



Youth Involvement in Community Development: Encouraging Social Entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT

Experiential learning provides a one of a kind opportunity for the young and bright students to engage in responsible leadership topics outside of the classroom. Teaching and learning can become inherently spontaneous and student-centric when moved from classroom to communities. Experiential learning occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by reflection, critical analysis and synthesis. From the collaborative learning atmosphere that results from the unique relationships developed outside the classroom to the deep learning that occurs when students must put into practice “in the real world”. Society and culture awareness is predominately important for the young generation of tomorrows India. What they have theorized about from behind a desk, field experiences are unmatched in their learning potential. Teaching and learning outside the classroom immerses students in genuine cultures. Engaging students with communities exposes them to unique experiences. One way to escape the confines of the classroom and to afford students opportunities to grow is to encourage students to learn from and to serve the surrounding community.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the fact that, students who are privileged need to give back to the society especially to those who are not so privileged. Encouraging the young to contribute to communities first and then careers is the need of the hour. Immersing students to community and diverse cultural needs will surely help enhance their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It would also add to greater personal efficacy and leadership development, thereby enhancing social responsibility and career opportunities.

Keywords: Classroom, Culture, Curriculum, Communities, Social Service

I. INTRODUCTION

India is currently enjoying a ‘demographic dividend’, which means, it has a higher labour force than the population dependent on it. By 2020, India will have surplus of the young human resources. The average age in India will be 29 and it is set to become the world’s youngest country with 64% of its population in the working age group. Youth being outgoing, enthusiastic, vibrant, innovative and dynamic in nature is the most important section of the population. Today’s youth displays a strong passion, motivation and will power which also make them the most valuable human resource for fostering economic, cultural and political development of a nation. A country’s ability and potential for growth is determined by the size of its youth population. The countries GDP does not define a country, instead it’s the youth that defines a country. We are an amazingly young country, *let’s be proud of it!*



In fact, if we just take the age group from 10 to 19, there are 226 million Indians, poised, in other words, to enter higher education, going through school and ready for higher education. But, in order to understand the real need of the country and per se the society, this youth needs to be deeply connected with the social ground realities. And this relates to understanding that there is a whole society out there which may be as privileged as them. India is the only nation to have a surplus of human resources. We are potentially the people who are the youthful, productive, dynamic, young population, ready to work, and transform the world, the kinds of role that, say, China played in the last generation could be ours in the next.

In fact, International Labour Organization has worked out that by 2020, we'll have 160 million people in the age group of starting work — 20 to 24 is what they calculate — and China will only have 94 million, at the same time. So we really are poised to do that. But, and by the way, other countries will have a serious deficit that's estimated that the US will have 17 million short in terms of how many people they need of working age. We, in India, have the people. But do we have the ability to equip the people to take advantage of this, to be the workforce of the work engine for the world? If we get it right, we educate and train them, we really transform not just our own economy and our society, but the world.

II. THE REAL PURPOSE AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As the youth are brought into community organizations and civic roles that they have traditionally been excluded from, they can participate in local decision-making at multiple levels. This collaboration leads to skill enhancement, confidence building, and ownership that prepare them as they navigate toward adulthood. The development of community is a dynamic process involving all segments of the locality, including the often-overlooked youth population. The key component to this process is found in the creation and maintenance of channels of interaction and communication among diverse local groups that are otherwise directed toward their more individual interests. By facilitating interaction and developing relationships, these diverse individuals interact and begin to mutually understand common needs. When relationships, consistent interaction, and channels of communication can be established and maintained, increases in local adaptive capacities materialize and community can emerge.

During the process of interaction, the capacity for action emerges (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Bridger, 2003). This capacity is often referred to as "community agency." Agency is therefore reflected in the capacity of people to manage, utilize, and enhance those resources available to them in addressing local issues (Wilkinson, 1991; Luloff & Swanson, 1995; Luloff & Bridger, 2003; Brennan, 2005). Community exists in the collective actions of its members. These collective actions allow residents of all ages and backgrounds to participate in the creation, articulation, and implementation of efforts to support local change. Through this process of interaction, the collection of individuals creates an entity whose whole is greater than the sum of its parts. While much of the attention given to building local capacities is often focused toward adults, youth are an increasingly visible and active component in community development efforts. Such involvement contributes to both the development of community and the social and psychological development of the youth involved.

III. PROJECT CHIRAG, H.R. COLLEGE- CASE STUDY



To encourage youth involvement in the community, it is vital to understand the influences, motivations, obstacles, and feedback that they receive from the community. Project Chirag was started in March 2010 as a students' project in Mumbai's HR College as part of the SIFE (Student in Free Enterprise) initiatives. The project was co-founded by Jyotirmoy Chaterji, and the students were mentored by faculty members Pratibha Pai, and Dr. (Mrs.) Indu Shahani, Principal of HR College. The first village they reached out to was Ujjaini in Thane district, where the villagers were provided with solar lights through a crowd-funded project, 'Rs 10 for Light', where college students were asked to give Rs 10 out of their pocket money to help light up a village and its 100 homes. A project that started with a few students has today turned into the 'Chirag Light India Movement' that has also spread across multiple colleges and schools in India, The most recent project was in Aruna Chapori, a village located on a sandbar in the Brahmaputra. The village was cut off from the southern bank of the Brahmaputra in the 1950s, and had no access to the electricity grid. Before Project Chirag's intervention, the villagers were totally dependent on traditional lighting methods such as kerosene lamps and firewood. But after the team's visit in mid-July this year, all the households now have two lighting systems – one for their homes and the other portable. Each solar lighting system has an individual solar panel and one of them also has a mobile charging facility. The solar lamps are sourced from a company, which chooses to remain anonymous, that develops and manufactures solar products. Each lamp costs around Rs. 2,500-5,000, and is given to the villagers for free. As for the villagers, the solar lights have become a boon. The minimal usage of kerosene oil has cut down their monthly expenditure. The kerosene through the PDS system is available to them at Rs 30 and the cost on the black market is Rs 50. Previously, each household consumed around 3-4 litres of kerosene a month; today, it is one litre in nine months. An added and welcome bonus is a healthier environment to breathe in. Occurrences such as small children gulping down kerosene mistaking it for water have reduced significantly. The introduction of solar lights has also impacted various other areas, especially education. The children have switched from kerosene lamps to solar lights, which not only give better lighting but also allow them to study late at night. The men and women can also stay out for their work for longer hours without worrying about finishing the household chores before it gets dark. In some villages, women especially have benefitted and are able to take on handicraft work or join self-help groups and support each other.

IV. OUTCOME AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Professional Identity

The student will develop a professional identity as a social worker that is characterized by competence in a broad range of social work skills, knowledge and values.

2. Professional Ethics and Value Dilemmas

The student will learn to apply the values and ethics of the profession and develop the capacity to tolerate and work constructively with the value dilemmas, conflicts, and ambiguities inherent in the practice of social work.

3. Knowledge

The student will obtain extensive and varied opportunities to utilize and build upon the theoretical and empirical knowledge



4. Skill

The student will develop a varied repertoire of practice skills fundamental to social work and relevant to a wide range modalities, and settings.

5. Student Engagement in the Learning Process

The student will actively engage in the learning process and develop the capacity to reflect on the work

6. Self-Awareness

The student will develop a self-reflective and reflexive stance, which includes growing awareness

7. Social Problem Analysis

The student will develop the ability to identify, analyse, and respond to critical social problems

8. Social Justice

The student will develop a knowledge base and the related skills needed to work for social justice

9. Collaboration

The student will develop the ability to work collaboratively with other professionals and the community at large

10. Critical thinking

The student will develop and demonstrate the skills of critical thinking.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In recent years, a number of social forces have changed both the landscape of family and community life and the expectations for young people. We just need to change the mind-set of the young. One need not be grey haired to work for community. If sense and responsibility is understood at an early age, the society will stand to benefit.

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