



Service Learning: Benefits of Another Learning Pedagogy

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Abstract

The Service Learning is an articulated, consistent and coordinated teaching-learning methodology. It resorts to unique assumptions, integrates the learning of technical and scientific knowledge with the personal, social and community development. This methodology permits the student to realise interdisciplinary work and produce plasticity on his/her creativity whilst producing cognitive, personal, social, emotional and transcendental knowledge. This process allows for the development of interpersonal, intrapersonal relations, communication, it fosters joint work and networking, leadership, cooperation and negotiation, personal effectiveness, self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-motivation. It also sensitises students to address humanitarian issues and for the everyday life of the community and social responsibility. This study reflects on the importance of teaching-learning methodology based on Service Learning and it discusses the relevance of its inclusion in the academic curriculum. It uses qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, favouring group interviews with content analysis.

Keywords: Service-Learning, University, Methodology, Student's holistic development, Alternative learning pedagogy

1. Introduction

The Service Learning (SL) is generic concept with many brands and each region gives it an importance and a specific designation (Tapia, 2013). Hence the existence of different names to signal the Service Learning is as diverse as Solidarity Schools, Schools of Good-living, Learning- Service, Learning + Service, Service-Learning, Active Learning in the Community Social Services; Ethics and Citizenship Training, Mandatory Social work; Community Social Practices, Social Educational Practices. Celio et al (2011: 168) also share the same feeling and feature names such as: "service-learning," "community service," "experiential learning," "public service," "civic engagement," and "civic involvement". It is another pedagogical methodology which establishes other objectives (Ballesteros-Sola, 2017) and exceeds the specificity frontier and spreads to most of the questions, as it is the case of soft skills that are cross-cutting to function, time and society. It focuses itself upon sustainable development and it intends to identify, understand and solve social disagreements that affect the community. It is a dynamic and interactive process of applying scientific knowledge to the problems of the students' development and communities and it rises as a good multiplier of tacit knowledge (Rutti et al, 2016).

Despite the significant benefits derived from Service-Learning as a learning teaching methodology for the development of the student, the university, the local community, the economy and society, higher education institutions, especially in the sphere of the Economic and Business Sciences, still rely highly upon traditional learning teaching methodologies, which are vertical top-down ones and of expository and independent nature of the community. They are a lot more based on specificity rather than general approach and focus a lot on the specific technical and instrumental skills. However, they neglect other key skills that value the knowledge economy, as it is the case of emotional and spiritual skills. In this way, learning present weaknesses and flaws in the training of more ethical students for business and everyday life. In this sense, in the opinion of Moorer and Christian (2009), business schools have been slow in implementing alternative pedagogical practices and more appropriate to the community and have failed to include service learning in their curricula. This pedagogy is globally important and it should be disseminated and applied to all areas of knowledge (Moorer and Christian, 2009). Lawler and Joseph (2009) do also consider that service learning, while a learning pedagogy, seems to be very suited to graduate interdisciplinary courses, particularly those of the areas of the humanities. However, while a pedagogical instrument and inclusion, service learning is being broadened and studied in a wide range of areas of knowledge, such as Economics, Management, Business, Finance, Engineering, Psychology, Mathematics, Accounting, Nursing, Sociology, Political Science, Education, Geography,

Communications, Computer Technologies, Urban Geography, Planning, *inter alia* (Rutti et al 2016), which underlines its importance in any area of knowledge.

The Service Learning offers interesting pedagogical benefits. Therefore, this study envisions to address the feasibility and relevance of including the SL in the curriculum of the Undergraduate Degree Programme in Economics. In this sense, we sought to determine the sensitivity of a group of faculty from the University of Minho, in the economic area, about the relevance of adopting this teaching-learning methodology. We resorted to the use of qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, in particular, group interviews with content analysis. The group interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide. Two Focus Group were conducted and we observed the homogeneity of the participants to ensure fairness/equity in the intervention, participation and discussion.

2. Service learning: Strategic learning methodology

Service learning, hereinafter referred to as SL, is not a new methodology (Sedlak et al, 2003). It is a pedagogical conciliatory strategy that nurtures collaboration, mutual respect, relations between people and endeavours to establish the bridges between the University, the students and the community (Petracchi et al, 2010). Is a pedagogical approach and it addresses education from an experience perspective. It has been applied to various disciplines, courses and various levels of education, by several universities worldwide (Yorio & Ye, 2012). It allows for reconciling school practices with the community work and improves the skills and the citizens' civic responsibilities (Andrews, 2007). It translates itself in the art of teaching the interaction between the University, the community and the student and it embodies diverse branches of personal and social enrichment, namely undertaking of civic responsibility, social cohesion, community development and the feeling of happiness throughout the learning and teaching processes and being an active molecule within the community. It works the human intelligence and it merges the relational, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, interpersonal and intrapersonal bits of intelligence. In this light, it is a possible alternative to humanise organisational institutions and society in general. This process of humanisation can foster the materialisation of a new culture where companies become closer to citizens and society. It may also stimulate companies to be more and more involved in social projects and assume and implement entrepreneurship and their social responsibility.

There are many definitions of SL, though not always convergent as regards results, objectives and importance (Billig, 2000). According to Williams and Lankford (1999: 37) *service learning is experiential education engaged in by students. These experiential activities address human and community needs and are*

accompanied by structured opportunities specifically designed to promote student learning and development. It is a powerful pedagogical tool for the individual's personal and social development and it orients the students toward the essence of their root as human beings, causing them to dive in a pool of personal values and civic responsibility (Bringle et al, 2016).

As such, it is a process that makes the students more active, positive and cooperative with society (Billig, 2000). The SL can be assumed as a philosophy of education, as a method of teaching or as a tool for school inclusion. Its implementation will lead to structural changes in the institutions and in the relations of partnership they will establish amongst the productive market, the market of education, behaviour and involvement of stakeholders, including civil society in general. It is a beneficial learning pedagogy (Tiger and Parker, 2011) and it involves the student, the school and the community in an interactive learning process. The symbiosis of those elements creates an atmosphere of trust among the parties involved. This process is an opportunity for students to improve their education administered within the school context (Kenworthy-U ' Ren & Peterson, 2005; Tiger & Parker, 2011) because the community functions as a classroom where the citizens are excellent mentors. However, the SL is still little used as a learning strategy and it is almost non-existent in the management and business course units, although it has seldom been used in higher education, in an isolated and sporadic manner. (Gujarathi & McQuade, 2002; Desplaces et al, 2006; Kenworthy-U'Ren & Peterson, 2005; Elwell and Bean, 2001; Williams and Lankford, 1999).

Although it is still a novelty to most higher education institutions, the SL is a didactic and pedagogical tool available to any educational institution and there is already some positive evidence of its results (Petkova, 2017). Its formal introduction in the curriculum seems to foster a structural change of the programmes and it might achieve the expected results for the betterment of society. This implies a preliminary reflection on the mission of universities, as well as the service that will be provided to the community. However, evidence suggests that the student learns more and better when he/she is part of the co-creation of knowledge process (Mpfu, 2007), as this it amalgamates assumptions of cognitive, civic, social, relational, emotional, and spiritual learning.

3. Service learning Benefits

Although it is important to delve deeper in this area to further support the relationship between the SL and the universities performance, the available literature is already rich in this related area. (Furco and Root, 2010). However, the SL is considered as a pedagogy of success for the teaching of entrepreneurship (Calvert, 2011) and as the methodology of SL comes in universities, the culture and

climate of these change naturally (Bringle and Hatcher, 1995). It is an educational pathway that helps to consolidate learning through reflective self-examination (Dunlap, 2006; Petkus, 2000) and it gives the student autonomy and control over his/her own learning process. It does also nurture the feeling of competence, self-efficacy, better social relations and sound connections (Billig, 2010) and it gives the student a sense of well-being at work. It is a learning methodology that involves the student and the community in a process of mutual interdisciplinary development and facilitates the access to knowledge (Tiger and Parker, 2011; Kenworthy-U ' Ren & Peterson, 2005; Mpofu, 2007; Al-Rashid and Walker, 2004; Conway, Amel & Gerwien, 2009). It creates social capital (Laura, 2014), fights poverty (Ebrahim, 2012), commits students with fairness (Heffernan, 2001), promotes social justice (Wang and Rodgers, 2006) and it renders students ever more altruists (Hegarty and Angelidis, 2015).

The application of the SL by educational institutions is one way to achieve a fairer and more sustainable society because it resorts to a teaching-learning process focusing upon justice and social commitment (Gaete, 2011). Therefore, Gaete believes that the SL is a cutting-edge transformational tool. It has power over the person, transforms his/her attitudes, actions and behaviours and it is an asset at the reach of humanity. When integrated thematically in the courses, it becomes an instrument of sustainability of society and it focuses people upon their concerns (Cheese and Hills, 2016; Dmochowski et al, 2016).

According to Bringle and Hatcher (1995), the SL should be expanded by the universities through direct development of the curriculum. These authors believe that there are many ways to implement it, in particular *through their involvement in the community, personal advocacy for an issue, political engagement and activism, or experience in related pedagogies* (Bringle and Hatcher, 1995: 112). However, they add that service learning could integrate subjects with more sensitivity and susceptibility to ethics and to the practice of service, pointing it as an example of social work. It should be noted that the SL cannot be confined to a discipline, because it is across all disciplines and it is a reflective, participatory, collaborative and humanitarian learning, which underlines the importance of ethics in the process.

For the institutionalisation of the philosophy of SL, the development of planning is important due to: (i) Common Vocabulary, (ii) Academic Integrity, (iii) Increase Support and Confidence, (iv) Institutionalisation (Bringle and Hatcher, 1995: 113), furthering the need for the change of the culture and mission of the University, and the SL should be developed within the characteristics of the culture of the institution (Heffernan, 2001). Which is why it should be well planned and integrated into the courses because it enhances the indexes of altruism and pedagogy (Hoffernan, 2001). It also improves and renders life more exciting for the performance of students and of organisations and for taking responsibility for a healthy citizenship (Dunlap, 2006; Petkus, 2000) because, as an experiential learning process, the SL stimulates actions like planning, design, structure, implement and evaluate courses

(Petkus, 2000). The SL should also be a tool for pre-university teaching, which would mean a rewording of the study plans and a redefinition of the mission of educational institutions (Appelbaum et al, 2017). Despite the initial effort the adoption of this methodology implies, it favours the sustainability of human life through the creation of a more sensitive society to the collective goods, while the macro threshold for every citizen. In this way, the issues of sustainability should be formally integrated into the academic curriculum, as it must occur within organisations and in every moment of citizens' lives (Dmochowski et al, 2016; Rusinko, 2010). Although it is complex and interdisciplinary, its integration has clearly defined goals, which, resorting to Lee, (2012) we list below:

1. grasp and understand interdisciplinarity and theoretical knowledge of a discipline,
2. understand, apply and adjust strategies to solve problems by means of appropriate methods and technologies,
3. communicate and work in group and in front of audiences,
4. understand professional responsibilities to the ethical, legal, and security level and draw a solution,
5. understand social aspects and give them appropriate solution,
6. raise awareness for the continuous acquisition of relevant knowledge.

If one compares to traditional education, reflections on the SL within higher education, outshine that students involved in this system are more positive, committed, responsible and sensitive to social issues and concerned with other people. They also unveil that these students trust more in the values and general principles governing life in society, which shows that the SL has a strong impact on the student, on the University and on the community at the personal, moral, social, relational, cognitive and spiritual level (Markus et al., 1993). Hence, there are many benefits which inspire us to defend the introduction of SL in the academic curriculum, among which, and according to García García and Cotrina García (2015: 18), we can list:

- a) it allows students to link themselves with future labour performance contexts;
- b) it raises their pedagogical awareness;
- c) it favours the development of a more realistic perception of the teaching profession;
- d) it builds their confidence when performing their profession;
- e) it promotes the educational dialogue with teachers, *et cetera*.

According to Newman and Hernandez (2011) and Hernandez and Newman (2006), the educational institutions that implement an SL programme demonstrate good performance. These authors have delivered the course “Minding our Business” (MOB), in 1997, and they were supported by the College of Business Administration. They concluded that students who attended the course demonstrated an outstanding performance, namely in decreasing absenteeism, increased interest in belonging to their institution, unveiled a high drive to start their own business, they were eager to acquire more skills for their personal development and build their self-esteem, among others. They also consider that students have developed their communication skills, interpersonal development, teamwork, leadership, open-mindedness for thinking and problem-solving skills, concluding that the MOB is an excellent SL programme. In this sense, they indicate that the main objectives of the Minding our Business Learning are summarised in table 1:

Table 1. Minding Our Business Learning Goals

The highest thinking level it requires or whether it refers to affective/moral or skill development follows each learning goal.

1.	<i>Develop a strong sense of social responsibility for the youth of the partner middle school. AFFECTIVE/MORAL</i>
2.	<i>Understand the basic principles associated with the operation of an effective team. COMPREHENSION</i>
3.	<i>Become a more effective team player. SKILL DEVELOPMENT</i>
4.	<i>Develop mentoring and team facilitation skills. SKILL DEVELOPMENT</i>
5.	<i>Improve leadership and communication skills. SKILL DEVELOPMENT</i>
6.	<i>Develop sensitivity and respect for social class, ethnic and racial diversity. AFFECTIVE/MORAL</i>
7.	<i>Understand some of the main issues and concerns of pre-adolescent development. COMPREHENSION</i>
8.	<i>Apply the basic concepts of entrepreneurship to a student run business. APPLICATION</i>
9.	<i>Facilitate the process of starting and running a business. APPLICATION</i>
10.	<i>Set up a projected income statement for a small business. APPLICATION</i>

Source: Newman and Hernandez (2011: 41)

Newman and Hernandez (2011) and Hernandez and Newman (2006), summarise evidence demonstrating that the results of the courses based on SL are not all the same and that they depend on some variables, among which we underline the culture of SL and its alignment with the mission of the institution. Hence, the mission of the institution feeds the culture of a university based on SL.

Despite the importance of Newman and Hernandez (2011) and Hernandez and Newman (2006) research, the SL should not be confined to a course but a part of the academic curriculum because the SL is across all areas and all courses. However, the courses related to the social area (case of social work

and social economy) seem to be more sensitive to SL than other courses. Nevertheless, regardless of the area and course, according to Conway, Amel & Gerwien (2009), the outcomes of the SL can be grouped in four blocks: academic outcomes, personal outcomes, social outcomes and citizenship outcomes: *academic outcomes*: enshrines academic and cognitive changes, the ability to apply knowledge, skills and learning to motivate and foster the individual accountability.

1. *Personal outcomes*: underlines the interpersonal skills, values and personal beliefs. It also outshines behaviours and attitudes that will improve the well-being of the individual,
2. *Social outcomes*: emphasises the interpersonal, group and social skills. It focuses upon the interaction with others, respect for others, respect for the community, empathy, thoughts and beliefs about the other are part of this block of results,
3. *Citizenship outcomes*: focuses on democratic participation, awareness and social responsibility, personal participation, justice, ethics and civic movements. Those are results to be embodied in the process service-learning.

In this manner, there are endless benefits of SL, whose results are hardly visible or measurable. Overall, its benefits and challenges for the stakeholder are identified by Ballesteros-Sola (2017:20-21) in table 2.

Table 2. Summary of benefits and challenges by stakeholders

	<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Challenges</i>
<i>Students</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Experiential hands-on learning</i> • <i>Connection to community</i> • <i>Sense of purpose</i> • <i>Tangible experience “sellable” for internships & jobs!</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Time consuming hard for students juggling many demands</i> • <i>Managing expectations not a course for an easy A</i> • <i>Apathy and lack of continuity</i> • <i>Short terms mindset – “Will this get me a job?”</i> • <i>Inexperience not all students can rise the occasion</i> • <i>Uncertainty “spoon feeding” temptation</i> • <i>Feelings of frustration when social business doesn’t materialize</i>
<i>Community Partners</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Free “consulting”/ access to business skills</i> • <i>Learning about YSB and earned income strategies</i> • <i>Closer ties to the university</i> • <i>Networking opportunities</i> • <i>Positive PR</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Time consuming: “I am running a nonprofit or social business, no time for this”</i> • <i>Managing expectations: “Can undergrads really deliver”?</i> • <i>Lack of project continuity: “What happens when semester is over?”</i> • <i>“We aren’t a business, we can’t understand the lingo”</i>

<i>Professor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged & motivated students • Tangible results • Positive PR • “Meaningful” teaching • Research opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming • Managing expectations / “high performance” pressure • Lack of project continuity • Lack of control over unforeseen factors • Institutional support/recognition (does it really count for tenure?) • Communication and coordination challenges too many stakeholders
SCORE <i>Counselors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advising with a purpose • Working with students • New connections & networking opportunities • Exposure to a new way to think about business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming • Understanding Yunus Social Business and the idea of merging purpose and profit • Working with unmotivated students

Source: Adapted by Ballesteros-Sola (2017: 20-21)

4. Methodology

The empirical study uses qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, in particular, group interviews with content analysis. The group interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview script. We conducted two Focus Group composed of six elements in the first and five in the second, and with faculty of the Department of Economics, School of Economics and Management, University of Minho. The study considered the social representation of participants, seeking to articulate the objective with the subjective of the discussion, in accordance with the recommendations of War (2006). The in-depth interview including the "focus group", allows to collect data enriched by the experience of the participants (Patton, 2002) and realise a structured discussion with a small group of participants, moderated by one or more facilitators (Prince and Davies, 2001; Marczak and Sewell, 2007 cited by Masadeh, 2012). The biggest advantage of this technique lies in the characteristics of inquiry and discussion through questions fully open with a potential of possibilities that other techniques do not allow to, namely by means of inquiries where the questions should be, by nature, closed. The groups in focus group formats should ensure some homogeneity with regard to their profile (Dreachslin, 1999) in order to be more equal to the contribution of the participants in the discussion of the topics under discussion (Gibbs, 1997; Boddy, 2005).

The group discussion permits access to the perceptions, the meanings and the assignments that the faculty members who participated in this research build on their understanding of the teaching of economics and how they perceive humanisation. The intervening professors' lines of investigation include Environmental Economics, Development Economics, Social Economics, Economics of

Education, Labour Economics, Regulation Economics, Econometrics and Financial Economics. The size of the groups considered the guidelines recommended by researchers using this methodology. According to Masadeh (2012), researchers indicate a number of participants that will vary between 4 and 12. However, Leitão and Vergueiro (2000) Marczak and Sewell (2007), cited by Masadeh, 2012, indicate 7 participants and Greenbaum (2003) between 8 to 10 participants.

Once we completed the transcription of each interview, these were carefully read, looking for the core contents of each interview and underlining the respondents' responses and ideas about such contents. In this stage, we followed the recommendations materialised by Bardin (1977), whereby the first level of the research based on semi-structured interviews consists of what the author means by structural decoding centred in each interview. The drawing was made of the various contents of the interview, thereby attempting to rank them as well the links they might have with other contents.

Finally, we have drawn the synopsis of the interviews by means of the content assessment grids.

5. Content Analysis of the group interviews

The scope of this investigation is the perception of the Faculty of Economics about the introduction of the Service Learning in the teaching-learning process in the Undergraduate Degree Programme in Economics as a supplementary teaching tool.

In the two Focus groups conducted, teachers stressed that the focus of teaching-learning in the degree in Economics should be built, almost exclusively, on the basis of foundational models and quantitative methods. Which explains why they perceived many difficulties to use the SL model at the level of the first cycle studies. This strict attitude raises obstacles to a possible implementation of the SL methodology. However, teachers admitted the possibility of introducing social content, after teaching the disciplines that they regard as fundamental to the student (mainstream). They claim they saw the possibility of making branches in disciplines belonging to the terminal phase of the degree course for the implementation of the social dimension and stressed: "there are things that are structural which can inspire students to do different things; they are not exceptions in the economic science related field, but rather branches" and they added "we cannot adjust permanently the teaching to reality" because "there is a set that is structural and that everyone needs to know, which is the core of the course and that is independent of what is happening out there in the society". In this way, participants assumed the need for disseminating knowledge as a method of learning to be followed. Despite this rationale, teachers also recognised the importance of economic sustainability and the trade-off between efficiency and

equity, recognising that they could eventually consider the teaching and learning of the social sphere. They add that, in the future, such a reality could lead to the implementation of Service Learning. However, the teachers reaffirmed that its eventual implementation could only occur in the last year of the degree or 2nd cycle of studies (Master's Degree). Hence, its introduction in the curriculum would need a basis of dialogue between the programmes of the Undergraduate and Masters Courses, stating: "it is necessary to draw a common basis for dialogue and thereafter design the branches or deconstruct". Teachers find it difficult to draw it as the content of a 1st cycle Course Unit due to the current curricula structure and the course units current syllabus they have to deliver in the classroom: "it's too hard to fulfil the course units' contents let alone introduce as evaluation object dimensions are not in the syllabus/content". Given the aforementioned constraints (reservations), it seems more favourable to its implementation at the level of the 2nd cycle courses, stating: "I do not know if these issues should not reflect on a framework of courses after graduation; eventually, it might make more sense in an evaluative form in the 2nd cycle". Teachers consider that eventually they could introduce some of the social issues in optional course units of "social economics" and "environmental economics", which gravitate around problems yet to be solved. However, they reaffirm: "it sounds interesting ... but I fail to see how to fit it in the curriculum".

When talking about how to draw the students of the degree in economics' attention to social issues, it was addressed the importance of an inclusive school as opposed to the current dominant model. Nevertheless, teachers express their concern with social issues, giving preference to the training of the students to enter the highly competitive market. In this sense, it was suggested that the issues of inclusion, citizenship and social commitment should be introduced in the teaching-learning process, in a pragmatic manner, punctually and voluntarily.

Teachers have expressed apprehension and unawareness about the methodology of the SL by stating: "the awareness that there is a world out there, with which we have to worry about, can be done in the same manner as undergone in the environmental and social economics". In view of the lack of knowledge about the methodology in the analysis (Service Learning), there was a confusion with volunteering practices, or services practices already inserted in the University extension or pedagogical practices of learning in the working context (stages). There appeared expressions such as: "the student will be part of society, to any organisation of the real world and he/she has to identify problems". They have also stated that these practices would be identical to volunteering contexts. As such, they considered that the methodology of SL could not be used in the course units because these are evaluated and mandatory as opposed to the SL which would be, in their understanding, volunteering, adding: "one cannot be forced to volunteer, whether we like it or not. It might be a bit perverse the student goes

volunteering to earn points within the format of his/her curriculum". However, the facilitator stressed that volunteering is different from community service and service learning. This rationale raised the question of the social awareness of students, which is considered a key step to understand the community where students live. Whilst stressing again the disciplines of social economics and environmental economics, one of the participants, who profiled the agreement of others, said: "probably it increases more awareness and it might extend itself more to several course units and it seems to be a competence to develop. Another thing is to approach society by following the employers' suggestions, that is, it is the University that should perform this job. In this manner, its implementation should be indicated explicitly in the curriculum. However, the professor thinks that the function of the University education is not to teach someone to work".

Another dimension raised about the introduction of Service Learning was its inclusion in the field of soft skills, which is a programme that already exists in the School of Economics and Management. This rationale was not defended because those skills are not mandatory for the completion of a Undergraduate Degree in Economics. Thus, it was suggested the possibility of its inclusion in University extension projects by invoking that it would also be a good link to the community and a solution that would involve the creation of an additional and obligatory curriculum unit. However, another participant said that the current University extension is just a provision of services by teachers. In this manner, considering the Service Learning within the University extension could only make sense if offered in a completely different format.

According to the teachers, another obstacle to the implementation of the SL lies in the fragile students' drive for social activities that do not involve a classification and claimed: "they will probably strive to get a good grade on this course unit only, ending their interest here for this discipline". Another teacher, putting himself in the role of the student, invoked "I got tired of working, I have devoted my time, and the other who performed less will have a similar classification". They have also observed that the student community sphere is limited to the University campus, their accommodation and leisure environments located around the campus, seem to render them unaware of the pulse of the city.

These are aspects that request further in-depth discussion because it is a cross-cut assumption of the collective and individual social responsibility and accountability. In the absence of this (co)responsibility, the implementation of social practices and the community aid will struggle with structural problems, which will prevent its natural development.

6. Discussion and Final Remarks

We think that, due to the general unawareness of the teaching-learning methodology of SL learning, teachers have expressed many reservations about this methodology, considering the odds and perhaps the difficulty to apply it. They have even taken it as volunteering practices proxy and other pedagogical practices such as placements and applied existing projects in some disciplines. They have stated that one cannot be constantly adapting the curriculum to present reality. In this light, and considering that the SL is a methodology devised to establish a bridge between the student and the community, and considering the gap between the students and this reality, would not it be appropriate and urgent the introduction of SL in different courses?

Despite their lack of knowledge about the methodology of SL, teachers demonstrate, however, a positive positioning in relation to activities of social nature. Nonetheless, the aspect which seems to hinder back its implementation still are the extensive syllabus designed for the Undergraduate Degree Programme in Economics. Teachers defend the introduction of this methodology in some of the course units, in a pragmatic manner.

Regarding the difficulties of implementing the Service Learning, we understand that:

1. Firstly, it seems necessary to deliver training actions for teachers and in parallel to the student community. These training sessions should explain the methodology of SL and highlight its objectives and benefits. They should also stress the requirements of the method, namely in terms of commitment, responsibility/ accountability and cooperation.
2. The SL is an interdisciplinary learning teaching methodology. As such, we believe it is important to underline that the success of its implementation draws on the changing of each course unit isolated perspective, where the course unit does need to be autonomous and to contribute for the personal development of the student in an integrated manner.
3. The SL is a collaborative and interactive learning methodology between the University, the student and the community within its various social institutions. Hence, it seems relevant to accentuate the social concept within the methodology of SL.
4. It would be necessary to clarify the stereotyped concepts of "volunteering", "social", "responsibility/accountability", "cooperation" and "commitment". Indeed, the social dimension is not synonymous to charitable, of kindness interested or other forms of individual objectives.
5. It seems important to fight back the idea that SL is not a volunteering practice nor the application of course units, such as internships and visits to companies. One cannot confuse this methodology with graduation projects. The SL focuses upon the holistic development of the

student and the community and deviates itself from the methodologies that focus primarily on technical and instrumental skills.

6. The SL is a learning teaching methodology of mutual co-responsibility. It allows the student to address real social problems, to feel and tackle them the way in which he/she handles real issues. In contemplating such situations, the student is aware of a social reality that the University and related activities within the framework of different disciplines conceal. In this sense, the researchers consider that the SL is a humanising Learning-teaching methodology, which is consistent with the available literature.

The University does play a strategic role in the economic and social development. It may be the pivot in connecting institutions and the community. The SL is a crucial instrument for the achievement of those goals. It is a pedagogy of global value and should be disseminated and applied to all areas of knowledge. With the SL, knowledge diffuses and excels itself in interpersonal relationships, continuous and dynamic among all the participating elements of the teaching-learning process and the community.

7. References

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