DOCUMENTING TACIT KNOWLEDGE FOR SERVICE LEARNING PROJECTS

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ABSTRACT

The study addresses the gaps in the service learning process flow to enable the systematic documentation of tacit knowledge during the service learning programme by the students, community members, instructors and stakeholders. Narrative reports, findings, and reflective data from the students and community members were collected to formulate the workflow, templates guidelines and transferable reporting methods for collecting and consolidating information across all stakeholders as well as to design a pilot system for acquisition and exchange of community certified knowledge. Collected data has been stored into the designed platform and more information is currently being uploaded into the system. From the work that has been completed so far, it is observed that a systematic method of storing tacit knowledge can be devised and this transfer of knowledge can be captured in order to ensure the continuity of projects beyond the service learning programme.

INTRODUCTION

Learners today have evolved along with times, as they are now required to not only have to academic knowledge of their chosen fields but also have to be fully equipped with the necessary skill sets as 21st century learners. Industries today expect students looking to join the workforce to be critical thinkers, creative, excellent at collaboration and communication, fluent in digital literacy as well as capable of social and cross cultural interaction.

Well aware of the changing times, institutions of higher learning worldwide are now turning to different platforms and methods to groom students into becoming valuable members of the industry and leaders of the future. Mann & Casebeer (2016) also noted that these institutions are also taking on the task of providing students with holistic learning experiences as well as opportunities to interact with diverse populations. An example of such a pedagogy which allows for this is service learning, being identified as an ideal mixture of both academic and co-curricular participation of students which promote personal growth and active citizenship in addition to skill building and academic learning (Bowen, 2011).

Service learning has long been recognised as one the high-impact educational practices which have shown positive impacts on the learning experiences of students. The American Association of Community Colleges has defined service learning as "combining community service with academic instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking and personal and civic responsibility" (Prentice & Robinson, 2010). Some of the identified significant characteristics of service learning is that it allows for "different ways of understanding, the value of human experience as a source of learning, the requirement for reflective thinking to transform experience into learning, and an ethical foundation that stresses citizenship" (Harris, 2004).

Service learning has also been accredited to the development of necessary skills in students, as they work with various communities to address issues which are of importance to them. Sandy & Franco (2014) states that traditional service learning pedagogy "privileges the local, embodied experience, particularly the direct participation of students in off-campus communities". Service learning prepares students to apply what they learn in their academic settings into the real world, allowing them to gain a deeper understanding on how to work on