

## **Fostering Holistic Education through a Service Learning Partnership Model**

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## **Abstract**

For more than two decades the notion of student centered and holistic learning has been a focus of educational reform in Thailand. However, little success has been achieved so far, especially in higher education where learning remains lecture-based and career-focused. In order to produce graduates who are both qualified in their major area of study and are socially responsible citizens, higher education needs to be reengineered for flexible learning and social justice by reaching out and collaborating with communities to foster holistic learning. This study aimed to investigate the effects of a service learning partnership model on student's transformative learning, teacher's transformation in the teaching and learning process, and the impacts on a community's well-being.

The service learning partnership model was designed and implemented by two course leaders in the Master's Program of Educational Administration at Kasetsart University in Bangkok. One course leader was responsible for the course on School and Community Relations and the other was responsible for the course on Educational Supervision. The two course leaders believed that education should both fulfill personal growth and develop social well-being. In developing their service learning partnership model, they began by discussing challenges facing Thai education and trying to identify ways in which universities could help overcome these challenges. They then analyzed desirable students' learning outcomes, and collaboratively designed and planned service learning projects for students. In July-October 2013, the new model was implemented and tested in the two Masters courses run by the designers of the model. The two designers created a partnership with a disadvantaged private school in the neighborhood that lacked government support. The students in the two courses then developed a service learning project with this school based on the needs of the school.

The effects of the model on student's transformative learning, teacher's transformation in the teaching and learning process, and the impacts on community's well-being were tested. 38 students enrolled in the two courses and 9 teachers from the partnered school were interviewed and surveyed through a closed-ended questionnaire. In addition, detailed observations of student's activities, analysis of students' learning reflections and students' projects, and peer reviews and reflections were carried out.

The results of this study revealed that through participation in the project, students had developed their consciousness of creating partnership and relationship building with others, and appreciated service learning as an effective learning approach. The course leaders had changed their teaching techniques from a teaching-based approach to an approach based on student learning, community-based learning, research-based teaching, cross-subject planning, and ICT-based critical thinking. This study also found that the principal and teachers of the partnered school were satisfied with this partnership approach as their teachers had gained access to professional development. The teachers in the school stated that they had discovered new teaching techniques and now realized more of their students' unique ability than they had before they participated in the project.

## **Introduction**

For more than two decades the notion of student centered and holistic learning has been a focus of educational reform in Thailand. However, little success has been achieved so far, especially in higher education, where learning remains lecture-based and career-focused. It is widely believed that higher education is a means to economic growth and national development. A common view of higher education is that its main aim is to produce skilled people who can work in an increasingly competitive environment. Many people pursue higher education with an aim to better their career prospects and increase their job opportunities. The economic purpose of higher education then seems to overshadow the humanitarian aspects of education in which the aim is to produce compassionate and moral human beings. Increasing global challenges now require people who have expert knowledge and who can also put their knowledge to good use for humanity.

Therefore, in addition to providing skilled knowledge for the workplace, education must also be understood as the art of cultivating the moral, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of a whole human being. The essential learning required to prepare a productive and responsible worker for the twenty-first century must empower the individual to think as an autonomous agent in a collaborative context rather than to uncritically act on the received ideas and judgment of others. Workers will have to become autonomous, socially responsible thinkers (Merizow, 1997: 8). "Teach less learn more" will be a requirement for teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Learning should not be restricted to the classroom but should be more closely integrated with the community and the society at large.

In order to produce graduates who are qualified in their major area of study, critical thinkers, and socially responsible citizens, Thai higher education needs to be reengineered for flexible learning and social justice by reaching out and collaborating with communities to foster holistic learning. The premise of holistic learning is that the social context of the interaction between the education institution and the community is significant. It recognizes that the exchanges that take place within this social interaction are the foundation for developing critical learners (Patel, 2003: 272) as it includes experiential knowledge of learners and teachers that improves the quality of the teaching situation and levels of achievement of learners. Holistic education also advocates a transformative approach to learning which involves a change in the frames of reference that a person may have. This change may include points of view, habits of mind, and worldviews of those involved in the interaction process.

Higher education must play a leading role in paving the way towards sustainable development by creating graduates with expert knowledge and compassion for both present and future generations. Presently there are many calls for action by Thai higher education institutions to be both socially responsible institutions and create socially responsible students. Various forums and seminars have been conducted to address issues of University Social Responsibility (USR), Desirable Characteristics of students in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Socially Responsible Students, etc. Most of these forums have given rise to

partnerships between higher education institutions and the public and private sectors to foster desirable characteristics of students and a sustainable society. Thai higher education institutions are being put into a dilemma. On one hand, HEIs have to maintain competitiveness in the global market economy, and on the other hand they have to be socially responsible and reach out for community development (Buasuwan and Rassameethese, 2013).

For 22 years, a Master Program in Educational Administration at Kasetsart University has aimed to prepare future leaders of education who are both competent administrators and have strong moral values. Although many of these students have become very successful in their career, increasing global challenges require them also to be leaders who can help to transform the world into a better place. Since education leaders are some of the key people in the nurturing of future generations to become compassionate and responsible citizens, their proper training is essential.

In order to develop holistic learning and to create future school administrators who are competent, critical and responsible citizens, two course leaders in the Program of Educational Administration at Kasetsart University have designed and implemented a “Service-Learning Partnership Model” in their courses in 2013. The main aims of the present paper are to discuss how the model is designed and implemented and to present the preliminary results of a study of the impact of this model on student’s transformative learning, teacher’s transformation in the teaching and learning process, and on a community’s well-being.

## **Literature Review**

### **Holistic Education, Transformative Learning, and the Role of Teachers**

During the 1970s, an emerging body of literature in science, philosophy and cultural history provided an overarching concept to describe this way of understanding education — a perspective known as *holism* (Miller, 1996). A holistic way of thinking seeks to encompass and integrate multiple layers of meaning and experience rather than narrowly defining human possibilities. Every child should be regarded as more than a future employee; every person’s intelligence and abilities are also far more complex than their scores on standardized tests.

Holistic education is based on the proposition that each person finds identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections to the community, to the natural world, and to spiritual values such as compassion and peace. Holistic education aims to awaken people’s passionate love of learning and intrinsic reverence for life. This approach to learning cannot be done through an academic curriculum that condenses the world into instructional packages, but through direct engagement with the environment. Holistic education nurtures a sense of wonder.

Mezirow's (2000, p. 22) transformational learning model includes the following nonsequential learning processes: 1) A disorienting dilemma. 2) Self-examination of feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame. 3) A critical assessment of assumptions. 4) Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared. 5) Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions. 6) Planning a course of action. 7) Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans. 8) Provisionally trying new roles. 9) Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships. 10) Reintegration of new perspectives into one's life.

Previous research suggests that the process of perspective transformation and the relationship between individual and social transformation are often difficult to predetermine, explain, and assess because of methodological constraints, myriad contextual factors, different individual learning styles and personalities, and the diversity of educational programs studied (Mezirow et al., 2000; Taylor, 1998, 2000). However, the ideal end result of transformational learning is accepted to be that the person is empowered by learning to be more socially responsible, self-directed, and less dependent on false assumptions.

Various scholars argue that the purpose of a modern university is to develop critical thinking (Barnett, 1997; Patel, 2003). Higher learning must nurture students' traits of criticality, confidence, and independence as these enable an individual not only to act in real situations in relation to the discipline knowledge being taught but also to authorities of epistemology such as universities. In this approach, holistic practitioner is a teacher who passes on the ownership of the knowledge to the student and develops the feeling of self-directed learning. Teacher is also deeply involved with students' experiences and reflects on his or her own experiences of the learning and teaching interaction (Patel, 2003).

In holistic education, the teacher is seen less as person of authority who leads and controls but rather is seen as "a friend, a mentor, a facilitator, or an experienced traveling companion" (Forbes, 1996). Schools should be seen as places where students and adults work toward a mutual goal. Open and honest communication is expected and differences between people are respected and appreciated. Cooperation is the norm, rather than competition. Thus, many schools incorporating holistic beliefs do not give grades or prizes. The reward of helping one another and growing together is emphasized rather than being placed above one another.

Education that fosters critically reflective thought, imaginative problem posing, and discourse is learner-centered, participatory, and interactive, and involves group deliberation and group problem solving. Instructional materials reflect the real-life experiences of the learners and are designed to foster participation in small-group discussion to assess reasons, examine evidence, and arrive at a reflective judgment. Learning takes place through discovery and the imaginative use of metaphors to solve and redefine problems.

To facilitate transformative learning, educators must help learners become aware and critical of their own and others' assumptions. Learners need practice in recognizing frames of reference and using their imaginations to redefine problems from a different perspective.

Finally, learners need to be assisted to participate effectively in discourse. Discourse is necessary to validate what and how one understands, and to arrive at a best judgment regarding a belief. In this sense, learning is a social process, and discourse becomes central to creating meaning. The emphasis is on creating an environment in which learners become increasingly adept at learning from each other and at helping each other learn in problem-solving groups. The educator functions as a facilitator and provocateur rather than as an authority on subject matter (Merizow, 1997).

An example of holistic teaching and learning in an Asian culture has been reported by Jean Chiu (2009). Chiu carried out a survey study of holistic learning in a Journalistic English news course in Taiwan. The course, in a program of traditional English for Special Purposes (ESP), aimed to avoid an exclusively cognitive emphasis on learning in an academic subject area. The course piloted the use of a holistic education approach in a context beyond general education programs. Chiu found that as a result of the holistic approach in one program, the students' affective, social, cognitive, and cultural dimensions had been enhanced. In particular, affective support in the form of collegial one-to-one facilitation was found to contribute notably to enabling these Taiwanese students to engage effectively with cultural and social dimensions in their English learning.

### **Partnership for Service-Learning in Higher Education**

The dominant cultural assumptions in service-learning are based on the pragmatic and reflective experiential traditions of Dewey (1933). Kiely (2005) argued that many empirical studies on service-learning have focused primarily on measuring the impact of service-learning on students' personal, civic, and cognitive development (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee; Eyler, 2000; Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001; Steinke & Buresh, 2002). Educators that explore learning processes in service-learning tend to focus primarily on interactive discussion of a student's cognitive reflections as a useful predictor of a student's academic and personal outcomes (Ash & Clayton, 2004; Eyler, Giles, & Schmiede, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hatcher, Bringle, & Muthiah, 2004; Silcox, 1993; Welch, 1999). Service-learning theorists and practitioners have readily adapted Kolb's learning cycle (Kolb, 1984) of concrete experience, cognitive reflection, abstract theorization, and experimentation to generate knowledge and facilitate learning in diverse contexts. Along with physically situating students in authentic environments, service-learning programs simplify the Kolb model further by encouraging some form of structured reflection to connect experience with concepts, ideas, and theories and to generate new and applicable knowledge in concrete "real-life" situations (Kiely, 2005).

The adoption of service-learning as a prominent form of educating students in higher education has existed for more than two decades (Nino et al., 2011). The proponents of service-learning models argue that this form of learning will help to solve society's most challenging social problems (Lemieux & Allen, 2007). Although there are varying definitions of service-learning, the most cited definition of service-learning is that of Bringle and

Hatcher (1996). According to them service-learning is “a credit bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of service responsibility” (Bringle and Hatcher, 1996: 222). Service-learning places emphasis on three main outcomes: (1) Service to the community. (2) Enhanced critical thinking and problem solving skills. (3) The cultivation of lifelong, morally just, democratic citizens (Harkavy, 2004). Service-learning models have one primary goal, to connect classroom theory with real-world experience (Dauenhauer et al., 2010). Students engaged in service-learning activities have had changes in attitudes towards lower-socioeconomic groups (Sanders et al., 2003), significantly increased levels of perceived self-efficacy (Williams et al., 2002), growth in personal and professional learning (Williams & Reeves, 2004), and retain course content in a meaningful way (Dauenhauer et al., 2010).

Service-learning programs established at institutions of higher learning typically develop collaborative partnerships with community-based agencies that provide students with direct contact with client groups considered to be vulnerable populations (Rothman, 1994). However, creating and sustaining partnerships with a community-based agency requires the goals of both the agency and the university to intersect, ultimately providing a mutually beneficial collaborative project (Rubin, 2001).

Since humans are social beings, partnership between humans, business, organization, etc. are common. Partnership is a concept that two parties agree to work together towards the same goals. Combining strengths to overcome limitations makes partnership appealing to many.

## **A Study of Holistic and Service-Learning at Kasetsart University**

The service-learning partnership model was designed and implemented by two course leaders in the Master’s Program of Educational Administration at Kasetsart University in Bangkok. One course leader was responsible for the course on School and Community Relations and the other was responsible for the course on Educational Supervision. The two course leaders believed that education should both fulfill personal growth and develop social well-being. The details of this research are as follows.

### **Methodology**

#### **Step I: Design of the service-learning partnership model**

The course leaders began by discussing challenges facing Thai education and identifying ways in which universities could help overcome these challenges. They reviewed concepts of holistic learning, then analyzed desirable students’ learning outcomes, and collaboratively designed and planned service-learning projects with students.



## Step II: Implementation of the model

In July-October 2013, the new model was implemented and tested in the two Masters courses run by the designers of the model. The two designers created a partnership with a disadvantaged private school in the neighborhood that lacked government support. The students in the two courses then developed a service-learning project with this school based on the needs of the school.

## Step III: Investigation of the effects of the model

The effects of the model on student's transformative learning, teacher's transformation in the teaching and learning process, and the impacts on community's well-being were tested. 37 students enrolled in the two courses and 9 teachers from the partnered school were interviewed and surveyed through an open-ended questionnaire. In addition, detailed observations of student's activities, analysis of students' learning reflections and students' projects, and peer reviews and reflections were carried out.

### **The service learning partnership model**

The elements of this model are divided into three sections, which are 1) objectives and guiding principles of the model, 2) participants, and 3) approach to teaching and learning. A diagram of the model is shown in Figure 1, and the details of the three sections of the model are as follows.

#### 1. Objectives and guiding principles

##### 1.1 Serving the needs of the community

A service-learning project is aimed to serve the community. The community was therefore asked to suggest student projects that would be responsive to their needs. Providing a service based on the needs of the community allows students to receive good cooperation from the community and help them to achieve the goals of the project. However, students are also expected to investigate their own strengths that can be of service to the community.

##### 1.2 Students' learning outcomes

The Master's Program in Educational Administration aims to produce future educational leaders who are both competent in leading and managing an educational institution and in setting a good example by maintaining good conduct and virtues. The outcome of learning must therefore reflect both aims. The two course leaders discussed students' learning outcomes and mapped out the syllabus to achieve these desired outcomes. Formative approach was used to assess students' learning outcomes on their skills and ability in applying knowledge in the service-learning project. A student's interactions with their team members and partner school members were also observed and feedback given to the student.



A student was also required to reflect their thoughts and feelings via Facebook, learning logs, and class discussion.

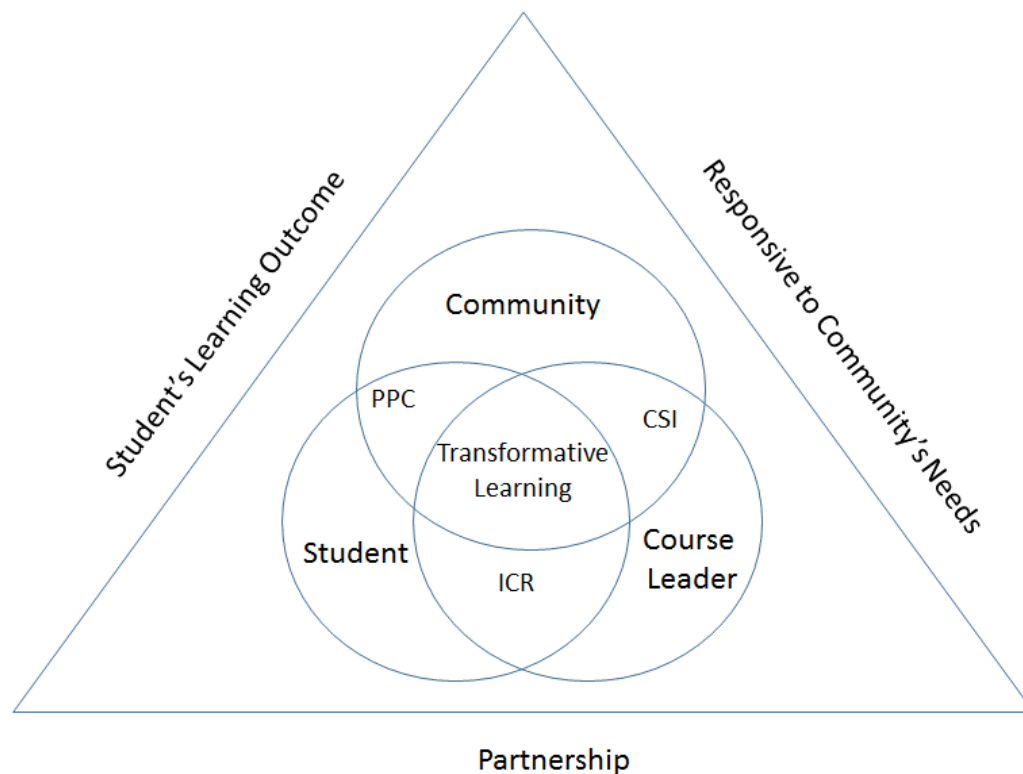


Figure 1. The service-learning partnership model

### 1.3 Partnership: Combining strengths to overcome challenges

The model is developed based on a belief in partnership and holistic learning. Since the premise of holistic education is that a student's learning becomes meaningful when it is in connection with the community, the teaching and learning process should be interactive and facilitate a student's learning through social settings. While the community can be a good learning resource for students, students can also contribute to the community by applying their learned skills and knowledge to the needs of the community through community service-learning projects. As in many countries, there is a gap in the quality of education in the Thai education system, and schools and students do not have equal opportunities to provide or receive quality education. Because of this, the course designers selected a disadvantaged private school in the neighborhood that lacked government support for the students' projects.

## 2. Participants: Community, Course Leaders, and Students.

The key partners who have been involved in this new approach to teaching and learning are community, course lecturers, and students.

2.1 Community: The community selected for this study was Thammasiri School, which is a private elementary school under patronage of Noi Nok Temple in

Nonthaburi Province. This school is private and its main mission is to serve disadvantaged students in the community. Since this school is close to Kasetsart University, it was very convenient to take students to the school for their learning activity. The two course leaders contacted the school and discussed possibilities for students' learning projects.

2.2 Course lecturers: Course lecturers acted as facilitators and supervisors. They encouraged students to think and ask questions about issues related to quality of education and school and community relations. The course leaders also inspired and empowered students to develop their own potential to provide service to the partner school. Course leaders also provided guidance to students on project development, and allowed class time to students to do group work on development of service-learning projects.

2.3 Students: Students played a leading role in directing their own learning. They divided themselves into groups based on interest in the service learning projects. The groups then planned the activities for their project, raised funds for the activities, and set their own goals.

### 3. Teaching and Learning Process

#### 3.1 Combined subject and sequentially integrated project design (CSI)

The two course leaders believed that learning should be integrated across the syllabuses for their two courses and that teachers must play a leading role in working together and planning for teaching and learning activity that can facilitate student's holistic learning. The two course leaders analyzed the objectives of their own course, identified key student's learning outcomes, and integrated the learning outcomes together into one service-learning model.

Students in the Master Program of Educational Administration are already in their profession as teachers and administrators in schools or other educational institutions. Their learning should therefore be experiential and work-related. In addition giving individual project-based assignment to students in many classes can be a burden to students. In the past many students have complained about the workload of learning assignments which obstructs the quality of their learning. Also, past students have provided feedback to the masters programs that learning should be more activity-based rather than lecture-based. However, developing a learning timetable that includes learning activity outside of classrooms has been a challenge because students must have sufficient time to return for their next class. This challenge supports Clark (1997) who says that the established educational structure is not equipped to cope with the major changes taking place in the world today and that systemic restructuring of education is needed. To overcome the challenges of educational timetabling, the two course leaders planned their teaching and learning activities together to allow for student's learning activities outside the classroom.

The School and Community Relations course run by one of the course leaders expects students to be able to understand the nature of the community, conduct community surveys and build relationships with the community. The course on Educational Supervision run by the other course leader aims to provide students with skills

in staff training and supervision. The course leaders designed and adopted a sequentially integrated project based on these courses in which students are expected to apply their learning from the course on School and Community Relations to investigate the needs of the community partner school and then develop a teacher training project based on the needs of that school.

### 3.2 Problem-based, project-based, and community-based learning (PPC)

In the teaching and learning approach of this service-learning model, students were encouraged to identify their own problems for project-based activities rather than working on a project assigned by a course leader. In identifying the problems for project development, students had to apply the knowledge and skills in community surveys that they learnt in the class on School and Community Relations. They then had to build rapport with the partner schools and community in order to obtain data for their project development. During school visits and surveys, students gathered data on the problems and needs of the school and community. Students then proposed their project activities to the two course leaders for guidance and then to the partner school for its approval. Once the projects had been approved, students designed the implementation of all project activities in collaboration with the partner school.

The four service-learning projects that were designed and implemented at the partner school were:

- 1) Plasticine molding art project
- 2) Pop-up art project
- 3) Project-based learning approach
- 4) Study plan development project

### 3.3 Information-critical-reflective learning (ICR)

Students were required to obtain information for decision-making in their project development. When students proposed their project to the course leaders, they were required to use information from their data gathering to support their decision-making in every step of project development. Course leaders promoted students' critical thinking by assigning students to raise an issue for discussion in the course Facebook. The course leaders would monitor and assess students' participation and evaluate their ideas. In the classroom, course lecturers also selected some of the topics that received most attention for further discussion in the class. Students were also encouraged to reflect on their experiences, thoughts, feelings and actions during the service-learning project. However, since some students were not comfortable in talking in class about their feelings, course leaders had to provide alternative approaches, such as Facebook or learning logs, that were acceptable to all students.

## Results of Kasetsart Study and Discussion

In this section, we will discuss the findings from this service-learning study at Kasetsart University in the light of the work of previous authors summarized in the Literature Review section. We will discuss the effects of the study on the three participants, namely, the students, the course leaders and the partner school.

### 1. Effects on students' learning

The results of this study revealed that through participation in the project, students had developed their consciousness of creating partnership and relationship building with others, and appreciated service-learning as an effective learning approach. Experiences of students on learning transformation reflected Mezirow's transformational learning process (2000: 22) which are "1) A disorienting dilemma, 2) self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame, 3) a critical assessment of assumptions, 4) recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared, 5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions, 6) planning a course of action, 7) acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans, 8) provisionally trying new roles, 9) building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, 10) a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective".

For example, one of the students gave a reflection of her learning experience in the course Facebook that *"I really liked this kind of learning. It is very experiential and fun. Also as a teacher, it gave me a new perspective on teaching and learning. We have become partners already."* Every student also revealed that they found this teaching and learning approach to be very effective because they learnt from the real social setting. They also had to put their management skills into practice. Even though some students mentioned that project-based learning required a lot of time and energy, many of them said that it was very worthwhile. Many of them mentioned that they really appreciated that lecturers and students worked together and integrated their teaching and learning process because it made them learn knowledge through its application and integration. They also said that this teaching and learning approach was very efficient because they could put their time to good use. These comments support Dauenhauer et al. (2010) that service-learning models have one primary goal, to connect classroom theory with real-world experience. Students also commented that rather than having too many assignments, one big project assignment can teach them much more. One of the students stated that *"I talked to my friends who are studying in the same program in another university. They were very amazed that learning at Kasetsart University is very extensive.... However I think it is very good because we gain much experience when we have to do the real work."*

During the first class of School and Community Relations, students were asked whether or not they had conducted a community survey. None of them had experience in community surveys or in asking community members about their needs, except through visits to students' homes. One student said that

*“I think sometimes we take community for granted. We teach their kids, we work in their community, but we never care to learn about their needs and wants. Information about community that is reported in School Self-Assessment Reports is often rather old. We never try to keep it up to date so that we can better respond to their needs.”*

At the beginning some students were quite reluctant to undertake the service-learning project assignment because they were afraid of the responsibility. The two course leaders had to explain to the students that this assignment was a group work assignment and that they could manage and divide the responsibility. Not every student had to do the same thing but they could all contribute to the project based on their own strengths and at their own pace. At the end of the project, students had developed a change in their attitude towards learning. One of the students said that

*“At the beginning I was very confused with all the responsibility that I had to deal with, but our team members helped each other very well. The most important thing is that when I saw the happy face of the students and teachers when I conducted my activity, I felt very content. I felt that I did something good.”*

Encouraging students to raise questions, reflect their own thoughts through discussion, Facebook, and a learning log helped develop student's confidence. Many students said that they felt they had learnt to express their ideas more freely and to exchange their points of views with their classmates. Many students said that asking them a lot of questions made them think all the time. Some students said that

*“At first I was afraid of expressing my opinions in class because I was afraid of saying something wrong, but learning in this class does not make me feel that way. I feel more free to express my views in class because teacher never says that I am wrong, only asks me why and how.”*

Some of the students were also worried about the extra work that this service-learning project might require because they already had heavy teaching and administrative loads at their school and had a family to look after. However, these students confessed that after watching a teacher at the partner school show surprising expressions on her face after seeing an academically weak pupil show unknown abilities in “show and tell” after the plasticine molding activities, their tiredness disappeared.

## 2. Effects on course leaders' teaching and learning approach

The course leaders found that they changed their teaching techniques from a teacher-based approach to approaches based on student learning, community-based learning, research-based learning, cross-subject planning, and ICT-based critical thinking. The course actually started as problem-based learning when students were assigned to create a service-learning project. Instead of doing what the instructors assigned they had to decide for themselves what they should be evaluated for. First, they had to survey among themselves their group strengths, and then decide how to use these strengths to help teachers in the

partner school. With these problems to solve, the curiosity of the students drove them to learn from text books, research papers, or resource persons. What they found was their own knowledge that they could apply. The course leaders then became resource persons, planners and facilitators to help the students relate theory to practice, to participate in discussions, provoke the thoughts of the students, to provide encouragement, and to say words of appreciation. Students did not have to worry about exams because observation and evaluation was done throughout the course. This observation and evaluation was done at all stages from the initial planning step, then through the preparation and supervision during the busy weeks of training at the partner school, until the preparation of the final report on the project.

Before this new teaching and learning approach was introduced, the two course leaders mainly conducted their classes in the form of lecture-based approach with some group activities and project assignment. Most of the projects were not hands-on but written projects. Both leaders noticed that with the new approach, students changed their learning behavior from being passive to becoming much more active and interactive learners.

Course leaders also found that they learnt from collaboration with each other. Before this project, the leaders never planned their teaching and learning activity together. Each lecturer was responsible for their own course with little communication among them. With the new approach, the two course leaders had to meet regularly with each other for planning, reflection, student project activity, and student assessment. As a result, the two course leaders learned teaching and learning techniques from each other. For example, one of the course leaders had over 20 years of teaching experience and had good technique in giving supervision to students and as a result the younger course leader learned supervision techniques. On the other hand, the younger course leader employed ICT in her class to develop students' critical thinking and to encourage students to use English. The other course leader then learnt how to apply that technique in her classes. Because of the collaboration in this project, the course leaders were able to improve their syllabuses, assessment tools and teaching and learning processes.

### 3. Effects on the partner school

This study also found that the principal and teachers of the partner school were satisfied with this partnership approach as their teachers gained access to professional development. However, at first there were unmet expectations between the partner school and the students. Due to limited school resources, the teachers in the school requested learning materials and resources from this service-learning project. However, the students in the project planned to provide training to the teachers because based on their survey, teachers in the school did not have proper teaching training. Further, many of them were very senior and used teaching-based methods. Therefore, the students thought that in order to help the teachers help themselves, it was better to concentrate on capacity-building for the teachers by giving them new teaching techniques and showing them new methods for creating learning materials.

By the end of the projects, teachers in the school were quite satisfied with the results of the students' projects. They said that they had discovered new teaching techniques and



now realized more of their students' unique ability than they had before they participated in the projects. For example, in one of the projects, young students in the partner school had to tell a story about their plasticine molding piece of work. A student who performed well in her academic work could not tell her story fluently, but a young boy who was not a high academic achiever could tell the story in a very interesting manner and could get a lot of attention from the teacher and other students. The teacher said that *"I had never thought that he would be such a good storyteller. I always thought of him as a low performer."* The teachers also said that this plasticine molding art project is still being used at the partner school. The findings from this project reflect the concept of holistic learning that every child is more than a future employee; every person's intelligence and abilities are far more complex than shown by their scores on the standardized tests used in Thai schools.

### **Conclusion**

To produce graduates who are qualified in their major area of study, are critical thinkers, and are socially responsible citizens, Thai higher education needs to be reengineered for flexible learning and social justice by reaching out and collaborating with communities to foster holistic learning. This study revealed that a holistic learning and service-learning partnership model can be used as a new teaching and learning approach to develop desirable characteristics of future education leaders. Students learning by this approach have developed their consciousness in making contributions to the community, making connections with others, and being more critically and socially responsible citizens with the ability to apply their learned skills and knowledge for the good of the community. Course leaders have changed their teaching and learning approach from lecture-based to activity-based. The teachers at the partner school now have a wider view on teaching and learning techniques that make them more aware of their students' unseen potential. More importantly, addressing educational challenges and transforming the world into a better place requires commitment of all parties working together towards a common goal. This study reflects the philosophy of the Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu who says that "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." By transforming ourselves, we can eventually transform the world.



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