

IMPACT OF SERVICE LEARNING BASED SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION ON TEAM BUILDING AMONG BUSINESS MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The covid-19 pandemic made a definite impact on education worldwide, forcing brick-and-mortar higher education institutions to move online and virtual learning become the new normal. This paradigm shift pushes students to complete social isolation. The virtual teaching-learning mode the experiment-based education and team-based peer learning on the back foot. In this study we examined how community service learning was helping students to learn team building skills more effectively while serving communities during the rural camp in the remote areas. The current study examines the pre and post rural camp effectiveness of team building through community service learning. The responses of three hundred post graduate management students were considered for the study. Our findings from the confirmatory factor analysis show three important factors in assessing the perceptions on team building and its effectiveness. The results from the independent sample t-test did not show any significant effect of team building on the behavior of students based on different genders. However, the paired sample T test results show that there is a difference in the perceptions related to the team building. The empirical findings offer a premise to educators and policy makers to design curriculums and pedagogies based on experiential, outbound, community serviced based learning for the post pandemic era. This study proves the effectiveness of service learning as tools which is useful for the educators and corporate trainers in enhancing team building abilities among the students and socially connect them with communities as well as many social realities at the grassroots level.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of community service learning as a strong pedagogical tool for the student is the outcome of the experimental learning movement of 1970s in USA. The service learning concept which is the extension of David Kolb's experiential leaning model to community service experience has focus on two aspects i.e., i) it is used to learn many concepts while working/ serving communities outside the walls of classroom and boundaries of campuses and ii) the feeling and sense of pride that society is being served and community is supported by students.

Service learning has emerged as a crucial development in the formulation of contemporary pedagogies meant for higher education in professional courses. It is considered as a unique form of experiential educational design which makes it distinctive from other theoretically driven curricula. Service learning is considered as a community engagement-based learning which aims at combining program learning objectives and community service in order to enhance student growth as well as societal good. National Service Learning Clearinghouse

defines service learning as “*a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.*” The rural camp is a strong learning tool which provides outdoor education in rural and tribal surroundings offers many possibilities for learning different concepts as well as enhance social sensitivity of management students who are getting training to serve the multinational corporations.

Rural Camp is a medium of the service learning training program through which students achieve real objectives for the community and enhance their social development with academic and cognitive development. It is a platform for the students to make them understand the rural social system and sensitize them on the interconnected issues pertaining to the rural setup. Additionally, it helps the students to analyze the strategies adopted by the NGOs, the government and other local bodies towards the development of poor people. The whole exercise enhances group learning among the students. The present study focus on service learning approach to decipher the effectiveness of team building among the students who joined for a rural camp, where the students were encouraged to organize and carry out programs and events for social awakening and development of the people and conduct a survey on socioeconomic and educational status of rural people. This study carries out an empirical analysis to evaluate the pre and post rural camp effectiveness of team building on the post graduate students.

The literature on team building and its interventions has been mixed. For instance, in a study Mazany et al. (1995) tried to assess a workshop related to strategy development and team building provided to a set of senior managers of a manufacturing organization situated in Auckland. The results show that teams generate a well-defined and consensus-oriented decision-making process which was not influenced by individuals. Similarly, using the respondents of three public sector banks Saraswat and Khandelwal (2015) finds a positive effect of team building exercises on team effectiveness. Therefore, the empirical literature on team building is limited to the senior managers and professionals of the corporate firms and other organizations which can be extended to a student’s group.

A burgeoning body of literature highlights the positive impact of service learning in professional courses provided by the school of business, communication, education and social work (Markus et al., 1993; Cohen & Kinsey, 1994; Zlotkowski, 1996; Morton & Troppe, 1996; Rocha, 2000). Scholars working in the social work domain are interested to study the impact of service learning course on practical skill development (Rocha, 2000). However, there are meager studies which consider the effect of service learning in the professional courses. The present investigation intends to fill these gaps in the literature. This study is also a value addition to the existing body of literature on service learning and an encouragement for professional and social work educators who consider service learning approach as useful tool to enhance learning abilities. Experiential learning serves as an effective preparatory bridge for the students’ of social work by providing the concentration level field placement (Kropf & Tracey, 2000) which might be essential from the field supervisors’ perspectives about the lack of students’ willingness to get involved into the field practicum (DeWeaver & Kropf, 1995).

We contribute to the growing literature on education designing and service learning in multiple ways. Service learning is a least ventured area of research as it did not fetch much research attention. Pragmatically, it could flourish only in the domain of social work as the post graduate students were trained to focus themselves into civic engagement activities and community partnership. The existing studies identifies that service-learning promotes students’ expertise and make them engaged into better professional (academic) career (Rocha, 2000; Knee,

2002; Kapp, 2006; Anderson, 2006; Nadel et al., 2007; Scott, 2008; Lowe & Medina, 2010; Faria et al., 2010). Therefore, the scope of service learning must be widened and should be brought into other professional courses.

To the best of our knowledge this is a first investigated work on the effectiveness of team building on the outcome of service learning which involved successful completion of the projects assigned to the students. The rationale of choosing Kerala for the collection of the data is based on the following reasons. First, Kerala is the most literate state of India. As per 2001 census, Kerala ranked first with 90.86 per cent of people being literate which has increased to 93.91 per cent as recorded in the census 2011. We expect that with the increase in the literacy, the educators would be more concerned about enhancing moral awareness among the students. Second, as compared to other states in India, Kerala has the highest female sex ratio of around 1084 females per 1000 males based on 2011 census estimates. Although the female workforce participation in Kerala is 25.6 per cent however, women in Kerala are empowered and literate.

Therefore, we also hypothesize that women would be playing a pivotal role in effective leadership and finally team building and management when it is to the successful completion of the projects. The reason for choosing management courses for service learning is because of the increasing intent of the corporate sector towards philanthropy. There is a significant change in the paradigm shift from pro shareholder perspective to pro stakeholder approach as witnessed from corporate sector in the emerging markets. Additionally, corporate social responsibility is also linked to bring in a positive image and brand equity of various firms and support in favor of their business strategy (Pracejus & Olsen, 2004; Hamlin et al., 2004; Bigne et al., 2012; Samu & Wymer, 2014; Wang & Korschun, 2015). At times when the corporate management is transforming, there is also a need of a symmetric transformation in the perspectives of the workforce managing the business of these companies. Therefore, rural camp program as part of service learning has been integrated and made compulsory into the academic curricula of various professional courses among the institutions. The remainder of the paper is organized into the followings sections. In the Section 2, we provide an overview of the past literature. In Section 3, we present the description of the data and applied methodology. The discussion on the empirical results is presented in the Section 4 and Section 5 concludes the study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

With the growing skepticism and erosion of societal values, readjustments in the present curriculum are necessary so that education remains an effective tool for imparting social and moral values. In response to this urgent need, NCERT in India has implemented value education in the school curricula. On the recommendations of NCERT, The National Curriculum Framework in 2005 came up with an integrated approach which aims at imparting human values at all stages of education and learning. Despite these initiatives, value education still strives and taken lightly by the educators at the higher education level. Much attention towards value education is given at primary and secondary level of school education, rather than in higher education in India. Therefore, with the rapid pace of development and globalization the greatest challenge before the educators is to include the value education in the higher educational institutions. For the effective evolution of the education system and to impart moral awareness among the students, educators need to intervene and update the existing pedagogy followed in the higher education institutes. The University Grants Commission (UGC; the higher education regulating body) also realized the importance of the moral education and the increasing demand of value education in higher education institutions. In order to meet these goals, service learning

is considered to be a new and advanced approach which not only inculcates moral values among the students but also simultaneously benefits various communities. Service learning is an approach which involves community service and academic learning on a single platform through which students are being trained to meet the real needs in the environment with the aim of improving it (Tapia, 2001; Furco & Billing, 2002; Puig et al., 2009; Fraile et al., 2017). Therefore, service learning is a widely accepted teaching innovation tool which includes personal social responsibility into higher education, offers a platform to engage the students and involve them into various civic activities and rural communities (Jacoby, 1996; Martínez, 2008; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011; Naval et al., 2011).

Service Learning

The term service learning was coined in 1969 by members of the Southern Regional Education Board (Stanton et al., 1999), but the educational philosophy as such grew out from the intellectual contributions of various scholars. Kolb (1984) work is perhaps the best-known presentation of the experiential learning which mentions about four-stage model of learning. It is widely used as a foundation on organizational learning (Dixon, 1994) and adult education theory (Jarvis, 1987; Weil & McGill, 1989). The service learning aims to achieve the learning aspect of the subject area and the service aspect by providing a solution to various real-world problems.

In addition to this, the service learning approach bring about other educational benefits to students, which include academic learning as it provides motivation to the students in achieving the career goals of life, interpersonal learning as the students form an association with the rural community, transformative learning which help students to identify problems on a prior basis, and cognitive progress of students which enhances their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. By engaging the students in service-learning setup, students learn the connection between service and classroom academic environment, dissemination of the service to the community, and the role of the students towards the community members. Service learning emphasizes on six important characteristics namely reflective, integrative, reciprocal, strength based, contextualized, and life-long.

The reflective feature of service learning emphasizes providing a structured opportunity for the learners to analytically reflect the experience related to the service they provide. Structured reflective opportunities help the learners to explore and transform their interpersonal values, judgments, practices, assumptions, opinions, beliefs pertaining to any action or experience, have depth knowledge and help to prepare a foundation for future actions and plans (Seifer & Conner, 2007).

Service Learning and holistic Development

The integrative characteristic of the service-learning focusses on a holistic approach as it assimilates classroom program learning goals, supervision of the mentors, community developmental projects and concomitant prior issues of the community. Therefore, students have to actively participate by considering themselves as both learners and community members.

The reciprocal aspect of the service-learning provides benefits to all the participants involved in the process. Students put effort, and time to understand the social issues connected with the community and link it with the course material. Course coordinators plan the course material based on the service-learning. NGOs, community participants and other organizations

acts as co-educators and coordinate with the course instructors and students to accomplish their mission and vision in bringing social development of the community.

The strength-based facet of the service-learning makes use of available resources and community strengths, and transforms the organizations and the community members as co-educators of students. The capacity and expertise that lie in every community help the students learn the basic objectives embedded in the projects and plan strategies based on community's unique strengths.

The contextualized approach of service learning focusses in providing an opportunity to the students in inculcating the knowledge and understands the issues that reside in the context of the community. By understanding the issues students connect the underlying theories taught to them in the class, to the practical knowledge, as evinced from the communities.

The life-long approach of the service-learning is sustainable and remains forever. The outcome of this educational tool is meaningful, distinctive and influential. While synthesizing the theory and practice, students are able to inculcate civic sense, enhance self-awareness, build relationships, identify social issues, and develop their analytical skills to solve the problems. In this way, service-learning prepares a base for interpersonal growth.

Service Learning in developing Social Entrepreneurship Traits

Service learning is a way through which students are sensitized about the social issues and they work in a team to achieve a common goal (Falk, 2012). Teamwork is a crucial component of contemporary education system (Pfaff & Huddleston, 2003) which necessitates focus, discipline, responsibility, professionalism, vision, and effective communication among the participants. Eyler and Giles (1999) in a study pointed out that approximately 40 percent of the respondents learn to work with people which are part and parcel of the service learning training they experience. Based on the existing literature, it is clear that service learning promotes team building behavior among the participants. The present study also tries to decipher this aspect of service learning by drawing a sample of students from various professional courses.

Service learning has been misinterpreted by a few educators and practitioners as an exclusive integration of service into the academic curricula. However, this definition is not appropriate and hence, no consensus is reached because of two reasons. First, the transformation in the culture at higher education institutes has created space for a gradual acceptance of the notion that service/experiential learning and education should be integrated. Second, the classroom teaching itself is limiting and distorting the pragmatic approach and even the goals of service learning. Therefore, service learning approach is able to create even more engagement of the participants, and connect community service and academic learning with a difference, than a classroom teaching would allow. To date, there are only a few educational studies that have systematically traced student attitudes towards multiculturalism (i.e., Nell, 1993; Lopez et al., 1995; Levine & Cureton, 1998). Most of the studies pertaining to service learning are descriptive, while only a few studies have attempted to explain why students maintain certain multicultural predispositions (i.e., Astin, 1993; Pascarella et al., 1996). Since educational researchers conducted these studies, most of these studies focused on the interactions between the college environment and student perceptions. Departing from the growing body of literature, this paper would address a wider scope of service-learning programs that have an impact on higher education cultural values and giving an empirical support of the outcome of the service learning.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample Profiling

Rajagiri Business School (RBS) situated in the Indian state of Kerala was established as a result of the indefatigable industry and foresight of a congregation of priests known as Carmalites of Mary Immaculate (CMI), who focuses on high quality education as their main area of philanthropy. The School is nationally and internationally accredited with a truly diverse faculty mix committed to high quality teaching and research. Partnerships have been established with reputed management institutions across the globe.

This study assesses the response of three hundred students of Rajagiri Business School located in the coastal city of Kochi in the southern state of Kerala in India. Students who were enrolled into different programs such as Master in Business Administration (MBA), Master's in Human Resource Management (MHRM) and Post Graduate Degree in Management (PGDM) were surveyed before and after participating in a rural camp. A structured questionnaire following Axon et al. (2019). The participants were predominantly female (54.7 %), Christians (39.4 %), and from urban area (68.7 %). Their age ranged from 20 to 27 years ($M = 22.33$, $SD = 1.55$).

Data Collection

The Attappady Social Service Organization (ASSO) is the major NGO working towards the integral development of the people living at Attappady (Palakkad district) of the Indian state of Kerala. The main objective of the organization is to plan and execute to meet the developmental goals, and improve the standard of living of the people of Attappady. ASSO is currently running two major projects such as Attappady Integrated Development Project (AIDEP) being financed by Karl Kubel Foundation Germany and Jalanidhi Project which is assisted by World Bank.

RBS consults with the ASSO and bring various projects for the students to carry out the service learning program which is made mandatory for the students who attend the rural camp every year at Attappady. These students are randomly distributed into 12 groups where each group comprises of 30 students. The important roles handled by students are committee member, committee head, group leader and Camp student coordinator. Every group is assigned with a faculty mentor who guides the students and instructs them throughout the completion of the project.

Reliability and Validity

The confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess convergent and discriminant validity. The factor loading was observed to confirm the reliability of the constructs of all items (except 1 items) showing loading more than 0.7.

To examine the relatedness of the items with in construct related scale, composite reliability (CR), maximum shared variance (MSV) and average variance extracted (AVE) were measured. The composite reliability range is between 0.770 to 0.912 which is above the cutoff value of 0.7 showing that the CR estimates are reliable. The AVE values for each construct are above the cutoff value of 0.5. The square root of AVE for all construct is greater than inter construct correlations which confirms the discriminant validity.

Construct Item	Items in the Questionnaire	Standardized loading estimate
Factor 1	Q1	0.724
	Q4	0.790
	Q12	0.773
Factor 2	Q13	0.774
	Q14	0.702
	Q15	0.767
Factor 3	Q16	0.709
	Q2	0.759
	Q3	0.739
	Q5	0.798
	Q6	0.736
	Q7	0.748
	Q8	0.713
	Q10	0.745
	Q11	0.773

Source: Authors' own computation

To assess the discriminant validity between the variables, MSV was calculated whose values are lower than the AVE values. We develop an inter correlation discriminant validity matrix between latent construct, which shows square root of the AVE values of the latent construct are more than their construct correlation values. Hence, based on the reliability estimates we derive three factors explaining the students' perceptions on team building such as factor 1, factor 2 and factor 3 (Table 1 and 2).

	CR	AVE	MSV	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor 1	0.770	0.528	0.521	0.727		
Factor 2	0.850	0.586	0.520	0.701	0.766	
Factor 3	0.912	0.565	0.521	0.722	0.721	0.752

Note: Bold values shown diagonally represent square root of the AVE and the sub diagonal entries are the latent inter-correlations.

Source: Authors' own computation

Main Results

We conduct the study to capture the perceptions regarding the team building behavior of the students who were assigned into various groups during the rural camp. We took the opinion of the students about various aspects of team building before moving to the rural camp (PRE_TB) and again after coming from the rural camp (POST_TB).

We use the independent sample T test to compare that whether the means of two independent groups of the same variable from a different population is significantly different from one another. The results of the independent sample T test of pretest are shown in the Table

3. The distribution of perception about the team building in male is varied considerably within the sample group from minimum value of 2.38 to maximum value of 5.0, with a mean score of 3.95 and standard deviation of 0.35. The distribution of perception about the team building in female participants is varied considerably within the sample group from a minimum value of 1.85 to a maximum value of 5.0, with a mean score of 3.90 and standard deviation of 0.29. We use the independent sample T test to analyze the difference of pre-perception about team building based on gender. Our results show no significant difference between male and female respondents based on the responses captured on pre-team building.

Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
PRE_TB	Male	136	3.95	0.350	0.030	1.397	298	0.163
	Female	164	3.90	0.290	0.023			

Source: Authors' own computation

Table 4 show the distribution of team building calculated during posttest from the sample. The distribution of perception of team building among male is varied considerably within the sample group from 3.06 to 4.75, with a mean score of 4.018 and standard deviation of 0.338. We find variations in the perception about the team building among female participants within the sample group ranging between 2.11 to 5.0, with a mean score of 4.001 and standard deviation of 0.295. The result from the independent sample T test shows that there is no significant difference between male and female respondents based on post team building.

Gender		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
POST_TB	Male	136	4.018	0.338	0.029	0.472	298	0.637
	Female	164	4.001	0.295	0.023			

Source: Authors' own computation

We conduct the paired sample T test to examine the mean difference between two variables to be equivalent to zero (Table 5).

The pre and post test was conducted to analyze the influence of rural camp in team building among the students. The results from paired sample T test show a significant relationship between pre and post team building perception at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis that the actual mean difference between the paired samples is equal to zero. The result shows that there is significant positive difference between post and pre-team building perception of students.

Pairs	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
PRE_TB POST_TB	0.079	0.353	0.020	.851	299	0.000

Source: Authors' own computation

In a nutshell, our finding implies that the scores of all sixteen responses taken from the participants changes from pretest to posttest. This is perhaps because team building exercises inculcate team synergy which improves the team performance (Carron & Hausenblas, 1998). Therefore, we confirm that the scores representing the perceptions on team building and its effectiveness changes among those students who do not participate in rural camp.

Our results from the independent sample T test although did not show any significant influence of service learning on team building behavior, however, the pair sample t test show that team building behavior is strong when both male and female participants are included in the group and projects were assigned. This implies that service learning intervention is significant in explaining the team building behavioral changes among the students. Our results show that service learning is an effective tool in enhancing the team building behavior among the students and can be effectively used by the educators in professional courses.

DISCUSSION

This study explores the effectiveness of service learning which enhances the attributes of team building among the students. We find improvements in the perceptions across all participants which improved the team building skills resulted from the rural camp. Using the confirmatory factor analysis, we find three important factors which evaluate the perceptions on team building and its effectiveness. Furthermore, the results of the independent sample t-test explain no significant effect of team building on the behavior of the students during the pretest and the posttest. Contrarily, the paired sample t-test results show that there is a difference in the perceptions related to the team building among the participants.

This study provides inputs to frame a set of policies for the educators and corporate trainers which would help them to groom the students and make them fit for various corporate roles.

Due to lack of spirit and co-operation among the group members, individual efforts are expected to give good outcomes as compared to the group efforts. These are distinctly noted by the corporate firms who offer jobs and time bound tasks to the student interns or employees. As a result, in most times it is evidenced that the students show an unwillingness to participate actively in a group. Therefore, it is crucial that educators should rectify various shortcomings underlying in the current educational setup and prepare the students to take jobs in global environs. Based on the empirical results, this study confirm that service learning is an effective tool which can enhance the team building skills among the students and can be used by the educators effectively in post covid-19 pandemic scenario. This well boost the experiential learning among students and forge better social connect with communities and their problems.

IMPLICATION AND FUTURE

The service learning through any mode - virtual, hybrid, or in-person practice, is an indispensable factor of experiential learning that can help students practice skills, develop cross-cultural knowledge, gain an understanding of social inequities and disparities, and build positive relationships with their community.

The online learning has been growing rapidly because of pandemic restrictions and lockdowns but e- service learning has not kept pace and for all intents and purposes, is a sporadic pedagogical practice in education field. This challenges the future educationists and researchers to re-imagine and integrating community-based learning experiences. There is need to re-imagine service-learning pedagogy to maintain the virtues of higher education, sharpen clinical skills, and develop civic engagement among students of professional and technical courses.

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