

A New Model for Comprehensive Service-Learning: A Case Study in Long-chi Village

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ABSTRACT

Long-chi Village, located in Lushan, Ya'an city, Sichuan province, China, was severely affected by a huge Earthquake, moreover, it had been overlooked and now is facing a serious extinction crisis. In order to revitalize this village, the comprehensive service program of Long-chi Village has adopted a series of measures, that is recruiting students from different colleges and assigning them to different service groups to give a hand, implementing all steps of service-learning, to help this village to develop in all aspects, such as local culture and economy. So far, it has been proved that this program could lead to a win-win situation. Participating students are able to tap their potential to the full. And the existing problems of the community are studied and analyzed comprehensively and systematically, as a result, the solutions could be more focused and a better result could be expected.

Key Words: service learning, disaster management, marginalization

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The Comprehensive Service program in Long-chi Village is a pioneering Service-Learning practice and exploration conducted by Sichuan University. Long-chi Village is located in the stricken area of 2013 April 20th Lushan earthquake which occurred in Ya'an, Sichuan province, China. The village was severely affected by the Earthquake, however, because of less developed transportation and other heavy risks involved, it had been overlooked and now it is facing a serious extinction crisis. For revitalization of the village and the promotion of Service-Learning courses SCU, Long-chi Village was selected as the Service-Learning Practical Base of the public elective course "Disaster-Reduction Service-Learning and the cultivation of public service leaders" that offered by the Institute for Disaster Management and Reconstruction(IDMR).

During the process of the Long-chi Service Learning Program (LSLP), two main issues were identified. First, the overall arrangement of the numerous students who are from different departments with distinct specialties.

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The second one is the systematical comprehensive service plan for helping the less-developed village. Under the guidance of Service-Learning's primary purpose, promoting students to maximize their potential in their profession, students are assigned to different groups. On the other hand, the program is divided into different parts according to subject category. Moreover, the sub-projects and the group members' knowledge and abilities should match each other. What's more, the interactions between every groups must be promoted. In summary, this classification and match method not only meets the students' professional development needs, but also helps to solve the service programming problems from various views.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Currently, there are many theories and success cases studies about Service-Learning. Researches are mainly divided into two groups. One is the experimental Service-Learning activities which are conducted in schools or communities. For example, community volunteer services launched by Fu Jen Catholic University in Taiwan(Fu Jen Catholic University. n.d)and the foundations for community engagement and the experiential education in recreation and leisure by Brock University in Canada(Brock University. n.d). Participating in such projects does not require any professional knowledge and skills, so it is unlimited to all the students in this university. The main purpose is to establish the practical foundation. The other one is the professional Service-Learning conducted in communities aiming at helping students to get professional knowledge and practical experience as well(Morton & Troppe, 1969). For instance, the physiotherapy service learning program of University of Indianapolis (Indianapolis University. n.d). This program aims to provide health care services to the community, which demands specific and professional knowledge and skills. However, there are few reports on such a Service-Learning program which could conduct a comprehensive service through multi-disciplinary integration method to meet the multiple needs of the community. Thereby, this paper is focused on the development of the new model for Service-Learning through combination of students and work from multi-disciplinary studies.

3. METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

The comprehensive Service learning program of Long-chi Village based on community needs, adopts the multi-disciplinary integration model and implements all the steps of Service-Learning, that is, knowledge learning, practice, review, reflection, discussion, improvement, and execution. After learning theoretical knowledge in classrooms, students are assigned to different groups according to their subject category and the matching degree between the sub projects and their specialties. The seven sub projects' themes are public relations, local culture, village economy, health care, civil engineering, environmental security and rural governance. And they are respectively responsible for the program promotion and communication, collection and collation of local cultural resources, local economic strategic planning and guide, conduct research on local hygiene condition and carrying out health care work, investigating the housing construction and reconfiguration, environmental safety assessment and building up emergency response plan, and studying rural governance system and giving proposals and suggestions on planning to the local government.

In order to achieve these goals, students have to effectively implement each link of Service-Learning. That is, conducting field researches with the help of local government and public welfare organizations, taking down log reports, reflection and discussion

within each group, cooperation and communication between different groups and at last, the student are supposed to come up with feasible suggestions and plans on revitalizing the less developed Long-chi village.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

It has been proved that this comprehensive Service learning program of Long-chi Village could lead to a win-win situation. Participating students are able to tap their potential to the full. In this case, the existing problems of the community are studied and analyzed comprehensively and systematically, as a result, the solutions could be more focused and a better result could be expected.

The main reason for the success of the program lies in its integration. Rather than focusing on improving one aspect of the community condition, the program aims to provide comprehensive service to the target village according to its actual needs. Moreover, participating students are from various colleges and have different backgrounds. On the basis of cooperative research, there's a division of labor to let them focus on different service aspects according to their specialties. Through 3 theory-studying courses and 6 practice-studying courses in the targeted community, this service learning project has recruited 60 students, arranged into 7 groups, from 17 colleges. A series of matters have been conducted in this project. Firstly, it launched a bee-keeping crowd funding, which has raised up to 32465.27RMB, or roughly \$4860. With this funding, 18 families are able to keep 42 more boxes of bees to increase their incomes. Secondly, this project has successfully conducted health screening on 42 villagers and has established their personal health information files as well. In addition, all the surveys on family information of the whole 18 local families has been completed.

Moreover, a complete aerial map of Longchi village has been obtained, with which, a risk-avoiding map has been drawn and a community model has been made. Then, successfully undergone a collecting and collating process, one brochure about local village culture has been compiled and three public media platforms on service-learning, hit over 8000 times, have been established. Last but not the least, a book named introduction to social service learning has been well-compiled and published already. However, to be frank, there are still three problems waiting to be solved. First, the sustainability of the programs not strong enough. Second, the participating enthusiasm for this program is decreasing among students. Third, lack of communication between various platforms. Against these problems, following measures have been taken out. At first, establishing the Service Learning Research Council of SCU and training qualified students to guide each sub projects. Secondly, encouraging and guiding students to maximize the benefits with existing results. Thirdly, taking advantages of new media's platforms to establish a perfect communication system among governments, NGOs, universities and so on to share information and ensure its equivalence. The comprehensive Service program of Long-chi Village is a pioneering exploration of the Service-Learning's new model, which is worthy of consideration. It is a demand-oriented, comprehensive, systematic and multi-disciplinary integrated program led by SCU, supported by local governments and assisted by social forces to fully apply the professional skills of every students and help the target village at the same time.

6. CONCLUSION

The given case shows the new demand-oriented, comprehensive and multi-disciplinary integrated model of Service-Learning could help the communities in a wider range and more effective as well as promoting the students' professional skills and sense of civic responsibilities. By conducting the demand-oriented and comprehensive service program through multi-disciplinary integration method in marginalized communities which have suffered disaster, both the students and the community are benefited. In other words, this model could not only let the marginalized communities achieve comprehensive and sustainable development, but also develops the students' professional skills and cooperation abilities.

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