

KEYS



UNISERVITATE
Aprendizaje-servicio solidario en la Educación Superior Católica

UNISERVITATE COLLECTION

Towards a Global History of Service-Learning

María Nieves Tapia
Daniel Giorgetti
Andrew Furco
Kathleen Maas Weigert
Anthony Vinciguerra
Alba González
Esther Luna González
Carol Ma Hok-Ka
Bibi Bouwman

Introduction

5.1

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Towards a Global History of Service-Learning

Uniservitate Collection

Coordination of Uniservitate Program: María Rosa Tapia

General Coordination: María Nieves Tapia

Editorial Coordination: Jorge A. Blanco

Coordinators of this volume: Daniel Giorgetti

Translation and editing of texts in English: Alejandra Linares

Design of the collection and of this volume: Adrián Goldfrid

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ABOUT US

Uniservitate

Uniservitate is a global programme for the promotion of service-learning (SL) in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs). It is an initiative of Porticus and is coordinated by the Latin American Center for Service-Learning (CLAYSS).

The programme's objective is to generate a systemic change through the institutionalisation of service-learning as a tool for higher education institutions to fulfil their mission of offering a comprehensive education to new generations and involving them in an active commitment to the problems of our time.

Porticus

Porticus coordinates and develops the philanthropic endeavours of the Brenninkmeijer family, whose social engagement stretching back as far as 1841, when Clemens and August Brenninkmeijer founded the C&A company, starting a tradition of doing good while doing business.

Several businesses, charitable foundations and philanthropic programmes joined Porticus and expanded through numerous family initiatives.

Since its foundation in 1995, Porticus has grown to become one of the most committed institutions working to address the challenges of our time, to improve the lives of those most in need and to create a sustainable future where justice and human dignity flourish.

Porticus has two goals which guide their way it works: to listen and learn from the people they seek to serve, and to act on evidence that demonstrates what Works.

CLAYSS

The Latin American Center for Service-Learning –CLAYSS– is a leading organisation for the promotion of service-learning in Latin America, and a worldwide reference. It promotes the development of service-learning in both formal and non-formal education, and provides advice to policy makers, NGO leaders, communities, educators and students.

The Uniservitate collection

The Uniservitate collection is an editorial project of CLAYSS (Latin American Center for Service-Learning) in collaboration with Porticus. It is aimed at Catholic Higher Education professors and authorities, other educational institutions, specialists in Service-Learning, ecclesiastical leaders, as well as the general public interested in education and social change.

With the contribution and collaboration of outstanding international scholars and specialists, the objective is to offer contributions from different regions and to share multicultural perspectives on topics of interest related to spirituality and the pedagogy of Service-learning in the world.

Each digital book is published in English, Spanish and French, and can be downloaded free of charge from the Uniservitate website: www.uniservitate.org/





Daniel Alberto Giorgetti

Daniel Giorgetti has a PhD in Social Sciences (University of Buenos Aires), and also holds a Master's degree in Social Sciences (FLACSO) and a Bachelor's degree in History (UNS). He served as academic secretary of the Labor Relations Program (UBA) and as deputy secretary of Advanced Studies (School of Social Sciences, UBA). He is a researcher and lecturer at the School of Social Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires and the National University of Moreno. He teaches graduate courses at the Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO, for its Spanish acronym), the Catholic University of Salta (UCASAL, for its Spanish acronym) and

the Schools of Economic Sciences, Social Sciences and Law of the University of Buenos Aires (UBA, for its Spanish acronym).

He directs research and university extension projects. He has published in the fields of service-learning, labor studies, social movements, labor movement, youth participation and human rights. He worked as an advisor in the Provincial Council for Education and Labor of the Province of Buenos Aires (COPRET, for its Spanish acronym), and as a consultant in the "Solidarity Education National Program" of the Argentine Ministry of Education. He has been an instructor and researcher in the Latin American Center for Solidarity Service-Learning (CLAYSS, for its Spanish acronym) since it was founded, he has also been a teacher at different education levels, participating as a trainer in social organizations with popular education and youth leadership projects. Between 2018 and 2021 he worked as coordinator of regional meetings and areas for the project entitled "Networked Civil Society to Consolidate Democracy," funded by the European Union.

1. INTRODUCTION

Towards a Global History of Service-Learning

While organizing a book about the history of service-learning, we run the risk of presenting general aspects without taking into account the human dimension of practice. In this introduction we would like to bear in mind the richness of the personal experiences on which institutional processes are based, as well as the pivotal moments that make up this history.

This practice has spread all over the world. For those of us who have committed ourselves to it for many years, listening to the exciting experiences of students, teachers and administrators has become a habit. Because service-learning is not just a method to incorporate solid academic knowledge and an effective solidarity action, it also makes a long-term impact on those who put it into practice.

There are plenty of testimonials from students who have felt the effects of service-learning projects in which they have been involved. In some cases, as was acknowledged in recent pieces of research¹, the practice of service-learning has had an influence on the choice of a profession or on the social engagement they assumed in their lives. However, in all testimonials this practice is acknowledged to have effectively contributed to the consolidation of a system of values that students keep throughout their lives.

In the case of lecturers, the link with the pedagogy of service-learning arrives through different paths: some lecturers approached it after learning about their colleagues' successful experiences, while others became involved after joining an institution where service-learning projects were carried out. A very large group of teachers discovered service-learning while seeking innovative methods that would allow them to strengthen their teaching with a social purpose.

In research interviews, there is often a question about the personal journey that led the interviewee to engage with service-learning. The answer generally reveals the person's particular path, be they a teacher, an administrator or a student. The testimonials gathered highlight the excitement about the achievements obtained in the community task, and about having contributed, through a small action, to a transformative process.

¹ The Latin American Center for Solidarity Service-Learning (CLAYSS) has conducted several pieces of research in its programs, among which it is worth mentioning "Solidarity Service-Learning in Arts Program" (2022) and "Establishment Processes of Service-Learning in Public Policies. The Case of Argentina and Uruguay." (2021). The author has collaborated in both pieces of research.

This situation brings about changes both in the lives of students and in the communities where the solidarity action took place.

We could conclude that it is inevitable for personal history to be involved in the service-learning experience. All the faculty members and administrators of an educational institution believe that, even if a new academic learning has not been proposed, they renew the contents they already know, feel that “they are learning again” and come into contact with the theoretical contents in an enriching dialogue with social reality.

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By the same token, thinking of the global history of service-learning represents a challenge that entails the pleasure of finding a framework of exciting projects and experiences. Because this task makes it

possible to know the manifold reality in which educational institutions of all levels have been operating in relation to their local circumstances. It also allows us to find out the silent ways in which this practice has been changing the lives of different people, enabling them to think of a better future and make small contributions to the community to transform society as a whole.

This book gathers the paths followed by the practice of service-learning in different regions of the world and puts forward a view about historical processes that encompasses the particular characteristics and watersheds that marked its consolidation.

Furthermore, we seek to present annotated chronologies and facilitate an interaction between cultural traditions, theoretical frameworks and institutional policies. For this reason, the chapters explore the situation in Latin America, North America, Europe, Asia and Africa. This work allows us to form comparative views, as well as to systematize and recognize the roots of the promising realities of this pedagogy around the world. In an initial approach, similarities and differences are observed, and we introduce them below.

Common Aspects in the History of Service-Learning

Student leadership is a key. Among the similar aspects which are recurring in all the surveyed sites, it is possible to identify the real benefit recognized by students, not only due to the effective learning and the actual practice of a solidarity action, but also in the impact they perceive in their lives and a worldview filled with solidarity values.

Secondly, it is noteworthy that service-learning relies on the effective commitment of thousands of people, which goes beyond formal tasks and is shown through the time and energy devoted to these projects. We are speaking of teachers and administrators, as well as students and members of social organizations who work to improve life in their communities.

Another major aspect is the institutional facet. In other words, it has been established that the consolidation of the practice of service-learning in the world recognizes formal

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institutionalization processes, both in universities and schools, and even in educational policies. That is to say that the continuity and soundness of the projects required an institutional approach. This included the registration and systematization of experiences in order to transition from

the phase of individual teacher effort to developing work teams and involving school administrators. At a later stage of institutionalization we can see educational institutions formalizing the systematic practice of service-learning and, in some cases, local governments developing educational policies that promote them.

Lastly, the construction of networks constitutes a significant step in these cases. Networks which strengthened that institutionalization along with the dissemination of best practices through effective communication were built up in every continent, as well as in countries and regions. They make up a framework which involves universities, schools, hospitals, public agencies, social organizations and neighborhood associations. In some cases, these networks have been formalized at the national or regional level.

Examples include some of the national networks, such as Campus Compact (United States), Campus Engage (Ireland), Rete Universitaria Italiana del Service-Learning (Italy), South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF), Stiftung Lernen durch Engagement (Germany), Engagement Australia, the University Service-Learning Network (Spain) and the Spanish Association of university service-learning (Spain).

At the regional level, the Ibero-American Service-Learning Network (REDIBAS, for its Spanish acronym) comprises networks from Brazil, Chile, Spain, Uruguay and Mexico, among others. Other regional networks have also been set up in Europe and Asia, such as

the Central and Eastern European Service-Learning Network, the European Association of Service-Learning in Higher Education and the Service-Learning Asia Network (SLAN).

At the global level, some of the networks with a more extensive background include the Talloires Network of Engaged Universities for civic and social engagement and the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE). This book seeks to show such a comprehensive panorama of different routes and many years of work. For this purpose, authorities on service-learning from all continents have been gathered to recount that history. Each chapter has the style of its author and contains a chronological summary to better visualize the process. In addition, the chapters let the reader know about the specific features of service-learning in the region.

Diversity and Local Riches

What particularities can be found in these chapters? One of them is the variety of names used throughout history and the current reality of this practice. While in the United States and Canada it is called “service-learning,” in Latin America we speak of “solidarity service-learning,” laying emphasis on the region’s tradition of solidarity. The terms “socio-educational work” and “civic engagement” are used in some European countries, and the term “community service-learning” (CSL) prevails in countries as varied as Canada or Turkey. In Spain the acronym “ApS” is used to refer to “service-learning” and in Italy the English term “service-learning” is employed.

In her chapter about Africa, Bibi Bowman revisits the idea that service-learning is a multidimensional concept and cites bibliographic references in which more than 140 words are used to describe it.

Other particularities that we can mention in the following chapters derive from the cultural traditions in which service-learning has been rooted in each place.

The origins of service-learning in the United States stem from diverse experiences within what authors call “submovements.” This process has involved community engagement organizations and educational institutions, with a central role played by Catholic education. Nevertheless, it has been influenced by the national agenda on civic service and the popularity of some programs, such as the Peace Corps. In Canada it has also had a significant presence in educational institutions, many of which are Catholic, and it has incorporated dialogue with indigenous communities and their traditions.

The rapid growth of service-learning in Asia in recent years has been achieved in conjunction with the cultural values of community, mutual support and attitude of service inherent in numerous local traditions; even in the native knowledge or in Confucius' philosophy, as Carol Ma tells us.

In the case of Africa, the author makes it clear that it is difficult to provide a uniform overview due to the great variety of cultures, relations, types of projects, capacities, resources and structure of each university. But she highlights that there are processes of recognition of native forms of knowledge after periods of cultural imposition and that there are local traditions that are closely related to service-learning, among which she mentions the traditional concept of "Ubuntu," a humanist philosophy focused on people's reciprocal cooperation and loyalty.

In Latin America, the practice of service-learning has enhanced local experiences of solidarity carried out by educational institutions and allowed for a connection with the roots of indigenous peoples, where cultural expressions of mutual help, harmony with nature and community work predominate. This practice has also built up community service experiences in universities, as occurred in Mexico or Colombia, for instance.

In the case of Europe, it has connected with former traditions as well, like the Cambridge University Extension movement (since 1872), and has followed different paths depending on each country's reality. Processes of community education, cooperative studies, civic engagement, volunteering, active citizenship and socio-educational work are highlighted, according to the approach followed by each country.

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In each chapter it is possible to delve into how service-learning practices were developed, even before they were given their current name. This allows Esther Luna to explain that, in Italy, service-learning is born "bottom-up" and that, in Spain, it is considered a "discovery" since it provided a name for a practice that was already being carried out.

How This Book Is Organized

As regards the organization of this book, Chapter 2 was written by Maria Nieves Tapia who analyzes in historical perspective the link developed by universities and higher education institutions with society from their origins. It dates back the first educational institutions in history and the first registered university in the city of Fez in the year 859. Then notices the process of modernity, and in the successive paradigms that go from the idea of an “ivory tower” to commitment with today’s society. This look allows her to analyze the historical origins of learning-service and provide a framework for regional histories that outline the various authors in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 describes the development of service-learning in the United States and Canada and was written by Andrew Furco, Kathleen Maas Weigert and Anthony Vinciguerra. Both countries acknowledge common experiences and have exchanged projects and ideas. However, as the authors point out, they have also formed different approaches to the implementation of service-learning. The chapter explores the particularities of each case with regard to cultural, sociological and historical factors, and provides us with a comprehensive chronology that allows us to understand the institutional process developed in both countries, starting from when the term “service-learning” was formally coined in the United States in 1967.

In Chapter 4, Alba González deals with the history of service-learning in Latin America. The author underlines the integration of education and solidarity from isolated proposals in the early 20th century to the current global movement expressed through structured and institutionalized programs, and national, regional and international networks. For this purpose, she addresses the singularities of the region, the profound community tradition that embraces the term “solidarity” associated with mutual aid, collaborative work for a common cause and the struggle to defend rights. And she draws a comparison with the transformations of Latin American educational thinking in which there exist distinguished traditions, such as Paulo Freire’s contribution to popular education.

Chapter 5 explores the history of service-learning in Europe. Esther Luna, from the University of Barcelona, presents an overview of several local developments, which begin to be systematized in the 1980s but their origins date back to the late 19th century. The aim of this chapter is to examine the European roots of service-learning. It provides a detailed description of each country and emphasizes those places in which the practice and evolution of service-learning is more important, both in terms of its background and vigorous implementation.

Chapter 6 addresses the process followed by service-learning in Asia. It was written by Carol Ma Hok, who explains the characteristics of service-learning as a pedagogy increasingly used in the continent. She describes its growth in the last two decades starting from the creation of the Service-Learning Asia Network (SLAN) and the first Asia-Pacific regional conference on Service-Learning (2007). In addition, she talks about the previous local traditions that were enriched by the development and evolution of service-learning.

Beatrix Bowman deals with the history and current situation of service-learning in Africa in Chapter 5. The author begins her analysis with the perspective of community participation in Africa. She analyzes its growth in higher education institutions and how it has evolved with various emerging education models. In order to do so, she conducts a bibliographic analysis and systematizes the dialogue held with experts from different countries through round tables. Furthermore, she puts forward the link between the theoretical and pedagogical frameworks of service-learning and the cultural, social and philosophical roots of community participation in that continent.

Daniel Giorgetti



In support of the Global Compact on Education

Uniservitate is a global programme for the promotion of service-learning in Catholic Higher Education. Its objective is to generate a systemic change in Catholic Higher Education Institutions (CHEIs) through the institutionalisation of service-learning (SL) as a tool to achieve its mission of offering an integral education and training of agents of change committed to their community.

“We will not change the world, if we do not change education”

Pope Francis

5 Towards a Global History of Service-Learning

The practice of service-learning is seen in many fields as an educational innovation. However, it has a long history that makes it solid and relevant, both in educational projects and in the construction of societies based on democracy and solidarity today.

This book brings together authors from different continents who, based on their experience in service-learning, take a historical look at the roots, particularities and growth of this practice. In its pages you will find the evolution it has undergone since the first experiences of social engagement in Latin America and the Caribbean, the rich and varied processes experienced in European countries, the strong growth of service-learning in Asia and Africa in recent years, and the well-established tradition that has developed in the United States and Canada.

Beyond the diversity and the “local color”; provided by particular nuances, readers will find that there are common characteristics which underpin the commitment of those developing service-learning projects today.

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