

Service Learning Project Reflection in ARO

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ABSTRACT

This Service Learning Project Reflection in Afghanistan Relief Organization mainly focuses on my volunteer teaching during TESOL Graduate program at Kabul Education University. In this project, I discuss my understanding, experiences and my students' beliefs about service learning. Service Learning Project Reflection in ARO is the community needs, especially the students who are orphanage students and I voluntarily be ready to teach them and share my experiences that I have learnt during my MA.

Afghanistan Relief Organization is partnership of ACCESS, so when I start my service learning the students are happy and they engaged in the lesson, because it is necessary for them to understand what I am teaching to enrich their knowledge. Students who are in ARO studying full time and this service-learning course are optional. The purpose service learning, students learn more about their relationship with the communities they engage socially with classmates. Learn more about their capacity for serving others. Mostly in this course applied integrated speaking and reading English course involves forty hours teaching in ARO. Service-learning is an experiential learning pedagogy that moves students beyond the classroom to become active participants in their learning and develop community knowledge and skills.

Objectives: The purpose of this article is to hold project service learning in ARO because of community needs and to develop students learning styles the process of learning through integrating reading and speaking skills.

Keywords- Service learning, integrating reading and speaking, community needs, problem solving, engaged, learning styles, unity, leaning peace, critical thinking.

I. INTRODUCTION

The M. Ed TESOL Graduate Program of Kabul Education University planned to provide the service learning experiences for Med TESOL students that will fulfill learning objective and provide service learning that meets a true community needs and it was also as part of its semester projects. The class project aims to give the students chance to provide service learning that meets real community needs.

First, for Pre- Service Reflection, I have learnt here in my own class and then I tried to identify my project. Second, when I took my decision to do some things volunteer in the community? I went in the community to find a place and had a few call and appointment with some schools, orphanage, and ACCESS

partnerships but finally I selected Afghanistan Relief Organization (ARO) that is ACCESS partnerships. I organized my service learning program where I have prepared agreement letter with ARO and I describe my purpose and objectives. So, it is the best place that I found for doing my service learning.

When I went in Afghanistan Relief Organization I talked with manager of ARO then he introduced me with head of English department and I defined service learning for both of them to have some information, because it is necessary for them to know our purpose of service learning and they say that it first time that you come here to help for us as a volunteer. It is mentionable this integrated speaking and reading English course involves forty hours teaching in ARO. Connors, K., & Seifer, D. S. (2007) believe that before project development starts or revisions are made to an accessible project, it is

significant for the partnership to define what is meant by doing a service learning experience.

The head of English department told me that they have problems in speaking and reading subjects, because their teachers are not trained in new methodology how to teach reading and speaking and then I met the students they were quiet and shy students. When I found this problem I decided to have class with students and instructors and both of them involved in my teaching session the advantage were for both students and teachers. Beside that I suggested when I am teaching in both classes their teacher should come and participate in my teaching class. There were two classes and their levels are pre-intermediate.

This service-learning that I had done in ARO and it benefits to everyone who involved in that project such as: students, teachers and community. This project of service learning took place 17/9/2012 till 19/11/2012 and it occur in ARO.

I chose ARO to do my service-learning project because they need me to help them and I did service for having a good future of my community. On the other hand, I thought it is my responsibility and I can say that it is my feeling that I should help and serve in my community at least I can solve a few problems that some people may face with those problems.

I think, the learners are studying in ARO. They are disadvantages people and most of them cannot study in private courses because they have economical problems. When I saw them and I thought they need me to help them, because I feel their eyes are calling me for helping and I became happy and sad on that time, because I realized that in our community there are many people want to continue their education but they face with economical problems and most of them can't follow their education. On the other hand I became happy, there are some people who want to do something volunteer for the community. I thought, I can do something to my community when I was learning something new and I tried to share outside the class or the community.

It was possibly one of the most helpful things I had done in the ARO. I am not only had fun but I also learned about why and how we need to begin to help with disadvantages people that they did not have opportunities to study in private courses or some other areas.

II. WHAT WAS LEARNED?

I understood that everyone can solve their community problems by working volunteer; because in our community there are lots of problems if we cannot solve all problems at least we will solve one or two little problems that we are able to do that. Mead, M (1971) believes that "Never doubt for a moment that a small group of individuals can change the world". When I understood many new methods and skills in TESOL program I reflect my experiences in ARO with my students and with teachers who are involving with them.

Most of my students engaged in learning English language, then one day I asked one of my students why you are studying English language? He says that, I like learning English because I can speak English when I travel in oversea. One of my student about 18 she says that I am studying English language, because I am the only oldest child in my family to find a job and help to my family, she adds on her speech nowadays if you don't know computer and English language you can't work in most offices so why I am interested in studying English. Other little boy about 13 years old, he says that I am studying English because I want to be a good teacher in the future.

Here is a quote from Faizy, N. "Service learning is a special program in our center and I appreciate from this program. I really understood new learning styles to enrich my knowledge and learn easily".

Every individual student have their own perspective ideas in their future but most of them want to have a good job in order to help for their family so they are disadvantages people and their wishes are having bright future with their family.

According to Toole & Toole, (p. 100) reflection is an important means by which students integrate prior knowledge and experiences with new experiences to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. Learners in ARO gained in this service-learning class by integrated reading and speaking, professionally, and personally. For example: When I was teaching them integrated reading and speaking I covered some topics such as: survival topics and social topics. They understood how to read and discuss in their class and their real life situations. They learnt more about social issues and especially in the areas of communication.



They can grow a professional network of people if they want they can connect with finding a job and doing some kind of activities that will help for the community. Perry and Albright (1999) developed an activity for

integrating reflection into elementary school literacy instruction that can also be used in service-learning program. So, in this case, learners will write about their service experience and understanding in an essay, article or journal and then they share their essay, article or journal with their friends and classmates in their class. The reflection process is increased students understanding and goes ahead to share their perspectives and ideas with each other and this kind of reflection improve students understanding and abilities in their service learning.

At the middle of service learning, there was a symposium by the name of Educational Research in Afghanistan at KEU that is sponsored with USA Embassy and Indiana University by helping KEU and I had a poster presentation according my service learning that I had done in ARO. So, there were many people and when I was presenting for each group of people they were asking questions about service learning, because it was new for everyone who participated in this symposium and I answered for their questions on that day I really enjoyed working with disadvantages people and I proud of my kind teachers and this Graduate TESOL Program that they provide such kind of opportunities to us and I really learnt many things that I explained in this paper.



While I am presenting poster presentation for Service Learning project at the KEU Symposium. November 6/2012

Reflection in service-learning has been called the "link that ties student experiences in the community to academic learning" (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 171). Teachers also gained some new methodology and integrated skills personally and professionally when they involve in service-learning class. When I had the class with my students in ARO and during the class as I mentioned above teachers also involve and help during the class. The teachers also learnt some new strategies and skills that I applied in the class. For example: Mostly I have covered integrated reading and speaking skills, by

having group work, pair work, role play and discussion, because I learnt these new skills and strategies from TESOL Graduate Program and I knew that they need such kind of integrated skills to improve their speaking skills and reading skills.

The students and teachers who participated in service learning they can grow the organization volunteer unity. For example: Service learning students who I taught them will share their ideas and experiences with their friends, class mates and with the society that they live, through this activity they can increase public awareness about service learning. In the future they will do service learning in their community, because they will be teacher in the future to help volunteer.

III. STRENGTHS AND AREAS OF GROWTH

Cress, M. C. (2005) says that across the country, learners and their teachers are coming out from their classroom and they want to helping with their communities in order to share learning abilities and to apply experiences in real life connections between their teaching and everyday problems in their towns, cities or in their states. The most important points are that when I met my students, they were very quiet and shy students. For example: in my first session I want them to read the passage they were quiet and just looking to each other then I knew that how start.

First, I smile and ask them randomly then they took part in the class and I realized that they shy and quiet but they can read the passage so slowly. They haven't skills and courage of reading and speaking. When asked them to come in front of the class they said we will talk here not in front of the class. So, I realized they are a little bit shy students it needs time to bring changes.

Therefore, after a few sessions I encourage them and they became participative and active students. When my project became completed they were very active students and they able to come in front of the class and they share their ideas with whole class.

My students are mixed teenagers and adults both from girls and boys in the same class. When I was teaching a few first week to my teenagers students, they did not take part in the class activities especially girls.



Here is a quote from Rahmani, F. "I am happy that I can speak in front of the class, camera and people". Here is a quote from Nasari, S. "First a special thanks from you and this program that we could learn how to read and speak in front of the class".

At the end of course I realized some interesting points about my students that surprised me, the last three weeks they were very active and they involve in their group work and pair work and they tried to take chance in order to share their ideas in the whole class. And other issue was that there is a scholarship from US Embassy and they want send people in the India for one month and will sponsor by US Embassy. So, when they took exam one of my teenage students passed the exam not from adult students it was surprise for me because teenagers are very talented and they try in educational field also most of parents recognized without education there are not peace in our Afghanistan.



Also we can bring peace among people when we doing our service learning. For example: when we worked among a group of community then they gained the advantages of service learning in their selves and in their society. Therefore, they will continue service learning for other community for bring some changes in their society.

Here is a quote from Ali. He says "service learning brings unity and peace among people in order to help each other".

In addition, when they start service learning, they can share their ideas and they will transfer the advantages of service learning in their community. In this case they bring some positive changes in their community and they will establish unity among the community partnership and this unity can bring peace among the

people. In addition I can say that service learning can be a social activities and I am sure that if someone involve in this program they will do service learning again and again.

Here is a quote from Noori. She says that "We wish to have such kind of program more and more and when we gain knowledge and improve our speaking skills. So, we should transfer for others". Here is a quote from Sadullah. He defines that "I think, it is a really helpful and interesting program. We have not seen yet and no one did it for us. Now I am happy, because of being in this useful class".

At the end I can say that, it was first time that I did service learning and I really want to continue service learning in my community in the coming winter, because it has two advantages. First, I will reflect what I understand from my course and I never forget when I am doing and sharing my experiences with others and the second advantages are the community will learn from me and I will bring some changes in order to solve their problems.



When I finished my service learning my students asked me I should come and teach for them, because they say that we learnt many new things from you. For example: they add in their speech, reading the text by skimming and scanning and having discussion in whole class help us to learn from each other and share our knowledge and they say in first time we were not able to speak in front of the class but now we can do. So, in the coming winter I am making my schedule for those people that they need me and will continue my service learning; now I feel comfortable to doing this activity in the community it will be fun for me in the vacation that I have in the winter and I am enjoying by doing service learning. (Dewey, 1938, p. 47). "The connection between thought, "worthwhile" educational experiences, action, and further learning is the cornerstone of the service-learning reflective process".



IV. CONCLUSION

Finally, I can say that service learning helped me to reflect my knowledge and experiences that I learnt from TESOL Graduate Program especially from service learning class that we had there. When I was doing service learning first I realized the community problems in Afghanistan Relief Organization (ARO) with both instructors and students. As I mentioned above their instructors didn't trained in new teaching methodology and they did not have experiences in integrating reading and speaking skills and learners had problems in reading a text and they did not have ability to talk or share their ideas in front of the class.

At end of this course instructors trained in integrating skills how they should apply and I believe that they can solve their problems in the future, because their instructors have the ability to apply integrated skills in their classes. On the other, when I was teaching in ARO I prepared the materials that they need and also the teaching materials were according their level of students. The most important issues are students' learning and feelings should

be taken into account by considering students' prior beliefs and interests and by giving students choices. When I reorganized my students' capacities and abilities I gave them opportunities to be in cooperative work groups, to take leader roles, and to take initiative. All of the factors discussed during this service learning and they gained knowledge. They understood what I taught for them in the future I believe that they can transfer what they learnt from this service learning course.

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