Chapter 15
International Education, Diversity Exposure, and Cross–Cultural Engagements

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ABSTRACT

The quest for mission-driven approaches in business education arises out of a deep concern for development and achievement of student centered outcomes. This chapter assesses these concerns by analyzing service leaning and practical cases. International education, diversity exposure, and cross-cultural engagements are analyzed in line with the extent of achieving service-learning outcomes. The analysis is done by examining the value added to business school learning models through these engagements. The discussions show that students and faculty benefit through critical thinking, tolerance to diverse cultures, and preparedness for global careers. The chapter ends with illustrative cases of global community service, global academic tours, business simulation games, and X-culture global challenge engagements by United States International University Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Service learning seeks to achieve mission driven outcomes which integrate theory and practice. It in calculates a sense of community responsibility through student commitment to social, environmental and health issues. It focuses on individual reflection to enrich the learning experience, teaches civic responsibility, and strengthens communities through student service. Service learning is considered as one of the mission driven approaches to higher education. This is because it has positive outcomes on

students in regard to interacting with others, facilitating cultural understanding, appreciation of diversity and team building. Using service learning projects strengthens the educational experience for students by providing a unique opportunity to develop skills as integral elements in the teaching/learning process (Misra & Ballard, 2003). Service Learning enables students to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another. Institutions of higher learning can enhance learning outcomes by transforming their missions into educating students to responsible citizens. Service learning plays a crucial role by connecting theory to practice. Effective service learning establishes clear learning outcomes which require the application of concepts, skills and knowledge from the academic disciplines while involving students in the construction of specific solutions to societal problems.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore service learning as an aspect of mission driven outcomes in universities. Specifically, the chapter situates service learning within the broader experiential learning at United States International University-Africa (USIU-Africa). It borrows heavily from service learning models while focusing on international education, diversity exposure and cross cultural engagements. International education focuses on internationalization of education through global learning programs such as study abroad and global service learning. Diversity exposure section shows how integration of different cultures benefits organizations and humanity at large while cross cultural engagements seeks to elucidate how global cultures enable learners at USIU-Africa to appreciate mutually exclusive tendencies while at the same time appreciating diversity. The chapter ends with real life cases used at United States International University-Africa (USIU-Africa). The cases focus on community service, global academic tours, business simulation and X- culture global challenge.

BACKGROUND

Service Learning Models

Service learning is an educational method that involves students in challenging tasks that meet genuine community needs. It requires the application of knowledge, skills and systematic reflection on the learning experience undertaken during community service. Service learning is recognized as a pedagogy connecting classroom theory and program outcomes to the needs of the community. Service learning seeks to acquire the social skills which benefit the students outside the classroom to embrace a broader and realistic perspective of social realities as they affect different groupings in the society and appreciate socio-economic diversity that affect the community.

Students are presented with a series of service-learning techniques focusing on specific social issues affecting the society. These issues include but not limited to art, traditions, language, religion, environment, health, education and culture. Students explore environmental challenges and learn about the interaction between humans, technology, and the natural world. In terms of the health problems students address and reduce the severity of health issues such as diabetes, cancer, and HIV/AIDS, while also participating in community outreach at health fairs and blood drives. Students engage in cross-cultural interaction by participating in activities that emphasize exchanges of beliefs, practices, values, morals, language and religion.

There are different types of service learning approaches adopted by institutions of higher learning which include problem based service learning, service internships, capstone simulation courses, community based action research and civic based service learning. These models promote service learning

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