



Localizing SDGs in Purposive Communication through Service Learning in DLSU

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Abstract: The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect the need to solve complex problems through collaboration and localization. Localizing these goals ensures that community and national problems are addressed in a synergistic way by and for locals. This paper describes the localization process that engages students enrolled in Purposive Communication, the university Social Action (COSCA), and partner communities through Service-Learning. It explains the Service-Learning framework of the university and its role in developing the communication skills of students, their awareness of SDGs, and their social engagement. The remainder of the paper focuses on the reflection of students about the impact of service learning on their understanding of the SDGs and application of the lessons learned in the course.

Key Words: Purposive Communication; Service-Learning; SDGs; localizing SDGs; sustainable development

1. INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect the need to solve complex problems through collaboration and localization. Localizing these goals ensures that community and national problems are addressed in a synergistic way by and for locals. One way of localizing problems such as poverty and hunger, inequality, environmental degradation, disasters, and lack of sustainability is through Service-Learning in schools.

Service-Learning is a "form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection as students work with others through a process of applying what they are learning to community problems, and at the same time, reflecting upon their experience as they seek to

achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding for themselves" (Eyler and Giles, 1999).

Research on SL (service learning) shows its impact on students' awareness and commitment to civic responsibility (Hebert and Hauf, 2015; Vandzinskaitė, Mažeikienė, and Ruškus, 2010). In addition, SL also provides opportunities for real-world application and collaboration (Bowen, 2010; Flinn, Kloos, Teaford, Clark, and Szucs, 2009). Consequently, SL improves students' communication skills (Prentice, 2009; Hamstra, 2011). However, what seems to be missing is a case study localizing SDGs through SL in Purposive Communication. This paper attempts to fill this gap by reporting the process of embedding SL in a new English course in De La Salle University and by sharing student reflections on the



impact of SL in their learning journey. This paper will be of relevance to teachers who are looking for ways to localize the SDGs in their classroom and who are serious about developing their students' communication skills, commitment to SDGs, and empathy.

2. PURPOSEFUL COMMUNICATION

This three-unit course is a required General Education course for all freshman university students. All classes meet two times a week for 13 weeks with additional out-of-class activities to meet the objectives. In DLSU, the course description states:

This course, **PURPOSEFUL COMMUNICATION**, hones the ability of students to ethically, effectively, and professionally communicate, through the strategic use of various communicative forms, with different multicultural audiences and for different purposes in various modes. This course specifically develops the students' ability to use their communication skills and to use technology for civic participation in support of UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The course is anchored on interdisciplinary approach and in outcomes-based education (OBE). In addition, the process-approach and the genre-based approach will be used to teach the course (unpublished syllabus).

The course has five learning outcomes all connected to an SDG that each team of three-four members picked at the beginning of the term:

1. Students write a problem-solution-evaluation extended essay that critically analyzes an SDG and localizes it by analyzing a specific problem, researching best practices and practical solutions from various disciplines, and proposing a solution based on library research.
2. Students present their PSE paper during the panel discussion.
3. Next, students call "people to action in support of an SDG or an NGO partner of COSCA through an advocacy letter."
4. The students then "raise awareness of a specific target audience on SDG or on an

NGO partner of COSCA by planning and creating an advocacy communication campaign (Options: infographic, poster, vlog, social media posts)."

5. Finally, they reflect on their progress as a purposive communicator through a portfolio.

3. SERVICE-LEARNING IN DLSU

In DLSU, the Center for Social Action and Concern (COSCA) supports faculty members who wish to adopt SL in their course. COSCA envisions to be "in the forefront of social formation and engagement, dedicated to the integral development of Lasallians and Partner Communities through responsible citizenship and empowerment of marginalized sectors towards a just and humane society" (COSCA, 2015).

COSCA (2015) created a Faculty Guide for SL with a useful checklist. This is shown below:

1. **Curricular-based**
 - Academic-based experiential learning in all levels
 - Credit-bearing/part of course assessment
 - Linked to academic goals/outcomes
 - Structured time and output-based
 - Critical reflection for better understanding of the course content
2. **Consistent with DLSU Vision-Mission**
 - Bridging faith and scholarship in the service of society, especially the poor
 - Service to the marginalized sector of the Philippine society
 - Participate in addressing community needs and demands
3. **Applies the Lasallian Reflection Framework (LRF)**
 - The Lasallian Reflection Framework (LRF) is a step by step process of reflection that ensures the integration of Lasallian values



- and principles in an individual, group or institution's daily life¹
4. **Promotes university-wide participation**
 - Applicable to at least one course in each academic programs/majors/disciplines; not confined to social development courses
 - Active faculty involvement and supervision
 - Institutionalized in the university (structure, systems, procedures, policies, etc.)
 5. **Espouses the Expected Lasallian Guiding Attributes (ELGAs)**
 - The Expected Lasallian Graduate Attributes (ELGAs) focus on the knowledge, skills and attributes that graduates should acquire and demonstrate in their course of studies and internships as evidence of accomplishing the school's vision-mission. These ELGAs also reflect the graduate's capacity for lifelong learning and transfer of knowledge in the workplace. ELGAs refer to **Critical and Creative Thinker, Effective Communicator, Reflective Lifelong Learner, Service-Driver Citizen** (p. 5)

This Faculty Guide also includes the benefits of SL, the differences among other types of service such as volunteerism and community service. In addition, it provides a guide on the integration of SL in the curriculum.

4. SL IN PURPOSIVE COMMUNICATION

Service-Learning was adopted by the Purposive Communication committee for several reasons. First, it helps students to localize SDGs. For

example, some students, who chose SDG1: No Poverty, analyzed the needs of their partner organization helping the elderly. Second, students are able to apply what they are learning about communication to meet audience needs. Third, the learners will be able to help a community and vice versa. In this way, they also develop the Lasallian values. Lastly, SL gives purpose to everything that they do in the course. This meaning-making process differentiates Purposive Communication: Communication with a Mission from other courses that confine learning inside the classroom.

Service-Learning in Purposive Communication starts in week 1 with an orientation on SDGs. Students form groups of three-four members, and then they draw lots to pick one SDG to localize. Next, COSCA organizes Advocacy Fora where partner organizations share how they localize the SDGs and how students can support them in their advocacy campaigns. Each session is for three hours, divided into two parts: a plenary session where partner organizations share and talk about who they are, what their programs are, why they are doing these, for whom they are doing these, its contribution in attaining SDG & how they localize it, and how can students help. The second part is for the breakout session where students are given the freedom to choose a partner organization whom they are willing to work with. After enlisting, students will propose their advocacy campaign project using the specially-designed advocacy plan template made by the researcher. After planning, each group will present their proposal to the partner organization. Before the Forum ends, the partner organization must sign the plan to show their approval and duly noted by the Faculty In Charge and Service Learning Coordinator.

The students are given a few weeks to prepare their advocacy campaign materials. Some students create infographics, posters, slideshows, and short video clips that partner organizations can upload to their social media channels and to their website.

In addition, the students also help their



partner organizations write advocacy letters such as letters for sponsors (in behalf of the organization), letters to possible volunteers, and letters for partners. These letters and the advocacy campaign materials are given to the partner organizations through COSCA.

Another important component of SL in Purposive Communication is the reflection. The researchers created a reflection sheet with prompts aligned with the Lasallian Reflection Framework composed of three stages: see-experience, analysis reflection, and commitment action. Below is the actual prompt:

GPECOMM- SERVICE-LEARNING REFLECTION PROMPTS

I. SEE-EXPERIENCE (*Masid-Danas*)

- What was your initial impression or expectation before proceeding to the Advocacy Forum?
- What issues did you observe in the Advocacy Forum/ presentations of the center/organization/community during the Advocacy Forum?
- How do you feel about the situation of your selected center/organization/community as shared during the Advocacy Forum?

II. ANALYSIS-REFLECTION (*Suri-Nilay*)

a) **Academic Enhancement**

- What specific elements/principles of GPECOMM are related to the advocacy plan I prepared?
- How was I able to apply my skill, perspective, or concept related to GPECOMM?

- How does this experience reinforce my prior understanding of GPECOMM?

b) **Personal Growth**

- How did this experience make me feel (positively and/or negatively)?
- In what ways did I experience difficulties (e.g. interacting with others, accomplishing tasks) and what personal characteristics contributed to the difficulties (e.g. skills, abilities, perspectives, attitudes, tendencies, knowledge)? In what ways did I succeed or do well in this situation (e.g. interacting with others, accomplishing tasks, handling difficulties) and what personal characteristics helped me to be successful (e.g. skills, abilities, perspectives, attitudes, tendencies, knowledge)?
- How did this situation challenge or reinforce my values, beliefs, convictions (e.g. my sense of right and wrong, my priorities, my judgments)?

c) **Lasallian Values (Faith, Service, Communion in Mission)**

- What specific elements of the Lasallian values relate to this experience?
- How was I able to apply a value, perspective, or concept related to the Lasallian values?
- Does this experience challenge or reinforce my prior understanding of these values?

III. COMMITMENT-ACTION (*Taya-Kilos*)

a) **Academic Enhancement**

- How is my service-learning activity (Advocacy Plan/ Project/Activity) with the partner organization related to



- GEPCOMM course I am taking?
- Was I able to apply the theories I learned in GEPCOMM to the Advocacy Plan/ Project/Activity I did for the partner organization? How?
 - Did the service-learning project (Advocacy Plan/ Project/Activity) address community needs? Why? How?
- b) Personal Growth**
- What did I learn most from this experience (Advocacy Forum/service-learning)?
 - After this experience what did I learn about myself?
 - What are the additional skills I got from my service-learning activity?
- c) Lasallian Values**
- Is the project I did with the community sustainable? Can this be replicated by the community on their own?
 - What did I learn about the Lasallian values? How was I able to apply them?

terms. First, teachers were encouraged to provide an orientation about the Advocacy Forum before the actual event. Second, groups were formed in the classrooms and were given the advocacy planner in the syllabus. Third, the Forum was scheduled during class hours, and each session gave three partner organizations 15 minutes each to present their advocacy and their needs with regard to campaign materials. Classes were also given the list of partner organizations before the Advocacy Forum. In this way, choosing which organization to support became easier. Fourth, faculty members were given both a printed and an online list of guidelines about advocacy campaign materials and how students will submit them.

Fifth, to facilitate the monitoring of project implementation, the faculty members were given a summary of the advocacy plans of their students with corresponding names of their group leader and the name of the organization they will work on.

Sixth, to ensure appropriate and proper accomplishment of advocacy plan template, the researcher provided a sample complete advocacy plan as reference for students. Finally, the researchers created a Google Folder where faculty could upload their students' output for proper tracking and submission.

5. LESSONS LEARNED

During the first time SL was implemented, there were several problems that we faced. First, the students were not given enough orientation about the Advocacy Fora. Second, some groups of students did not attend together, so this caused problems when they prepared the advocacy plans and when they created the advocacy campaign materials in the classroom. Third, some students proposed advocacy plans that were not allowed such as fund-raising events and giving monetary or material donations. Fourth, some students did not attend the Forum because it was held on a Friday when there were no classes.

These were addressed in the succeeding

6. SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

As a summary, this paper provided connections among its important components such as the Purposive Communication; Service-Learning; SDGs; localizing SDGs; and students' learning/ reflection towards attaining sustainable development. The paper showed that, through Service-Learning, students' learning and skills honed through the Purposive Communication class could have an impact in helping organizations pushing the realization of SDGs, Through the localized programs initiated by these organizations, the students were able to apply the learning and skills in helping the organizations advocate their programs at a wider reach using different platforms and advocacy materials. More



than the creativeness provided by the students in the advocacy paraphernalia, is the content placed in each of these advocacy materials. The real intentions are properly stated to persuade and attract support from target audience. In that sense, the localized SDG programs of the organizations were delivered in a more organized and technology-ready advocacy communication campaign. Having realized the impact to the selected organizations, students were appreciative of the opportunity to be of help in promoting the organizations' advocacies. They were also appreciative of the skills they gained from their Purposive Communication class, indeed a communication with a mission.

To conclude, this paper described the localization of SDGs in Purposive Communication through Service-Learning for teachers who want to help their students develop communication skills while helping NGOs in their advocacy campaigns. This is also for teachers who want to improve their students' reflective practice. In addition, the description of the SL in this paper may help educators who wish to develop their students' 21st century skills of solving problems, collaboration, effective communication, and creative thinking. Finally, as we confront disasters and complex problems such as COVID19, through SL we can work together to achieve the SDGs for the sustainable development of ourselves and the planet.

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