

Multifaceted Aspects of Assessment in Service Learning: Lessons Learned

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Purpose

- Assess the benefits of service learning (SL)
 - Qualitative data
 - Quantitative data
- Derive strategies for assessment of service learning in graduate curricula

Service Learning

- What is service learning?
 - A pedagogy that combines community service with explicit academic objectives, preparation, and reflection
 - An effective tool for linking academic learning with practical experience

PT SL Research 2000: Hypothesis

- Participation in service learning would increase levels of civic responsibility in graduate-level physical therapy students as compared to a control group.

Design

- 92 Masters of Physical Therapy (MPT) students
- Subjects SL experience captured through:
 - Surveys
 - Journal entries
 - Faculty guided discussion

Data Collection

- Guided questions
 1. How does your experience affect the way you view service learning in the community?
 2. How does service learning shape your role as a PT?
 3. Do you have a greater understanding of yourself as a result of service learning?

Quantitative Analysis

- Attitudes Regarding Civic Responsibility and Skill Development Scale (ACR)
 - Community Life Survey
 - Activities and interests
 - Personal Characteristics

Quantitative results

- No significant results any 3 domains of ACR
- Ceiling and floor effect:
 - Perception of civic responsibility at baseline
 - Possibly from previous experiences with volunteer work

Qualitative Analysis

- Coding system to organize links and patterns
 - Inferred generalizations and assertions from responses
- Repeated readings and examinations
- Tested validity of assertions
- Generated two themes

Qualitative themes

1. Service learning had a positive impact on student's professional and personal development.
2. Service learning was a unique experience that fostered care of the community.

"Lessons Learned"

- ACR was not sensitive enough to measure subtle attitude changes over time
 - Previous experiences with service *may* have influenced results
 - Community service *may* have been an integral part the subjects lives
- Fostered query of how to best measure PT student's SL experience

Previous SL Studies

- Village and Village, 2001, 2004
- 178 graduate students (SL participation - voluntary)
 - Assessment tools:
 - Survey format
 - Verbal and written reflection
 - Outcomes
 - 98% reported some personal and/or professional benefit
 - 89% reported feeling their patients benefited from the services provided
 - Limitation of study
 - Unable to identify specific benefits gained with survey format

Previous SL Studies

Beling, 2004

- 40 MPT students: 20 experimental/20 control
- Assessment tools (pre/post test):
 1. Facts on Aging Quiz
 2. Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal
- Outcomes:
 1. Experimental group developed personal relationships that improved their attitude regarding geriatric PT
 2. Experimental group improved knowledge about geriatric PT issues
- Limitation of study:
 - Results failed to capture changes in student's critical thinking

Strategies for Assessment

Domains of Service Learning

1. Students
2. Faculty
3. Institution
4. Community

Methods of Assessment for Domains of SL

Variety of methods to collect a broad range of information

- Focused interviews
- Focus groups
- Verbal communication
- Journal writing
- Surveys

Types of Surveys for Assessment

- End of Program Survey for Students, Faculty and Community Partners (CP)
 - Shinnamon, Gelmon & Holland, 1999
- Community-Based Learning for Students, Faculty and CP
 - Gelmon et al, 2001
- Students: Volunteer Functions Inventory; Community Service Self-Efficacy Scale; Attitudes Scale; Civil Action Scale

Advantages of Assessment

Method of Assessment	Students	Faculty	Institution	Community
Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Easy to analyze 2) Quantitative data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Easy to analyze 2) Quantitative data 	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Easy to analyze 2) Quantitative data
Interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Provides opportunities for explanation of answers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide feedback • Can assess campus-wide impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Can interview people at different levels to discern impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to provide context for answers
Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Share experiences with peers 2) Reflection on what was learned 	—	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Opportunity to provide context for answers
Journals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Clarify thought processes 2) Apply ideas to concepts learned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on experiences 	—	—
Observation	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide feedback • Provide guidance for formation of service-learning curriculum 	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Observe the impact on the community partner
Analysis of Published Documents	—	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Show the impact of service learning on the institution 	—

Disadvantages of Assessment

Methods of Assessment	Students	Faculty	Institution	Community
Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No freedom to express individual voice • Unable to share context of experiences • Bias • Hard to control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If prompt is given too soon, may not have enough time between to analyze any change 	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Unable to share context for answers 2) Difficult to control biases 3) Must be mindful of community partners' time
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Labor-intensive to analyze 2) Difficult to code with high interrater reliability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Consistency between interviewers of faculty members is difficult to maintain 2) Confidentiality is difficult to maintain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Labor-intensive to analyze 2) Difficult to maintain consistency 3) Difficult to maintain high interrater reliability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Labor-intensive to analyze 2) Difficult to code with high interrater reliability 3) Time-consuming for community partner
Focus Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to assemble due to schedule conflicts of many people • Labor-intensive to analyze • Difficult to code with high interrater reliability 	—	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor-intensive to analyze • Difficult to code with high interrater reliability • Time-consuming for community partner
Journals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult to enforce maintenance of journal • Difficult to code with high interrater reliability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of journals difficult to enforce due to busy schedules • Difficult to distinguish identifying information 	—	—
Observation	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time-consuming for faculty • Might make faculty member feel uncomfortable • Observer may be intrusive to classroom setting and disrupt the normal flow of classroom experience 	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Observer may be intrusive 2) Time-consuming for community partner
Analysis of Published Documents	—	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Might be difficult to find past access to documents pertaining to service-learning impact 	—

Conclusion

- Service learning lends an opportunity to expand the learning experience for PT students
 - Diversity
 - Cultural competence
 - Individual perceptions of quality of life

Conclusion

- Challenge:
 - Difficulty in measuring intangible learning experience
- Combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis will benefit future SL analysis outcomes

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