

Enhancing Service Learning through Problem-based Learning

When service learning projects are problematised through PBL, they promote engagement and empowerment of students. As the projects are posed as problems, students need to consider the implications, needs, constraints and the possible approaches they could take. Deliberately involving them in these decision-making processes would allow them to formulate their objectives of the project and give them ownership over the services they are rendering. This empowerment of the students helps to enrich student's learning process so that they can better understand the significance of their actions. The engagement with the service through PBL allows the participants to bring with them the self-directedness and personal responsibility for learning. Furthermore, the construction of learning issues as the participants engage with the learning would also ensure that what is learnt resonates better with them. The additional learning process that PBL brings into service learning means that participants would also be able to construct their learning through the engagement with the problems.

Data will be collected through a mix of participant observation and ethnographic surveys of teams from Singapore working on particular service projects in Thailand. In particular, issues like responsibility for learning and quality of reflection would be looked at through the observations to assess how well the participants learn through the service. One outcome of the project is the use of PBL in introducing service-learning projects to students and as an approach in engaging and empowering the participants involved in service learning so as to enrich their learning process in service learning projects.