

7th International Conference on Intercultural Education “Education, Health and ICT for a Transcultural World”, EDUHEM 2016, 15-17 June 2016, Almeria, Spain

## The project of “Cap Collection”: a PBL in the school and an opportunity of social inclusion for students and adults with intellectual disability

José Francisco Amiama<sup>a\*</sup>, Javier Monzón<sup>a</sup> & Javier Ballesta<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Universidad del País Vasco / Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (UPV/EHU). Av Tolosa, 70 20018 Donostia, SPAIN

<sup>b</sup> University of Murcia. Campus Universitario de Espinardo 30100 Murcia, SPAIN

---

### Abstract

This Case study, which is included in a wider research, gathers the experience, started in the previous academic year, of a community service learning project on the collection of plastic caps done by students of sixth form (11-12 years old) in collaboration with adult people who suffer from an intellectual disability. From a qualitative methodology based on analysis of documents, observation and deep interviewing, we want to investigate its keys to success, including also the benefits which these two collectives obtain. Among the obtained results, we emphasize on the importance of the sense of this project (benefit for a third person), as a motivating element and which generates stability, as well as the collaborative culture between supported entities from an educating city. Also, we notice benefits for the adult people with an intellectual disability, who are introduced as active citizens, as well as on the recognition of diversity on the side of the students.

© 2017 Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of EDUHEM 2016.

*Keywords:* Project Based Learning, service learning, education on diversity, educating city; voluntary service.

---

### 1. Introduction

Current society is immersed in a deep process of change which affects school, since it is an educating institution and it is linked to its territory; but also to the community organizations, municipality and state (Bolívar & Escudero, 2008). This educating entity is requested to help students, as they are citizens, to develop a series of functional

---

\* Corresponding author. *E-mail address:* [joxe.amiaama@ehu.eus](mailto:joxe.amiaama@ehu.eus)

competences for their personal and social growth (Kolmos, 2004; Branda, 2008; Kuiper, Meijer & Moust, 2011; Mendía 2012). This challenge demands changes in the ways of doing of the school. A methodological proposal which helps with this change of paradigm is Project Based Learning (PBL).

Within this methodology and looking for a social bonus, Service Learning (SL) is defined as “an educating proposal which combines processes of learning and community service in a single, well articulated project, in which participants learn at the same time as they work in real necessities of the environment with the aim of improving it” (Puig, Batlle, Bosch & Palos, 2007 p.15). Therefore, LS is an educating model which promotes civic values, favouring the participation of community members, from an associative perspective and with the aims of covering their own necessities from solidarity (Mendía, 2012). This author adds that it is a binomial made up of the words learning and solidarity service. This task can be directed towards the school, for example by having the students of higher forms help children with the reading; as well as towards the community, which is the case we are analysing in this article. This kind of practice, despite being considered interesting since they articulate school, community and social aspects, offering a reflexive learning with beneficial results for the collectiveness, is very rare in schools (Martínez, 2014). In this same sense, Osborne and Dillon (2007) reflect on the great value given to school for the formation of citizens, not realizing the time employed in such an institution is not higher than 20%, adding that learning also takes place in social and cultural contexts. Some authors are starting to get over the concept of *formal and non-formal education* to talk about learnings, and talk about educational contexts (Guisasola & Morentín, 2007).

Towns and cities are places where, paradoxically, the increase of inequality, anonymity or a feeling of lack of safety, as well as the support for the citizens’ rights or spaces for leisure, opportunities and meetings can occur at the same time (Subirats, 2013).

Based on this idea, learning and educating cities came up. In 2012 UNO approved of the establishment of the Global Network of Learning Cities of UNESCO (UNESCO-GLCN), the following year the First International Conference took place in Beijing, where about five hundred mayors and educational institutions from more than one hundred nations took part (García, 2015). This author understands an educating city as “that region, town or city which moves its resources at all levels with the aim of boosting and enriching its human potential, for the encouragement of personal development, the maintenance of social cohesion and the creation of prosperity. This covers and interrelates the different educating processes: formal, non-formal and informal” (García, 2015 p. 59).

The state network of the educating cities of Spain (2016) compiles the three principles in which they are based on: 1. Detection and evaluation of necessities to carry out social proposals; 2.- Presenting the information in a transparent and adequate way; 3.- Citizen participation.

This educative proposal suggests including its members by looking for explicit links of collaboration among all its citizens and the institutions which represent them. At the same time, it facilitates the learning and socialization to those collectives who have been historically marginalized and excluded by the community (Klein & Osborne, 2008).

Among these groups we find adults with intellectual disability, who, historically, have been given some support, but to a lesser extent to generate a feeling of belonging to the community. Amado (2001) defines them as *tourists* in their own neighbourhood, municipality or town, since they are present but not cohabiting or contributing socially to the collective. It seems interesting to change the way of looking at these citizens, not only considering them as mere service recipients but also looking at them as generating ones, for example, through voluntary service (Shoultz & Lakin, 2001). This new kind of proposals, apart from benefitting those people who receive voluntary support, are also useful for this collective to dignify themselves as an active and participating agent towards the others, promoting the search of new social roles (Amado, 2001).

It is a challenge that is materializing bit by bit, like in this project of cap collection where members of two institutions of the same municipality, which is an educating city, take part. One group made up of 12-year-old students of a school and a day care centre of adult people with intellectual disability.

## 2. Method

Trying to faithfully capture the scope of the experience and the sense of what was lived in the proposal of service learning, this research is based on a case study. The study, in its totality, gathers the analysis of three school

experiences. One linked to a classroom of the school, a second one linked to the centre, and the third one, which corresponds to this work, deals with an educating proposal which links the school to its territory.

The analysed dimensions have been divided in two groups. One referring to community view (common values and interests; feeling of belonging; acknowledgement of diversity, and link of cultural life and territory); and the other referring to citizen participation (shared leadership, collaborative culture, democracy, and social transformation).

### 2.1. Aims

This exploratory qualitative research has as its aim to know the keys to success of a service learning project by compiling the benefits it provides its participants.

### 2.2. Instruments

In the development of this proposal, the following tools were used:

*Documental Analysis* in the first phase of the study of the case for the contextualization of the practice. On the one hand, texts of the municipality, since it is an educating city, were analysed, and on the other hand the models of the institution of adult people with intellectual disability.

*Non-participating Observation* in the meeting of the different participating entities which took place in the educating city with the intention of defining the collaborative activities to be done during the academic year. These data were also collected before the interview.

*In-depth Interview* about the keys and the impact of the project on cap collection in both participating institutions. This formal conversation was carried out with the headmistress of the school and the person responsible for the day care centre.

### 2.3. Procedure

The context of the investigation is put into practice in the industrial municipality where the school is located, which has a population of 9,500 inhabitants. This is one of the 170 educating cities of Spain. This process started in 2008 with the collaboration of UPV/EHU (University of the Basque Country) although the first 12 educating municipal activities started in 2010. In 2014, the entry to the network of educating cities is requested. By the academic year 2015-2016, 156 activities had already been designed, nine of which correspond to the inclusive society section. Apart from the town-hall as coordinator, sixteen entities of the municipality take part too.

The school belongs to the network of ikastolas of the Basque Country. It defines itself as an integral cooperative, and belongs to the teachers and the families. One of its main goals is the use and spreading of the Basque Language. Its educating offer is wide (2-18 years old) and has an average of two classrooms per course.

The other entity belongs to Fundación Goyeneche-Garagune. They are 13 day care centres which offer their services to about 250 adult people with intellectual disability, whose aim is to turn them into first class citizens. The centre of this municipality normally does different activities and social projects as a collective (talks in schools and universities, selling of products in the municipal market, collecting school material for the Red Cross, volunteering, ...) and also in collaboration with the rest of municipal entities. One of these collaborative projects is the cap collection.

The Garagune Centre took the initiative to propose companies, shops, bars and the two educating centres of the municipality the collecting of plastic caps to fund the purchasing of an adapted vehicle for a boy who suffers from Weber-Cockayne syndrome. These users' commitment was to collect the recyclable material every fifteen days and take it to a waste collecting point.

The Ikastola saw in this Project an opportunity to turn it into a Service Learning for fifth form students (10-year-olds). First, during Language class, they worked on some argumentative writings which were sent to the school management for the approval of the project and the authorization to temporarily leave the classroom every fifteen days. They also wrote to the rest of schoolmates and their families, who got involved from the very beginning.

These alumni took on the responsibility of collecting the caps from all the classrooms of the centre's two buildings and, every fifteen days, give them to the users of Garagune, thus generating a relationship among people. In each of the two academic years that this service learning takes, a formative session on the intellectual disability under the name of Me like You was carried out

The carried out project has been interdisciplinary. During the Maths class, they weighed and quantified the caps in graphics, making comparatives. These results were shown in the rest of the classrooms and in the teachers' offices. Under the alumni initiative, during the Arts class, they have built some decorated boxes which will look aesthetic in the school and that will encourage their use.

### 3. Results

The data have been arranged based on the aim previously formulated:

#### 3.1. Keys to the success of the project

- The headmistress (H) claims it has been the purpose, (raise funds by collecting caps) for the benefit of a third party. "It is not our goal"(H), adding that the aim is in the longer term, what gives a longer continuity to the community activity. "It leads us to understand that giving occasional support is a mistake. Those collaborative activities are alright to get to know each other, to know what there is in the village. However, they miss a bit of their content" (H). "Bonds between these groups have arisen"(H)
- Being a participant in an educating city facilitates carrying out projects and activities. "We are always encouraging people to take part and to do that, the educating city is a special frame because it is possible to combine all those activities you have in your mind"(H)
- However, there is the risk of activism, the action for the sake of the action. "If you don't really believe in it, it might be that from there, other activities appear that have no consequence afterwards, either another one begins or it remains as an activity of which you say it was alright and is positively valued; but we call those mushrooms. It stays as one more mushroom"(H)
- The important role that the teachers play with a positive attitude towards the community proposal is also noticeable. "The fact that the teacher creates and values is an important factor for the success and possible continuity of the projects" (H)

#### 3.2. Benefits for those who collaborate

In the school:

- From a competence point, the students work values such as solidarity and respect for the other thanks to the shared practice with other courses and with another entity. In her reflection, the headmistress puts it as follows: "Many times we don't go further than the theory. Through videos you can see and work with many values. But it is having them close and sharing those moments that we really embrace them, and if we mean to, we can, as a final target, bring up students who are competent for life. They live in a certain environment, but sometimes you need to open your eyes wide to realise what that environment is like. If the nearest environment is (name of the town), I think all the richness it can have in its difference needs to be looked at from a positive and altruistic view"(H)
- Acknowledgement of diversity, noticing that a disabled person can be a committed citizen. Regarding the change in the point of view of the student on people with intellectual disability, the headmistress mentions that the children become aware that "they also collaborate, that they can also be altruistic and even that they come here to facilitate certain tasks which we can't or don't do"(H) These experiences are considered during shared moments like the session Me like You. The headmistress is aware of the importance of giving words to these learnings. They have already lived the experience and they have taken it to the most reflexive point" (H)

- Apart from these benefits, in the curricular aspect the contents to be taught are also covered, what also helps to bring sense to the social task. “So we have talked about Maths, about Arts, languages, values, therefore it leaves room to perfectly include it in the curriculum without being afraid to say there will be contents uncovered” (H)
- The headmistress emphasizes on the stimulating nervousness with which collection day is expected because of the ignorance regarding the amount of caps that will be collected as well as for the people who will be coming to pick them up. “How many? Who will pick them up? Who is coming to get them?” (H)

In Garagune Centre:

- The person responsible for the day care centre (PRDC) says that the Garagune centre, through this project with the school, covers the aims demanded by its users, like seeing these adults in the surroundings “they travel in a van collecting the bags with caps” (PRCD)
- Another aim is to facilitate opportunities to relate to. The person responsible mentions that “you can tell who knows them and who doesn’t in the playground” and adds the evidence that “the number of people they stop to talk to in the street has increased” (PRCD)
- The third and fourth aim are to generate opportunities of contribution and to increase active participation. Proposals which are covered with this kind of actions as they are aware of the “what for” of the activity. The young boy who the benefits of this campaign are for visited us in the centre and it was an emotional visit and we all wanted to help” (PRCD)
- Between both institutions the joint activities have increased and the duration of some of them too. The person responsible said that, on request of this group of students, they were invited to an omelette contest and to a photography course.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusions

A basic goal for the school is to actively participate in the construction of competent and critical citizens. Therefore it must be aware that it is located in a context which has its own characteristics and conditions and that it is influenced by these. Service learning projects are a methodological proposal that can link the school to its territory by means of a social project, generating benefits for the members of the educating community as well as for the social community. Thus, we start from a shared cultural project that gives sense and cohesion to the community and that breaks the barriers between formal and informal learning.

Through this experience we can conclude that, several variables have converged for its success in its execution. The first one is the application of active and participative methodologies which empower the student. They are allowed to leave the classroom periodically under the supervision of the teacher and management of the school, guaranteeing they are working on the curricular contents proposed for the academic year, in a more flexible and interdisciplinary way. The attitude and belief of the teachers are basic, as they lead the practical side of the project.

A second one is that the project must make sense. This is to take into account the own context and making sure it generates benefits on others and inspires hope in the members that take part collaboratively. This motivation for a community action and with its clear and social aims generates stability and therefore sustainable projects which connect the project with its environment. These cohabitation proposals in the frame of an educating city also need entities and people for them to be able to arise and stay in time. Based on the evolution of the activities during these few years, we can see that not only the number of activities increases but also that after a positive assessment of that experience, it is repeated in a wider way and with a greater stability in time, generating new synergies between them.

Both institutions count on available people, who promote a shared leadership and who are well considered in their collectives. They boost and encourage others to carry out personal and social enrichment activities, which allow and give all its members the opportunity to participate .

Collaboration between social agents generates links and affection. There are changes in the way of looking at the other one and of recognizing diversity. It also generates a feeling of belonging at the school as it can be seen with the involvement of the families. It is a collaborative culture in which it is not always the same people who offer and receive services.

This simple and beautiful community proposal encourages people to continue with the social transformation for the improvement and human growing of all its members.

## Acknowledgements

Research project: “La escuela incluida en el territorio análisis de las estrategias de participación ciudadana desde la educación intercultural inclusiva”. MINECO 2014-15 (EDU2013-46491-R). Funded by Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.

## References

- Amado, A.N. (2001). Why Bother? How persons with disabilities benefit as volunteers. *Impact*, 14 (2), 4-5.
- Bolívar, A., & Escudero, J.M. (coords). (2008). Respuestas organizativas y pedagógicas ante el riesgo de exclusión educativa. In J. Gairín & S. Antúnez (eds), *Organizaciones educativas al servicio de la sociedad* (pp. 283-318). Madrid: Wolters Kluwer.
- Branda, L.A. (2008). El aprendizaje basado en problemas. El resplandor tan brillante de otros tiempos. En U.F. Araújo, F & Sastre, G. (eds.), *El aprendizaje basado en problemas. Una nueva perspectiva de la enseñanza en la universidad*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
- García, A. (2015). Ciudades del Aprendizaje: una respuesta para la educación. *Revista educare*, 19 (1), 54-69.
- Guisasola, J. & Morentin, M. (2007). ¿Qué papel tienen las visitas escolares a los museos de ciencias en el aprendizaje de las ciencias? Una revisión de las investigaciones. *Enseñanza de las Ciencias*, 25 (3), 439-452.
- Klein, M., & Osborne, K. (2008). *The Concepts and practices of lifelong learning*. *British journal of educational technology*, 39 (4), 755-757.
- Kolmos, A. (2004). Estrategias para desarrollar currículos basados en la formulación de problemas y organizados en base a proyectos. *Educar* 33, 77-96.
- Kuiper, T., Meijer, A., & Moust, J. (2011). Innovation in Public Health Teaching: The Maastricht Experience. *Public Health Reviews*, 33(1), 300-314.
- Martínez, B. (2014) Service-Learning and Inclusive Education. *Educación y futuro*, 30, 183-206.
- Mendía, R. (2012). El aprendizaje-servicio como una estrategia inclusiva para superar las barreras al aprendizaje y a la participación. *Revista Educación Inclusiva*, 5(1), 71-82.
- Osborne, J. , & Dillon, J. (2007). Research on Learning in informal contexts: Advancing the field?. *International Journal of Science Education*, 29(12), 1441-1445.
- Puig, J.M<sup>a</sup>, Batlle, R., Bosch, C., & Palos, J. (2007). *Aprendizaje servicio. Educar para la ciudadanía*. Barcelona: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia & Octaedro.
- Shoultz, B. & Lakin, K. (2001). Volunteer and service opportunities for people with developmental disabilities. *Impact* 14 (2), 2-3.
- Subirats, J. (2013). Una visión desde las políticas públicas en pleno cambio de época y con riesgos significativos de exclusión social. *ATPS. Revista Internacional Animación, territorios y prácticas socioculturales*, 5, 13-26.