

IMPACT OF SERVICE-LEARNING IMMERSION ACTIVITIES ON THE PERSPECTIVE TRANSFORMATION OF SHS STUDENTS: AN INSIDERS LENS

Frances Therese D. San Juan¹, Juan Kristopier D. Angeles²

^{1,2}Bataan Peninsula State University, Philippines

Email : jukristopier@gmail.com¹, francestherese.sanjuan@deped.gov.ph²

ABSTRACT

The implementation of the K-12 Curriculum in 2016 is the most significant transformation in the Philippine educational system in the postcolonial era. Along with this change of curriculum is the supplemental two years (Grade 11 and Grade 12) to the former 11-year basic education system in the country. One of the academic strands in the K-12 curriculum is the Humanities and Social Sciences which includes subjects that require service-learning immersion activities that promote transformative learning. In recent years, transformative learning has been utilized by researchers in explaining adult learning. Transformative learning has been regarded as a "shift" in the traditional understanding of thoughts, feelings, and actions, which principles are founded by the early studies of Mezirow (1978, 1979). Moreover, guided by contemporary paradigms in explaining re-entry learning among women, the transformative learning model has derived the term perspective transformation, a learning process that can lead people to experience significant changes in the ways they view their identity, behavior, and culture. In the service-learning context, the transformative learning model also explains how reflection and meaningful dialogues can facilitate more socially responsible community actions among students. However, service-learning educators have recently raised concerns about the need for more empirically driven research studies to continuously substantiate both the theory and the value of applying service-learning to K-12 and higher education. Furthermore, studies show that the adolescent population has been less commonly studied for transformative learning. Thus, using a qualitative lens, the researchers took deeper insights into the impact of service-learning immersion as culminating activities for a senior high school subject (Community Engagement, Solidarity, and Citizenship) on the perspective transformation of students. Findings revealed that their service-learning immersion experiences helped them achieve perspective transformation, even after the long hiatus brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Transformative Learning, Service-learning, Immersion, Perspective Transformation

INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the K-12 Curriculum in 2016 is the most significant transformation in the Philippine educational system in the postcolonial era. Along with this change of curriculum is the supplemental two years (Grade 11 and Grade 11) to the former 11-year basic education system in the country. In the K-12 Program, the supplemental years are intended to enable students to master educational concepts and skills to become lifelong learners as well as to prepare the graduates to have middle-level skills (Guiamalon & Hariraya, 2021). The supplemental two years are categorized as senior high school, which is composed of diversified tracks and strands. Accordingly, the K-12 curriculum is crafted considering a transformative learning approach as it aims to prepare learners for 21st-century skills like collaboration, communication, and creativity. One of the academic strands in the K-12 curriculum is the Humanities and Social Sciences which tackle content subjects that require service-learning immersion activities that promote transformative learning. Specifically, Community Engagement, Solidarity, and Citizenship, one of the specialized subjects of humanities and social sciences requires students to immerse themselves to the community.

In recent years, transformative learning has been utilized by researchers in explaining adult learning. Transformative learning has been regarded as a "shift" in the traditional understanding of thoughts, feelings, and actions, which principles are founded by the early studies of Mezirow (1978, 1979). Moreover,

guided by contemporary paradigms in explaining re-entry learning among women, the transformative learning model has derived the term perspective transformation, a learning process that can lead people to experience significant changes in the ways they view their identity, behavior, and culture. In the service-learning context, the transformative learning model also explains how reflection and meaningful dialogues can facilitate more socially responsible community actions among students. However, service-learning educators have recently raised concerns about the need for more empirically driven research studies to continuously substantiate both the theory and the value of applying service-learning to K-12 and higher education. Furthermore, studies show that the adolescent population has been less commonly studied for transformative learning.

With the aim to address the challenging changes in society, Service-Learning (SL) has become a known pedagogical approach that integrates academic learning and community service. Despite the academic efforts, evidence-based conclusions revealed that the trend of utilizing SL post problems such as the lack of clarity in the implementation to educational institutions (Cuenca-Soto et al., 2023).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study aims to determine the impact of service-learning immersion activities on the perspective transformation of SHS Students of Morong National High School - Senior High School. The researchers of the current study utilized a qualitative lens, the researchers took deeper insights into the impact of service-learning immersion as culminating activities for a senior high school subject (Community Engagement, Solidarity, and

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Citizenship) on the perspective transformation of students. The researchers utilize purposive sampling to determine the participants. Specifically, the following criteria was established: (1) current or past student under the Humanities and Social Sciences Strand (2) was able to attend the Community Engagement, Solidarity and Citizenship Community Immersion Activity. The researchers conducted a qualitative data gathering using Google Form. Open-ended guide questions were sent to the participants via Facebook Messenger and Email. Upon retrieval of transcripts, the researcher conducted thematic analysis for data analysis.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Findings revealed that their service-learning immersion experiences helped them achieve perspective transformation, even after the long hiatus brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the following nine (9) themes were generated in this study:

- The Community Engagement Immersion Activity developed my nationhood.
- The Community Engagement Immersion Activity provides a deeper understanding of self and others' identity.
- The Community Engagement Immersion Activity helps us learn from the community.
- The Community Engagement Immersion Activity helps me develop compassion.
- The Community Engagement Immersion Activity provides self-awareness.

- The Community Engagement Immersion Activity helps in valuing life.
- The Community Engagement Immersion Activity helps appreciate diversity and cultural complexities.
- The community engagement Immersion Activity creates a partnership with the community.
- The Community Engagement Immersion Activity helps in having a grasp of genuine reality in the community

DISCUSSIONS

The first theme, “The Community Engagement Immersion Activity developed my nationhood” pertains to the positive effect of the immersion activity in developing the Filipino identity and sense of nationalism among the students. For instance, one participant purported, “Upon experiencing this type of activity at the age of 18, it boosted my willingness to improve this country, by helping those who are in need, just like what we are taught in our school”.

The second theme, “The Community Engagement Immersion Activity provides a deeper understanding of self and others' identity” pertains to the recognition of other people's identity as well as their own identity. One participant claimed, “The Community Engagement Immersion Activity is a transformative experience that gave me an opportunity to reflect on my own identity more deeply as I interact with others. It led me to understand the context of a diverse and interconnected world, as well as my awareness of my values and beliefs and how they align with and differ from those that I've encountered.”

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Another participant noted, “when we engage with the community in Sitio Ibayo, I have the opportunity to interact with people who are unfamiliar to me and have different backgrounds. It's not easy; it can be challenging. However, once you learn to reevaluate their perspectives, it may help you understand and gain a deeper awareness of your own identity.”

The third theme, “The Community Engagement Immersion Activity helps us learn from the community” pertains to the learning generated by the participants through their social engagement in the community. One participant claimed, “The community immersion program in which we participated taught me the value of learning not only from professors, but also from fellow classmates, community partners, and people of any age or educational background”.

The fourth theme, “The Community Engagement Immersion Activity helps me develop compassion”. One of the participants elaborated, “Engaging to activities that include dissecting the problems and positions that our fellow countrymen experience face, pushed me to be more kind to those people that I have no idea on what they are facing and what options they have chosen to reach that point in their life. In short, I notice that I became more compassionate about other people and view myself as lucky and at the same time incompetent. Lucky, because I didn't experience that kind of hardship they are facing and incompetent because the only help I can offer them is participating an activity to make those who are in position to help these troubled families.”

The fifth theme, “The Community

Engagement Immersion Activity provides self- awareness” means that the immersion activity has provided them the sense of awareness of their selves as students within a complex community. One participant noted, “Participating in a community engagement immersion activity has led me to some behavioral changes that foster self- awareness, cultural sensitivity, empathy, adaptability, and a deeper understanding of my values and their impact on others. These changes have contributed to various aspects of my life that have let me be more mindful as I observe my own actions, reactions, and behaviors in new and unfamiliar situations. It also improved my communication as I interact with diverse groups, resulting in more effective and respectful interactions with others.” Another student elaborated. “Engaging in a community also means immersing oneself in a new environment with different people. It can lead to the development of your sense of social awareness. For example, when I participated in community engagement activities in Sitio Ibayo, I met many families. Since it was my first time seeing them, I became more self-aware of how my behavior and actions would affect them, as I believe it would shape their perception of me as a person.”

The sixth theme, “The Community Engagement Immersion Activity helps in valuing life” reveals the essential realization among the participants regarding how they value their life.

For instance, a participant claimed, “My experience during the community immersion has taught me a lot about myself and how I perceive my conduct. I learned to be self-sufficient and to accept the responsibility that was placed upon me. I learnt to socialize with people of all socioeconomic

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backgrounds. Most importantly, I learnt to value life and be grateful for what I have now. The community immersion has opened my eyes to many things and realities, and I will treasure this experience since it has taught me to be a better person”.

The seventh theme, “The Community Engagement Immersion Activity helps appreciate diversity and cultural complexities” is an essential theme regarding the appreciation of various local microcultures they have encountered in the immersion program. One participant noted, “Interacting within a community that has a different culture can be challenging, similar to our experiences in the Sitio Ibayo community. However, it can also help you explore and understand other cultures. When you become more open to different cultures and learn to appreciate their ways of living more deeply, people will not find it difficult to interact with you.”

The eighth theme, “The community engagement Immersion Activity creates a partnership with the community” shows the partnership established in the community immersion activity. For instance, one participant cited, “It is an excellent opportunity for us to network and create partnerships. It also allows us to apply freshly gained skills and information in real-life situations in our communities.”

The ninth and final theme, “The Community Engagement Immersion Activity helps in having a grasp of genuine reality in the community” pertains to the eye-opening experience among the participants with the realities they previously did not realize before the immersion activity. One of the participants cited, “Community immersion opens my eyes to many things and reality and also I will cherish this experience for it teaches me to become a better person.”

CONCLUSION

The researchers of the current study concluded that the learners achieved perspective transformation. Moreover, the Community Engagement Immersion Activity has been an avenue for transformative learning, specifically, self-reflections about how diverse and complex cultures are. The participants have an overall positive perception regarding the impact of the self-learning immersion activities on how they achieve changes in the ways they view their identity, behavior, and culture.

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