability to relate well with others
7. learned new things not taught in school
8. contribution of new ideas to the locals
9. contribution of new activities to the locals
10. ability to understand the locals

Experiences of all students under community-based ISLMP

Local students: significant improvements in 10 out of the 22 indicators

Foreign students: significant improvements in 8 out of the 22 indicators

Common indicators where both students had expressed significant improvements:

1. involvement in the social activities of locals
2. preparation for future career
3. commitment to share with others
4. learning new things not taught in school
5. contribution of new ideas and...
6. new activities to the locals

Experiences under agency-based ISLMP

Local students: significant improvements in 10 out of the 22 indicators

Foreign students: significant improvements in 9 out of the 22 indicators

Common indicators where both students had expressed significant improvements:

1. awareness of community's strengths and weaknesses

2. sensitivity to diversity particularly in relating well with others amidst cultural differences

Discussion

Agency-based approach (ABA): students immediately and meaningfully engaged with local people given a limited time

Community-based approach (CBA): students have still to plan what services they have to render, takes time and requires more resources

But CBA can inspire and develop students' creativity to find ways they could be of greater service

Major evidence for the potentials of CBA:

- all students under CBA expressed a greater sense of ownership of new ideas and activities they introduced to the locals

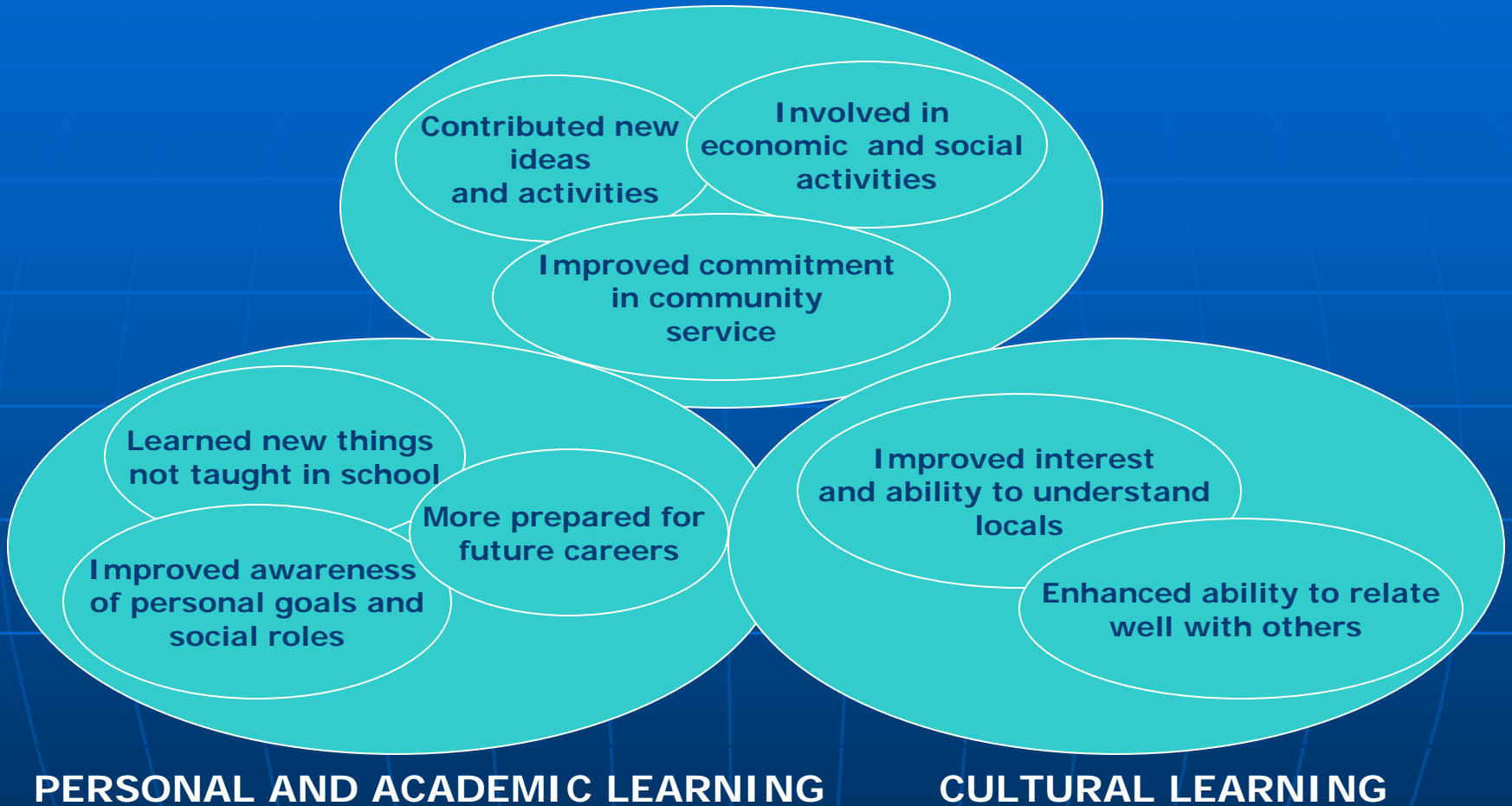- foreign students under ABA did not significantly experience sense of ownership

Fig. 1. Indicators where all students self-rated significant improvements comparing initial and final community engagements.

Summary and Conclusion

Therefore, the two ISLMPs were successful because students significantly expressed that they...

Had extended meaningful services to other people

Had learned from community services that reinforced classroom knowledge

Had improved their abilities to relate well with others despite personal and cultural diversities

Thank You

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