

An “Integrated” Service-Learning Model in a Residential College Context: A Case Study in University of Macau Henry Fok Pearl Jubilee College

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ABSTRACT

University of Macau Henry Fok Pearl Jubilee College has cultivated an “integrated” service-learning model in a residential college context. The residential college setting at University of Macau provides a living-learning environment in which students are provided ample of opportunities to take part in activities that fall outside the realm of the normal curriculum of university education. With students from different academic disciplines participating in a series of initially unconnected extracurricular activities (each with individual educational goals), an “integrated” service learning model in a residential college setting is to integrate the continuous efforts and outcomes of those college activities into extended service learning program(s) with a view to addressing the specific needs of a community and providing services to fulfil the needs. This contextualized service-learning program in a residential college is neither course-related nor discipline-related which completely depends on the voluntary participations of the students.

This paper is to showcase the lines of developments of the Henry Fok Pearl Jubilee College “integrated” service-learning model based on a case study of an experiential learning and voluntary teaching activity at Hainan Chengmai Si Yuan Primary and Secondary schools and a series of talks, workshops and projects in preparation for this activity. With a non-credit bearing nature and the mixed academic backgrounds of students, the service is an entirely voluntary, collaborative project which demonstrates the challenge of a coordinated approach and of striking a good balance between students’ personal interests and developments as well as the quality service to the community in need. With this unique educational context, this paper endeavours to demonstrate the variations in meanings and nature of a service-learning model to meet specific educational goals in a residential college in university education in Macau. This paper is divided into three parts. It begins with a brief literature review on definitions of ‘service-learning’ and introduces the need of a contextualized service-learning model under the new residential college educational system in University of Macau. The second section is a descriptive account on the development of service-learning program in Henry Fok Pearl Jubilee College. The last section explains the development of the “integrated” service-learning model characterized by its activity-network approach.

Key Words: integrated service-learning, civic responsibility, non-credit bearing, residential college, Macau

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1. LITERATURE REVIEW & SERVICE-LEARNING IN HFPJC

The definitions of service-learning are varied as it is practised by different educators in a wide array of service-related activities. While some practitioners focus on the integration of experiential education programs into the students' academic curriculum (Corporation for National and Community Service, 1990), others pay more attention to the balance between learning goals and service outcomes (Sigmon, 1994). In the context of residential colleges in UM, service-learning is implemented through extracurricular, non-credit bearing activities. This paper adopts a wide definition that sees service-learning as a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enhance both personal and civic development through which students apply their skills and competencies to impact others.

Residential college (RC) system has been established in the University of Macau in 2010 to promote college member's whole-person development. As a small on-campus staff-student learning community, residential college aims to foster liberal education and civic engagement among students through a rich variety of activities of social, physical, moral, cultural and civic pursuits that fall outside the realm of the normal curriculum of disciplinary education. Bearing the university's 4-in-1 education model, community and peer education is a very important part of the new pedagogical model. Service-learning program is adopted to encourage college members to take an active role in serving and helping others, as well as prepare students for life-long learning by connecting specialty education with community needs and real-world experience.

Henry Fok Pearl Jubilee College (hereinafter referred to as HFPJC) is one of the pilot residential colleges in University of Macau with a mission to develop a collegiate community through which members will develop a mature understanding of personal and community issues, along with a flexible and mature global vision. With around 200 students from different academic disciplines and different grades during the academic year 2013-14, HFPJC provided a living-learning environment in which students were encouraged to participate in various activities, including community and voluntary services. Service-learning activities are initiated and organised either by college office or by student members. Besides college staff and student House Association, ordinary college members also have the opportunities to initiate service-learning activities with the support of the college.

Within the context of the RC system, service-learning activities of HFPJC have several distinctive characteristics. First of all, all these activities are neither course-related nor discipline-related. Participants with various academic backgrounds compose a team to practice interdisciplinary cooperation and teamwork skills. Secondly, it's a non-credit bearing program. The driving force behind the participation is their personal interests and social responsibilities instead of receiving credits. Thirdly, all the participants are volunteers. For most of the events, students choose to involve in either part(s) of the service or all aspects of the process. Fourthly, service-learning happens both in campus and off-campus, in Macau and overseas. In order to provide more opportunities to engage more students with different course schedule, HFPJC designed various interdisciplinary activities in different areas and levels. For example, college members volunteered to run the college's library and be the tutors of study groups, which is a reciprocal learning process with the aim to meet college community's intellectual needs. In the academic year 2013-14, college members took part in experiential service-learning project in Thailand or Hainan China, which help enhance their cultural engagement, as well as to fully realize their global citizenship.

2. MEETING THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF RC EDUCATION

Service-learning in HFPJC is implemented to meet the evolving needs of higher education in Macau within the RC system. As an important element in RC education, service-learning aims to achieve both the historical mission and traditional academic goals of higher learning in fostering civic responsibility, critical thinking and literary skills as well as developing the ability to self-manage, self-reflect and read the world with global perspectives. This suggests a broader view of service learning to foster out-of-class learning within the different definitions of “service-learning”. As Jacoby (1996) suggested, “while service-learning that is embedded in the curriculum provides opportunities for faculty to enhance students’ learning by integrating course content with practical experience in a structured manner intended to meet course objectives, powerful opportunities for student learning and development also occur outside the classroom” (p.xviii). HFPJC recognizes the significance and potential impacts of the unique living-learning environment in RC. By incorporating service-learning into college activities, this approach adopts a more holistic understanding of student learning by extending the learning contexts to the everyday living environments. HFPJC launches service-learning programs using a noncourse-related activity-based learning (i.e. out-of-class, co-curricular, experiential learning experience) model in a residential-college context incorporating service-learning into non-credit bearing learning activities. These were not affiliated with any faculty or specific academic disciplines. Regardless of academic discipline, the projects aimed to promote positive attitudes toward volunteering, citizenship and hence college members’ sense of social responsibility. These were not integrated with any academic course content or curriculum. The following sections elucidate the implementation of the “integrated” service-learning model in HFPJC using the experience in the academic year 2013-14 as a case study.

3. THE HFPJC SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAMS

HFPJC service learning programs were designed and structured to meet the long-term RC education needs to develop students’ whole-person developments and essential generic skills. In preparation for the full implementation of the residential college system in the fall semester 2014-15, some service-learning activities in HFPJC took place in the academic year 2013-14 were particularly designed to incorporate the five major learning competencies (i.e. cultural engagement, leadership and service, healthy living, global citizenship, interpersonal relations and teamwork) into experiential learning as a trial. Each of the activity or project led to a carefully organized service experience in which participating students were provided the opportunities to learn and reflects actively on what they have learned throughout the experience in sharing discussions and/or writing. It was a student-oriented, interactive, experiential education method to place students in the context of real-life situations to connect closely with the society. The program put an equal weight on both the service and the learning which each enhances the other. Students in the college organized and provided the service which met community needs. Different types of projects and workshops were interconnected with each other to form a wider service-learning program. The reason for this was to maximize the possibility to involve the majority of students from a variety of backgrounds to apply different skills.

4. A CONTEXTUALIZED ‘INTEGRATED’ SERVICE-LEARNING MODEL

To meet the special residential college education needs, HFPJC’s service-learning program (2013-14) was a contextualized outcome. As Xing and Ma (2010) pointed out, “service-learning must be contextualized and relevant to meet unique and evolving

needs, and the broader objectives of service-learning provide room for various models to emerge. By creating and evolving methods of adopting service-learning, faculty members have developed different models that allow their disciplines to service society. Thus service-learning takes different forms in different contexts.” RCs in University of Macau are the small on-campus staff-student learning communities that integrate students’ learning and living. Each student not only belongs to his/her faculty but is also assigned to one of a number of RCs. RC education has to be designed for students from different faculties and backgrounds to develop the general competencies and skills. Thus, service-learning as college education pedagogy in HFPJC was intentionally structured to meet most of the demographic characteristics of each student to promote whole-person education. The role of service-learning in HFPJC is to enhance college members’ sense of belonging to the college and to promote college members’ responsibility to care for others and contribute to the community through which they understand how they can utilize their skills to impact the community.

The service-learning model adopted in HFPJC is an ‘integrated’ one at two levels. At one level, each college activity was carefully organized to fulfil at least one RC competency to enhance students’ whole-person development. The completion of each activity was then followed by an informal sharing session in which students were encouraged to reflect actively on what s/he had learned from the experience, and more importantly, to think about how to extend the impacts of their learning outcomes on the wider community. With active students’ participation, the learning outcomes of each activity were pertaining to a wider service-learning program. As a result, different college activities and a variety of learning outcomes were integrated to contribute to a long-term service-learning program. At another level, since students were actively involved in the planning of the service under instructors’ guidance, the process required students’ creativity and problem-solving skills as well as their academic skills. This resulted in an ‘integrated’ learning when life skills learned outside the classroom are integrated back into learning and the next college activities or service-learning. The next section gives further information on how HFPJC service-learning model is developed.

5. DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAM

In the fall semester 2013-14, a series of oil painting workshops were organized. Each student was encouraged to produce at least one painting upon the completion of the workshops. In the sharing session under instructor’s guidance, students initiated the idea that linking the visual content of each painting to compose a short children story. The learning outcomes of the oil painting workshops (i.e. paintings) were then developed into another learning competency (i.e. English creative writing) and this group of student participants, who were initially engaged with painting art, then took part in another structured English Creative writing workshop. In the next stage of the project, other students were also involved to get the text translated into Chinese, to edit texts, to design the book cover, and to get the pictures and story published. It led to the publication of a children story book which was used as teaching materials in the upcoming voluntary teaching and community service. From initially oil painting, creative writing, translation, editing and graphic design to eventually conducting storytelling and voluntary teaching activities in youth centers and schools, the series of activities involved different interest groups (e.g. translation group, graphic design and publishing group) and learning experiences.

In November 2013, HFPJC organized an artist-in-residence program to engage college members with artistic practices. A visiting artist Chu Yinhua was invited to teach workshops on cyanotype printing through which students were not only engaged with the artistic practice but also exploring the history and culture of Macau. At the reflection

stage, students initiated to produce postcards with the select cyanotype prints to contribute to service-learning. The postcards were used as souvenirs to impact service receivers in community service activities. Different elements were involved in HFPJC service learning including integrated learning, reflection, student voice, collaboration, quality service, civic responsibility. As service providers, students practiced skills to care for others in the community, solve problems from the beginning to the end with big-picture learning.

In order to raise funds for the upcoming community service and charitable activities, including voluntary teaching and service-learning project in Hainan and visiting children wards at the hospitals, HFPJC student House Association organised a charity bazaar on campus in April 2014. To prepare for this event, several groups of volunteers took care of different parts of the project (see Figure 1).

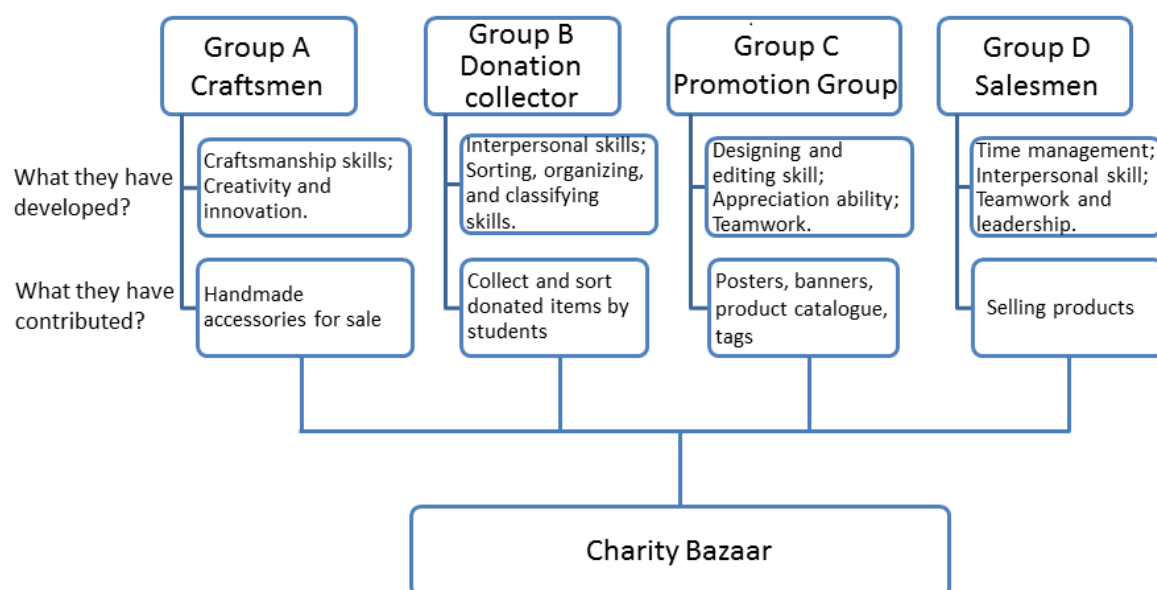


Figure 1 HFPJC charity bazaar organizational chart

Group A was composed of students who attended the handicrafts workshop. Those handmade purses, handbags, necklaces, bracelets and bookmarks, which were very popular at the charity bazaar, were designed and handmade by student volunteer craftsmen. After learning the basic production skills, students designed the accessories as selling items for fund raising. Many items were sold out on the first day. Volunteers organised additional workshops to make more handicrafts and offered on-site tailor-made services. This group produced products for sale which were the crucial source of income of the charity fund; meanwhile, they not only learned craftsmanship from the workshop, but also develop their creativity and management skills in the process.

Volunteers in Group B were responsible for collecting used items donated by college members. They needed to contact peer members, call for donations, gathered the donated items and sorted the items according to different types and properties. The volunteers were responsible for attaching each item with a card indicating the name of the donors as records. This experience was significant in developing students' communication and interpersonal skills.

Group C was the promotion group that was composed of several smaller teams in charge of different tasks including poster and banner designs, thank-you cards, modelling and photo-shooting, and catalogue design. The promotion process provided a

platform for creative ideas and innovations, from which students could develop their design skills and art appreciation abilities, as well as enjoy the achievements of teamwork.

Group D was the sale division. During the charity bazaar, two booths were set up on campus. Volunteers from different majors helped sell the items during the bazaar. It was the most challenging part in scheduling and division of labor in order to arrange enough student volunteers with different class schedule to fill in all the time slots. Time management was the key for success in this project. Students were also required to learn face-to-face retail merchandising techniques in order to increase sales. This experience allowed students to further enhance their time management skill, interpersonal skills, teamwork and leadership.

With the help of all these volunteers, the charity bazaar was a success. The fund raised through the bazaar provided financial support to the upcoming community service projects. More importantly, it has offered college members a learning process in which students contributed their skills and offered to help others to develop a sense of social responsibility, and to prepare them to become productive citizens.

6. SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAM IN HAINAN

In July 2014, a volunteer teaching and service activity at Si Yuan Junior and High Schools in Chengmai Hainan took place. This service-learning camp was planned in October 2013 with which all the accompanying college activities took place from November 2013 to June 2014 aimed at planning the camp. This experiential service-learning camp was an event consisting of a series of voluntary activities which aimed at encouraging college members to participate in community services outside Macau, to provide services that meet local communities' real needs, as well as to explore the possibility of long-term service-learning projects with a number of Si Yuan schools and other schools in China. This was part of an ongoing long-term project in collaboration with Hong Kong Yan Ai Foundation to promote voluntary teaching activities in one hundred schools in China. These schools are recently built located in sub-urban cities surrounded by either impoverished antiquated villages or virgin new developments. Most students in those schools are from poor families who need assistance, care and love.

This camp was a service-learning activity which expanded on simply community service by enabling students to explore and examine the needs of others before (and during) providing the service. Before arrived in Hainan, HFPJC students had communicated the local schools to understand the culture, socioeconomic status and the needs of the local students and community. Having realized that the school campuses are in lack of cover plants and most local Hainan students are lacking in environmental awareness, HFPJC decided to deliver environmental education in the service. Volunteers conducted a recycling plant pot making workshop to teach local Hainan students to re-use plastic bottles and initiated a tree planting activity to teach about the impacts of human behaviors on the sustainability of the ecosystems. With the funds raised at the charity bazaar, HFPJC donated and planted twenty young trees in the campuses. Knowing that many children from impoverished family tend to drop out of school at an early age, HFPJC volunteers also organised sharing sessions to share with the local students their learning experience. They also provided other teaching services including storytelling and Macau culture class to enrich the exposure of the local students in Hainan. To enhance the learning experience, the HFPJC volunteers joined the cultural exchange activities such as bamboo dance, calligraphy, painting and paper cutting workshops. Volunteers made use of the children storybook that fellow college members published as teaching materials. They also prepared Macao local snacks and postcards with cyanotype images of Macau that were produced by fellow college members as gifts

to the students in Hainan. This activity was a service-learning which integrated student service into the learning (i.e. teaching skills, communication skills, organization skills, etc.). During the camp, student participants conducted qualitative observations on what the local students needed and the shortcoming of the nature of a one-off voluntary teaching opportunity. In the post-experience sharing session, students reflected that the service-receivers (i.e. the local students in Hainan) in fact needed more support and resources on general education/knowledge (e.g. world view, exposure outside Hainan, information on tertiary education, knowledge that is outside normal academic curricula, etc.). In addition, with limited resources and time available to university students, our student participants realized the shortcoming of the nature of voluntary teaching activity that only allowed limited, one-off service to a limited number of service-receivers. Based on these observations, our student participants are currently developing an education video production project to maximize the impacts of their voluntary teaching service to a larger number of students in two hundred schools in China (this project aims at producing a series of short educational videos as general education materials for being broadcasted in those schools which receive the service). This learning/service outcome forms a significant reference point which allows teachers to evaluate students' development in global citizenship, as well as leadership and service.

The service-learning programme in Hainan provided a good opportunity for our college students to fulfill the competencies in leadership and service, global citizenship, cultural engagement, and interpersonal relations and teamwork. This was not only a process to provide the service to meet the real needs of the local community; it was also a journey of self-reflection and self-learning for all the participants. The schools and local Hainan students who received the service also benefited from the activities.

7. DEVELOPING AN “INTEGRATED” SERVICE-LEARNING MODEL

In order to enrich students' everyday college life, and promote college member's whole-person development, HFPJC have organized a variety of activities in the areas of culture, sports, community service, social events, academic improvement, and leadership. Most of these activities are initially separated, and the students can choose to participate in some or all of the activities on the basis of their own interests. The service-learning project in Hainan succeeded in integrating a series of initially unconnected extracurricular activities with individual educational goals into a larger service-learning programme through which the outcomes of individual activities have been maximized. The “integrated” model (see Figure 2) indicates the mechanism how different activities are integrated into a service-learning program.

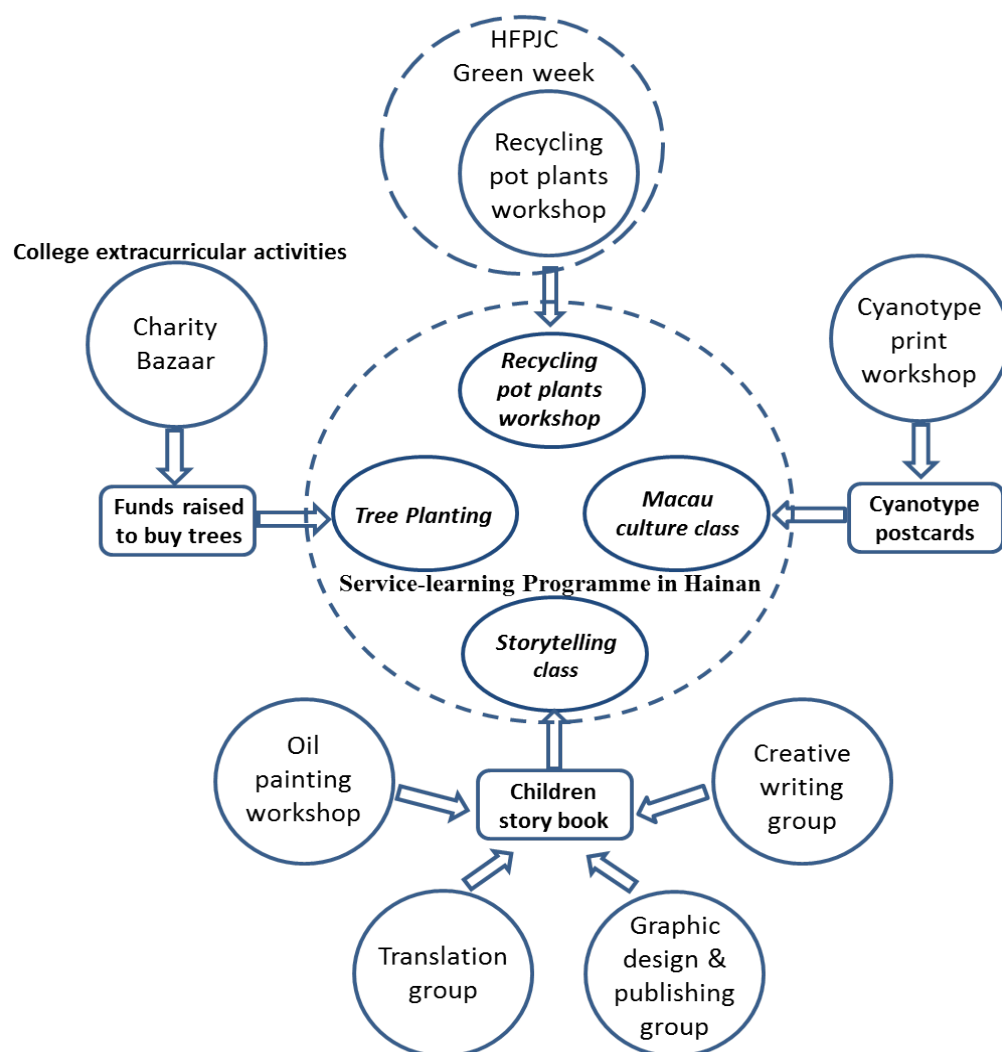


Figure 2 The integrated service-learning model in a residential college context

HFPJC service-learning program was the results of combined learning outcomes of a variety of college activities. The rationale behind this approach is to connect and extend the individual educational goals and learning outcomes of each college activity into integrated service-learning programs that connect students' everyday college life with the community through which students learn how they can impact the community. This approach explores the educational impacts of initially interdisciplinary, non-credit bearing, co-curricular activities to meet the changing needs in the new University of Macau RC system. This method is to create a "seamless" learning environment which not only acknowledges the significance of each college activity on student learning but also recognizes the importance of the very often neglected potential learning space 'in-between' activities. By engaging students with linking the learning outcomes of a variety of activities, the integrated learning approach encourages students to be proactive, creative and sagacious. HFPJC service-learning project was a collaboration between the college, community-based organization staff, students and the schools which were served. All partners benefited from the project and contributed to the planning of the program.

8. CONCLUSION

The HFPJC service-learning program was a result to meet the unique needs in the new RC education paradigm in University of Macau. While service-learning in many higher

education institutions is embedded in the curriculum, this paper shows that service learning as non-credit bearing college activity in a residential college offers great opportunities for student learning and development outside the classroom. The HFPJC service-learning program adopted an activity-network “integrated” learning approach to create a continuous “seamless” learning environment in RC to engage students who are from a variety of backgrounds and personal interests with both direct and indirect service learning. When service-learning, particularly in residential college education, is intended for integrating meaningful community service to enrich the learning experience, service-learning program in residential college should connect reciprocally with the learning outcomes of different college activities instead of being a separate program on its own with a view to developing sustainable service-learning programs. This ‘integrated’ learning model endeavors to achieve a balance between service and whole-person development which enhances with each other. It is proposed that the service-learning program in HFPJC will be developed from direct/indirect service-learning into research-based and advocacy service-learning activities.

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