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History of Service-Learning in
Latin America

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4. HISTORY OF SERVICE-LEARNING IN LATIN AMERICA

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Abstract

This article offers an overview of the historic development of service-learning in Latin America. In Latin American countries, the integration of education and solidarity was first shown through isolated pioneering proposals at the beginning of the 20th century and it manifests itself today in the global movement through organized and institutionalized programs and through local, national and international networks. The diversity and heterogeneity of practices leads us to focus on founding experiences rather than on individual regions or countries and, without failing to recognize national characteristics, the aim is to spot elements in common.

The historic analysis of the educational initiatives and practices in Latin America first involves addressing the peculiarities of the region in connection to the beginning and development of these experiences in specific political, economic and social scenarios. Secondly, it is necessary to analyze the peculiarities of these practices in cultures with a long and deeply rooted tradition in which the term “solidarity” has a strong connection to reciprocal help, joint efforts for a common cause and the struggle to acquire and secure rights. Lastly, it is important to direct attention to the changes in Latin American educational perspectives and pedagogical models used to implement service-learning in this region.

The implementation of service-learning at regional level was secured through various forms, including the promotion of the approach through public policies or by social organizations or educational institutions which encouraged the incorporation of service-learning practices in the education agenda. In some countries service-learning was first implemented in basic education, while in others in higher education. Its implementation being either voluntary or obligatory, as part of an institutional or course proposal and within a curriculum or arising from a teacher’s initiative, shows not only its flexibility and versatility but also the challenges it poses. Some of these challenges will be addressed at the end of this chapter to complete the picture.

Introduction

This chapter is written in Buenos Aires during the second wave of a pandemic which affected the whole world. In this context, one which is impossible to ignore, a new debate arose in Argentine society concerning two issues: solidarity and education. These issues constitute the backbone of this piece and provide a framework for the writing of this chapter.

What do these issues mean for us, Argentines, for Latin Americans and for people residing in other parts of the world? What role do they play in the new times we have to live? Have they always meant the same and have they born the same relation to each other throughout time? The answers to these questions go beyond the objectives of this piece, but they set the scene for it, since this chapter focuses on the historic context of the initiatives designed and the implementation of service-learning practices in Latin America.

To that end, we will begin by analyzing the meaning solidarity has in the countries of this region. Secondly, there will be a description of the main landmarks related to the origin and dissemination of the pedagogical proposal of service-learning and of educational experiences of service in higher education institutions, schools and social organizations. Thirdly, the models and pedagogical approaches on which service-learning practices were based as well as various options for their implementation will be identified. Lastly, the current situation and some future challenges will be analyzed.

A- Our Origin

Is there a common tradition of solidarity in Latin America? If we trace back the origin of society as a whole, it was solidarity—based on the structure of kinship—that allowed human growth and development, according to anthropological studies.

Nowadays, the findings of this discipline regarding the construction of “the other” provide us with essential information to analyze solidarity-based education in Latin America. As Todorov (1992) has already analyzed, indigenous populations in Latin America came into existence and were for centuries, from the Eurocentric perspective which shaped the scientific viewpoint in progress, the paradigm of “the others”. According to this author, “the other” may be another person in relation to “I” or a social group to which we do not belong and who may be part of our society, as has usually been the case in history (women for men, “lunatics” for “normal people”, the poor for the rich). But “the other” may also be a person belonging to another society or a completely unknown culture, which is so remote that it does not seem to belong to the same species.

Recognizing the internal and the external “other”, the marginalized, the immigrant, the refugee, the poor, the undocumented, the displaced, the hidden, who are—in most cases—deprived of their rights, is part of the construction of the Latin American we, and we intend to educate new generations following this conviction. To this end, Joaquín García Roca (2005) suggests placing ourselves “in the suffering” of the last and excluded people as well as “in the situation of power” which silenced the stories of the defeated and the losers and, from this social view, “our perspective”, identifying the potential (solidarity causes) which can allow us to have a future for all. Service-learning gives us the chance to work in schools, social organizations and universities with this objective in mind.

The solidarity tradition in Latin America has manifested itself, since pre-Hispanic times, through cultural expressions of mutual help

The solidarity tradition in Latin America has manifested itself, since pre-Hispanic times, through cultural expressions of mutual help, such as *la minka*, *la mano*

vuelta, *el convite* and other forms of ownership and collaborative work in a community, and it was boosted by the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, in the 1980s. While being persecuted by the army, the Mayans explained this, stating “We are killed because we work together, eat together, live together, dream together” (as cited by García Roca 1994, pp. 260-261).

The ideal of fraternity pursued by the French Revolution inspired the independence movements in our America, and the immigration of the 19th century introduced other forms of solidarity-based associationism, such as benefit societies, common savings funds, cooperatives, fraternities, and so on.

These deeply rooted community traditions, in which profit is viewed as opposed to shared lives, reciprocity and mutual help, shaped the meaning of “solidarity” in the countries of this region:

Working together for a common cause, helping others in an effective and organized way, resisting as a group or nation to protect our own rights, facing natural disasters or economic crises, and doing all this with others. Solidarity is one of the most highly appreciated values in our cultures and it is a common objective among old and new organizations in our emerging civil societies. (Tapia and González, 2005, p. 127)

Nieves Tapia has written a long chapter analyzing the difficulty of having a globally-shared understanding of the concept of “solidarity” (Tapia, 2003 p. 153). In that chapter, she points out that it is virtually impossible to translate the term *solidaridad* into English

with all its community implications and the sense of collective commitment it has in our languages.

In South America, solidarity—as a contra-culture—reveals what is hidden, recovers reciprocity and draws sustenance from the alternatives which defy the logic of a system that leads to a unique global world, on the one hand, and a conflicting and unfair world, on the other.

In South America, solidarity—as a contra-culture—reveals what is hidden, recovers reciprocity and draws sustenance from the alternatives which defy the logic of a system that leads to a unique global world, on the one hand, and a conflicting

and unfair world, on the other. The objective of solidarity understood this way is to “perceive the asymmetry of human relationships and transform them into an ethical and political imperative in favor of those who suffer their negative consequences” (García Roca, 2005, p. 27).

In the 20th century, the theology of liberation in Latin America had already proposed thinking this way and voicing thoughts from “the other side of the world”. Since the 1960s, influenced by the Basic Ecclesial Communities arising in Brazil and spreading to Latin America, Vatican Council II (1962-1965) and the Episcopal Conference in Medellín (1968), the theology of liberation has been in line with the “preferential option for the poor”.

Around the same time and arising from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which had a critical view of the development theory, the dependency theory stated that the underdevelopment was to be interpreted as a structural situation caused by an unfair and unequal organization of the global economic system for the benefit of core countries and to the detriment of dependent periphery countries.

In addition, the pedagogical-political matrix of these views was based on Paulo Freire’s book entitled *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which was published in 1970. This Brazilian educator believed that it was necessary to implement a pedagogical model which directed the attention to the subject to be educated, establishing a contrast between this model and the model of “banking education”, conceived as a simple transmission of knowledge without any intervention or contribution on the part of the learner. Freire’s approach had major repercussions on the region. Before the military coup of 1964, the “movement of popular education” started in Brazil, which aimed to question the relation of dominance

through literacy programs. Paulo Freire was also in charge of the literacy process in Chile,³ which gave rise to a group of militants who later on became popular educators and, at the same time, swelled the ranks of new political parties and revolutionary movements.

These emancipatory pedagogical proposals involved the implementation of methodological strategies and pedagogical practices which have always characterized popular education. Simón Rodríguez's work⁴ constitutes a landmark in its long history since Rodríguez undertook popular education (and later on, from 1830 to 1851, he wrote about it), and the pioneering project of the Warisata Schoolteacher Training College (Escuela Superior de Formación de Maestros Warisata), which was founded in 1931 and is well-known for its innovative pedagogy as an *Ayllu* school. This schoolteacher training institution was founded in La Paz, Bolivia, a region mainly inhabited by Aymara people. This school was inspired in indigenous traditions and its objective was to build collective knowledge. Its pedagogical project prioritized the population's opinions and decisions, reciprocal cooperation, community engagement in service and social commitment. Its originality lay in the fact that the proposal comprised learning strategies which respected Andean forms of socialization through ancestral institutions, such as the *Ayni*, the *Minka* and the *Marka*, as part of educational experiences which had never taken place in schools.⁵ Basilico and Luna (2015) analyze the characteristics of this experience—pedagogical fundamentals, the implementation of the project-based learning methodology and the relationship between educational institutions and communities—which constitute the antecedents of service-learning in Latin America.

In his books entitled *Education: the Practice of Freedom* and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, written during his exile in Chile, Paulo Freire conceptualizes his practices in Brazil during the late 1950s and the early 1960s and relates them to the Chilean literacy experiences, emphasizing the incorporation of everyday life and a special focus on reality.

The role of everyday experiences, connection to reality, the importance of practice, the distinctive nature of learning and the centrality of the learning subject in popular educa-

3 Many of the literacy campaigns in Latin America, some staged by volunteers while others by people who took part in obligatory programs, were inspired by the Cuban model of literacy brigades established by Fidel Castro in 1960, which mobilized thousands of students and resulted in a rapid decline in illiteracy.

4 Simón Rodríguez worked as a teacher at early age at the Caracas Reading and Writing School for Children (Escuela de Lectura y Escritura para el niño de Caracas) and was the tutor of the future liberator Simón Bolívar. As a teacher, at the end of the 18th century, Rodríguez promoted the education of neglected people, such as indigenous populations and Afro-American slaves, in pursuit of equality, and he proposed teaching through references to real situations. In 1825 he was appointed General Director of Public Education by Bolívar and, from then on, he advocated his project of a popular and political school for all Latin America. See Puiggrós (2005) to read about the impact of his ideas on the Ibero-American educational trends.

5 See Mamani Cussy, O. (2011). La Educación Comunitaria: su incidencia en la escuela y comunidad. *Revista Integra Educativa*, 4(2), 197-203. Recovered from http://www.scielo.org.bo/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1997-40432011000200009&lng=es&tlng=es 2011

tion constitute aspects which have inspired many of the Latin American experiences of service-learning.

In the regional community traditions, Latin American experiences highlight the concept of solidarity, distinguishing it from the concepts of charity and altruism and replacing giving with sharing, “doing something for someone” with “doing something with someone”, paternalism with fraternity, and the proliferation of injustice with “the recognition of rights and the search for fairness and justice”.

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search for fairness and justice” (Giorgetti, 2021:7). This is the meaning of solidarity which fosters service-learning.

Even though the theoretical and methodological framework of this proposal has its roots in the USA⁶ (especially influenced by John Dewey⁷), in South America it was incorporated into a practice already established, a background of solidarity and community-based traditions which takes the richness of the model and reinforces the originality of a viewpoint from this part of the world.

B- Solidarity-Based Educational Experiences in Latin America

Latin American history, which is marked by interruptions in democratic systems (coups d’ état, dictatorships and terrorism⁸), economic crises and disruptions of social bonds, also encompasses resistance shown, in the case of education, through emancipating peda-

6 Also see Tapia & Peregalli (2022) on this topic (in the press).

7 At the beginning of the 20th century, John Dewey started a big movement for pedagogical renewal, stressing the close connection between education and democracy and promoting education based on experience. From his viewpoint, experience does not exhaust itself in the mere present or through mere actions. Dewey is concerned with thoughtful actions related to the load of information which is transported at different times of experience, and he considers action to materialize when there is intention and an aim in mind, a purpose (See Puiggrós, 2005, p. 82).

8 From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, Latin America staged a number of coups d’ état: Brazil in 1964, Dominican Republic in 1965, Argentina in 1966 and 1976, Panama and Peru in 1968, Bolivia in 1971, Ecuador in 1972, Uruguay and Chile in 1973. Other countries established alternative regimes based on Russian authoritarian models: Cuba in 1959, Nicaragua in 1979 and Venezuela in 1999.

gological proposals like Freire's and opportunities to have an inclusive education system, such as popular education.

Adriana Puiggrós (2005) points out that the political and economic fragmentation of the continent which took place after the independence movements hindered the reconstruction of historic articulation and the creation of a shared sense of collective identity regarding education: the development of Latin American popular pedagogy has not been part of a sustained tradition, unlike the globalized liberal tradition and neoliberal influence.⁹

Despite this fragmented development, the long and deep-rooted Latin American community tradition has manifested itself in its educational system. Solidarity-based initiatives—including literacy efforts or school tutoring, campaigns organized to collect food for needy communities or people facing natural disasters, and voluntary or obligatory social programs led by university students—are often undertaken throughout our subcontinent.

In Latin American countries, a more formal integration of education and solidarity was first shown through isolated pioneering proposals at the beginning of the 20th century and it is present today in the global movement which manifests itself in organized and institutionalized programs as well as in local and national service-learning networks.

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tries service-learning was first implemented in basic education, while in others in higher education. Its implementation being either voluntary or obligatory, as part of an institutional or course proposal and within the curriculum or arising from a teacher's initiative, shows its flexibility: there are no "prefabricated" and "ready to install" models; projects mainly depend on each institutional context and culture.

The diversity and heterogeneity of practices leads us to focus on founding experiences rather than on individual regions or countries and, without failing to recognize national characteristics, the aim is to spot elements in common.

⁹ In Latin American countries, this influence manifested itself in the strong coincidence of educational models adopted in the 1990s.

B.1 – University Social Commitment in Latin America

One of the pioneering experiences related to the connection between education and solidarity is that of the Mexican welfare system, the background of which may be traced back to the context of the Latin American university extension movement at the beginning of the 20th century. This process was influenced by the University Reform, which originated in the City of Cordoba (Argentina) and its ideas spread to the whole continent for more than a decade.

One of the pioneering experiences related to the connection between education and solidarity is that of the Mexican welfare system, the background of which may be traced back to the context of the Latin American university extension movement at the beginning of the 20th century. This process was influenced by the University Reform, which originated in the City of Cordoba (Argentina) and its ideas spread to the whole continent for more than a decade.¹⁰

In 1918, against the backdrop of the European war, the Russian Revolution and the Mexican Revolution, a student movement began in Cordoba to demand the democratization of universities and social solidarism.¹¹ The reform essential demands included Latin American student unity, the renewal of pedagogical methods, the creation of Popular Universities, student co-governance, academic freedom and university extension programs. The last of these demands is of particular interest to us. At the inauguration ceremony of university extension courses at the Law School in the month of August of 1920, students stated:

Until now the University, a state institution financed by the people, has not been in contact with it other than through tax-payment (...). Therefore, we consider it peremptory to return to the community at least some of the benefits which a situation of privilege allows us to obtain from the spiritual heritage of the species (...). To this end, Law students, gathered in students' unions, as befits the concept of specific solidarity, take upon themselves to correct this anachronistic divorce between the university and the people, undertaking—as a first step—to spread the knowledge obtained through their long courses of study, aware that this knowledge will be useful to the republic since it will strengthen citizens' legal conscience.¹²

10 To read about the influence which the University Reform of Cordoba had on Mexico, see Gortari, 2005; Casanova Cardiel and Cano Menoni, 2018.

11 For more information on the University Reform process, see Portantiero, 2018 a.

12 As cited in Portantiero, 2018 b. p. 60.

Since Cordoba, the Reform—and with it the extension movement—has spread to other universities in Argentina. The topic of continental solidarity in Latin America, present in students' rhetoric and actions, allowed the movement to expand into Peru, Chile, Venezuela, Cuba, Brazil and Mexico.

Even though extension was incorporated into the law which created the National University in **Mexico** in 1910, extension activities in this institution started under the rectorship of José Vasconcelos in 1920.¹³ The extension policy of this university constituted an important part of the impetus given to popular education and to Mexican cultural institutions by Vasconcelos as a Secretary of Public Education (1921-1924). This happened at a time when an educational project was underway to address the needs of a country emerging from a military conflict, when almost 80% of the population was illiterate, scattered in a vast territory and fragmented, suffering inequality situations (Cano Menoni, 2019 p. 533). In this way, the signifier “university extension” became a synonym of “social commitment”.

In the mid-1930s medical interns of the university, which was already autonomous, submitted a social service project to be implemented in the rural communities which lacked health services. This project was authorized by President Cárdenas (1934-1940), who gave instructions for the Department of Health to fund it. Through an agreement signed in 1936 the Social Medical Service was established as a requirement to become a surgeon at that university. This way the practice of meeting the needs of vulnerable communities was formally introduced and this practice also contributed to students' academic education and training.

The institutionalization process at university also involved the professionalization of extension efforts, which were progressively less based on voluntarism. High extension participation was gradually organized through the social service system, which had its own parallel development (Cano Menoni, 2019, p. 542). Little by little other Mexican higher education institutions, inspired by the experiences at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM, for its Spanish acronym), started to work on the regulation and promotion of social service.¹⁴

A law regulating section 5 of the Constitution, related to professional practice, was enacted in 1945 and Social Work was defined under title VII as a temporal activity which was, and still is, a graduation requirement for all courses of study and a benefit for society and the State.¹⁵ Mendoza Cornejo states that this regulation took place in a demobilization context, when social service had lost its “mysticism of revolutionary transformer” and “had

13 See Mendoza Cornejo, A. (1992, pp. 12-14)

14 To read about this process, see Mendoza Cornejo, A. (1992).

15 Law regulating section 5 of the Constitution, related to professional practice in Mexico City. Published in the Federation Official Gazette on May 26, 1945; last reform introduced in 2018. Recovered from http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/208_190118.pdf

become symbolic in most public universities”. Two decades had to pass before it was fully incorporated into public policies (Mendoza Cornejo, A. 1992, pp. 15-17). Even though the implementation of social service has had its flaws, has encountered bureaucracy-related obstacles and does not always result in service-learning projects in the strict sense of the term, it is one of most important precedents of service-learning.

At the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, the rise of youth participation—within the framework of a European and Latin American revolutionary movement, from the Cuban revolution to the French revolution of May 1968—manifested itself through various social and political movements. Undoubtedly, the student movement of the 1960s voiced the most radical agitation in connection with university social intervention (De Souza Santos, 2019, p. 81). This movement manifested itself in new social service efforts led by student unions, youth university associations, social movements related to these groups, or university chairs. A clear example of this was the experiences at the University of Buenos Aires between 1973 and 1974, when many curriculums and syllabuses were changed in order to relate the university to an economic, political and cultural development project. There were also community initiatives designed to help the lower-income sector (Sozzani, 2007).

In addition, the call to action had another social and political angle related to innovation in “university social responsibility”, which had its own characteristics and perspectives.

Within the conservative trend which emerged more strongly in the 1980s, “social responsibility” at many universities boiled down to industry ties. However, in Latin America, the tradition of university reformism and the specificity of university relations with their spheres of influence resulted in the preservation of social programs, especially those focused on communities (De Souza Santos, 2019, p.80).

University social engagement and the reformist intervention in social problems continued to exist in the symbolic world view of many universities and it tended to become stronger in democratic transitions in history.

University social engagement and the reformist intervention in social problems continued to exist in the symbolic world view of many universities and it tended to become stronger in democratic transitions in history. A good

example is that of the University of Brazilia, whose president—upon inaugurating a really advanced extension policy in 1986—stated:

A university policy must combine the maximum academic standards with the maximum social engagement (...). Therefore, what will characterize the product will be its elite con-

dition, but what will characterize its use will be its widespread engagement, its anti-elitist condition. (As cited in De Souza Santos, 2019, p.86)

Against a background of a generalized democratic transition, at the end of the 1980s, and of a growing increase in social and civic participation, universities recovered their autonomy, which had been badly affected by dictatorships in the previous decade.¹⁶ Many institutions updated their curriculums, and their extension activities received renewed enthusiasm. Student unions and independent student organizations started to undertake volunteer activities which were part of the formal extension programs in some cases and, in others, supplementary efforts.

In the 1990s, as a consequence of the implementation of neoliberal policies in the region, a large part of the population in Latin America faced exclusion and had their rights systematically infringed. This situation sparked off the debate and reflection on the social mission of higher education institutions (Perez, D. & others, 2009).

Against that background, several Latin American universities multiplied and/or changed social engagement initiatives, many of which were related to pressing social problems, through extension or transference projects or volunteer efforts sustained over time and involving different levels of curricular integration. In other higher education institutions the participation in these projects was considered obligatory for chair or course accreditation, or they were incorporated into the curriculum as a graduation requirement.

After the pioneering experiences in Mexico, other countries in the region incorporated a social service requirement as public policy, adopting various types of efforts: compulsory projects for all university graduates or just for those in some courses of study.

In **Colombia** the Compulsory Social Service, created under Decree No. 3842 in 1949, established the “rural year” as a graduation requirement at Medical School, replacing internships. Its goal was for populations in remote rural areas to have access to primary healthcare services. In 1981 Law No. 50 enacted on May 27 changed the concept of “rural year” to that of Compulsory Social Service and this service was to be provided for the whole national territory and had to be implemented in all technology-related courses of study and in all universities.¹⁷

16 In countries which endured dictatorships, institutional crises manifested themselves through the suppression of university autonomy and the limitation of free and critical thinking development and of diffusion of ideas, placing institutions at the service of authoritarian modernizing projects while in the democratic countries of the region – at a time when neoliberalism was imposed as a global model of capitalism – institutional crises were related to the role of public universities in the emerging market of university services, forcing them to seek new environments (Boaventura, 2019, p.124).

17 Law No. 50 enacted on May 27, 1981, pursuant to which the Compulsory Social Service was created in the Colombian national territory. Official Gazette, year CXVIII. No. 35794. July 7, 1981. p.16. Recovered from <http://www.suin-juriscal.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?ruta=Leyes/1604717>

In **El Salvador** university graduates are also required to render services to the community. Under section 2 of the Higher Education Act promulgated by Decree No. 522 in 1995, “social engagement is the means by which academic work interacts with social reality”.¹⁸ Pursuant to section 19 of said law, it is established that rendering social service constitutes one of the graduation requirements in all the institutions of this country.

In **Venezuela**, the Higher Education Student Community Service Act, enacted in 2005, establishes that Community Service comprises “activities which must be undertaken by higher education students who will become professionals, applying the scientific, technical, cultural, sports-related and humanistic knowledge acquired during their academic education, for the benefit of their community.”

This law establishes that one of its aims is to “promote solidarity and social engagement among students as an ethical and civic standard,” “enhance higher education quality through service-learning” and “shape the country’s social assets through service-learning”.¹⁹

This is the only national law which establishes that social work activities must be implemented as service-learning efforts, although many of the experiences in Latin American universities are, in fact, examples of this pedagogical practice.

In other countries, such as **Nicaragua**, the social service requirement only applies to some courses of study. Even though this practice was established pursuant to the “Compulsory Social Service Act”²⁰ enacted in April, 1968 for all students graduating from both secondary schools and higher education institutions, in the latter it was regulated that year only for healthcare professionals. Pursuant to Decree No. 17 social service is established as a degree issuance requirement for those graduating from the School of Medicine, Odontology, Pharmacy, Medical Technology and any other healthcare-related courses of study in this country, legally established after having complied with all academic requirements.²¹

18 Higher Education Act. Decree Law No. 522, November 30, 1995, published in Official Gazette No. 236, Book No. 329, December 20, 1995. Recovered from:

<http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/f32fffa1afba9cdd5dc4e9b3f55604382adff1af.pdf>

19 “Higher Education Student Community Service Act,” Official Gazette No.38 272, September 14, 2005. Recovered from <http://www.ucv.ve/en/organizacion/rectorado/direcciones/dicori/leyes-y-reglamentos/ley-de-servicio-comunitario-del-estudiante-universitario.html>

20 Compulsory Social Service Act, Enacted on April 3, 1968 and published in Official Gazette No. 81 on April 4, 1968. Recovered from

[http://legislacion.asamblea.gob.ni/Normaweb.nsf/\(\\$All\)/2E0E9F278CCE7415062571F800649620?OpenDocument](http://legislacion.asamblea.gob.ni/Normaweb.nsf/($All)/2E0E9F278CCE7415062571F800649620?OpenDocument)

21 Requirements arising from the Compulsory Social Service Act for healthcare professionals. Decree No. 17, passed on November 5, 1968 and published in Official Gazette No. 256 on November 8, 1968. Recovered from

[http://legislacion.asamblea.gob.ni/normaweb.nsf/\(\\$All\)/23DB8CE7E46629C7062571FD00676FB3?OpenDocument](http://legislacion.asamblea.gob.ni/normaweb.nsf/($All)/23DB8CE7E46629C7062571FD00676FB3?OpenDocument)

Bolivia, Ecuador and **Peru** also incorporated compulsory social service for students in medical schools, as a requirement to obtain their professional license.²²

In other countries where social service is not compulsory pursuant to national legislation, institutions established it as a requirement, as is the case in **Costa Rica**. The University of Costa Rica established University Community Work in 1975, whose close connection to service efforts turned it into one of the models of service-learning in the region:

Laid down by the university community in 1971-1972, this requirement stated that in order for all students to graduate they had to spend a certain number of hours participating in interdisciplinary community projects, in which they had a critical and creative engagement with the community in order to make their contributions to the solution of problems and the satisfaction of needs. (González, 1998)

In **Argentina**, in the last 20 years, there have also been compulsory requirements related to various community service efforts: at the National University of General Sarmiento in 1995, at the National University of Río Cuarto in 2009, at the University of Buenos Aires in 2010, at the University of Mar del Plata and the National University of La Pampa in 2011, at the University of Avellaneda in 2013, at the University of Río Negro and the National University of Cuyo in 2017 (Tapia, 2018).

In many cases, these practices were previous to their conceptualization as service-learning experiences. As stated by a faculty member, “in lab practices²³ our objective was professional training and we realized that we were implementing service-learning when we later on came across this concept” (as cited in Giacomini, 2012, p.79).

Other higher education institutions encourage students to do service work, although this is not a mandatory requirement. A clear example is that at the University of Caxias do Sul in **Brazil**, which has had a strong community engagement since its establishment in 1967. In 2000, more than a hundred research projects at that university aimed at solving various legal, healthcare, psychological, social, cultural and sports-related issues which were put forward and discussed by community members.²⁴

22 See the corresponding legislation in “Characteristics of Social Service for Medical Professionals in the Andean States” by Bendezu-Quispe, G., León, F., Moreno J., Inga-Berrospi F. (2020). In online magazine Medwave 2020; 20(2): e7848 doi: 10.5867/medwave.2020.02.7848. Recovered from <https://www.medwave.cl/link.cgi/medwave/revisiones/revisiontemas/7848.act?ver=sindisenio>

23 Compulsory subject at the beginning of all courses of study at the National University of General Sarmiento (Argentina).

24 Cf. Pauletti, R. (2001) El aprendizaje-servicio: una experiencia universitaria en Brasil. In the National Ministry of Education, National Program “Schools and Communities”. Pedagogical Proposal for Service-learning. Records of the 3rd and 4th International Conferences “Schools and Communities” (pp. 81-85), Republic of Argentina.

In the case of the Catholic University of Peru, the service-learning proposal has been incorporated as a way to work on community issues, while still at university, and to gain hands-on knowledge.²⁵

In **Mexico**, the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education has incorporated service-learning into its educational model as an opportunity to professionalize social service through a curricular component.²⁶

The Pontifical Catholic University of **Chile**, one of the pioneering institutions in the region in the incorporation of service-learning, has an interdisciplinary team of professionals and students who advises faculty members from different academic units on how to implement the service-learning methodology in projects which have a positive impact on communities and students' education.²⁷

There are also social volunteer initiatives which promote solidarity efforts among young people. In 1973 **Jamaica** established the National Youth Service (NYS), which has a number of programs—jointly led by the government and private institutions—aimed at people between the ages of 17 and 24. This program was suspended from 1983 to 1994, but since 2001 the NYS has worked with the sponsorship of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture (Ochoa, 2010).

The experiences at UNISOL—Civil Association Solidarity University—**Brazil**, established in San Pablo in 1995, and those at Option **Venezuela**, created in 2002 and composed of students and university professionals, are examples of youth service engagements promoted by civil associations and social organizations (Perez, D. & otros, 2009, p. 118).

All these experiences, together with others in which young university students participate, constitute various ways of interacting creatively with communities, helping students reflect on issues of the public agenda, social development initiatives and/or public policies, and acquiring a problem-solving attitude towards local reality, which is the starting point for them to become more effective, fairer and more obliging professionals. In high-quality service-learning projects:

Development proposals are discussed with various stakeholders in society, i.e. society is considered a stakeholder; therefore, proposals are analyzed to determine which are explicitly promoted and which pose difficulties and, due to that, cannot be implemented

25 See Experiences at the Catholic University of Peru. García Serra, O. and Villaseca Chávez, M. (2008). In Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. "Anthology 1997-2007" (pp. 274-277). Buenos Aires, Republic of Argentina.

26 Cf. Recovered from

http://www.cca.org.mx/apoyos/formacion_c/02_profesores/info_esp/03_Aprendizaje_Servicio/manual_operativo_AS.pdf

27 See an analysis of these practices in "Anuario A+S " (Service-Learning Yearbook) (2020) of the Catholic University of Chile. Recovered from <https://user-eku1m4o.cld.bz/Anuario-A-S>

in response to demands or proposals. This is completely different from just “informing” society of the research carried out by universities. (Giacomini 2012, p. 40)

As previously analyzed, throughout the 20th century social engagement was institutionalized in various ways and this is a common feature of Latin American higher education.

One hundred years after the Reform Movement in Cordoba, and within the framework of the 21st century problems and demands, a debate about the relationship between higher education institutions and society has arisen for debate. The following issues are included on the agenda related to the “social mission” of universities: discussions on concepts such as “social engagement”, “social responsibility of universities”; different forms of integration of research and teaching practices and strategies of social intervention; the relation between “academic knowledge” and “popular knowledge” and the importance of scientific and technical work and of professional education for society, among others.²⁸

Within this framework, service-learning practices constitute innovative pedagogical efforts which integrate teaching, research and extension and that, in their implementation, provide society with solutions based on knowledge, science and technology.

Within this framework, service-learning practices constitute innovative pedagogical efforts which integrate teaching, research and extension and that, in their implementation, provide society with solutions based on knowledge, science and technology. This special interaction between

the processes of knowledge production and dissemination and social needs constitutes an input for universities and a chance for students to go through real-life experiences.

In Latin American higher education institutions there has arisen a wide variety of alternatives to incorporate service-learning practices into curriculums and research programs, many of which have been shaped into course assignments, courses designed considering the implementation of service-learning efforts, internships in community organizations, pre-professional practices in communities, interdisciplinary social or environmental problem-solving programs or research programs related to service-learning practices.²⁹

28 For a detailed analysis of these issues, see Boaventura, 2019, p. 80 and ff. pp., Tapia, 2018, p. 123 and ff. pp.; Perez, D. & others, 2009, p. 34 and ff. pp.

29 See Tapia for specific examples of these programs, 2018, pp. 39-57

B.2 – Service-Based Educational Experiences in Basic Education

As Tapia (2006) points out, in Latin America experiences which integrate education and service emerged, in general, as a result of local efforts rather than due to external influences, and service-learning practices took place prior to any theoretical debates on them.

Unlike other educational reform and innovation movements which occurred in almost all Latin American countries during the 1990s, mainly as a result of the influence from international organizations, service-learning arose from a “bottom-up” approach.

Unlike other educational reform and innovation movements which occurred in almost all Latin American countries during the 1990s, mainly as a result of the influence from international organizations, service-learning arose from a “bottom-up” approach.

In Latin America many educational institutions have tried to come closer to social reality, mainly to mitigate poverty or to face some of the challenges posed by inequality in this region. The strong solidarity-based tradition manifested itself through habitual activities in schools, such as solidarity campaigns, trips to isolated areas to help disadvantaged people, to regions affected by environmental disasters or to rural schools where children were in need of learning coaching, and so on. Tapia (2018) states that service-learning efforts started long before they were characterized as such and they comprise the cultural traditions of each country.

Various Latin American countries experienced transitions from authoritarian governments to democratic ones at the end of the 1970s and in the 1980s.³⁰ As a result, instruction on civic participation, human rights and democratic values became vital to go along with those political processes in the education of new generations. Lots of research refer to the need for schools to actively participate in the construction of citizenship among young people, mainly in connection with political practices and their meaning.³¹

Today, “citizenship” is a broad signifier related to other key words such as participation, democracy, coexistence, discipline, authority, politicity; the meanings of which are discussed and defined in each investigation.

30 In Latin America, the so-called “third wave of democratization” got to the Dominican Republic and Ecuador in 1978; Peru in 1980; Honduras in 1981; Bolivia in 1982; Argentina in 1983; El Salvador in 1984; Guatemala, Brazil and Uruguay in 1985; Paraguay and Panama in 1989; and Chile in 1990.

31 See Núñez, P. and Fuentes, S. (2015). “Estudios sobre construcción de ciudadanía en la escuela secundaria argentina: tendencias y categorías en las investigaciones en la última década (2002-2012)”. *Espacios en Blanco*, vol. 25, N° 2, pp. 351-372. Recovered from http://www.scielo.org.ar/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1515-94852015000200006&lng=es

The concept of citizenship in Latin America, affected by the theoretical debate and the realities experienced and endured in the region due to economic crises and political violence, was enriched by the participation of stakeholders themselves. As Giorgetti (2007, p. 41) points out:

Citizenship and education combine in a new way, in which recipients are, in turn, the protagonists of each stage and the ones who build knowledge. Within this framework, service-learning projects constitute an innovative experience regarding citizenship and education, since they strengthen curricular content learning, deepen the engagement with society and have great participation on the part of young people in every stage.

Solidarity-based educational experiences stimulated, in this context, the development of active youth leadership and citizenship as a result of community engagement from early ages.³² Service-learning does not take children and youngsters as “citizens of the future”, but it emphasizes the need to promote their participation, commitment and leadership in the present. Citizenship education requires more than just learning legal rules and ethical principles. The development of this type of project allows students to relate activities and tangible results to the needs for change, analyze the connection between emerging problems and structural issues, between social concerns and socially and economically unfair situations and between social work and citizen engagement (Tapia, 2006, p.150).

In addition, in the countries of our region, which have growing social and educational marginalization, there is evidence that service-learning institutional projects positively impact on social inclusion and student retention. A decade’s experience of public policy related to the promotion of service-learning in Argentina evidences that these practices can be considered a tool for inclusive education since:

Service-learning practices promote the participation of all students, even those with diverse skills or those who face extreme social and educational vulnerability (...) so as to convert students from “recipients” to “protagonists” with an active role in solidarity-based projects aimed at local development. (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2007, p. 3)

In basic education, solidarity-based educational projects started in institutions: at high school (e.g. in Argentina, Chile and Bolivia) or in primary school (e.g. in Uruguay).

In basic education, solidarity-based educational projects started in institutions: at high school (e.g. in Argentina, Chile and Bolivia) or in primary school (e.g. in Uruguay). These

32 See some experiences in Giorgetti, D. (2007) (Comp.) Educar en la ciudadanía. El aporte del aprendizaje-servicio. Buenos Aires: CLAYSS.

projects sometimes arose from institutional decisions or as part of the mission or pedagogical project of each institution, from a community or some civil society organization, or they were promoted through a public policy.

After the implementation of some service-based efforts which were integrated with course content and led by students, these practices—with different formalities—began to spread in some Latin American countries.

In some cases these practices constituted a graduation requirement. Several countries promoted—through public policies—the spread of solidarity-based educational experiences and there are also examples of civil society organizations which, on many occasions together with government institutions, helped promote these practices.

In Panama, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Costa Rica social service was incorporated into high schools as a graduation requirement. In almost all cases this requirement is met by doing community service for a number of hours, and the activities involved are not always service-learning practices in the strict sense of the term.

In **Panama** Law No. 47 enacted in **1946**, Organic Law on Education, lays down that Student Social Service is a requirement in fifth and sixth year of high school, both in public and private institutions of this country. Pursuant to Resolution No. 1003 of the Ministry of Education (August 31, **1998**), Student Social Service is regulated and students must complete at least 80% of a total number of 80 hours during the academic year while they are in fifth and sixth year. In 2000, in accordance with Resolution No. 1846, the number of hours required was reduced to 40 hours for students attending night schools and special education centers.³³

In **Dominican Republic** Student Social Service was established as a graduation requirement in all high schools in **1988**, under Ministry of Education Ordinance 4-88.

In 2003 Law No. 179-03³⁴ establishes the requirement for students to work on reforestation activities for thirty (30) hours in areas set out by the Secretary of State for the Environment and Natural Resources, within the framework of the 60-hour community work each high school student must do in the second year of the second stage.

33 For more information on this legislation see: Sue González, A. (2012) “Marco jurídico de la educación en Panamá”, p. 388 and p. 392. Recovered from:

https://iptlaspalmas.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/7/9/12795050/marco_marco_juridico.pdf

34 Law No.179-03. Recovered from:

<https://www.inaiipi.gob.do/transparencia/phocadownload/base-legal/Ley%20Establece%20Treinta%20Horas%20Actividades%20Reforestacion%20para%20Obtener%20Titulo%20Bachiller.pdf>

In **1994**, pursuant to the General Law on Education of the National Ministry of Education in **Colombia**, it is provided that students must do social service in the two high school years: tenth year and eleventh year. Under section 30 of this law (115/94), one of the objectives of high school is its “relation to social and community development and organization programs aimed at solving local social problems”, and it establishes that student social service is a “curricular component required for the integral education of students”.³⁵

Two years later, under Resolution No. 4210 of the National Ministry of Education, it is established that students must complete 80 hours of social work in the last years of high school and that pedagogical service projects are part of the curriculum and the institutional education plan.³⁶

In **Nicaragua** in **1996**, under section 36 of Law No. 217, General Law on the Environment and National Resources, it was established that students must complete a minimum number of hours doing ecology-based services or practices as a high school graduation requirement.³⁷

In **El Salvador**, section 26 of Decree-Law No. 917, General Law on Education (1996), provides that high school students shall graduate once they have finished their studies and passed all courses in the curriculum, which includes student social service.³⁸

In 2019, Executive Order No. 4 established student social service at high school as:

*An activity whose aim is to contribute to students' integral education and service attitude towards others, and allow them to discover and raise critical and solidarity awareness as well as develop their citizenship, productive and academic skills through projects which are mainly educational and promote personal and social development at institutional, community and national levels.*³⁹

It establishes priority topics such as the environment, literacy, art, culture, recreation, prevention, sports, social events, education and science.

In **Costa Rica**, in **1997**, Law No. 7739, Code on Childhood and Adolescence,⁴⁰ provides that it is a duty for people under age who are part of the educational system to do com-

35 General Education Law of the National Ministry of Education. Law No. 115, enacted on February 8, 1994. Recovered from: <http://www.bnm.me.gov.ar/gigal/documentos/EL000259.pdf>

36 Resolution No. 4210 of the National Ministry of Education, September 12, 1996. https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1621/articles-96032_archivo_pdf.pdf

37 General Law on the Environment and Natural Resources. Law No. 217, enacted on March 27, 1996. Recovered from: [http://legislacion.asamblea.gob.ni/Normaweb.nsf/\(\\$All\)/1B5EFB1E58D7618A0625711600561572?OpenDocument](http://legislacion.asamblea.gob.ni/Normaweb.nsf/($All)/1B5EFB1E58D7618A0625711600561572?OpenDocument)

38 https://siteal.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/sit_accion_files/siteal_el_salvador_0197.pdf

39 Decree No. 4. Special Regulation on Student Social Service at High Schools. Published in Diario Oficial de El Salvador, 31 de Enero de 2019. Recovered from <https://sv.vlex.com/vid/decreto-no-4-reglamento-775355949>

40 Ley N° 7.739 Código de la Niñez y la Adolescencia. Recovered from: https://siteal.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/sit_accion_files/siteal_costa_rica_0673.pdf

munity service through the programs which each educational center develops to that end, pursuant to the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Public Education. This law also establishes that said service shall constitute a graduation requirement at high school.

In 2000, the National Council for Education established “Student Community Service” as the thirty-clock-hour service rendered by students during the school year, related to programs, projects and activities which favor their personal and social development and contribute to the solution of community problems.⁴¹

Two years later, pursuant to Decree No. 30226, issued by the President and the Minister of Public Education, it is reaffirmed that Student Community Service constitutes a requirement for students in tenth year at academic schools and for students in eleventh year at technical schools.⁴²

In Venezuela, the General Regulation of the Organic Law on Education of 1999 establishes that “apart from complying with the legal requirements for graduation from high schools, including technical high schools, each student shall participate in an activity aimed at benefiting the educational institution or the community.”⁴³

As explained, many of the laws on compulsory service were enacted within the framework of the “1990s reforms”, a term which refers to the historic process of educational reforms in Latin America starting in 1990 after the Jomtien Declaration (Thailand).

In the various fora where educational policies were discussed,⁴⁴ the main needs or difficulties pointed out in connection with Latin America were the exclusion of young people from the education system, illiteracy, lack of educational equality, centralization of education management, lack of economic resources, lack of teacher training programs, the limited time devoted to learning in school and the need for technological resources.

With its pros and cons, its strengths and its weaknesses, this process put “the debate on educational quality and policies” on the table.⁴⁵ Reforms mainly pointed to the need for commu-

41 Regulations for Student Community Service. Resolution 50-200 of the National Council for Education, October 24, 2000. Recovered from <https://mep.janium.net/janium/Documentos/8714.pdf>

42 https://siteal.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/sit_accion_files/costa_rica_-_decreto-30226-mep.pdf

43 General Regulations of the Organic Law on Education. Official Gazette No. 36.787, September 15, 1999. Decree No. 313. Section 27. Recovered from <https://docs.venezuela.justia.com/federales/reglamentos/reglamento-general-de-la-ley-organica-de-educacion.pdf>

44 There were four Latin American summits on Education: in Guadalajara (Mexico) in 1991; in Guadalupe (Spain) in 1992; in Salvador de Bahia (Brazil) in 1993; and in Buenos Aires (Argentina) in 1995. After these summits, the 9th Latin American Conference on Education took place in La Habana (Cuba) in 1999. This process came to an end in Dakar in 2000 with the Latin American Declaration on Education for All.

45 For an analysis of the reforms see Javier Herrera Cardozo (2017) “Reformas educativas en Latinoamérica: huellas y camino a seguir”. Recovered from <http://eduneuro.com/revista/index.php/revistaneuronum/article/view/70>

nity engagement. Although the proposal might have been interpreted as a strategy of states and international organizations to delegate their responsibility in connection with education to others (families, communities, teachers, businesspeople and civil society organizations), it also opened the debate on the relationship between schools and communities and the inclusion of other actors to improve education quality, with different results in each country.

Against this background, the legislation on compulsory service impacted on educational systems and on students' citizenship and service education in different ways. In some countries, apart from the enactment of laws, there were specific training programs and guidelines which helped consolidate the integration of solidarity-based efforts and curricular content, and encouraged many initiatives. In others, the service requirement could not be properly implemented at national level or became too bureaucratic. The fact that the number of service hours had to be recorded was sometimes an impediment for the development of sustainable projects or true socially-oriented initiatives (Ochoa, 2009). However, several projects related to social, community or student service constituted service-learning experiences in a strict sense, where students had a leading role, performed effective service actions in response to the needs of their communities, and the projects were well-integrated with curricular content.

Even though other Latin American countries have not set out requirements in connection with service-learning practices, countries such as Argentina, Chile and Uruguay have implemented public policies for their promotion. In the implementation of these policies, there have been periods of strong support for service-learning and others in which this support was withdrawn due to political and economic fluctuations.

In **Argentina** there has been a public policy—on and off—since the 1990s, and thanks to this fact, service-learning experiences have had greater visibility and have been promoted, and due to this specific material and training courses have also been designed.

This policy was implemented in 1999 through the creation of the National Program “Schools and Communities” by the National Ministry of Education, which became—in 2003—the National Program “Solidarity-Based Education”, which was also introduced in higher education institutions, thus maintaining the continuity of the work on service-learning. This new program gave continuity to the organization of the annual International Conferences on Service-Learning, which began in 1997 and soon increased its turnout. These events encouraged the participation of faculty, technical teams and specialists from other Latin American countries, apart from the national audience, and they are still organized in Argentina.

From its creation, the program aimed at encouraging the participation of Latin American champions; and this was seen through the organization of the MERCOSUR Fora on Education, in joint work with the corresponding Ministry department.⁴⁶

María Nieves Tapia's guidance and that of most part of her team also proved essential for the continuity of the promotion of service-learning at local and international levels.

One of the main innovations resulting from the Program "Schools and Communities" was the creation of the Presidential Award for "Solidarity-Based Schools" in the year 2000, which had the objective of increasing the visibility, recognition and appreciation of solidarity-based educational experiences being carried out at national level and of encouraging other educational institutions to implement them.

This course of action for the promotion of service-learning, which also constituted an essential tool for the collection, compilation and systematization of information from multiple experiences at educational institutions, was also followed by other Latin American countries.

In 2002, the Ministry of Education of Chile organized a contest to recognize the best service-learning practices. This event was also held in the following years and, in 2006, the Bicentennial Prize "Solidarity-Based Schools" started to be awarded, with the aim of increasing the visibility and recognition of solidarity-based practices led by students, promoting solidarity as part of the school curriculum, relating solidarity to democracy and systematizing experiences to help spread and multiply these efforts.⁴⁷

In 2007 the Ministry of Education of Uruguay awarded the "National Prize for Solidarity-Based Education" and in 2014 said ministry and the National Administration of Public Education organized the contest "Solidarity-Based Education" together with the Latin American Service-Learning Center (CLAYSS, for its Spanish acronym) and the "El Chajá" Organization. In 2021, that event was held again.⁴⁸

In 2008 Ecuador organized the Presidential Award for "Solidarity-Based Schools", which was awarded the following year. This contest was organized through the Solidarity-Based School Program of the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, whose pedagogical objective was to integrate class content with solidarity-based services rendered to the community.⁴⁹

46 See Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2007, pp. 96-97.

47 Eroles D. (2007) Visibilidad y reconocimiento de la solidaridad estudiantil en Chile. Bicentennial Prize "Solidarity-Based Schools". Ministry of Education, Government of Chile. Recovered from <https://docplayer.es/15685765-Visibilidad-y-reconocimiento-de-la-solidaridad-estudiantil-en-chile-premio-bicentenario-escuela-solidaria.html>

48 Cf. <https://uruguay.clayss.org/es/uruguay/concurso>

49 Cf. https://clayss.org.ar/boletines_anteriores/24/noticia05_24-2009.htm

The experience in Argentina revealed the great number of informal efforts being done in educational institutions, before these initiatives were promoted by the State. Many of those efforts were service-learning experiences in the strict sense of the term, but others constituted research school projects carried out in communities, food collection campaigns, awareness-raising campaigns or institutional community-based service experiences, which could potentially become service-learning projects.

As Giorgetti (2021) points out, in Argentina there existed a “dialectical” relationship in the construction of the service-learning movement: “the experiences undergone in schools enriched the proposed theoretical concepts with examples and practical application, while those concepts (...) were put to practice and accordingly changed” (Giorgetti, 2021, p. 26).

Even the technical teams of the Ministry, one of the members of which was the above-mentioned author and chapter writer, admitted that they learned from the work done by the schools.

All that experience, gained from the heart of the education system, led to the formal incorporation of service-learning through the enactment of the 2006 National Education Act.⁵⁰

In Chile, at the end of the 1990s and after the 1973-1990 dictatorship, the State promoted educational community-based experiences, with the objective of fighting inequality and teaching citizenship at school. With that aim in mind, the programs known as “Montegrande Project” and “High School Education for All” were created at the Ministry of Education.

The former was implemented in 1997 and had the objective of improving education quality through innovation and equity at high school. This program promoted the creation of networks between high schools attended by a vulnerable population and various civil society organizations so that they could set up solidarity-based projects with and for the community.⁵¹

The Program “High School Education for All”, established halfway through the year 2000, focused on the most disadvantaged high schools which had a high dropout rate, with the aim of guaranteeing twelve years of education for all those students. To that end, each high school was encouraged to implement its own tailored efforts aimed at student retention and community development with the support of social organizations. During the year

50 In section 32, the National Education Act promotes “solidarity-based actions” and “youth volunteer activities and solidarity-based educational projects to help community development” and, in section 123, “service-learning” is specifically proposed. Cf. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Argentina, *Solidarity-based Education Program (2007)*, “10 Years of Service-Learning in Argentina”.

51 Cf. Ministry of Education, *Montegrande Project (2000) Proyecto Montegrande, de cada liceo un sueño*. Santiago de Chile.

2001 there were training sessions for high school teachers who were willing to work on service-learning projects in collaboration with the National Program “Schools and Communities” of the National Ministry of Education of the Republic of Argentina.⁵² The next year, the Ministry of Education of Chile organized a contest to recognize the best service-learning practices.

In 2006, as already mentioned, the Ministry and the Bicentennial Committee of Chile organized the Bicentennial Prize “Solidarity-Based Schools”.⁵³

Unlike previous cases, the promotion of service-learning in Uruguay started with a civil society organization initiative: the Volunteer Center of **Uruguay** (CVU, for its Spanish acronym).⁵⁴ Since its creation in 2002, against a background of social organizations emerging and growing in number in the last years of dictatorship in that country (1973-1985), the CVU have been in contact with Argentine leaders in the field.

As already pointed out, service-learning experiences usually take place before they are conceptualized and they are enriched with a nation’s cultural traditions. As part of the Uruguayan experience, it is possible to mention the so-called “socio-pedagogic missions”, carried out between 1945 and 1971 by students and professionals in rural “rancheríos” (settlements), which were inhabited by the poorest population in the country, and the various community-based service activities organized by catholic schools (Giorgetti, 2021: 8).

This background facilitated the introduction of the proposal into the education system and a fruitful alliance with state authorities. In the development of service-learning in Uruguay combined efforts were made by civil society organizations at both local and regional levels (CLAYSS participated in the training of Uruguayan teachers and educators through its Argentine platform from the very beginning of this process), government education officials and intergovernmental organizations.

Another difference between this experience and those in Argentina and Chile was that in Uruguay service-learning was first formally implemented in primary schools and its greatest potential is still there. In addition, unlike those experiences, Lasidas and Miguez (2021, p. 43) point out that in Uruguay the implementation strategy of service-learning “evidences a strong interrelationship between NGOs and the State following a top-down approach”,

52 Cf. Marshall, T. “Aprendizaje-servicio y calidad educativa”, in Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. “Antología 1997-2007” Buenos Aires, Republic of Argentina pp. 235-240.

53 Cf. Eroles, D. “El Premio Bicentenario “Escuelas Solidarias”. In Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. “Antología 1997-2007” Buenos Aires, Republic of Argentina pp. 241-244.

54 See the analysis by Lasida and Miguez, 2021, for the development of service-learning in Uruguay.

and this is clear through the fact that service-learning is implemented in schools after the proposal is approved by multiple education authorities.

After a period of time in which institutional support for the promotion of solidarity-based experiences was weaker (2008-2014), although a network of teachers continued adhering to the proposal, CLAYSS's head office was established in Uruguay with the support of the local organization called "El Chajá". Through this initiative, which has been supported by the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI, for its Spanish acronym) since 2015, schools are further assisted with the implementation of service-learning and the promotion of the proposal within the education system, in collaboration with the education authorities and CSOs.

Just like the experiences in Argentina and Chile, the contests of solidarity-based educational experiences raised the visibility of concrete practices and received support with the validation of leading figures in the political system.

In Latin America, there are other examples of CSOs promoting student volunteer programs which have had an important role in the promotion of service-learning in the countries where they work, such as the Bolivian Philanthropy Center (CEBOFIL, for its Spanish acronym) in Bolivia,⁵⁵ the NGO Alliance in Dominican Republic⁵⁶ and Faça Parte in Brazil.⁵⁷ The last organization cited coordinated the program "Sello Escuela Solidaria" in 2003, which encouraged all the schools in that country to self-assess and certify their solidarity-based practices in alliance with the Federal Ministry of Education, the Consed (Conselho Nacional de Secretários de Educação), Undime (União Nacional dos Dirigentes Municipais de Educação), UNESCO, UNICEF and the OEI (Tapia and Ochoa, 2015).

The Latin American Service-Learning Center (CLAYSS, for its Spanish acronym) deserves a separate note. This center was created in Argentina in 2002 for the promotion of service-learning, at a time when the Program "Schools and Communities" had been discontinued by the National Ministry of Education. CLAYSS, whose name reaffirmed its Latin American service mission, was established to accompany and serve students, educators and community organizations implementing or willing to implement solidarity-based educational projects or service-learning efforts.⁵⁸

55 Cf Landers, S. "El aprendizaje-servicio en Bolivia" (n.d). In: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. "Antología 1997-2007" (pp. 254-258). Buenos Aires, Republic of Argentina.

56 Cf. Then Marte, A. "Construcción de una iniciativa de fomento del voluntariado juvenil en aprendizaje-servicio en la República Dominicana" (n.d). In Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. "Antología 1997-2007" (pp. 259-263). Buenos Aires, Republic of Argentina.

57 Cf. Villela, M. (Coord.) (2001) *Soñando juntos*. Sao Paulo: Faça Parte. Instituto Brasil Voluntario.

58 Cf. <https://clayss.org/es/node/1>

CLAYSS's efforts, led by María Nieves Tapia, have always supported these experiences in Argentina and this center even organized international conferences when the Ministry stopped financing them. At the same time, it helped train technical teams, teachers and school authorities in both basic and higher education, and it promoted these practices in other Latin American countries, not only in Uruguay, but also in Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Colombia, and Mexico, among other countries.

C. Pedagogical Influences and Connections: Between Tradition and Innovation

At the end of the 1960s, with the agreement between John Dewey's tradition of "learning by doing" (against a background of civil rights mobilization and youth protests on American campuses) and Freire's ideas, the term "service-learning" was formalized in the USA and, in the mid-1970s this pedagogical proposal began to spread in Latin America as well (Tapia, 2018, p. 11).

Latin American popular traditions on education accompanied the change towards service-learning in many countries, but they were also influenced by other pedagogical theories, models or schools of thought which, with time, became important influences for the construction of the critical mass of solidarity-based projects

As already stated, Latin American popular traditions on education accompanied the change towards service-learning in many countries, but they were also influenced by other pedagogical theories, models or schools of thought which, with time, became important influences for the construction of the critical mass of solidarity-based projects, with different back-

grounds and key identifying features: student leadership, specific service efforts aimed at dealing with problems diagnosed together with communities and designed with pedagogical purposes.

In the 1970s and 1980s the advance of cognitive science had a huge impact on pedagogical theories and studies; and papers on thinking strategies, metacognition and the differences between expert and novice thinking were published.⁵⁹ Against that background Vygotskian approaches were recovered and papers on cognitive structures and their relation to concept significant learning spread.⁶⁰

59 Cf. Fly Jones, B. (1987) Estrategias para enseñar a aprender. Buenos Aires: Aique.

60 For the theory on significant learning, see classic studies: Ausubel, D. P. (2002). Adquisición y retención del conocimiento. Una perspectiva cognitiva. Barcelona: Paidós; and Novak, J. & Gowin, B. (1988) Aprendiendo a aprender. Barcelona: Martínez Roca.

As a psychological theory dealing with the processes which an individual goes through to learn in a classroom environment, significant learning is defined as the process by which new knowledge or information relates to current relevant aspects in a novice's cognitive structure (previous knowledge or anchoring ideas) substantively and non-arbitrarily. In this interaction new content acquires meaning for a subject and a transformation of the previous knowledge in his/her cognitive structure is produced, which becomes progressively enriched and modified giving rise to new more powerful and explanatory anchoring ideas, on which future learning will be based.⁶¹

Significant learning, valid for over forty years, is still present among teachers, curricular design experts and education researchers, sometimes receiving their criticism. In Latin America it spread mainly in the 1980s and 1990s within the framework of educational reforms.

Significant learning as a process by which meanings are shared, interchanged and negotiated, although the theory limits it to teachers and students as protagonists of the educational event, can be reintroduced and taken to the various actors in the solidarity-based educational experiences. In significant learning, the importance attributed to metacognition, active participation and the critical analysis of a learner about his/her own cognitive process also underpins the reflection process, one of the key aspects of a quality service-learning project.

Another significant influence was Lev Vigotsky's work. Many of the fundamental concepts of Vigotsky's psychology, such as mediation, practice and activity, started to have a huge impact on the educational concepts at the end of the 1980s. In Latin America these concepts spread in the following decade, when the first book by this Russian thinker, published in 1934, was translated into Spanish.⁶²

As to service-learning, his theories contribute to explaining the importance of communication and cooperation between participants going through teaching and learning processes, as strategies for effective learning, with motivation as the element which makes learning meaningful and cooperative work as a way to learn better than individually.

Vigotsky's concept of "zone of proximal development",⁶³ which states that the context in which learning takes place is decisive, also contributes to providing theoretical support to the pedagogical proposal of service-learning. In addition, research carried out by specialists inspired

61 See Rodríguez Palmero, M. L. (2004) "La teoría del aprendizaje significativo", First International Conference on Concept Mapping. Pamplona, Spain. Recovered from <https://cmc.ihmc.us/Papers/cmc2004-290.pdf>

62 Vigotsky, L. (1995) *Pensamiento y Lenguaje*. Buenos Aires: Fausto.

63 Vigotsky defines this category as the distance between the level of actual development (determined by the capacity to solve problems independently) and the level of potential development (determined by the capacity to solve problems with adult guidance or the collaboration of more skilled peers).

by Piaget's work has shown that the interaction between peers who have different perspectives on a problem is an efficient way to induce cognitive development (Tudge, 1993).

As Moll, L. and Greenberg, J. (1993) point out, one of Vigotsky's most important contributions is his proposal that human thought must be understood in specific social and historical circumstances. When studying the relationship between productive (work-related) activities and learning (school-related) activities, these authors have emphasized the interdependence of students' learning with the resources which are provided by society to support that learning. They have also shown the positive effects which the contributions of various community stakeholders have on classroom work, whose knowledge is integrated into students' work and becomes issues for analysis. In this type of experience, which is similar to that of service-learning, teachers "learn" that there is valuable knowledge outside the classroom and that teaching through the community, represented by its actors and knowledge, can become habitual school work. The researchers cited above state that "developing social networks which link classrooms to outside sources (and) mobilizing knowledge backgrounds we can transform classrooms into more advanced contexts for teaching and learning" (Moll, L. and Greenberg, J. 1993, p. 398).

They also state that the creation of meaningful networks between academic life and social life through specific learning activities in the classroom may improve the situation "within its walls". In addition, the service-learning proposal states that through solidarity-based efforts reality "outside the classroom" can also be transformed.

Other pedagogical models and didactic strategies (influenced by a constructivist approach to learning) which propose learning centered on the discovery or solution of real problems, role-playing, case analysis, cooperative team work, learning communities, project learning, situated or problem-based learning (PBL)⁶⁴ have something in common with service-learning: systematic work aimed at integrating learning with "doing", the connection of theory with practice, students' leading role and the redefinition of an educator's role.

However, solidarity-based educational experiences add an essential element: community engagement. Let us analyze some examples.

In case analysis or methods analysis students learn from the analysis and discussion of real-life experiences and situations. In a service-learning project work is also based on real cases but, apart from pedagogical intention, there is a solidarity-based intention of dealing with and improving a given situation with others.

64 For these teaching models and strategies, see Morine, H. & Morine, G. (1992) *El descubrimiento: un desafío a los profesores*. México D.F: Santillana-Aula XXI; Deva, J. I (1983) *Creer y pensar*. Barcelona: Paidós; Pozo Municio, J. I. & otros (1998) *La solución de problemas*; Litwin E. (2008) *El oficio de enseñar. Condiciones y Contextos*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.

Problem-based learning is a teaching strategy in which real-life problems are presented and solved and it is the teacher who chooses the problematic situations to be resolved. In service-learning, however, the proposal is that a situation be considered problematic as a result of a participative diagnosis involving both students and community stakeholders.

Like in situated learning, students learn both in the classroom and in the field, but in a solidarity-based experience they work and learn “with” and “from” the community and from all the stakeholders involved in a given project.

A service-learning project involves solidarity-based efforts through which curricular content is developed; discovering, deepening and applying that content to real situations in order to meet specific community needs.

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communities and their real and felt needs, working together “with” (and not “for”) others and doing solidarity-based actions with special attention to problem-solving is essential in a quality service-learning project, and all this contributes to the commitment of the different methodological proposals to a fairer society, solidarity-based citizenship training and the development of professionals who are responsible in society.

To the proposal that schools should provide students with “opportunities for them to knowingly select a context to work on and an experience to go through, conceiving them as actors with the capacity of contradicting the feeling of a casual observer casting a furtive look” (Litwin E. 2008, p. 20), service-learning adds the opportunity to help transform that context.

This author maintains that project or problem-based instruction, with an interdisciplinary approach, may be an answer to the demands of making knowledge more challenging and thought-provoking (Litwin 2008, p. 47). The potential of teaching “beyond content” has been debated for a while now, both in connection with basic education and higher education.

In higher education, social engagement in our region has been related to forms of research and education integrated with social intervention practices, such as action research.⁶⁵ These practices include the participative selection and completion of research

65 The action research proposal made by Kurt Lewin around 1940 is deep-rooted in Latin America and was adopted by Fals Borda as participative action research, which was mainly developed in the 1960s and 1970s.

projects which involve communities and social organizations, as the solutions to the problems may benefit the results of the investigation (De Souza Santos, 2019, p. 166).

Addressing social issues involves, as part of the complexity of this task, the need to integrate different content fields, which is connected to the transdisciplinary logic governing scientific production nowadays. Unlike multidisciplinary approaches, which focus on the study of a discipline by other disciplines at the same time, and interdisciplinary approaches, which promote the transference of methods from one discipline to another:

(A transdisciplinary action) manifests itself and produces interactively and complementarily between, through and beyond fields, simultaneously, at different levels of reality, integrating and completing the knowledge of all fields in favor of understanding the world, in the way which is currently problematized... (Almarza Riquez, 2003, p. 10)

This way, in projects integrating learning, research and social engagement—basic elements of quality service-learning experiences in higher education—social problems are related to academic interests, and scientific knowledge production remains linked to the satisfaction of community needs.

Participatory research and the integration of learning and social engagement respond to the demands of the 21st century: the need for education to be focused on the production of socially significant knowledge, the solution of social problems and the search for a new solidarity-based redirection of the relationship between universities and society

Participatory research and the integration of learning and social engagement respond to the demands of the 21st century: the need for education to be focused on the production of socially significant knowledge, the solution of social problems and the search for a new solidarity-based redirection of the relationship between universities and society.⁶⁶

In addition, service-learning practices themselves may be considered innovative education strategies. As stated in Edith Litwin's analysis (2008, p. 66), innovative proposals are based on different sources: theoretical developments on learning—as in the case of constructivist schools of thought—or experiences which question traditional developments, address content in a new and efficient way and explore issues differently, or propose activities “bordering” the curriculum. Other innovations are influenced by the change which some strategies may bring about by breaking with traditional curricular times and proposals. That author also states:

66 For examples on this see Giacomini (2012).

Educational innovation is understood as the curriculum design and implementation aimed at promoting institutional improvement of teaching practices and/or their results. Innovations respond to education aims (citizenship and participation) and take on meaning in the social, political and historical contexts of institutional life. Concepts such as creation, change promotion and improvement are all related to innovation. Innovations sometimes draw back on the best proposals in the history of pedagogy, and truly creative past experiences are implemented in new contexts and realities. (Litwin, 2008, p. 65)

If we agree with that definition, service-learning constitutes an innovative practice. A clear example of how this pedagogical proposal may be adapted to suit different situations and contexts is related to the fact that it was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, which broke out in 2019, when classes were suspended and bimodal learning (in-person and online learning) was adopted. In this sense, many experiences already underway and others which started to address problems arising from the pandemic became online practices, thus continuing with relevant situated learning related to student participation, civic responsibility and community engagement, apart from channeling new generations' interests related to technological developments and interpersonal communication on social media.⁶⁷

The service-learning pedagogy has also proved its versatility and adjustment to various institutional contexts, with different aims, cultures and working styles.

The service-learning pedagogy has also proved its versatility and adjustment to various institutional contexts, with different aims, cultures and working styles.

In Latin America forms of implementation of this proposal in formal education have varied widely in connection to each nation's traditions, and they have changed throughout the decades depending on the different social, economic and political contexts.

As already discussed, some models are based on the fulfillment of a certain number of service hours as a graduation requirement at high school or university. In these cases, on the one hand, there has not always been consistency between legislation and public policies or between institutional rules and practices, and, on the other hand, these requirements may turn these practices into a mere obligation to comply with. Even though legislation has led some institutions to create institutional quality service-learning programs, this does not seem to be the general rule.

⁶⁷ See Strait, J. & Nordyke, K. (2015) eService-Learning. Creating Experiential Learning and Civic Engagement Through Online and Hybrid Courses. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing y Tapia, M. R. (2021) Ventanas abiertas al aprendizaje y servicio solidario virtual: cómo desarrollar proyectos de aprendizaje-servicio solidario mediados por tecnologías. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: CLAYSS; Bogotá: Educapaz, Libro digital, PDF. Recovered from https://clayss.org/sites/default/files/material/Colombia_A-S_Pandemia.pdf

However, the concern for the incorporation of active civic participation and service into education has been present in the region for a long time and, recently, the concept “service-learning” has been introduced in several countries like Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Venezuela and Uruguay (Tapia and Ochoa, 2015, p. 94).

In other cases there are legal or institutional frameworks within which service projects are developed (such as CAS—the International Baccalaureate Creativity, Action and Service projects) or, specifically, service-learning efforts, such as the community service projects in Argentina.

There are also educational service experiences which are compulsory as a result of institutional decisions: some schools have established service-learning programs in which all students or students in certain courses must participate. Examples of institutions which have implemented these programs are the Concepción School in the city of Concepción, Chile,⁶⁸ and the Carlos Pellegrini Commerce-Oriented School, dependent on the University of Buenos Aires, which established the Solidarity-Based Action Program in 1996.⁶⁹

There are also a great number of educational institutions in the region where solidarity-based educational experiences are carried out in certain subjects, on the teachers’ own initiatives, and these activities are either compulsory or voluntary.

C- Assessment and Challenges

The origins, developments and forms of implementation of various proposals and their integration in our region, education systems and solidarity-based initiatives have been discussed in this chapter. To conclude, future challenges will be briefly analyzed. Three of them will be focused on: firstly, the importance of communication and the relationships among all stakeholders who, in our large region and in other parts of the world, work on and promote service-learning proposals; secondly, solidarity will be discussed as an imperative of our time; and finally, we will address the elements which need to be present in service experiences when they are part of education improvement proposals.

C.1 - Network Connections

In our present world, dominated by neoliberal globalization, not all connections are global: there are regional, national and international networks based on reciprocity and mutual

68 <https://educacionparalasilididad.com/2016/11/08/experiencia-del-colegio-concepcion-en-chile-aprender-sirviendo-aprendizaje-servicio/>

69 <http://www.cpel.uba.ar/index.php/informacion-institucional-info>

benefit. As De Souza Santos (2019) states:

The new alternative and solidarity-based transnationalization now hinges on new information and communication technologies and on the creation of national and global networks where new pedagogy, new processes of construction and diffusion of scientific knowledge and other new forms of local, national and global social engagement circulate. (De Souza Santos 2019, p. 153)

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In the last few years networks of educators, educational institutions and public and private organizations which promote service-learning have been created in our countries. These networks

have a horizontal collaboration structure among their members; their skills become complemented and the synergy of their relationships is aimed at common goals, such as service-learning promotion, mutual learning and research.

At regional level the Ibero-American Service-Learning Network was established, which was founded in Buenos Aires in 2005. At present, it is made up of seventy-four governmental organizations, social organizations, universities and regional organizations from Latin America, the USA and Spain. This open model, respectful of each member's identity, is aimed at promoting relationships, synergy and joint development, drawing on the existing associations and practices. Another objective is to become an environment for coordination, implementation, awareness-raising, learning and opportunity research aimed at the development of service-learning. It also promotes civil society participation and the dissemination of good practices to attend to educational needs.⁷⁰

In the last ten years the number of national networks has enormously increased. The most long-standing one is the National Service-Learning Network in Chile (REASE, for its Spanish acronym),⁷¹ established in 2011 by a group of academics and authorities from educational institutions of different stages in the education system, in order to promote and systematize the methodological approach of service-learning in Chile (known as "A+S", in Spanish). This network has systematically increased its members, from its original seventeen participants up to the two hundred members registered by 2016, 85.5 % of whom belong to higher education institutions (Pizarro Torres & Hasbún Held, 2019, p. 23).

⁷⁰ See <https://www.clayss.org.ar/redibero.html>.

⁷¹ See <https://www.facebook.com/reasechile>.

In 2017, promoted by CLAYSS, the network Rede Brasileira de Aprendizagem Solidário⁷² was created with the participation of various social organizations, universities, governmental organizations, researchers and schools, which work for the promotion and development of service-learning in Brazil. Some of its members are the OEI's Brazilian Office and organizations such as "Instituto Singularidades", "Instituto Unibanco", "CENPEC", "Instituto Quer", "SESC Nacional" and the Secretary of Education of São Paulo.

In 2019, the Mexican Network of Service-Learning⁷³ and the Uruguayan Network of Service-Learning⁷⁴ were created. The former is made up of eleven educational institutions and civil society organizations. The National Autonomous University of Mexico, the Ibero-American University, the Monterrey Institute of Technology, the Marist Schools of Central Mexico, the Autonomous University of Nayarit, the Autonomous University of Querétaro and the University of Monterrey have representatives in that network.

The Uruguayan network is made up of representatives of civil society organizations, educational institutions, and governmental organizations, which are regional and international entities with headquarters in Uruguay.

In the first two meetings there were representatives from CLAYSS, the National Administration of Public Education (ANEP, for its Spanish acronym), ANEP's Central Governing Council (CODICEN, for its Spanish acronym), the Youth and Adult Education Office (DSEJA, for its Spanish acronym), the CEIBAL Plan, the Center for Education Training (CFE, for its Spanish acronym), the Global Learning Network, the Catholic University of Uruguay (UCU, for its Spanish acronym), the Business University (UDE, for its Spanish acronym), the Institute for the Social Inclusion of Adolescents (INISA, for its Spanish acronym), the National Institute of Rehabilitation (INR, for its Spanish acronym), the Institute for the Economic-Social Promotion of Uruguay (IPRU, for its Spanish acronym), the Civil Association named "El Chajá", and the organizations known as "América Solidaria" and "Gurises Unidos".

Since December, 2020 CLAYSS and a group of local organizations have been promoting the creation of the Argentine Service-Learning Network. Its objectives include promoting service-learning as a public policy in Argentina, helping with the implementation of these practices in all kinds of educational institutions at all levels and in civil society organizations working with children, adolescents and young people, and becoming an environment for sharing knowledge and experiences related to the development of network member organizations in their efforts to improve education quality and inclusion.

72 See facebook.com/RedeBrasileiraAprendizagemSolidaria.

73 See <https://sites.google.com/udem.edu.mx/1er-encuentro-de-ayss-mxico/inicio>.

74 See <https://uruguay.clayss.org/es/uruguay/red>.

Meanwhile, favored by these networks, new knowledge and research has been locally produced in connection to the service-learning experience in the region.⁷⁵ Other examples of the dissemination and growth of the proposal are the publication of the first academic journal in Spanish in 2014, aimed at spreading service-learning research, thoughts and practices,⁷⁶ and the growing Latin American participation in international fora.

The connections between networks and local governments and civil society organizations are also vital for the implementation of the proposal. In Argentina, for example, the National Ministry has created a network made up of officials appointed by Provincial Ministries as “jurisdictional leading figures”. The training and assistance received by them has made it possible to implement efforts at local, provincial and regional levels and has facilitated the diffusion of the proposal in the whole system.

In addition, the formation of alliances with organizations involved in the promotion of service-learning at local and national levels has helped spread proposals horizontally and strengthen the link between local organizations and schools in connection with service-learning projects. This type of connections gives educational institutions the opportunity to transmit problems which they should not or cannot resolve to governmental or non-governmental organizations specialized in service-learning, easing social-demand-related pressures, especially for schools; facilitates the identification of priority needs in the community and provides continuity and sustainability to the project (Tapia, 1998, p. 130).

C.2 – Solidarity as an Imperative

At present, urgent global issues related to human rights, the environment, sustainable development, food, water (and right now, the pandemic) prove that there are no immune social groups or safe territories: risks and threats affect us all. And, against this background, solidarity-based education takes on vital importance.

Besides, contemporary debate in its various forms of presentation (subordination studies, postcolonial studies and decolonial studies) addresses otherness in its theoretical, philosophical and ethical expressions as “concrete others”, cultural minorities, groups subdued to some form of domination, discrimination and/or subordination. These discussions also take place in education and provide information on theories and practices related to those issues.

75 See <https://clayss.org.ar/investigacion.html>.

76 RIDAS, Revista Iberoamericana de Aprendizaje Servicio. Solidaridad, Ciudadanía y Educación. Recovered from <https://www.clayss.org.ar/ridas.html>

“Openness to the other”, as De Souza Santos (2019) states, is the real aim of university democratization, which goes beyond democratization in connection to access and permanence at university. In a society where life quality is based on knowledge configurations which are more and more complex, “university legitimacy will only be achieved when activities known today as part of extension programs develop so much that they disappear as such and become part of investigation and teaching activities” De Souza Santos (2019, p.108).

Service-learning projects in higher education may be part of the answer to the problem.⁷⁷ 21st century demands in the search for an education which is more focused on the solution of social problems pose new challenges to teaching and investigation, such as the search for a closer connection between the scientific knowledge produced at university and lay, popular, traditional, urban, rural and non-western cultural knowledge such as, in Latin America, knowledge from indigenous communities. However, as Nieves Tapia (2018) states, the inertia of the traditional paradigm persists, teacher-training programs do not always reflect new demands and, within the framework of the growing globalization in higher education courses of study, the universities of the region find themselves under the pressure of responding to patterns defined in northern hemisphere countries, which do not usually take into account or assess social engagement.

Challenges regarding the institutionalization of social engagement integrating teaching,

The solidarity-based model proposed by service-learning also has enormous potential for students' early civic and solidarity-based education in countries with a long history of authoritarian governments, since it promotes the active participation of children, adolescents and young people in the construction of social cohesion, the consolidation of democracy, the fight against social and educational exclusion, environmental degradation and the defense of cultural diversity.

research and extension missions comprise not only the difficulty of overcoming bureaucratic obstacles, but also the revision of pedagogical and research methodologies, formation for university education and curriculum appropriateness.

Adequate curriculum and project planning to do effective community work, the quality and appropriateness of the knowledge applied by students when doing community service, the participa-

⁷⁷ In connection to this topic, see Giacomini (2012) and Abramovich & others (2012).

tion of community stakeholders in both the evaluation process and the solution of complex problems, the inclusion of new environments and subjects in teaching processes, and the creation of a permanent and flexible monitoring and assessment system are also challenges present in the implementation of service-learning in university life.

The solidarity-based model proposed by service-learning also has enormous potential for students' early civic and solidarity-based education in countries with a long history of authoritarian governments, since it promotes the active participation of children, adolescents and young people in the construction of social cohesion, the consolidation of democracy, the fight against social and educational exclusion, environmental degradation and the defense of cultural diversity.

C.3 – Quality Education for All as a Goal

As previously discussed, in all Latin American countries there is a long history of solidarity-based educational practices, many of which constitute excellent service-learning models in higher education and basic education institutions or are promoted by civil society organizations.⁷⁸ However, it is important to highlight that not all community service projects are service-learning initiatives in the strict sense of the term. For a project to be a service-learning effort it must lay the same emphasis on responding to community demands as on responding to students' learning needs.

Quality service-learning practices are designed considering not only community needs but also institutional education plans, with the participation of the educational community and at the service of a community demand which is really felt and to which students can attend. Learning through this type of projects means becoming involved with community problems in order to get to know and conceptualize them, collectively think about ways of dealing with problems and proposing solutions or forms to mitigate their effects, as a strategy to take action on communities from education stages. This way, the objective is to treat real situations as learning environments, for both students and teachers.

In order to guarantee effective service, it is vital to implement a participative evaluation and count on adequate assistance, which may be achieved through connections with social orga-

78 In connection to the Argentine experience, for instance, see the compilation of service-learning experiences which received the Presidential Prize "Solidarity-Based Schools" and the Prize "Solidarity-Based Practices in Higher Education" in https://clayss.org.ar/publicaciones-me_argentina.html. To read on the experiences in other Latin American countries (Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Uruguay, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru, Venezuela), see: https://clayss.org.ar/publicaciones-clayss_experiencias.html
For experiences in Uruguay, see: <https://clayss.org.ar/uruguay/bibliografia.html>
For experiences in Brazil, see: Gomez da Costa A. C. (2004) *Casos e Contos. Viagem por um Brasil solidario*. Sao Paulo: Faça Parte. Instituto Brasil Voluntário.

nizations and activities which are well-planned and well-managed. The whole process and the exchanges with the various stakeholders involved may become learning opportunities.

Making learning possible in the development of this type of practices also involves devising strategies aimed specifically at learning. These strategies are related to the creation of thinking environments to reflect on the activities performed and the contents applied to the experience or acquired in the practice, and also to the establishment of effective connections between the diagnosed problems and the categories of the different areas or fields.

The criteria which have been mentioned and which define quality service-learning practices are essential to assess whether community intervention experiences developed in institutions constitute service-learning projects and to design institutional strategies to improve those projects (Tapia, 1998: 130).

It is equally vital to take steps towards the monitoring and assessment of institutional programs and service-learning practices and their institutionalization. While there are some proposals and experiences in this regard,⁷⁹ the design of effective and shared assessment requirements and adequate and strict evaluation processes for this region are still challenges facing service-learning in Latin America.

Latin American Chronology

DECADE	COUNTRY / REGION	
1900	Argentina	Legal incorporation of “extension” into the structure of a university in the region. The first formal extension body was created at the University of La Plata (1905).
1910	Argentina	Beginning of the University Reform Movement. National University of Cordoba (1918).
1920	Mexico	José Vasconcelos promoted extension policy in the National University of Mexico.
1930	Mexico	UNAM became the first Mexican institution to formalize Social Service as a requirement for medical graduates (1936).
1940	Mexico	Mandatory Social Service was regulated for all university students for no less than six months (1945).
	Panama	Student Social Service was established as a requirement for the awarding of a high school diploma (1946).
	Colombia	Mandatory Social Service was established as a requirement to obtain a degree in Medicine (1949).

79 As an example of this, see Abramovich and others (2012: 37-39), Puig (2017), Herrero, M. A. & Ochoa, E. (2020 pp. 35-176), Pizarro Torres V. & Hasbún Held B. (2019).

DECADE	COUNTRY / REGION	
1950		
1960	Nicaragua	The “Law for the Creation of the Mandatory Social Service” was passed in 1968 for high school and higher education graduates and regulated, that same year, for health professionals.
1970	Jamaica	The University of Costa Rica established participation in a “university community work” (TCU, for its acronym in Spanish) project as a requirement for graduation (1975).
	Costa Rica	The University of Costa Rica established participation in a “university community work” (TCU, for its acronym in Spanish) project as a requirement for graduation (1975).
1980	Costa Rica	Mandatory Social Service was regulated for all technological and university programs (1981).
	Dominican Republic	Student service was established as a mandatory requirement for high school graduation (1988).
1990	Colombia	Student social service was established as a requirement for high school graduation in educational legislation (1994).
	El Salvador	The Higher Education Law stipulated that the completion of social service is one of the requirements that students must have in order to begin their graduation process in the country (1995).
	El Salvador	The General Education Law stipulated that high school students obtained high school diploma once they had completed and passed the study program, which included Student Social Service (1996).
	Colombia	Social Service was regulated with an obligation of eighty hours of social action in the last years of high school, and it was established that service projects were part of the curriculum and the institutional educational project (1996)
	Nicaragua	It was established that all high school students must perform ecological service as a requirement for graduation (1996).
	Costa Rica	The Code of Children and Adolescents established, among the duties of minors in the educational system, the obligation to provide a service to their community as a requirement to qualify for the high school diploma. (1997).
	Venezuela	The General Regulations of the Organic Law of Education established the obligation of students to participate in an activity that benefited the community in order to obtain a high school diploma or technical degree (1999).
	Argentina	I International Seminar on Solidarity-based Service-learning was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina (1997).
	Panama	Student Social Service was regulated and the requirement of an eighty-hour workload was established (1998).
2000	Argentina	The “School and Community” Program (1999) and the Presidential Award “Solidarity Schools” were created (2000).
	Chile	In 2000, service-learning began to be promoted through educational policies. In 2002, the Ministry of Education announced a contest for the best service-learning practices and in 2006 launched the Bicentennial Award “Solidarity School”.

DECADE	COUNTRY / REGION	
2000	Costa Rica	The Student Community Service was regulated, defined as the participation of students for thirty clock hours during the school year (2000).
	Argentina	The Latin American Center for Service-Learning (CLAYSS) was created (2002).
	Brazil	Since 2002, the Faça Parte CSO has been promoting the expansion of service-learning in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Education and local educational authorities. In 2003, it coordinated the launching of the “Solidarity School Seal”, which called on all schools in Brazil to self-assess and certify their solidarity practices, in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Education and other local and international organizations.
	Dominican Republic	A period of thirty hours of reforestation activities was regulated, within the framework of the sixty hours of community work to be carried out by high school students (2003).
	Argentina	For the first time, the “Presidential Award for Solidarity Practices in Higher Education” was granted (2004).
	Venezuela	The Higher Education Student Community Service Act stated that service actions must take the form of service-learning (2005).
	Uruguay	In 2002, the Volunteering Center of Uruguay took the initiative to introduce service-learning in primary schools. In 2007, the Ministry of Education awarded the “National Solidarity Education Award.”
	Ecuador	The Presidential “Solidarity Schools Award” was launched (2008).
2010	Chile	The National Service-Learning Network (REASE) was created (2011).
	Regional	Ridas, the Ibero-American Journal of Service-Learning, was created. First academic journal on service-learning in Spanish (2014).
	Uruguay	The Ministry of Education and ANEP (National Administration of Public Education), together with CLAYSS and the “El Chajá” Association, announced the “Solidarity Schools” Contest (2014).
	Brazil	The Rede Brasileira de Aprendizagem Solidário was launched (2017).
	Mexico	The Mexican Service-Learning Network was launched (2019).
	Uruguay	The Uruguayan Service-Learning Network was launched (2019).
	El Salvador	Student social service in high school education was regulated (2019).
	Argentina	CLAYSS, together with a group of local organizations, promoted the creation of the Argentine Network of Service-Learning (2020).

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“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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