

To Create Synergy in Service Learning

A case study of campus-community partnership of Voluntary Service Course of BNU-HKBU United International College

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Background

United International College (UIC), situated in Zhuhai of Guangdong and jointly founded by Beijing Normal University and Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), is the first full-scale cooperation in higher education between the Mainland and Hong Kong

A New Liberal Arts College to Serve China and the World

Background

Course/ Module with the perspective of ‘Service Learning’ (SL)
in UIC: **Voluntary Service**

- One credit bearing course for Y2 students
- One of the whole person education experiential learning course: others include ‘Physical Education’, ‘Art’, ‘Emotional Intelligence’... etc.
- **volunteering is the mainly learning outcomes**
- organized by one independent team
- **All conducted by full time course facilitator**

Objectives of Study

1. Campus-community partnership is one of the most important elements to achieve learning outcomes in SL, especially in the area of voluntary service module.
2. There are no studies about campus-community partnership closely related to SL in Mainland China.
3. UIC has implemented SL for over 8 years and has developed a stable and effective partnerships with different organizations in Zhuhai.
4. We believe that this kind of cooperation with bodies outsides could be promoted to others schools.

Methodology

Sampling method: Non-probability, convenient sampling

Data collection: Structural interview with six questions

Participants: 6 staffs from 2 community partners

- ✓ All partners were from the areas of rehabilitation service for children.
- ✓ 2 leaders
- ✓ 2 project/volunteer program coordinators
- ✓ 2 service supervisors (1 social worker, 1 teacher of special child education)
- ✓ Cooperation period: over 6 years

Findings (1)

UIC has developed a joint teaching campus-community partnership in SL

	Campus (UIC)	Community
Course design (learning outcomes, syllabus)	✓	
Community service project outline	✓	✓
Lecture, workshop, training	✓ lecture	✓ training
Community service supervising	✓ assistant	✓ Mainly
Debriefing/reflection	✓ whole	✓ service part
Grading	✓ whole	✓ service part
Financial support	✓ transportation	✓ logistic

The community partners didn't involve too much in course design and they would like to devote more on it if needed or for better community service.

Findings(2)

UIC joint teaching campus-community partnership is highly recommended by community partners.>>>> **strength**

	UIC	Other schools (who also worked with the interviewees)
Period	long-term and sustainable, regular	Short-term, occasionally
Organizing	The service group is consisted of UIC teachers and community partner staffs, with regular meeting	Community partners mainly lead the students to steer service.
Communication	Two-way communication with community partners and UIC is recognized to play with a more proactive role.	One-way communication mainly.
Service project	Outcome based learning pedagogy with clear objectives and assessment.	Task- oriented service only; students mainly looked for certificate rather than participation.
Contact person	Full time and professional/academic staff, very few changes in personnel.	Part-time, administrate staff or student, changes regularly each semester
Financial support	Transportation and logic support	No subsidy

Findings (3)

Staff of community partners acted as the key person in joint teaching partnership, but there are risks to certain extent.

Roles of staff from community partners: supervisor, facilitator and educator

External cause/risk	Internal cause/risk
Poor administration support from leader/manager.	Education background and professional quality of staffs.
Less experience of cooperation with other staffs.	Self-emotion management.
Time conflict between course time and official working time of community partners.	Improper expectation on college/ university students (over or below).
Staff cannot speak on behalf of organization freely in some case.	Weakness of awareness of educating college students in proper time.

Findings (4)

UIC joint teaching partnership could be promoted to other institutions if different challenges are addressed clearly.

1. SL concept is not easy accepted in a short period in Mainland China due to conventional tertiary education structure and ideology.
2. A full-time staff team is hard to be set up due to alternative and diverse requirements of qualification of staffs.

Limitations

1. Only six interviewees from community partners with government backgrounds >>> *generalizability is in doubt*
 - *More interviews are preferred.*
 - *Interviews from various backgrounds (e.g. NGOs serving rural areas or elder persons) are preferred.*
2. The opinion from other colleges which has partnership with community should be listened
 - *To avoid desirability in interview which might create bias.*

Conclusion

1. UIC joint teaching campus-community partnership can improve students' learning during community service period and can meet the needs of community (*win-win situation for school and partners*).
2. Development of a team of Intensive management and awareness of doing service and learning simultaneously are the biggest challenges by adopting UIC module.

Reference

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