



GEN
Global Education Network

Project I2 – Exploring Service Learning as an Entry into the Social Economy

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Learning Partnership: A teaching and learning strategy that fosters engagement with meaningful community service and reflection to enrich the learning experience

Introduction

- Build on positive evidence of service learning from the individual perspectives of social economy organizations and students
- Promote and strengthen the relationship between the social economy and Universities
- Students gain an understanding of the valuable contribution community and social justice organizations make toward attaining social and economic justice

Role and Participation of Community Partners

- Supervised students
- Developed learning tasks
- Determined purpose of task
- Evaluated process

Preliminary Findings From Student Experience

- Overall satisfactory to excellent experience - 95%
 - Expectations met – 54%
- Concern for welfare of broader number of people
 - 80% agree to strongly agree
- 75% agree there is a likelihood of involvement with community or civic affairs
- Likelihood of being involved:
 - With organization – 70%
 - Similar organization – 52%

Background and Rationale

- Community and engaged learning playing a more prominent role in the University experience
- Strengthen partnerships between Universities and social economy organizations
- A multi-strategic approach to education and learning helps strengthen the social economy

Sample of Organizations	Focus
Community Centre	Youth programs
Policy think tank	Policy analysis
Labour Organization	Education and awareness
Student Union	Communication strategies
Community-Based	Local/Global
Faith-Based	Seniors program

“We are unsure of how successful this placement was with helping the students make the connection between their course materials and the placement. If we were provided with more direction of how we could incorporate course material, we would have ensured to make that connection during the placement.” - Organization Supervisor, Spring 2008

How Students Benefited

- Challenged to connect course material to “real-life” context
- Reflection on relationship between education and teaching
- Professional communication skills
- Hired student researchers – experience data collection
- Experience social justice work within community setting

“And really just to make you an actual social citizen, so you can contribute to society, rather than just saying “I’m a teacher and I teach, and then I go home and that’s it.” – Student, Spring 2008

Project Methodology

- Meet with partners and share course objectives
- Community partners define particular tasks
- Develop course and integrate partners’ tasks
- Introduce community learning placements into course
- Assessment complements or supplements pedagogy
- Purposeful reflection components including relating skills learned and experiences to course content
- Pre and post reflection meetings with all participants

*“My original expectation was for students who would be able to grasp the importance and value of Parkland to other U of A students like themselves, and be able to come up with original and creative ideas for engaging those students in our work.”
- Organization Supervisor, Spring 2008*

Implications for the Social Economy

Community Learning Placements Provide Exposure To:

Students

- Informal exchanges
- Voluntary and community-based organizations
- Social enterprises
- Community associations
- Organizations that are independent of government

Community Organizations

- Access to specialized skills
- Mentoring new groups
- Meet social objectives
- Create a strong, sustainable, prosperous and inclusive society

Next Steps

- Strengthen linkage between learning process and the social economy
- Consider appropriate assessment strategies
- Explore learning placements across degrees and disciplines
- Make it simpler for social economy organizations to participate in curriculum and evaluation materials
- Foster dialogue across students and organizations
- Explore how Social Economy Organizations can be both sites of learning and sites of social change