

The Institutionalization of Service-Learning at Spanish Universities

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Service-learning is conceived of as an active pedagogical approach that integrates community services into learning processes. Although this practice has a long history in the Americas, it is still emerging in some European countries. Since the Bologna Process, Spanish universities have faced challenges associated with introducing learner-centered pedagogies and fostering students' social responsibility. However, service-learning fuses these two lines of intervention.

This article aims to provide data about the degree to which service-learning has been established and institutionalized at Spanish universities. To obtain these data, an electronic questionnaire based on a self-assessment rubric for the institutionalization of service-learning in higher education was sent to selected informants at Spanish universities. The results showed that most Spanish universities are at a very early stage in the institutionalization of service-learning; in fact, only a few appear to have mechanisms in place to achieve such institutionalization. The authors reflect on the need to support this emerging pedagogical practice to improve the quality of education and community engagement in the context of Spanish higher education.

Keywords: *service-learning, community engagement, institutionalization, higher education, Spain*

The Bologna Process, launched with the Bologna Declaration of 1999 by European countries to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher education, has entailed a profound restructuring of European higher education systems, including complex, multi-faceted reforms of degree structures, credit transfer, quality assurance, and curriculum development (Keeling, 2006; Neave & Veiga, 2013). The process has also driven the development of new teaching and learning pedagogies (Keeling, 2006), which, in the case of Spain, together with other internal structural changes, would not have been undertaken otherwise (Perotti, 2007). Neave and Veiga's (2013) study of the value of the Bologna Process identified a widespread perception that substantial changes have been achieved regarding teaching methods and student participation in learning activities, which have also promoted flexible learning paths. Thus, the process is understood to constitute pedagogical reform as well as an opportunity to move ahead with student-centered learning methodologies and the development of skills and competences grounded in best practices.

According to Mateo, Escofet, Martínez-Olmo, Ventura, & Vlachopoulos (2012), there is "a general trend for curriculum guidelines to shift from being content-oriented to being learning-oriented. The new pedagogical models focus on learning acquired through personal work, self-regulation and on the establishment of ideal conditions for achieving the educational goals" (p. 435). The acquisition of competences, in the sense of developing knowledge and abilities, also involves interaction, mediation, and management between knowledge and realities—physical, social, or cultural—and requires effective action to define the learning context. These changes in educational paradigms entail learning-focused rather than content-focused approaches, shifting from a positivist perspective (dominated by transmissive learning, characterized by teacher-centered approaches, individual learning, learning by theory, and accumulating knowledge that has only cognitive objectives) to post-positivist approaches, which encourage learner-centered pedagogies, learning through discovery, collaborative learning, praxis-oriented learning, learning through real issues, learning with staff but also from other stakeholders, self-regulative learning, and also affective and

skill-related learning, along with cognitive learning (Aramburuzabala, Cerrillo, & Tello, 2015; Jickling & Wals, 2008; Sterling, 2004).

As other researchers (e.g., Lozano, 2006; Wals, 2014) have maintained, there is also a need for universities to shift from their current, highly specialized focus toward the integration of new forms of learning that comprise multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or transdisciplinary approaches. The latter case, transdisciplinary education, not only allows for greater cooperation between specialists from various disciplines, but also directly involves other stakeholders—that is, users, problem owners, clients, and other actors.

Higher Education’s Third Mission

Traditionally, European universities have had two main missions: teaching and research. Yet, universities’ engagement with society is another aim increasingly upheld as a third mission. Despite reforms carried out in recent years within the European higher education area, the European Commission’s report (2015) evidenced the need for more progress, especially within the social dimension. Such progress is widely regarded as an essential milestone to ensure future prosperity, the well-being and sustainability of the European higher education system, and of society as a whole (Martínez-Seijo & Torrego-Seijo, 2016). Similarly, UNESCO (2015) stated that the current challenges facing education in a diverse, interconnected, and increasingly complex world call for a transformation of the educational sphere toward an integrated approach to education. This transformation would enhance ethical principles and values in the learning process to protect the four pillars of education (Delors, 1996)—“learning to know,” “learning to do,” “learning to be,” and “learning to live together,” with the latter two pillars best reflecting the social function of education.

In Spain, this educational philosophy is consistent with the approach of the “Estrategia Universidad 2015” (University Strategy 2015) (Ministerio de Educación, 2010), which urges Spanish universities to contribute to human and social development by including learning strategies to develop civic and social responsibility. In the same way, the “Conferencia de Rectores de las Universidades Españolas” (Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities) (CRUE, 2015) promotes a leading role for Spanish universities in processes of human development, carrying out new strategies to build a fairer and more participatory society (Aramburuzabala & Opazo, 2015).

Service-Learning: The Link between Pedagogy and Engagement

Service-learning (SL) is an opportunity to link a student-centered learning pedagogy with higher education’s third mission. There are several terms and definitions for SL, as well as various forms or degrees of community engagement (Ó Donnchadha & Ma, 2015), depending on the country, the context, the historical background, and the cultural tradition under consideration. As Escrigas, Granados, Hall, & Tandon (2014) observed:

The engagement with society is materialized in practices and structures that are continually evolving. Some scholars speak of a community-university engagement movement, of service learning, of community-based research, of engaged scholarship, of community-university research partnership, and of knowledge mobilization and its variants such as knowledge translation, impact or utilization. (pp. xxxv-xxxvi)

Service-learning organizations have a relatively long history in the Americas. One example is Campus Compact (<http://compact.org>), which was founded in the United States in 1985 and is currently made up of nearly 1,100 member colleges and universities. Another example is the “Centro Latinoamericano de Aprendizaje y Servicio Solidario” (Latin American Center for Solidary Service-Learning) (<http://www.clayss.org>), an organization that encompasses other SL networks and associations both in Latin America and worldwide.

Some European countries have similar platforms and institutions centering on SL in higher education. For instance, Campus Engage (<http://www.campusengage.ie>) is a network that promotes and supports civic engagement activities in higher education institutions in Ireland. In Germany, the “Hochschulnetzwerk Bildung durch Verantwortung” (Responsibility Education Through the University Network) (<http://www.netzwerk-bdv.de>) works to enhance civil society’s engagement with students, academics, and other university stakeholders, and to improve the quality of academic teaching and the exchange of knowledge between universities and society, thereby promoting social

cohesion. The organization pursues these aims through various teaching and learning methods, namely service-learning. In the Spanish context, although there is a tradition of solidarity within schools and universities, the use of the term *service-learning* is a recent one, becoming widespread, mainly in primary and secondary education, around 2002 (Batlle, 2011).

Acknowledging the many definitions of service-learning by different authors (e.g., Martínez, 2010; Puig, 2009; Soska, Sullivan-Cosetti, & Pasupuleti, 2010; Tapia, 2010), we view SL as a pedagogical approach that integrates community service into learning and the development of contents, competences, skills, and values, with the aid of reflection tools. Additionally, in SL, learning is linked to the curriculum of the higher education studies in which students are enrolled. Ideally, the role of the student is active across all the phases of an SL project (from design to execution and assessment), and the service performed addresses a social need. Moreover, the service is contextualized, such that it improves the student's immediate context and helps to transform society (Bellera-Solà, Albertín-Carbó, & Bonmatí-Tomàs, 2015).

Therefore, SL represents an opportunity to respond to the third mission, or social function, that all universities should consider pursuing, with teaching and research being the other two missions. Owing to the factors mentioned earlier, SL is arguably a suitable pedagogical option for higher education since “it is rooted in the theories of constructivism and experiential education” (Furco, 2001, p. 67). It is also one of the diverse initiatives in higher education seeking outcomes related to sustainability and comprising knowledge, skills, and affective impacts. Service-learning offers a distinctive form of experiential learning that engages students in active, relevant, and collaborative learning, focusing equally on the service provided and the learning acquired (Barth, Adomßent, Fischer, Richter, & Rieckmann, 2014; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). Indeed, the Association of American Colleges and Universities considers SL one of the 10 high-impact practices in education, as it offers significant benefits to students. Research has found that participation in SL is associated with positive outcomes, including increased student awareness and openness to diversity, multicultural competence, global perspective taking, political awareness, civic and community engagement, and feelings of civic and social responsibility (Kilgo, Sheets, & Pascarella, 2015). In addition, Arco, Fernández, Morales, Miñaca, and Hervás (2012) found that SL encouraged creative thinking, active and committed learning, and enjoyment of the learning process. They also found that SL helped to develop critical thinking, improve academic performance, provide opportunities for career exploration, develop civic responsibilities and pro-social attitudes, and motivate universities to recognize their responsibility toward society.

Institutionalization of Service-Learning

To ensure that SL is sustained as a meaningful part of universities' long-term interests, some institutional support is required. Indeed, this is the only means by which SL can become integrated as an institutionalized component of higher education. Furthermore, by institutionalizing SL, a university is in a better position to develop a global strategy for social commitment and social justice, as well as an action plan for its continuous implementation and improvement (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Jouannet, Montalva, Ponce, & Von Borries, 2015), thereby ensuring greater consistency among teaching, research, and service activities.

As Furco (2014) stated, “the concept of institutionalization goes beyond the notion of programme sustainability to suggest a deeper acceptance and valuing of a practice across the institution” (p. 264). Previous findings by Morton and Troppe (1996) suggest that institutionalization is most likely to occur when: congruence exists between the institutional mission and strategic planning; there is broad acceptance of the need for long-range planning and resources are allocated to support SL; faculty are central to planning; incentives are provided to faculty; faculty work is widely publicized; and university plans for integrating SL into academic study evolve over time and across personnel. According to Bringle and Hatcher (2000):

Institutional changes include intentionally clarifying mission and practice, examining how the curriculum can better reflect community engagement, investing in infrastructure that supports community engagement, developing new models for assessing successful engagement in the community, and adjusting the roles and rewards of faculty so that faculty work in the

community is recognized and supported. When this transformation is integral, enduring, and meaningful to all stakeholders, then service learning will be institutionalized. (p. 274)

In line with these approaches, the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE) Sectorial Commission for Sustainability recently approved and published a document focusing on the institutionalization of SL at Spanish universities in an effort to “promote the curriculum’s sustainability, contribute to the development of a fairer society, and improve academic and social learning that promote students’ competence development” (CRUE, 2015, p. 3).

One tool for the purpose of evaluating the institutionalization of SL in higher education institutions is the self-assessment rubric for the institutionalization of sl in higher education (Furco 2002). First published in 1998, it was designed to assist members of the higher education community in gauging the progress of their efforts towards the institutionalization of SL. Since then, the rubric has been frequently applied and revised in institutions in the United States (Furco, 2014). Although other models for evaluating the institutionalization of SL have been developed, such as the Comprehensive Action Plan for Service Learning (CAPSL) model (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000), Furco's has been adapted and implemented at a global level (Furco, 2014).

Method

The aim of this study was to gather data about the degree to which service-learning has been established and institutionalized at Spanish universities, relative to the 22 dimensions described in Furco's (2002) rubric.

Participants

Participants in this study were members of the Spanish University Service Learning Network, known as ApS(U) in Spanish. This network was created in 2010 to disseminate and develop SL projects at Spanish universities and to strengthen collaborations among academics interested in these practices (Rubio, Prats, & Gómez, 2013). ApS(U) is open to all university professionals, free of charge, and from its founding has played a leading role in the dissemination of SL among Spanish universities. It also represents a meeting point where issues related to teaching innovation, research, and social responsibility are addressed at the state level. For this purpose, meetings, seminars, conferences and symposiums are organized periodically; for instance, beginning in 2010, a national and international congress focused on SL experiences, research, and theoretical development is held annually in Spain. At the time this article was written, 41 of the 75 universities in Spain (Ministerio de Educación, 2009) were collaborating with ApS(U).

The contact information for the academics who participated in this study was retrieved from ApS(U). Since most Spanish universities have no legal representatives or services that address SL on behalf of the entire institution, we had to rely on key informants, specifically people who had been involved in the promotion of SL at their own universities. Each informant contributed to the study by completing an electronic questionnaire directly or by asking an expert at his or her university to do so. We asked the ApS(U) coordinator to provide us with the names and e-mail addresses of these key informants after informing them about the study, requesting their participation, and obtaining their consent. Thirty-two key informants at 32 different universities belonging to ApS(U) agreed to participate (see Table 1). Taking into account previous studies at the Spanish regional level (e.g., Soler et al., 2013), we assumed that universities that did not belong to ApS(U) did not know about SL or did not feature SL practices at their universities.

Table 1. Proportion of Spanish Universities Participating in the Study, and Number of Universities Belonging to ApS(U) at the Time.

	Number of Universities	Percent of Total Spanish Universities
Spanish universities	75	100
Universities belonging to APSU	41	55
Universities belonging to APSU and agreeing to participate in the study	32	42.6 (78% of APSU)
Universities responding to the electronic questionnaire	20	26.7 (49% of the universities belonged to APSU) (62.5% of the universities belonged to APSU and agreed to participate in the study)

Electronic Questionnaire

We converted Furco's (2002) rubric into a Google electronic questionnaire. It was divided into the five dimensions that, in Furco's rubric, are considered to be the key factors for SL's institutionalization in higher education (Furco 2002, 2014):

1. philosophy and mission of SL;
2. faculty support for and involvement in SL;
3. student support for and involvement in SL;
4. community participation and partnerships; and,
5. institutional support for SL.

Each dimension comprised several characteristic components, presented in the "Results" section. A three-stage development continuum was established for each component:

- Stage 1: Critical mass building, in which the university is starting to recognize SL and to build a support structure;
- Stage 2: Quality building, in which the university is focused on the development of quality SL;
- Stage 3: Sustained institutionalization, in which the university has institutionalized SL.

Respondents were only allowed to choose one answer for each component; however, they were given space in the questionnaire to comment on each dimension of the rubric.

Procedure

In March 2014, the online survey containing 22 questions was sent to the study participants. The initial invitation consisted of an e-mail explaining the study, with a link to the electronic questionnaire and a copy of the rubric document (in the form of an attachment). Ten days later, a reminder e-mail was sent indicating that the submission deadline had been extended five days.

Survey responses were quantified and analyzed through a statistical descriptive analysis using the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet tool. The results and a discussion of the findings are presented in the following sections.

Results

As noted earlier, the online questionnaires were completed by 20 academics from 20 different Spanish universities. Figure 1 illustrates the results in absolute numbers and organizes them according to the five dimensions comprising the rubric.

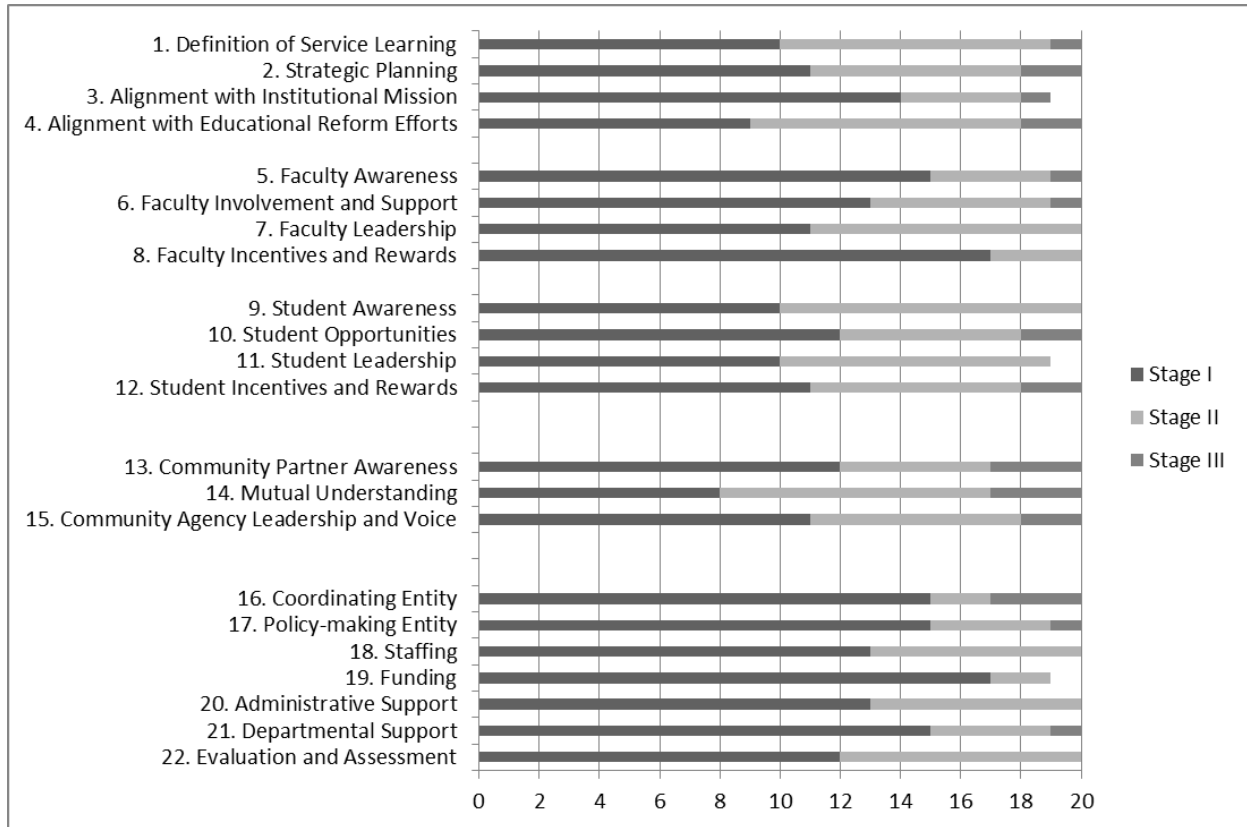


Figure 1. Survey results relative to the 22 components of the rubric.

Philosophy and Mission of Service-Learning

According to the rubric, this dimension includes the following four components: definition of SL; strategic planning; alignment with institutional mission; and alignment with educational reform efforts (Furco, 2002).

Regarding the definition of SL, 10 of the 20 respondents recognized that their respective universities were in stage 1, meaning there was no clear definition or agreement about the concept of service-learning at the university and that this term could be applied to other closely related practices such as volunteering or cooperation. Nine of the 20 respondents were in stage 2, in which a definition of SL existed but with some variations and inconsistencies in the use of the term. Only one of the respondents stated that his or her university adhered to a formal definition of high-quality SL that was accepted and shared by academics.

With regard to strategic planning, 11 of 20 respondents indicated that their institutions were in stage 1, which meant that the university did not have an official strategic plan in place to encourage SL programs. Seven responded that they were in stage 2, in which some SL-related strategies existed but were not recognized officially. Two respondents said they were in stage 3, meaning the university had developed an official strategic plan for advancing SL, which included viable short- and long-term goals for its institutionalization.

With respect to alignment with the institutional mission, 14 respondents indicated that their universities were in stage 1, that is, SL was rarely included in long-term efforts focusing on the core mission of the institution. Four responses corresponded to stage 2; SL was often mentioned as a primary or important part of the institution's mission but was not included in the university's official mission or strategic plan. Only one response corresponded to stage 3, in which SL was a primary concern of the institution and was included in the university's strategic plan.

Lastly, for the item related to alignment with educational reform efforts, nine of the 20 respondents recognized that their institutions were in stage 1, meaning that SL was unconnected to university-community programs or other innovative projects. Nine were in stage 2, in which SL was tied loosely or informally to other important university-community partnership projects or educational

innovation programs, and two were in stage 3, in which SL was linked formally and purposefully to university-community partnership projects.

Faculty Support for and Involvement in Service-Learning

This dimension consists of the following four components: faculty knowledge and awareness; faculty involvement and support; faculty leadership; and faculty incentives and rewards (Furco, 2002).

Pertaining to faculty knowledge and awareness, 15 of the 20 participants responded that few academics at their universities either knew what SL was or understood the differences between it and other practices such as volunteering, cooperation, and other experiential activities (stage 1). Only one respondent said that his or her university was in stage 3, in which a substantial number of faculty members knew what SL was and could distinguish it from other community service, internship, or experiential learning activities.

Regarding faculty involvement and support, 13 of the 20 respondents indicated that their respective universities were in stage 1, meaning SL was supported by very few faculty members. Six responses corresponded to stage 2, suggesting that an unsatisfactory number of key faculty members were engaged in SL. One response indicated that the participant's university was in stage 3; a substantial number of influential faculty members were instructors, supporters, and advocates of SL.

In terms of faculty leadership, 11 of 20 responses corresponded to stage 1; nine to stage 2. This meant that few or no influential academics were upholding or promoting SL at the university.

Related to faculty incentives and rewards, 17 of 20 survey responses corresponded to stage 1, in which faculty members were not encouraged to engage in SL and few incentives, if any, were provided. The work related to SL was not recognized in any way.

Student Support for and Involvement in Service-Learning

This student-focused dimension includes the following four components: student awareness; student opportunities; student leadership; and student incentives and rewards (Furco, 2002).

With regard to student awareness, 10 of the 20 responses acknowledged that there were no extensive mechanisms at the university to inform students about SL practices (stage 1). Ten responded that the university was in stage 2, in which there were some mechanisms in place to inform students about courses, resources, and opportunities, but such mechanisms were sporadic or only present in some departments or programs.

Regarding student opportunities, 12 of the 20 respondents indicated that their universities were in stage 1, in which few SL programs or courses were available for students. Six were in stage 2, in which SL options were integrated into specific courses and limited to certain students. Two were in stage 3, in which SL options and opportunities were available to students in several departments and at several levels.

Relative to the student leadership component, 10 of 19 responses corresponded to stage 1, meaning that there were few opportunities for students to lead in the dissemination of SL in their studies or at the university.

On the subject of student incentives and rewards, 11 of the 20 respondents stated that their respective universities were in stage 1. This meant that those institutions did not have formal or informal mechanisms to encourage students to take part in SL practices, nor was participation in those practices recognized.

Community Participation and Partnerships

Three components comprise this dimension of the rubric: community partner awareness; mutual understanding; and community agency leadership and voice (Furco, 2002).

Regarding community partner awareness, 12 of the 20 respondents recognized that their universities were in stage 1, meaning that few, if any, community agencies were aware of the university's goals for SL and the full range of SL-related opportunities available to students. Four were in stage 2, in which fewer than half of those agencies were aware of the goals and the opportunities for SL, and four were in stage 3, which meant that more than half were aware of the university's goals for SL and the full range of SL opportunities available to students.

As for mutual understanding, eight of the 20 respondents indicated that their universities were in stage 1; eight were in stage 2; and four were in stage 3. This meant that the understanding between the university and the community regarding each other's needs, timelines, goals, resources, and capacity for developing and implementing SL activities ranged from little or no understanding (stage 1) to broad agreement (stage 3).

Finally, in terms of community agency leadership and voice, 11 of the 20 respondents considered their universities to be in stage 1; few or no opportunities existed for community agency representatives to take on leadership roles in advancing SL at the university.

Institutional Support for Service-Learning

This rubric dimension includes seven components: coordinating entity; policy-making entity; staffing; funding; administrative support; departmental support; and evaluation and assessment (Furco, 2002).

The survey responses regarding the existence of a coordinating entity were as follows: 15 out of 20 were in stage 1, indicating that there was no university coordinating entity that could assist with the implementation, advancement, and institutionalization of SL. Of the other five respondents, two were in stage 2 and three in stage 3. Three universities had coordinating entities that could assist with the implementation, advancement, and institutionalization of SL. In the case of stage 2, two universities had a coordinating entity, but it was dedicated exclusively for SL or their services were only for some sectors, not the entire university.

In terms of a policy-making entity, 15 out of 20 respondents indicated that their universities were in stage 1, meaning that SL was not recognized officially as an essential educational goal of the university. Four were in stage 2, in which SL was recognized officially but no formal policies had been developed. Only one university was in stage 3, with broad recognition of SL by the university's policy-making board and formal policies developed or implemented.

With regard to staffing, 13 of 20 responses corresponded to stage 1 and seven to stage 2. These results revealed that there were no faculty members whose primary paid responsibility was to advance and institutionalize SL at the university. Where these staff did exist (stage 2), their appointments were temporary or paid with "soft money" or external grant funds.

As for funding, 17 of 19 respondents recognized that SL activities were supported primarily by short-term grants or from sources outside the institution (stage 1). None of the SL initiatives received funding support primarily from their own institutions.

In relation to administrative support, 13 out of 20 respondents indicated that their universities were in stage 1, indicating that administrative leaders had little or no understanding of SL and often confused it with other outreach efforts such as community service or internship programs. The other seven respondents categorized their university as being in stage 2, in which the university's administrative leaders had a clear understanding of SL but did little to make it a visible and important part of the university's work.

Regarding departmental support, 15 of 20 answers corresponded to stage 1; few departments recognized SL as a formal part of their academic programs. Four were in stage 2, in which several departments offered SL opportunities and courses, but these were not a part of the departments' formal academic programs and/or were not supported primarily by departmental funds.

Finally, for evaluation and assessment, 12 out of 20 responses aligned with stage 1; there was no organized university-wide effort to account for the number and quality of SL activities taking place. Eight corresponded to stage 2, with a proposed initiative to account for the number and quality of SL activities taking place throughout the campus. However, none of the universities indicated that there was an ongoing, systematic effort to account for the number and quality of SL activities taking place throughout the university.

Discussion

Given that most of the survey respondents indicated that their universities had not advanced beyond stage 1 in their efforts to institutionalize service-learning, we can surmise that SL in higher education is a recent initiative in Spanish universities and has not been widely implemented. However, the study results also revealed that there has been some progress, judging

from the number of universities that are in stage 2. Specifically, in relation to the first dimension of the rubric—philosophy and mission of SL—universities are developing definitions of SL and implementing short- and mid-range strategies to promote this practice. This is evidenced, for instance, by frequent references to service-learning in institutional documentation and the linkage between SL and educational innovation projects, which are most likely aligned with the Bologna Process.

Bringle and Hatcher (2000) highlighted the importance of deliberate institutional planning in facilitating institutionalization. If the institution has a team of administrators, faculty and staff who are involved in the development of a university plan for implementing SL (among other variables), then it is positioned to accomplish institutionalization more easily than others without such internal support and collaboration.

Dimension 5—institutional support for SL—also merits discussion. The results of the study demonstrated that institutional support is very weak. Only three institutions in the entire Spanish university system have institutionalized this pedagogical approach, and even then it is not complete. At the majority of the respondents' universities, SL is not recognized officially or included in official documents as an essential educational goal of the university. Two of the weakest components in the study were the lack of coordinating entities and financial support, two significant barriers to the institutionalization of SL (Butin, 2006). For instance, Bringle and Hatcher (2000) stressed the importance of developing a university infrastructure to support SL, that is, “having a centralized office that provides technical assistance, logistical support, monetary incentives, and recognition is an important aspect of institutionalization” (p. 284). Similarly, Furco (2002) asserted that SL structures should facilitate the pedagogy's dissemination and stabilization.

In view of the overall results, then, most of the Spanish universities that participated in this study are taking their first steps toward institutionalization. Using Lozano's (2006) five stages for the institutionalization of any practice—awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption—we argue that most higher education institutions in Spain are in the initial stages of awareness and interest. Some of the more advanced universities, however, are already in the evaluation stage of their SL projects. Only a few universities are in the adoption stage, the fulfillment of which is key to SL becoming institutionalized and thus part of the institution's culture. Even though it is possible to find different stakeholders at different stages within the same university, Lozano (2006) maintained that if an innovation is adopted and put into practice long enough and increasingly by different members of the institution until widespread implementation and stabilization occurs, it ceases to be an innovation and becomes part of the institution's culture, in other words, institutionalized.

However, some of the main obstacles that Spanish universities face in institutionalizing SL are mainly economic—that is, lack of financial support, not only for infrastructure, staff, and technical assistance, but also for the extra time and effort academics devote to integrating SL into their teaching practices.

It is also worth noting that Furco's (2002) rubric, which served as the basis for this study, is contextualized in the United States, with its long tradition of SL in higher education. Therefore, the objectives are ambitious. Adapting an existing institutionalization instrument to different contexts to wield universal indicators for the institutionalization of SL makes it possible to compare such contexts. On the other hand, it does not accurately reflect the emerging stage of SL in the context of Spanish universities. For instance, in the case of Spain, we believe that applying an earlier stage (stage 0) to Furco's rubric would have been helpful to describe a phase in the process characterized by incipient knowledge and implementation of SL. This would have allowed us to determine, in later studies, if some universities are evolving from this stage 0 to stage 1.

Limitations and Future Research

The methodology used in the current research possessed some inherent weaknesses that must be considered when interpreting the results and planning subsequent research. In terms of measuring institutionalization, this study included the perspective or judgment of one person or group of professionals from each university regarding the degree of SL's institutionalization at that university. All respondents were members of the ApS(U) network. Rather than turn to members of the management teams of universities, who would have supplied official data but who might not have

known about emerging initiatives, we relied on professionals actively involved in the implementation of SL.

Hence, this study is a first step in investigating SL in higher education in Spain, and more quantitative and qualitative research must be conducted to determine whether universities are introducing new initiatives since this is an emerging and constantly evolving field. In-depth interviews with different levels of stakeholders to analyze their views on SL's institutionalization at their universities, or case studies for understanding how universities move from stage 1 to stage 2, are future lines of research that could be pursued in the Spanish context.

Conclusion

The data obtained in this study allowed for an initial analysis of the institutionalization of SL at Spanish universities which may be valuable to the progress and implementation of this pedagogy. Although the results reflect a low level of institutionalization, Spanish higher education institutions are in the early stages of the dissemination of this practice. There have been positive developments in this regard, including the existence of the ApS(U) network and the CRUE, both of which are tied to higher education. However, SL will not be implemented effectively at Spanish universities if there are no structures in place to support it and to guarantee its sustainability through financial support, training, dissemination, and recognition.

Though we advocate for SL's institutionalization, we do not promote a top-to-bottom development of the pedagogy, which, according to some authors (Gough & Scott, 2007; Lozano, 2006), is not advisable. On the contrary, we call for a recognition of the efforts made by practitioners in order to establish a favorable context in which to encourage active learning methodologies, together with community engagement—for instance, by empowering and recognizing those academics who are firm advocates of this pedagogical approach and who are “innovators or early adopters (who) can serve as multipliers, creating the momentum needed to convince the others” (Lozano, 2006, p. 789). This is, necessarily, a bottom-to-top transformation, to overcome the well-documented resistance to change and pedagogical innovation at universities (Christie, Miller, Cooke, & White, 2013; Wals & Bewitt, 2010). Hence, institutionalization is viewed as a means to support and facilitate those emerging practices that often come from the bottom (i.e., from convinced academics) and that align with trends in higher education such as systemic approaches, community-based initiatives, multi-stakeholder dialogues, and democratic decision-making processes, among others.

Spanish universities have the Bologna Process framework to support SL and other active learning pedagogies (Keeling, 2006). Moreover, we stress that SL will gain ground at Spanish universities if social responsibility is understood as “an ethical quality policy” of institutions that must be developed through management, impact measurement and research, quality assurance processes, ethics, and participatory democracy (Vallaey, 2013) and not as a mere statement of philanthropic principles; after all, SL already has a long tradition worldwide and is developing its own assessment and research strategies. With this aim, although SL in Spanish higher education is a recent concept, there is still hope for it to be institutionalized because, as Lozano (2006) asserted and Jouannet et al. (2015) confirmed, “an innovation is usually institutionalized only after a long period of time” (Lozano, 2006, p. 790).

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