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INSTITUTIONALIZING SERVICE LEARNING IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The institutionalization of service learning in universities is a pressing concern in higher education. This qualitative research aims to explore strategies associated with institutionalizing service learning in the institutions of higher education. The paper examines the eight case studies from universities globally, including Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), Stanford University, the University of Cape Town, and the University of California, Berkeley, highlighting their successful adoption of service learning. The research seeks to address the limited integration of service learning in the universities by offering a theoretical framework of service-learning institutionalization. The theoretical framework consists of three components; governance, capacity and incentives (GCI) and further includes nine sub components. This paper aims to contribute to the development of evidence-based policies and practices, fostering holistic student development and civic engagement in higher education.

Keywords: Service Learning, Universities, Institutions of Higher Education, Community Engagement, Civic Engagement, System Integration, Institutionalization of Service Learning.

1. Introduction

Service learning has gained prominence as an effective pedagogical approach that combines academic learning with community service. By engaging students in practical experiences and fostering their civic responsibility, service learning contributes to their holistic development. While service learning has been widely adopted in higher education institutions around the world, its institutionalization in the universities of Pakistan is relatively limited. This research proposal aims to explore the higher education context in Pakistan and investigate strategies for institutionalizing service learning in these institutions. Through qualitative research methods, this study will shed light on the challenges, opportunities, and potential strategies for integrating service learning into the fabric of Pakistani universities. The higher education landscape in Pakistan has witnessed significant growth and transformation over the years (Said, H., Ahmad, I., & Nor, F. M., 2019)). With an increasing emphasis on quality education, universities in Pakistan are striving to provide a comprehensive educational experience to their students. However, the traditional lecture-based model of education often falls short in preparing students for the complexities of the real world (Ahmad, I., Khan, I., & Saeed, N., 2021). This has led to a growing interest in innovative pedagogical approaches, such as service learning, which bridge the gap between theory and practice (Saeed, M., & Ahmed, I., 2021)

Despite the potential benefits of service learning, its institutionalization in the universities remains limited. The current higher education context predominantly focuses on traditional lecture-based instruction, which often fails to prepare students for real-world challenges. The lack of awareness, understanding, and support for service learning among faculty and

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administrators, coupled with limited resources and assessment mechanisms, poses significant barriers to its integration. As a result, students are deprived of the opportunities for holistic development, civic engagement, and practical application of knowledge that service learning offers. Therefore, there is a pressing need to explore the higher education context and identify strategies for effectively institutionalizing service learning in the universities.

The paper adopts multiple case-method research to investigate institutionalization of service learning in various contexts and universities across the world. The case study method is increasingly being adopted in higher education research to capture the wealth of insights of phenomenon and reality in its factual happening. The multiple case method enables augmentation of the research process and builds the capacity of researchers to filter fact from false perceived through the human experiences. The paper adopted the four-stage process of case study research as 1) institutions having service-learning adoption were designed, 2) research was conducted on them, 3) the cases were analyzed and evidence were collected and 4) conclusions and recommendations were developed. (Widdowson, M., 2011; Yin, R. K., 2009). The paper aims to draw learning from eight case studies on how to contextualize services learning in universities.

The rationale for this research lies in the potential transformative impact of service learning on higher education. By integrating community service with academic instruction, service-learning fosters active learning, critical thinking, and social responsibility among students. It also enhances the university-community relationship and addresses pressing societal issues. However, the dearth of research focusing on the institutionalization of service learning within higher education context calls for an in-depth investigation. By understanding the challenges, opportunities, and strategies associated with integrating service learning, this research can contribute to the development of evidence-based policies and practices that promote student engagement, community development, and the overall quality of education in Pakistan.

Objectives

This research aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To explore how service learning can be institutionalized
- To explore the current higher education context regarding the integration of service learning in universities.
- To explore effective strategies for institutionalizing service learning in Pakistani universities.
- To develop tailored recommendations for integrating service learning within the specific context of Pakistani universities.

Research Questions



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Based on the literature review and the objectives of the study, the following research questions will guide this research:

- 1. How various universities have contextualized service learning?
- 2. How learning from successful adopters of service learning can help other universities?
- 3. What strategies can be employed to effectively institutionalize service learning in universities?
- 4. How can the identified strategies be tailored to the specific context of Pakistani universities?

2. Literature Review

Service learning is a pedagogical approach that integrates community service with academic instruction (Eyler, J., & Giles, D., 2014). It emphasizes the reciprocal nature of learning, where students actively participate in service activities that address community needs while reflecting on their experiences to enhance their academic learning (Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A., 1996). Several principles guide the implementation of service learning, including partnership and collaboration, reflection, experiential learning, and community engagement (Eyler, J., & Giles, D., 2014; Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A., 1996). Service learning offers numerous benefits to students, communities, and higher education institutions. For students, it enhances their critical thinking skills, promotes civic engagement, and develops their understanding of social issues (Eyler, J., & Giles, D., 2014). Communities benefit from the tangible outcomes of service projects, while higher education institutions experience improved community relations, enhanced student satisfaction, and strengthened institutional reputation (Kiely, R., 2011; Eyler, J., & Giles, D., 2014).

Despite the potential benefits, several challenges hinder the institutionalization of service learning in Pakistani universities. These challenges include the lack of awareness and understanding of service learning among faculty and administrators, limited institutional support and resources, assessment and evaluation difficulties, and cultural and societal factors that prioritize theoretical knowledge over practical experiences (Habib, Z., 2021; Ahmad, I., Khan, I., & Saeed, N., 2021). To overcome these challenges, various strategies can be employed to facilitate the institutionalization of service learning in Pakistani universities. These strategies include faculty development programs and training workshops, creating incentives and recognition for faculty engagement in service learning (Ahmad, I., Khan, I., & Saeed, N., 2021), establishing partnerships with community organizations integrating service learning into the curriculum (Ali, Y. F., & Hidayah, Y., 2021) and developing effective assessment and evaluation mechanisms (Ahmad, Khan & Saeed, 2021).

The higher education landscape in Pakistan has witnessed significant growth and transformation over the years (Ahmad, I., 2019). With an increasing emphasis on quality education, universities in Pakistan are striving to provide a comprehensive educational experience to their students (Habib, Z., 2021). However, the traditional lecture-based model of education often falls short in preparing students for the complexities of the real world (Ahmad, I., Khan, I., & Saeed, N.,



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2021). This has led to a growing interest in innovative pedagogical approaches, such as service learning, which bridge the gap between theory and practice (Saeed, M., & Ahmed, I., 2021).

3. Research Methodology

This research has employed a qualitative research design with multiple case method strategy to explore the institutionalization of service learning in universities. Qualitative methods are well-suited to capture in-depth insights, experiences, and perspectives of key stakeholders involved in service-learning implementation (Merriam, 2009). By collecting data about successful adopters of service learning, this study aims to gather rich data that can illuminate the higher education context and provide practical strategies for institutionalization of service learning.

Thematic analysis is employed to analyze the qualitative data collected through review of case studies. This approach involves the systematic identification of patterns, themes, and categories within the secondary data of case studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis will involve a process of coding, categorization, and interpretation of the data to identify key themes related to the higher education context and strategies for institutionalizing service learning. The paper adopted the four-stage process of case study research as 1) institutions having service-learning adoption were designed, 2) research was conducted on them, 3) the cases were analyzed and evidence were collected and 4) conclusions and recommendations were developed. (Widdowson, 2011; Yin, 2009). The paper aims to draw learning from eight case studies on how to contextualize services learning in universities. Total ten case studies were selected and two cases were dropped due to insufficient information.

4. The Analysis of Case Studies

The practice of service learning has been acknowledged as an efficient pedagogical approach combining the teaching of studies with community service. Within their academic framework, a number of universities around the world have been successful at adopting and implementing service learning. Experience gained from these universities may provide valuable information and lessons on how to implement service learning in other universities.

Case Study 01: Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)

For its comprehensive approach to service learning, IUPUI has received recognition. To provide guidance and support for service-learning initiatives, the institution has set up a Service-Learning Advisory Council made up of faculty, staff and community partners (Weiss, H. A., 2018). In order to support partnerships with community organizations, offer faculty development opportunities and facilitate the inclusion of these skills in their curricula, IPUI has set up a special Service-Learning office (Tedesco, L. P., & Salazar, K. A., 2006). These efforts have contributed to the successful institutionalization of service learning at IUPUI.

Case Study 02: Stanford University



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In particular, Service Learning was integrated into various courses and programs of study at Stanford University. Stanford's Haas center for Public Service plays a crucial role in the university's coordination and support of service education initiatives (Mitchell, T., et., al., 2011). Faculty and students working on service-learning projects may avail themselves of resources, training or funding opportunities at the Centre. In addition, Stanford has developed academic programs integrating service learning, such as the Cardinal Courses, which allow students to earn academic credit while participating in community service projects (Pollack, S. S. (1997). In Stanford University, the initiatives have helped create a culture of service learning.

Case Study 03: University of Cape Town, South Africa

South Africa's Cape Town University of Technology has taken the service-learning approach to addressing social and developmental challenges in its local community. In order to achieve a meaningful and sustainable service-learning experience, the University of Connecticut has established an effective partnership with community organizations, government agencies as well as NGOs. (McMillan, J., 2009). In order to facilitate integration of the service learning into the curricula. The institution has also developed detailed guidelines and criteria for design and evaluation of courses in this area (Mzizana, L., 2023). UCT's experience shows the importance of a strong community partnership, as well as explicit frameworks to successfully implement Service Learning.

Case Study 04: University of California, Berkeley

Through its Public Service Center, the University of California, Berkeley has demonstrated a long history of commitment to service learning. The Centre supports initiatives to improve service learning, such as training for teachers, student involvement and partnerships with the community (Furco, A., 2016). Berkeley's approach is based on integrating the training of services across different academic disciplines, and fostering interdisciplinarity (Ducker, S., et., al., 2013). Berkeley has created a culture of civil engagement and societal responsibilities among its students, by putting the discipline of service at the center of an extensive variety of educational programs.

Case Study 05: National Institute of Education, Singapore

National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore has implemented service learning as an integral part of its undergraduate curriculum. The university offers a wide range of service-learning modules across different disciplines, enabling students to apply their academic knowledge to address community needs (Tan, S. Y., & Soo, S. H. J., 2020). NIE promotes partnerships with local community organizations and provides support and training for faculty members to develop and implement service-learning courses (D'Rozario, V., et., al., 2012). The institution has also established systems and processes which focus on research, advocacy, and community



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engagement to promote education development through service learning. NIE also integrated services learning in the courses and curriculum.

Case Study 06: Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines

Service learning has been accepted by Ateneo de Manila University in the Philippines as a fundamental part of its Jesuit educational mission. Across numerous academic departments, service-learning programs are coordinated by the university's Ateneo Center for Educational Development (De Mel, R., et., al., 2015). Ateneo students reflect on the ethical and social aspects of their experiences while participating in community-based projects including tutoring programs, environmental conservation initiatives, and social entrepreneurship endeavors (Abenir, M. A. D., & Hok Ka, C. M., 2020). The university's dedication to social justice and solidarity is in line with these service-learning programs.

Case Study 07: University Malaysia Sarawak

University Malaysia Sarawak (UMS) has incorporated technology and community involvement into its service-learning program. To address social, economic, and environmental issues, the UMS helps local communities and the institution form partnerships (Salam, M., Iskandar, D. A., & Ibrahim, D. A., 2017). The university provides modules for service learning in a variety of subjects, with a strong emphasis on the application of technology to service learning and community development (Musa, N., Ibrahim, et., al., 2017). In order to guarantee significant community participation and academic integration supported by multidisciplinary works and involvement from other departments, the UMS offers training and support to staff members and students involved in service learning (Zaman, T., Wyai, G. L. C., & Falak, S., 2021).

Case Study 08: Peking University, China

In keeping with its goal of fostering the development of socially conscious citizens, Peking University has welcomed service learning. The institution promotes student involvement in service-learning initiatives that tackle societal problems like educational justice, environmental preservation, and poverty alleviation (Ye, J., 2017). To provide worthwhile chances for service learning, Peking University has forged alliances with regional communities and non-governmental organizations. In order to support community impact and student learning, the university also includes reflection and assessment components (Waite, P. D. (2009).

05. The Analysis and Discussion

Governance, Capacity and Incentives - GCI Framework

A conceptual framework is theorized as Governance, Capacity, and Incentives (GCI) to direct and assist in the institutionalization of service learning in higher education. Through the combination of traditional academic coursework and community service, service learning offers students the opportunity to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts and gives them practical experience. In order to ensure the durability and efficacy of service learning, institutions integrate it into their cultures and structures with the help of the GCI framework.



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GCI can serve as an instrument for addressing the institutionalization of service learning in higher education. Universities can build an environment that supports the incorporation of service learning into their culture and makes it a valued and sustainable educational practice that benefits the community as well as students by concentrating on Governance, Capacity, and Incentives. This framework guarantees the long-term viability of service learning by encouraging its alignment with the university's main objective.

05.1. Governance of Service Learning

There are three important sub-components that make up the Governance component:

05.1.1. Clear Policies and Guidelines

To offer a framework for service-learning initiatives within the university, it is imperative to establish unambiguous norms and procedures. The standards, guidelines, and practices that direct the execution of service-learning projects are described in these policies. Determining the goals and purpose of service learning in relation to the university's mission and academic objectives is a necessary step in developing these policies. It also lays out standards for the planning, execution, and evaluation of service-learning projects. The quality and consistency of service-learning programs are enhanced by these policies. They cover topics like community cooperation, student eligibility, safety, ethical considerations, and credit distribution.

05.1.2. Administration for Service Learn

This sub-component deals with the creation of specific leadership positions and administrative frameworks that are in charge of managing and directing service-learning initiatives. Establishing a central office or center for service learning within the university is a popular strategy. This office may be in charge of creating and implementing programs for service learning, offering assistance to teachers and students, and forming relationships with the local community. The administrators in this office are responsible for creating service-learning strategies, organizing resources, handling logistics, and making sure that all university rules and regulations are followed. Promoting the benefits of service learning to internal and external stakeholders and pushing for its incorporation into the university's larger objectives are further aspects of effective administration for service learning.

05.1.3. Partnerships with Key Stakeholders

The development of alliances with internal and external stakeholders is essential to the accomplishment of service-learning initiatives. The effectiveness and caliber of service-learning programs are improved by these collaborations. To guarantee that service learning is incorporated into the curriculum and research endeavors, academic institutions must internally promote relationships amongst departments and academic units. Universities should form and preserve external connections with government agencies, non-profits, and community organizations. These collaborations enable the alignment of service learning with community needs while offering students worthwhile volunteer opportunities. In order to guarantee that service-learning initiatives are advantageous to both parties and sensitive to community needs,



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successful partnerships also entail constant contact, cooperation, and feedback channels with community partners.

05.2. Capacity for Service Learning

05.2.1. Encourage Interdisciplinary Learning

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Building capacity for service learning includes fostering transdisciplinary learning. Dealing with difficult, real-world issues that don't cleanly fit inside the confines of a single academic area is a common component of service learning. To support the creation of service-learning projects and courses that draw from a variety of viewpoints and areas of expertise, universities should encourage cooperation and communication between various academic departments and programs. Interdisciplinary approaches improve student preparation for working in diverse, dynamic, and complex situations by encouraging students to develop a comprehensive grasp of problems and challenges.

05.2.2. Faculty Training

Because faculty members are essential in creating and executing service-learning programs, faculty training is an essential part of capacity building. To successfully integrate service learning into their courses, they must have the necessary knowledge and abilities. Workshops, seminars, and professional development opportunities covering pedagogical methodologies for service learning, best practices for community participation, and ethical issues should be included in faculty training. Along with developing meaningful community relationships and assisting faculty in evaluating the learning outcomes of service-learning events, it also entails helping them understand how to incorporate service learning into the curriculum. It is also crucial to give faculty members continual assistance and resources as they create and instruct service-learning courses.

05.2.3. Technology Usage

Using technology to its full potential is yet another crucial aspect of developing capacity for service learning. There are several ways that technology can expand the reach and efficacy of service-learning programs. In situations where physical presence is not feasible, universities can employ online platforms and technologies to support communication and collaboration between students, faculty, and community partners. Technology can aid with data gathering and evaluation, enabling academic institutions to monitor the results of service-learning programs and get participant input. Through the use of digital portfolios or online journals, students can successfully reflect on and share their service learning experiences by leveraging technology for these purposes. Additionally, to improving content accessibility, including online tools and resources into service-learning courses can facilitate creative approaches to project management and community participation.

05.3. Incentives for Service Learning

05.3.1. Credit Bearing



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The process of giving students' academic credit for taking part in service-learning activities is known as credit-bearing. This sub-component formalizes service learning within the university curriculum and acknowledges its educational significance. When students successfully complete courses or service-learning projects, they can receive course credit. Usually included in their academic records, these credits help them on their way to graduation as a whole. In addition to encouraging students to participate, credit-bearing service learning makes sure that their service projects are linked to their academic and professional goals. It serves to reaffirm that service learning is an acceptable and worthwhile component of their education.

05.3.2. Scholarships

Scholarships are monetary rewards given to students who participate in community service-learning projects. These scholarships may come in the form of grants, stipends, or help with tuition. Scholarships provide students who show a dedication to community service and involvement with a material incentive. They can encourage students to take part in service-learning activities and assist in defraying some of the costs related to attending college. Scholarships for service learning may be given out according to a number of factors, such as the quantity of service hours performed, the significance of the work, or how well it aligns with particular social or community objectives.

5.3.3. Social Identity

The identification and advancement of the social identities of educators, administrators, and students engaged in service learning are the main objectives of this subcomponent. It recognizes their responsibility as active members of their communities and agents of change. Colleges have the ability to design social identity initiatives that emphasize and commemorate the contributions made by service-learning participants. This could entail planning celebrations, awards, or ceremonies to recognize their contributions and influence. As a result of developing a social identity, service-learning participants are better able to feel proud of and a member of a strong community of people who are dedicated to social responsibility and service.

06. The Conclusion

A qualitative study approach was used to build the GCI (Governance, Capacity, and Incentives) Framework, a theoretical model that looks at the best strategies for institutionalizing service learning at different universities. The framework's creation is the result of a thorough examination of eight case studies, each of which represents a distinct university that has implemented service learning. An outline of how the research process led to the development of this framework is provided below:

The first step in the research process is to choose a group of colleges that have demonstrated success in institutionalizing and executing service learning. These colleges function as example studies. By taking into account several aspects such as the university's size, location, mission, and service-learning history, the selection process seeks to encompass a wide variety of ideas and practices.



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The groundwork for the effective integration of service learning into a university's culture is laid by the Governance component of the GCI Framework, which is further divided into the subcomponents of Clear Policies and Guidelines, Administration for Service Learning, and Partnerships with Stakeholders. In order to accomplish the university's educational goal, collaborations with stakeholders assist develop important, community-engaged learning experiences for students. Clear regulations and guidelines give structure, and devoted administration guarantees coordination and support.

The GCI Framework's second element, the Capacity for Service Learning, is essential to the effective execution and long-term viability of service learning in higher education. Encouraging interdisciplinary learning fosters comprehensive problem-solving; providing staff with training guarantees efficient course design and delivery; and utilizing technology improves communication, evaluation, and the learning process in general. Together, these sub-components strengthen the university's ability to promote and support programs related to service learning.

The GCI Framework's Incentives for Service-Learning component aims to encourage and compensate people and groups that participate in service-learning initiatives at universities. Scholarships offer cash rewards, credit-bearing options formalize service learning within the academic framework, and social identity promotion highlights the value of community involvement. Together, these rewards support and encourage service learning as a worthwhile and essential component of college life.

Based on these case studies, the GCI Framework basically condenses the insights and best practices from the universities that have successfully included service learning into their academic curricula. This approach provides a methodical framework to assist other educational establishments in establishing a conducive atmosphere for service learning, emphasizing incentives, capacity building, and governance. This framework is a great tool for encouraging community engagement among students and faculty members and developing service learning in higher education.

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