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# The Impact of Campus Interaction Among Students in Enriching Student Learning Experiences in North Macedonia

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## Abstract

Researchers practicing service learning can be leaders who continuously support the teaching staff by helping them to literally understand the essence of learning through service provision, overall development of civic thought, and education in general. The potential, goals and promises of research projects based on theories of service learning are activities that lead to understanding among people, underlining here the elements such as: educating young researchers, research about teaching, the role of instruction, i.e. lectures on genuine academic teaching and overall development of participating learners; involving as many citizens as possible in higher education; establishing partnerships between university community that have their integrity. The goal of this research is to shed some light on how can higher education play an even greater role in improving the quality of life in different communities of society? In order to analyse the impact of the campus or university-student interaction, students of the first and fourth year have been included in the research, from all study. The results from our research proved in a convincing way that the interaction (on campus) among students from different study programs has a different impact on students themselves in terms of their co-curricular activities and their contacts among one another. However, we found out that the students who are enrolled to the Business Administration study program are more engaged into the co-curricular activities and student communication development; and the fourth-year students have more co-curricular activities, whereas first year students have more contacts among themselves.

**Keywords:** community services, campus interaction among students, enriching student learning

**JEL classification:** I23

## Introduction

The purpose of learning through service provision to students initially initiates and enhances self-esteem, a better chance of thinking in a self-critical manner, greater capacity to influence social change and greater commitment to responsibility social life in the pluralistic democratic society in which we live (Crosby, 2004). Despite the fact that to date there is a great lack of genuine evidence for the effects of education programs through the provision of service, there is a possibility or the likelihood that they will continue to present key education innovation in the future. In his seminal work, Dewey (1938) stressed that the supplementation of students' personal development through education should also help the improvement of the misbalance between incomes and social status, aiming at the integration of the youth in society, partially

realized through the transfer of the most dominant culture and norms of certain behaviours. According to Dewey (1938), being a democratic society is the precondition for avoiding the clash of these functions and that democracy is the main factor in developing a solid educational system. That is why democracy does not represent an advancement that encompasses many rules in itself, but rather it is an entirety of social relations in which people consider themselves equal to others so that they can promote the overall development of each individual's capacities. Therefore, it is necessary to have a society, which will be able to eliminate the sources of these inequalities. Based on these reasons, it is necessary for the academic cadres to work in the creation and construction of a democratic society with equal opportunities. When speaking of education and the changes it undergoes, it is amazing to hear about proposals that have to do with tiny changes in the current educational and social system, though it is not common to think of education as part of a whole society in which the control of meaning and values of knowledge are connected with political and economic power, exploitation, privileges and cultural hegemony. The 21st century requires a deeper flow for both schools and the society in general, but this does not depend on whether we want schools to provide real education for our children by helping them to establish a society in which there will be no extreme divisions within the strata, or discrimination on gender, racial or ethnic grounds. In this paper, we will provide some examples for the developments in question, illustrating them with additional samples and tendencies towards which our schools should turn to.

The main research question investigates if there is a correlation between the interaction of university campus study through disciplines and various study programs and the involvement of students in extra-curriculum activities. We propose a specific hypothesis, which presumes that there are significant relationships between students' characteristics according to different study and their co-curricular activities.

## Concept of service learning

Service learning is most often defined as an educational technique for combining authentic community service security with integrated academic outcomes. Just as an organization that may be in disrepair, the same goes for a proper design of a well-managed education that is accomplished through service provision can make a contribution to realizing true learning and achievement comprehensive development of students, and at the same time help the realization of the needs of the community.

The implementation and use of the special teaching technique, known as the "learning in service" is a relatively new technique, but its roots are relatively old. Many religious and cultural traditions have tried to impose their ethics on those who believed in it, starting from what unites cultures and religions. Each of these traditions largely emphasizes the need and importance of education and education as a general good. Experience gained in the field, rather than for the general good, is largely characterized by theoretical content of service learning (Valtonen et al., 2015).

The theoretical basis for a correct approach to learning in the service, viewed in general comes out of the theory of traditional learning or teaching. The spread of service learning, viewed from different perspectives, in the last decade period, actually represents a genuine development of education in general (e.g. Mandel et al., 2016). It is worth noting that learning in the service is strictly in accordance with the principles of Vouet (Kolb, 1984), as opposed to the affiliates of the teaching staff, the educational institutions and the students they attend, in order to involve them in the relevant communities consistently, according to their educational goals they want to

achieve, aiming for the ultimate goal of the contribution to the community in which they live (Bringle et al., 2002; Hopkins et al., 2017).

As a second aspect, learning in the ministry provides good examples of engagement, which includes elements that are known as reinforces of mutual and genuine understanding in the teaching process: a) active learning b) feedback from a permanent character by experts, students or others. c) cooperation d) beginning of cognitive character, and, e) the so-called practical application that students are involved in tasks that have real-world effects, but also a security tool that can lead to errors with so-called high-risk hazards (Markus et al., 1993).

The third view is that learning through service provision extends and strengthens the curriculum, outside of a given interest when it comes to a subject that has a dominant character in higher education (Rice, 1996). Because this kind of teaching somehow obliges teachers and students to analyse topics from the interdisciplinary field and in different ways of seeing and analysing things, making the recipients of these experiences not only think about cognitive development but also for many other aspects of their intellectual development, such as the aspect of emotional development, social communication skills, values, attitudes, the development of philanthropic habits and participation in democratic activities in the society where they live.

Historically seen, the work and other activities that are carried out in a community are in most cases preplanned as such, they undergo a plan and way of functioning. Nowadays, a large number of in-service learning programs are oriented towards the support and assistance to individuals and groups in order for them to be able to adapt to political and economic currents rather than being oriented towards the designation and creation of opportunities for social advancement. In-service learning tends towards the strengthening of fundamental differences; moreover, it aims at avoiding and ultimately eliminating conflicts of harmful nature in society.

Societies continue to be harshly divided among social strata due to racial, ethnic, and religious prejudices of their own citizens. People's opportunities for full participation in social life depend on where we were born and educated. In order to compare and illustrate, we can say that full democracy gives anyone the right to participate in collective decision-making processes, which are of great importance for their lives. In order for this to effectuate the optimism of the society as a whole, as well as different viewpoints, which are intertwined and supported within the institutionalized procedures and modes of decision-making, everyone will have the right to learn as much as their temperament needs and is able to gain. This would be an argument of the flow of our educational system, which as such, makes it possible only to a small number of students to achieve distinct academic successes.

Our work aims to eliminate the obstacles from the path of those who have unjustly been excluded from the society and return them to the path where they will feel contented and productive (Poulter et al., 2016). Similarly, we cannot take into consideration that "manifestation acts" in different people would mean democratic acts by default. Marginalized groups have to be acknowledged and assured a decent presentation of their long-term interests in society.

Based on Freire's working activities (Nieto, 1996), education cannot be liberating and authoritative. Opportunities grow bigger only when various different educational projects begin to function in a harmonized way, along with all other progressive movements in society. This implies that participation in social changes in this field is a movement of special importance for both teachers and students. This especially helps in terms of (1) clarifying the reality from institutional injustices and inequalities; (2) discovering interrelations between different forms of injustice towards people; (3)

advancing the concept of "citizenry", which focuses on common activities carried out instead of individual charity work, as part of voluntary projects and programs. The founding fathers of multicultural education present the idea of the fight for rights and equality, improvement of the educational system especially in the segment of its contents and processes that characterize it in general. These activities are mainly oriented towards the quality of education and democracy in our society. This is a lesson never to be forgotten.

As supporters of educational programs, namely in-service teaching, as well as multicultural education, we, as teaching staff and civil society, have to evaluate and even re-evaluate our priorities in this field. As part of this repeated evaluation, we have to ask ourselves as to what extent we are ready and want to get in order to achieve real and fundamental social and economic changes, which we desperately need. How far can we get through in-service teaching/learning and multicultural programs? We have to answer these questions in order to be able to successfully crown our mission, thus providing citizens with various different qualitative multicultural services and programs in this very important field of social development in general.

## Methodology

### *Respondents*

Taking into account the fact that only SEEU serves to teach on campus conditions as a research population is taken SEEU students. To analyse the impact of the campus or university-student interaction, have been researched students of the first and fourth year, Albanian students and Macedonian students, from all study programs were also interviewed by Law Faculty students, Public Administration, Communication Sciences and Technologies, Business Administration and Pedagogical Faculty. Altogether, 1170 students have been researched, of whom 639 male and 531 female students. Also, comparatively other factors among students such as ethnicity (Albanian-Macedonian) and gender were also considered. According to socio-demographic characteristics of students or population for research, the distribution of students in this research is as follows: 639 male and 531 female students, Albanians first year students 564 (73.6%), fourth year students 395 (95.6%); Macedonians first year students 202 (26.4%), Fourth year students 18 (4.4%). According to the study programs the distribution was as following: Business Administration: the first year 170 (22.2%), the fourth year 147 (35.7%); Communication Sciences and Technologies First Year 176 (23.0%), Fourth Year 55 (13.3%); Juridical, first year 124 (16.2%), fourth year 139 (33.7%); Public Administration, first year 158 (20.6%), fourth year 45 (10.9%); and Pedagogical Faculty, the first year 138 (18%), fourth year 24 (5.8%).

### *Research instrument*

For measuring and collecting all these data, a part of the standardized questionnaire was used for the National Research Questionnaire for Student Activities by the Institute appointed as a National Research for Student Activities by the University of Indiana, USA, which was implemented to SEEU students. It should also be mentioned that the instrument was designed by Indiana University experts with all the metric characteristics of Psychometrics and that at international level represents the best and most standardized tool for measuring student involvement at the university level. The HNAS instrument for measuring student involvement at the university level is structured in five basic categories: (1) the level of academic opportunities, (2) the active and collaborative learning, (3) the student-faculty interaction, (4) the increase of educational experience, and (5) supporting the campus circle.

## Results

First of all, we present the results of the impact of different study programs on the enrichment of student learning experiences. This is descriptively presented in the following table:

Table 1

Different Study Programs and Enrichment of Student Learning Experiences

Variables	F	Sig.
Community services or volunteering	1,151	0,324
Participation in learning through the community where student groups have held 2 or more hours together	0,819	0,599
Work in a research project with faculty members outside the compulsory course activities	1,082	0,373

Note: \* $p < 0,05$ , \*\* $p < 0,01$

Source: Authors' work

According to the results, we can conclude that none of the variables have any significant (statistically significant) differences. In table 2 we present the results of the impact of the different study years (1st and 4th year) in enriching the student's educational experiences.

Table 2

Different Study Years (1st and 4th Year) and Enrichment of Students' Educational Experiences

Variables	F	Sig.
Community services or volunteering	1,875	0,171
Participation in learning through the community where student groups have held 2 or more hours together	0,139	0,710
Work in a research project with faculty members outside the compulsory course activities	0,141	0,707

Note: \* $p < 0,05$ , \*\* $p < 0,01$

Source: Authors' work

According to the results, we can conclude that none of the variables have any significant (statistically significant) differences.

Table 3 presents the results of the impact of different ethnicities (Albanian and Macedonian) on enriching student learning experiences. This is descriptively presented in the following table:

Table 3

Different Ethnicities (Albanian and Macedonian) and Enrichment of Student Learning Experiences

Variables	F	Sig.
Community services or volunteering	0,167	0,683
Participation in learning through the community where student groups have held 2 or more hours together	0,294	0,588
Work in a research project with faculty members outside the compulsory course activities	6,122	0,013**

Note: \* $p < 0,05$ , \*\* $p < 0,01$

Source: Authors' work



According to the results, we should conclude that in these variables only significant differences (statistical value) exist: Macedonian students mostly work on research projects with faculty members outside compulsory course activities

## Conclusions

The results from our research proved in a convincing way general hypothesis by which we predicted that the interaction among students from different study programs has a different impact in their involvement in community activities and showed these results. We predicted that the interaction (on campus) among students from different study programs has a different impact on students themselves in terms of their co-curricular activities and their contacts among one another, there are significant statistical differences such as (i) The Business Administration study program incites more co-curricular activities and student communication development; (ii) the fourth year students have more co-curricular activities, whereas first year students have more contacts among themselves; and (iii) Macedonian students work more often in a research project with faculty members outside the compulsory course activities.

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