



IARSLCE

European Service-Learning Research Agenda (ESRA)

EASLHE

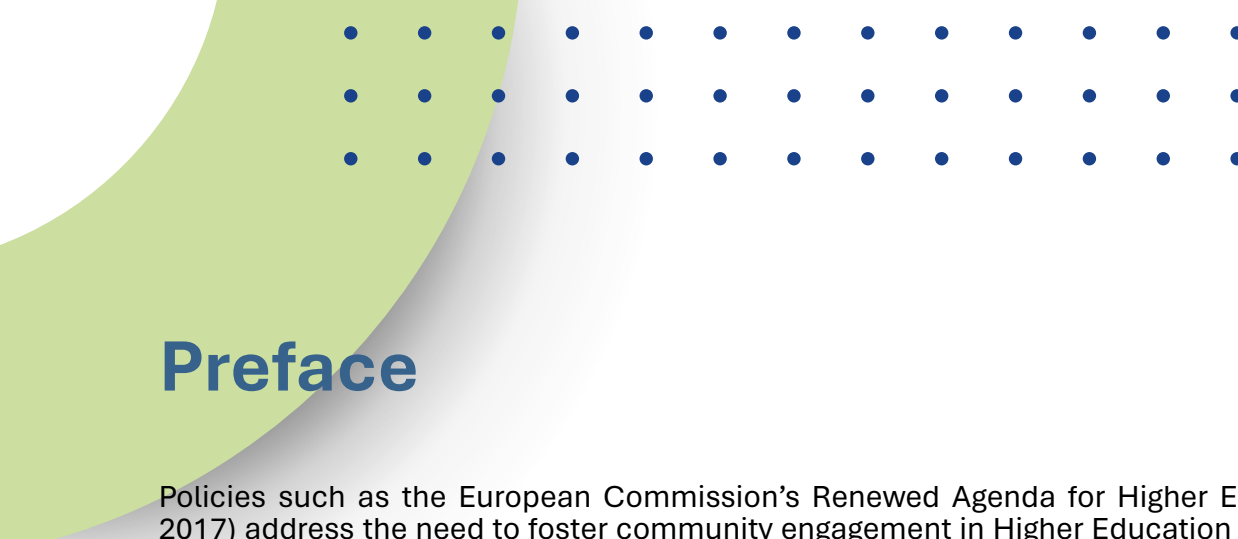
European Association of Service-
Learning in Higher Education

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Preface

Policies such as the European Commission's Renewed Agenda for Higher Education (EC, 2017) address the need to foster community engagement in Higher Education (HE). Service-learning (SL) in HE is an experiential educational pedagogy in which students engage in community service, reflect critically on this experience, and learn from it personally, socially and academically. The activities address human, social, and environmental needs from the perspectives of social justice and sustainable development, and aim to enrich learning in higher education, foster civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. Service-learning is always recognized with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). It brings together students, academics and the community whereby all become teaching resources, problem solvers and partners. In addition to enhancing academic and real-world learning, the overall purpose is to instil in students a sense of civic engagement and responsibility and work towards positive social change within society. SL can be developed across all undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, including different formats of lifelong learning, such as microcredentials.

The vision of the European Association of Service-Learning in Higher Education (EASLHE) is to foster a network of academics who value high-quality education, social justice, and civic engagement, namely service-learning. EASLHE looks for intercultural knowledge, ethical reasoning, lifelong learning, cultural awareness, tolerance, and diversity. The Association is renowned for its capacity to contribute to the development of a fairer society, in which individual and collective actions are pedagogically designed to identify and address public concerns. In this regard, EASLHE established its mission of promoting, not only the development and dissemination of SL practices but also research and policy-making in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Democracy, sustainable development, responsible leadership, critical thinking, and equity should be seen as key principles of action.

To accomplish this, EASLHE stated the mission of disseminating and exchanging information, good practices, and knowledge, as well as fostering and developing training activities and creating resources. This is possible by the establishment of links between local, national, European and global networks. Events such as meetings, seminars, conferences or workshops contribute to increasing the awareness of the development of service-learning in Europe. The association also conducts and encourages research and scientific publications on service-learning and raises funds to achieve the goals of the association, promoting or supporting transnational projects.

Therefore, research in and on SL matters for EASLHE. By placing teaching and learning in the social context of the community, SL has been a way of enhancing positive changes in academic, personal, social, and citizenship and democratic competences outcomes.

SL should be seen as a catalyst for transforming higher education in ways that better respond to societal and environmental needs.

Although the European Observatory of Service-Learning in Higher Education (EOSLHE) data showed that research in SL has increased dramatically in recent years, there is still much to be done. The investigative processes should be improved in several dimensions.

“There remains a need for stronger empirical research on the impact of SL, accounting for its complexity across diverse cultural, linguistic, and social contexts.”

Persists need to understand the influence of academic idiosyncrasies in the development and institutionalisation of SL, assessing internal and external quality management procedures. Better descriptions of studies' contexts, sampling, recruitment, and project designs are required to facilitate induction and meta-analysis, as the lack of detail makes it difficult to develop possible replications or adaptations for other European contexts.

Research limitations can sharpen the real impact of SL and jeopardise its institutionalisation. Here is where a European Service-Learning Research Agenda, as part of a Global Agenda developed by the International Association of Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE), shows its relevance by identifying lines of action under the guidance of a common goal: a prosperous, democratic, fair and sustainable higher education and society.

We are on the right track, but now it is necessary to redouble efforts so that SL is valued and recognised in higher education, serving as a catalyst for the transformation of European Higher Education as an active agent promoting the values of coexistence and democracy.

EASHLE contributes to the aim of intensifying transnational cooperation and expanding its scope, and to developing a genuinely European dimension in the higher education sector, built on shared values. The future will bring the realisation of ambitious proposals for Europe's higher education sector, such as the European degree. This is another step toward making a greener, more inclusive, and more digital Europe.

The hallmarks of high-quality research on SL and its institutionalisation in Europe are needed. But both processes are connected: Research contributes to institutionalisation, and vice versa. Through different research epistemologies and methodologies, studies will help to understand (and overcome) the barriers to institutionalisation in the European Higher Education Area. Additionally, a better understanding of the social actors involved in SL in the diversity of European contexts is needed. The institutionalisation of SL will be more effectively achieved if it follows a path informed by quantitative and qualitative research. It would be natural for social actors to express their new understandings and design new context analyses, enhancing different SL solutions, not only for institutionalisation but also for policy recommendations. Consequently, from an epistemological perspective, SL would be more empowering for both the cognoscenti subject (social actors) and the object of knowledge (SL institutionalisation), as they would interact and influence one another.

Every higher education institution is locally based and, for that reason, has its specific and strategic mission in the society of which it is a product. That mission stems from its historical legacy as an institution. Their products blend the human dimensions of teaching, research, and community service. What resounds here is the acknowledgement that, in general, both quantitative and qualitative SL research should be improved by collecting and reporting systematically, fostering theoretical or analytical consistency.

Global Research Agenda — Key Figures

Across all data-gathering forums · Same process and protocol

29

Forums held

Research agenda data-gathering forums conducted worldwide

695

Participants engaged

Scholars, practitioners and supporters of service-learning

44

Countries represented

Participants from across the globe contributed to the agenda

6,759

Research questions

Submitted across 10 focus areas for the global research agenda

10 focus areas — all forums followed the same process and protocol



The Global Service-Learning Research Agenda

As the practice of SL and community engagement continues to expand and deepen across the globe, the International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE) has sought to identify the key research questions and topics to investigate in the coming years. In early, 2019, IARSLCE launched the Global Research Agenda development initiative whereby scholars, practitioners, and other supporters of service-learning and community engagement participate in a series of research agenda data-gathering forums during which they identify research questions and issues of the future in ten focus areas: impact; implementation; institutionalization; theory and conceptual frameworks; instruments and measures; replication; cross-cultural and cross-national; equity and diversity; COVID/post-COVID; and methodology.

29 research agenda data-gathering forums have been held. Collectively, these 29 forums engaged 695 participants from 44 countries who submitted 6,759 research questions and issues for the research agenda. All of the forums followed the same process and protocol, focusing on identifying key research questions and issues across the ten aforementioned areas. Within Europe, a total of 5 research agenda data-gathering forums were held and hosted by members of various European SL and community engagement groups in the following settings:

September 2019 **ANTWERP, BELGIUM** - 2nd European Conference on Service-Learning

May 2020 **GALWAY, IRELAND** - Hosted by National University of Ireland, Galway

July 2020 **BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA** - 3rd European Conference on Service-Learning [virtual]

June 2023 **MUNICH, GERMANY** - Hosted by Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

September 2023 **ROME, ITALY** - 6th European Conference on Service-Learning in Higher Education

The data collected during these 5 European forums served as the basis for the regional data analysis meeting held in Antwerp, Belgium, from November 20 to 21, 2024. In this regard, participants analysed data that reflect European perspectives on the key research questions and issues that the service-learning and community engagement fields need to explore in the future.

In addition to the European regional data analysis meeting, 5 other regional data analysis meetings are held in Africa, Asia, Australia, North America, and South America. In each of the regional meetings, participants analyze the data collected from the data collection forums held in their respective region (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Global Research Agenda Development

The 2-day workshops at UCSIA: context

The work on the European Service-Learning Research Agenda was kicked off with a two-day workshop meeting on November 20 and 21, 2024, in Antwerp, Belgium, organized by the European Association for Service-Learning in Higher Education (EASLHE) in collaboration with the University Center Saint-Ignatius Antwerp (UCSIA). Members of the Research Work Group (RWG), the EASLHE General Meeting (GM), and other interested researchers were invited to participate in this activity.

Altogether 24 people from different European countries participated in the workshop: Austria (3), Belgium (3), Croatia (1), Germany (2), Ireland (1), Italy (3), Portugal (1), Romania (2), Slovakia (2), Spain (4), United Kingdom (2). They represented broad and diverse perspectives on service-learning and community engagement practice and research.

Methodology

The Regional Data Analysis Meetings followed the same process and protocol. The process was designed to capture some cultural and social contexts that shape and

define service-learning, community engagement, and research paradigms within each region. During the workshop, participants worked in small groups on organising, categorising, and prioritising the data for each of the ten sections of the research agenda (e.g., impact, implementation, institutionalisation, theory and conceptual framework, instruments and measures, etc.).

From this process, the participants **identified, discussed, prioritised, and set the key research questions** for each of the ten agenda sections. To ensure an effective use of the collaboration time, all participants were asked to familiarize themselves with (sections of) the data in advance. The data were shared before the meeting. Participants worked in teams of 3 or 4 participants. Each team had a set of data points (research questions identified by those who participated in the five European data collection forums) and was asked to follow these steps:

- 01** **Step 01 Familiarize Yourself with the Data**
Begin by thoroughly reading and reviewing all collected data. Immerse yourself in the material without judgment — the goal at this stage is understanding, not analysis.
- 02** **Step 02 Group Similar Data Together**
Identify individual pieces of data that express the same or similar ideas, or ask the same or similar questions. Cluster these together and establish a clear set of categories.
- 03** **Step 03 Name Each Category**
Once your categories are formed, assign each one a descriptive theme or title. This name should capture the essence of what the data in that group is about.
- 04** **Step 04 Identify Key Research Questions**
Within each category, pinpoint the most important research questions or issues. Consider: Which questions appear frequently? Which push the service-learning and community engagement fields forward in research and practice?
- 05** **Step 05 Rank Questions by Importance**
For each category or theme, rank the questions from most to least important. Some categories may have just one or two questions; others may have many. Apply your judgment consistently across all themes.

Facilitators:

Andrew Furco (University of Minnesota, USA). He has been facilitating the research agenda initiative over the past five years, and is the lead facilitator of all the regional data analysis meetings.

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Patricia Zunszain (King's College London, UK)

Alina Rusu (University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Romania)

Kathia Reynders (KU Leuven, Belgium)

Kaat Somers (UCSIA, Belgium)



Research Agenda

The content contained in this part of the global research agenda is based on an analysis of 508 research questions and items submitted by 65 individuals who participated in five forums held in Europe between September 2019 and September 2023. While these forums were held in Europe, two of them included individuals from other regions. The questions and items were categorized and prioritized by 24 service-learning and community engagement scholars, researchers, and practitioners from across Europe who participated in a two-day data analysis meeting held in Antwerp, Belgium, November 21-22, 2024. The results of their analyses and discussions are presented here.

I. IMPACTS

Impact research focuses on assessing the impacts of service-learning and community engagement on participants, including students, faculty, staff, educational institutions, and the community partners and organisations. They cross a broad range of short-term and long-term outcomes. This section of the agenda presents broad areas of impact to be investigated along with a particular set of themes within each impact area.

Impact of the Organization and Institution

Investigate the impact that institutional policies, organizations, and practices have on the advancement and institutionalisation of high-quality service-learning and community engagement.

Flexibility of the Curriculum

- Does today's service-learning impact how the study programme(s) will be (re)designed for the future generation(s) of students?
- What is the "added value" of using 'University Modules' that include service-learning to complement learning in higher education? There may be an appetite/interest now (e.g., student interest in supporting/contributing to community, service-learning filling a gap exposed by limited 'face to face' learning going forward.)
- How can faculties and schools become more connected to real-life learning and teach real life skills through service-learning?

Measurement

- What can we learn about the long-term effects of service-learning and community engagement participation?
- What are best practices for building long-term alliances with community partners?
- How do community-engaged learning and service-learning enable the delivery of the education strategy and other key institutional strategies?

Mission Oriented Leaders

- What are indicators of interconnectedness between partners?
- What can systematic, larger scale, and integrated studies that go beyond particular experiences tell us about the role of mission-oriented leaders and the ways such leaders support/do not support service-learning and community engagement?

Strategic Institutional Development

- What are the non-profit, private, non-governmental organizations, and government sectors that are most influential and important in furthering the impact of service-learning and community engagement?
- How can an institution engage its staff in service-learning and community engagement and what is the impact on their professional development?



Impact on Community

Investigate the short-term and long-term impact of service-learning and community engagement on communities and how to sustain service-learning and community engagement to optimize positive community impact.

Inequalities and Subjective Perceptions of Inequality

- Does service-learning and community engagement have any impact on reducing the gender pay gap in the community??
- What is the ripple effect of service-learning on unemployment and in developing socially and environmentally committed entrepreneurship?

Immediate, Short, Medium and Long-term Impact

- What long-term changes are notable within partner organisations?
- What is the long-term impact of service-learning on community partners in the context of organisational professionalization? Is service-learning a driving force of organizational professionalisation for community partners?

Community Organizational Sustainability and Mission Alignment

- How do service-learning and community engagement enable communities to further their mission and goals?

Impact on Academic and Educational Staff

Investigate the ways in which involvement in service-learning and community engagement impact the skills, knowledge, and professional trajectories of academic staff.

Transformative Professional Development

- What is the impact on teachers/professors and/or researchers who initiate service-learning or community engagement projects?
- Does service-learning increase the satisfaction of primary and secondary school educators with their profession?
- How can an institution engage its staff in this kind of projects?
- What is the impact on staff members' professional development?

Inclusive Learning Experience Design (Knowledge and Skills)

- How does an interdisciplinary setting of service-learning and community engagement impact actors/participants?
- Does service-learning make the curriculum more relevant, contemporary, and pertinent to the issues of today?
- What are the similarities and differences in impact from participation in traditional in-person service-learning courses and hybrid e-Service-learning courses?

Subjective Well-Being

- Service-learning is risky - it can and does fail. It is also very demanding, requiring a lot of emotional labour. What impact does service-learning have on teaching staff who participate in it?
- To what extent does participation in service-learning experiences contribute to the development of solidarity-based subjectivity and agency (e.g., the capacity to be subjects in research)?
- What is the impact of service-learning on facilitators' (faculty, staff) mental health or well-being?

Impact on Students

Investigate the ways in which participation in service-learning and community engagement impact students' academic, personal, civic, professional, and social skills and attitudes.

Academic Engagement

- How can service-learning and community engagement projects provide a more transformative learning experience?
- What is the tangible legacy of service-learning and community engagement experiences on students in the context of the behavioural domain?
- What are the long-term behaviour changes on students who participate in service-learning and community engagement?

Transversal Skills and Values

- What is the impact of Service-Learning in primary and secondary school democratic competences of students (using the European Union Reference Framework for Competences for Democratic Culture model)?
- How can service-learning help students to broaden their horizons to boost their soft skills and interpersonal competencies?
- On the long-term, how do service-learning and community engagement participation influence the likelihood of former students to engage in politics/civil society?
- Does participation in service-learning and community engagement influence students' values?
- What is the influence of service-learning and community engagement on "how to live your life"? Does service-learning and community engagement participation have an impact on students' life philosophy?

Professional Profile

- How can service-learning and community engagement develop students' graduate identity?
- In regard to balancing future practice, do service-learning and community engagement activities in higher education (and social sciences in particular) enhance the practice of graduates when they take up employment in voluntary/public sector jobs working with disadvantaged communities? Do these service-learning and community engagement opportunities lead to more inclusive and reflective practitioners?
- What is the impact of service-learning and community engagement on students' employability and their employment and transversal skills?
- Are there gender differences in the development of students' employability and transversal skills?

Inequalities and Subjective Perceptions

- Instead of asking students (especially students from disadvantaged backgrounds) to volunteer or engage in service-learning, how does bringing service-learning and community engagement into the curriculum affect students' interest in participating and in their overall experience and development from the experience? from disadvantaged backgrounds?



II. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation research focuses on examining the practices of service-learning and community engagement and the ways in which these practices are effective in achieving particular goals. Implementation studies seek to improve practice and provide guidance on best practices across a broad range of service-learning and community engagement programmatic approaches.

The research agenda identifies questions that centre on the process of delivering service-learning and community engagement across a broad range of community, cultural, geographic, disciplinary, and institutional contexts.

Framework for Implementation (Practices, Models, Roles, and Guidelines)

Investigate the best practices and models for structuring, implementing and assessing service-learning and community engagement that optimize stakeholder impact.

- What is the lifecycle of service-learning implementation?
- Research different ways to design service-learning projects and compare the impact of these different designs.
- Conduct studies that map the stakeholders, resources, specific roles and tasks that are needed to implement high quality service-learning and community engagement.
- What are the necessary training, design, and implementation components to ensure high quality service-learning and community engagement? Are these components interconnected and how do they impact the efficiency of the service-learning practices?
- What is good training for service-learning and community engagement?



Ethics in Implementation

Conduct research on the often-hidden ethical issues that undergird service-learning and community engagement practices and experiences.

- In partnerships, 'reciprocity' may simply be seen as a buzzword. What are the elements for establishing truly reciprocal collaborations in practice for all parties involved?
- Should teaching staff work additional hours (or expend other opportunity costs) to implement service-learning or community engagement?

Disciplinary Approaches/Pedagogical Content Aspects for Engagement Impact

Investigate the opportunities and challenges to adopting and advancing service-learning and community engagement as an instructional pedagogy.

- What is the relationship between particular types of service-learning courses (e.g., large size, particular disciplines, etc.) and different strategies for implementing service-learning in the curriculum.
- Is embedding service-learning realistic in subject-based curriculums? If the agenda is to institutionalise service-learning across universities or other types of educational institutions, how does one achieve this within the curriculum when the curriculum remains subject/discipline-based? Would there be more success if a different approach was taken?



Co-Production

Investigate the nature and approaches to relationship building among the various stakeholders that participate in service-learning and community engagement.

- It is important that service-learning and community engagement reflect the needs of the community and that research findings are shared with the community. What are the best strategies to not only monitor impact but also the process of service-learning/community engagement so that learning and research findings can be truly shared effectively?
- What are the ways to effectively incorporate citizen science principles into service-learning research?
- Examine the different models at play in different institutions of how practitioners and researchers in service-learning work together.



Identification of Needs (Society, Students, Institutions, Stakeholders, etc.)

Investigate the ways in which higher education priorities can align more fully to addressing public purposes through student engagement in service-learning and community engagement.

- How do we shift the focus of higher education from employability to enhancing students' ability to apply learning to real social problems, both as a graduate skill and as a way to best manage their roles as members of the community?

Risks, Challenges, Opportunities, Limitations of Service-Learning and Community Engagement Implementation

Investigate the conditions under which service-learning and community engagement experiences fail in order to better understand practices to avoid.

- Where do most problems in implementation of service-learning and community engagement to occur? How can they be avoided and what contingencies must be addressed?
- How can we minimize the negative side effects of service-learning/community engagement implementation? What are appropriate implementation strategies to minimise the negative side-effects (e.g., negative biases of hierarchy)?



Professionalisation of Engagement

Examine the relationship between service-learning/community engagement training practices and quality implementation.

- How does training on implementation affect the implementation process of service learning and community engagement?
- How does training on implementation affect the level of engagement of students in service-learning/community engagement practices?



Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence in Implementation

Investigate the role of artificial intelligence, technology, and digitalization in advancing quality practice of service-learning and community engagement.

- What are the best practices for conducting high quality hybrid service-learning?
- What are potential benefits and drawbacks of Artificial Intelligence in service-learning and community engagement?
- How can digital tools be implemented for reflection in service-learning and community engagement.
- Service-learning is revealing in its various forms/platforms (e.g., as a course, a project, an extracurricular activity in schools, etc.). How do particular forms/platforms shape and limit possibilities/opportunities for participants' experiences?

III. INSTITUTIONALISATION

Institutionalisation research focuses on examining the factors that promote the sustainability and institutionalisation of service-learning and community engagement across institutional and community contexts.

Studies in this area seek to conceptualize the idea of institutionalisation in light of the changing contexts of educational institutions and the varied approaches to service-learning and community engagement.

Conceptualization of Institutionalisation

Conduct investigations that build greater clarity on the concept of institutionalisation, what its aims are, and why institutionalisation should be achieved.

- "What" is it exactly that you want to institutionalize, considering the multiple interpretations, levels, and applications of community engagement and service-learning?
- What is the goal of institutionalisation? (Whereas it is often phrased as a goal, it seems more as an end)
- What impact does the institutionalisation of service-learning and community engagement have on the institution and the community?



Facilitators and Barriers of Institutionalisation

Investigate the challenges to and facilitators of institutionalizing service-learning and community engagement in educational institutions.

- What are the barriers of service-learning and community engagement institutionalisation?
- What are the motivations of staff members to engage in service-learning and/or community engagement? What motivates teachers to adopt these practices in their work.
- What support and incentives do teachers need to enhance their involvement in service-learning and community engagement?

Process and Strategies of Service-Learning and Community Engagement Institutionalisation

Investigate the various stages of service-learning and community engagement institutionalisation and the different ways that the institutionalisation process can be approached.

- What do longitudinal studies say about the institutionalisation progress and process over time? What are the key markers of institutionalization at different stages of institutionalization development?
- Which strategies for institutionalizing service-learning and community engagement are more successful?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of employing bottom-up approaches to service-learning and community engagement institutionalisation?



Policies and Models for Service-Learning and Community Engagement Institutionalisation

Identify institutional models and structures for service-learning and community engagement institutionalisation.

- What are different, successful models of service-learning and community engagement institutionalisation at different types of educational institutions?
- What types of institutional structures are associated with long-term service-learning and community engagement institutionalisation at institutions that are constantly changing and evolving?



Resources and Funding

Investigate best practices for securing financial and other resources that support the institutionalisation of service-learning and community engagement in educational institutions and partner organizations.

- How can service-learning and community engagement be better resourced to be effectively institutionalized?

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IV. COVID/POST-COVID

Questions and issues that explore service-learning and community engagement practices during and beyond COVID.

The issues include, but are not limited to:

- new emerging practices for service-learning and community engagement resulting from the pandemic.
- changes regarding the conduct of service-learning and community engagement research due to COVID.
- impact of COVID on the quality of service-learning and community engagement; and
- advantages and disadvantages of conducting service-learning and community engagement during or after COVID.

Lessons from COVID (Institutions, Community, and Students)

Investigate the ways that COVID has impacted service-learning and community engagement practices and participants' approaches to and motivations for their involvement in the practices.

- What challenges did the pandemic bring to service-learning and community engagement programs?
- What new best practice strategies did the pandemic bring to service-learning and community engagement programs?
- What are the long-term effects of the pandemic on students' motivation and attitudes towards service-learning and community engagement in the context of digital citizenship, and how can these be effectively addressed?



New Practices in Digital Engagement

Investigate the ways in which COVID has shaped how digital approaches are being applied to service-learning and community engagement practices.

- How have service-learning programs adapted to the challenges posed by the pandemic, and what innovative strategies have emerged during this time that promote digital citizenship?



Changes in Implementation after COVID

Conduct comparisons of how post-COVID practices of service-learning and community engagement practices are similar to or different from the practices used before and during COVID.

- How is e-Service-Learning post-COVID different from e-Service-Learning during COVID?

Ethics in Digital Engagement

Investigate the various ethical issues and challenges that may arise as service-learning and community engagement practice become more digitalized.

- What mechanisms, policies, structures, and practices need to be put in place in order that the implementation of service-learning and community engagement in the post-COVID era account for responsible online behaviour, digital literacy, and ethical use of technology?



Impact of COVID

Investigate whether COVID has changed views and approaches to service-learning and community engagement.

- What are the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on service-learning initiatives in terms of student engagement, community partnerships, and learning outcomes, considering the dimensions of digital citizenship?
- What new skills in post-COVID era are enhanced by service-learning and community engagement participation?



V. EQUITY AND SOCIAL ADVANCEMENT

Research in this area focuses on issues that explore the role of equity in service-learning and community engagement practices within and across cultures, populations, and regions. The issues include, but are not limited to, implications for conducting equity-focused research within and across different groups, populations, communities, and/or cultures.

Equity Principles in Curriculum/Course Design

Explore the program elements in service-learning and community engagement that promote participants' understanding of equity and social advancement.

- What program (curriculum) elements impact the development of critical (justice-oriented) social change understanding?
- Do different program aspects impact students from diverse demographic backgrounds differently?

Critical and Decolonial Research Approach

Conduct investigations that have a critical, decolonial approach and have epistemic integrity.

- What are effective research approaches that embody a critical, decolonial perspective with epistemic integrity that can be applied to studies of service-learning and community engagement?



Equity in Collaboration

Investigate how service-learning/community engagement relationships—between students, faculty, and community—can be made more equitable, reciprocal, and inclusive.

- How do we collaborate in a manner that values the contributions of all parties included in an equal manner?



Student Diversity (Student-Asset)

Examine how educational institutions adopt community-centred practices while addressing power imbalances, historical harm, and equity through justice-centred engagement, equitable co-production, and a commitment to collective thriving.

- How does resource disparity among students influence the creativity, adaptability, and flexibility of service-learning projects?
- What are the outcomes for different student demographics, especially those traditionally marginalised in education (e.g., socio-economic status, first-generation)?



Equity Issues in Society

Explore how service-learning and community engagement initiatives are intentionally structured to promote equity, including the design of partnerships, curricula, and pedagogies that prioritize co-creation, cultural relevance, asset-based approaches, accessibility, and the dismantling of exclusionary practices to ensure inclusive participation and equitable outcomes.

- How and to what extent could service-learning and community engagement contribute to addressing inequity issues?



VI. CULTURAL/REGIONAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL/CROSS-REGIONAL

Issues that explore service-learning and community engagement practices within and across cultures and regions are to be embraced and discussed, with an eye toward identifying questions or action steps for the research agenda.

The research issues include, but is not limited to:

- conducting research within and across different cultural or geographic settings;
- examining service-learning and community engagement across the educational spectrum;
- community voice;
- multiple frames of service-learning and community engagement.

Cultural Sensitivity in Service-Learning and Community Engagement Implementation in Concrete Projects

Investigate strategies for building greater cultural sensitivity and understanding in service-learning and community engagement projects.

- What are successful strategies in cross-cultural collaboration, according to students and community partners?
- How do cultural differences facilitate the capacity of community members to co-create research agendas?
- What are best practices for taking into account the cultural diversity of values/rules/norms of the recipients?



Contributions to Cross-Cultural Awareness

Investigate the ways in which service-learning and community engagement contribute to the advancement of participants' cultural awareness.

- To what extent and in what ways do community engagement and service-learning experiences contribute to culture awareness?
- What impact do cross-cultural service-learning and community engagement projects through glocalization promote participants' cultural awareness?

Cross-Country and Cross-Regional Differences in Community Engagement and Service-Learning Implementation

Examine the similarities and differences in service-learning and community engagement implementation and institutionalization across national, regional, and cultural contexts.

- What are the differences between the regions in regard to how service-learning and community engagement are defined, implemented, and institutionalized?
- What are the qualitative differences among implementing models of service-learning and community engagement across cultures and contexts?



Diversity in Political Context of Community Engagement and Service-Learning Development

Investigate how the different political environments across the region impact the ways in which service-learning and community engagement are practiced and institutionalized.

- How do cultural/historical/governmental/institutional contexts shape strategies for keeping and strengthening service-learning courses and students' engagement?



Linguistic Dimensions in Community Engagement and Service-Learning

Explore how the different languages and linguistic cultures in the region shape the ways in which service-learning and community engagement are defined, practiced, and advanced.

- To what extent is the current movement to give visibility to the linguistic diversity in the region affecting the ways in which service-learning and community engagement are being advanced and operationalised?
- Does the use of English as a primary language in the region perpetuate a sense of colonialism, and if so, does it have an effect on the ways service-learning and community engagement are perceived by students, teachers, and community members?



VII. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS AND THEORIES

The field of service-learning and community engagement has been criticized for being under-theorized and for lacking well-developed and well-tested conceptual frameworks.

Research in this area of work focuses on theory testing and building conceptual models and frameworks that explain various phenomena in the study and practice of service-learning and community engagement.

Theoretical Lens

Build a deeper and expanded theoretical base for research on service-learning and community engagement.

What are the conceptual frameworks and theories from other fields and disciplines that can be used in research on service-learning and community engagement. Some examples might include:

- Transformative learning theory
- Community organizing theories and frameworks. There are some examples developed where higher education works with local community organizing partners. This can be helpful for re-conceptualising service-learning and community engagement as more overtly political.
- Critical pedagogy — critical consciousness core to our hopes.
- Social pedagogy. This might be a useful theory as it focuses on cultural agility and inclusive practice - seeing academic/practitioners/communities and individuals as all sharing the same life space.
- Complex systems theory to analyse success of service-learning (one study exists, it can be interesting to replicate it)
- Digital participation theory
- Theory of experiential learning and its influence on students' learning.
- Theoretical models of social empathy development - could help reflection.
- Ecological models applied to institutional learning.

Operational Framework

Establish conceptual frameworks that provide guidance on how to best operate and deliver service-learning and community engagement programs and practices.

- How can the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) be leveraged as a taxonomy framework for service-learning activities. The (SDGs) have proven to be a useful framework for service-learning activities.
- What are the best digital literacy frameworks to understand and enhance service-learning and community engagement practices?
- What concept models explain the relationship between service-learning/community engagement participation and democratic and/or global competencies?

Systematising Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement

Develop a research plan that articulates a systematic approach to advancing key areas of research on service-learning and community engagement in Europe.

Which are the model protocols from previous research in broader field service-learning and community engagement that can be used as guides for conducting research on service-learning and community engagement in Europe?

- Conduct a systematic review of existing research on service-learning and community engagement in Europe beginning with pulling together a systematic review of the literature that has attempted to theorise service-learning/community-engaged learning. This will provide a picture of the state of play and the kinds of theories/models that have been used to date.
- Conduct an overview on the different theoretical models and conceptual frameworks used in service-learning and community engagement studies.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the specific competencies to evaluate and measure in service-learning and community engagement.



Theory Development and Service-learning Conceptualisation

Bring greater clarity to the definition of service-learning, taking into account the diverse knowledge systems and social contexts that influence how service-learning is operationalised and practiced.

- In order to have a robust conceptual framework, we need to build an understanding of what is meant by ‘service-learning’. One of the questions that comes up time and again is ‘what do we mean by service-learning’? It has numerous definitions and as many practices, which creates challenges when trying to use existing frameworks or create new ones for service-learning research.
- What are effective strategies to learn from the indigenous knowledge systems, cultures, and practices? How can communities’ knowledge actually inform current and new theories?



VIII. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The issues in this section focus on identifying the kinds of methods that are appropriate for the study of service-learning and community engagement. The items consider the research designs, methods, epistemologies and approaches that are needed and required in designing and operationalizing future research on service-learning and community engagement.

A broad range of research designs, methods, and approaches are needed in order to gain a full understanding of the nature of the field. A broad range of epistemologies are required in designing and operationalizing today's research on service-learning and community engagement.

Ensuring Quality

Explore the possibility of establishing a set of common expectations and research standards that can guide service-learning and community engagement researchers in conducting and producing high quality research.

- How do we best deal with small samples and sometimes biased conclusions?
- Could a detailed explanation of methodology be required for publications, including expected outcomes?
- Should we agree on guidelines for methodology?



Mixed Methods

Examine the potential and role of mixed methods in studies of service-learning and community engagement.

- Is a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches possible/desired to produce high quality service-learning and community engagement studies?
- Are quantitative and qualitative approaches equally effective in the study of service-learning and community engagement?



Community Focused

Explore effective strategies for conducting community-engaged research that is co-created with partners through participatory methods that prioritize community voice.

- Aim for more studies that utilize participatory action research (PAR).
- Establish a set of elements to be included to measure the community voice.

Longitudinal

Identify best practices and effective strategies for conducting longitudinal studies of service-learning and community engagement.

- How do we deal with the practical challenges of getting longitudinal data?



IX. INSTRUMENTS AND MEASURES

Securing quality research requires valid and appropriate instruments and measures that can secure the best data and provide opportunities for thorough, systematic analyses. Many of the instruments that have been developed for the study of service-learning and community engagement are home grown instruments that are often applied to single studies and are not cultivated further for potential use in other studies. In addition, there are many instruments that are available for studies of service-learning and community engagement, but it is sometimes unclear regarding the suitability of such instruments for programs or populations for which they were not initially designed.

The research agenda identifies issues for improving the instrumentation and measurement of service-learning and community engagement across the many contexts in which the work takes place.

Appropriateness

Conduct more testing of instruments and measures used in community engagement and service-learning research to ensure that the instruments are valid, reliable, and appropriate for the particular conditions and contexts in which the studies take place.

- Validate more instruments for community engagement and service-learning research.
- What are the best instruments for research on service-learning and community engagement that can be applied across diverse and national contexts?
- What is the best way to plan experiments? Should templates be developed to help plan service-learning and community engagement studies?

Collaborative Resources

Enhance the capacity for community engagement and service-learning researchers to access and exchange research-related opportunities, instruments, datasets, and other resources.

Establish an up-to-date repository/online platform that provides various resources (e.g., recent studies, instruments, data sets, etc.) to service-learning and community engagement researchers.

Develop a mechanism for community engagement and service-learning researchers to share and exchange research tools and methods more easily and more widely.



Participatory Engagement

Expand opportunities for all participants and stakeholders to have a voice and role in community engagement and service-learning research activities.

- What are best practices and effective strategies for giving voice to and involving various stakeholders in service-learning and community engagement research studies?
- How do we include the perspectives and voices of community partners?



Qualitative/Narrative Instruments

Develop greater clarity as a field as to which research methods and instruments are valid and appropriate (and not appropriate) for the study of service-learning and community engagement.

- Are all qualitative approaches (data from questionnaires, focus groups, observations in nature, etc.) valid for conducting research on service-learning and community engagement?
- What are the standards of rigour that should be met when using qualitative narrative instruments in service-learning and community engagement research?

Quantitative Instruments

Develop a database of quantitative instruments that are applicable to and valid for research on service-learning and community engagement.

- Quantitative measures in service-learning and community engagement research are scant. More instruments are needed. What are effective mechanisms for developing them?

X. REPLICATION

No one study provides all the evidence, understanding, or knowledge that is needed to draw firm conclusions about service-learning or community engagement. Replication is a critical feature of scientific inquiry and research.

Only a handful of service-learning and community engagement studies have been replicated. Replicating high quality studies is a way to strengthen evidence and secure more conclusive findings about the strengths and limitations of service-learning and community engagement practices, outcomes, and approaches.

Cross-Regional/Cross-Cultural Replication

Replicate service-learning and community engagement studies in new and different local and global contexts.

- Conduct further research in various local and global contexts, focusing on immigration studies (as both a topic and sample) and its connection to service-learning and community engagement.
- Conduct further research in various local and global contexts, focusing on community needs and their connection to service-learning and community engagement (as both a topic and sample).
- Conduct further research in various local and global contexts, focusing on populations with similar characteristics across different contexts, and populations with diverse characteristics in similar contexts (as a sample), while investigating various variables of interest.
- Conduct further research in various local and global contexts, focusing on (as a topic) how service-learning and community engagement studies can address universal needs.

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