

4B Should student led service learning be an integral part of the University?

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Service learning is a popular concept in North America; 'a credit-bearing educational experience in which a student participates in an organised service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.' (Bringle, 1996) At some universities, traditional service learning is supplemented by allowing students to design both the theory and the practical sides of their course.

Encouraging students to lead service learning is an approach that is popular at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, with students gaining hands on skills, both from the community work and the input in course creation. These skills are explicitly tangible and they allow students to clearly demonstrate and articulate graduate attributes.

This presentation will explore the possibility of student led service learning at a university such as Glasgow. What are the advantages of student led service learning? What are the potential pitfalls? Is putting course design in such a setting risking the academic rigour expected? Could there be possibilities for interdisciplinary work in such a setting?

It will also examine more fundamental questions about service learning, such as, is it within the remit of a HEI to be encouraging community development?

References

Bringle & Hatcher, Implementing Service Learning in Higher Education, The Journal of Higher Education, Vol 67. No. 2, pp.221-239