

## **Learning methodology in the classroom to encourage participation**

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Service learning is a methodology that promotes the participation of citizens in their community. This article presents a brief conceptualization of citizen participation, characteristics of service-learning methodology, and validation of a programme that promotes service-learning projects. This validation highlights the suitability of this methodology for the development of citizen participation.

**Keywords:** citizen participation; service learning; programme; validation

### **What does citizenship education involve?**

This article is based on GREDI's formation model<sup>1</sup> (Bartolomé and Cabrera, 2007; Bartolomé, 2002) (the aim of which is the promotion of an active, intercultural, responsible, and critical citizenship), where citizenship can be conceived as a legal status that provides individuals with a set of rights and responsibilities. Since a peaceful and productive coexistence between people requires each person, on the one hand, 'to be a citizen' (citizenship as a status) and particularly, on the other hand, 'to feel like a citizen' (citizenship as a process) citizenship therefore includes the notion of culture and citizenship awareness and is a process with the emphasis on the practical exercise of citizenship. Such citizenship awareness is not 'born' but 'created'; it is a natural social construction process that occurs through people's interaction and through their intention to produce a set of collective values and behaviour.

GREDI's model underlines these two basic dimensions: citizenship as a status and citizenship as a process. Citizenship as a process implies active citizenship practice. Hence, citizenship is seen as a social product and is not exclusively linked to its legal status (though the latter is still necessary); it is linked to a feeling of belonging to a community. This feeling may lead to participation in public community issues on the one hand, and on the other hand to obtaining the necessary competences for citizenship that allow for its active practice in the community.

These defining elements (feeling of belonging, participation, and competences for citizenship) interact dynamically and their development may fail if any of them meets an obstacle or barrier. Simultaneously, citizenship practice depends greatly on the individual's context (family, school, social, political context, and so on) (Bartolomé, 2002).

Our focus will be mainly on developing competences for citizenship as well as on creating a proactive, intercultural, critical, and responsible citizenship. Starkey and Savvides (2009), Osler (1998, 2000), Spencer and Klug (1998), and Bárcena (1997) are our main points of reference as well as the European Union's guidelines (Council of Europe, 1999), since they all consider as essential dimensions both the feeling of belonging to a community and citizenship practice. Therefore, within the education for citizenship framework, it would be necessary to:

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1. develop a vivid awareness of belonging to a community
2. learn a set of skills and competences to participate in a community
3. have a committed attitude towards community improvement.

### Citizen participation as a key transforming process

As has been mentioned, competences for citizenship participation are key in creating a proactive idea of citizenship. Indeed, to create a proactive citizenship, participation must be seen as a process for social construction (Cabrera, 2002). Consequently, participation is linked to a way of exercising power from relevant different spaces and interactive networks that we find in everyday life, within the context of a framework of social, cultural, and political institutions.

The differing conceptions of participation deployed by Carr and Kemmis (1988), D'Angelo (2003), Folgueiras (2005), Lipman (1991), Paul and Elder (2005), Pérez Ledesma (2000), Rebellato (2000), and Schön (1997) lay special emphasis on the need to offer education for an active, committed, and responsible participation. If we take the idea of Folgueiras, then we understand by participation:

Participation is understanding as a **citizenship right**, a **collective social action** which generates a sense of commitment and at the same time, a feeling of **shared responsibility** which facilitates **involvement in decision making, creates opportunities** for the development of **capacities** and favours or expresses a **feeling of identity to community**, always insofar as this is put into practice within a framework of **equality**. It is therefore essential from the **experiences and interests of participants**. This implies that it is they who define the topics, and **relationships** within the process are stimulated by **horizontal and egalitarian dialogue**. This makes active participation in **social and educational process** which seeks **change, transformation and social improvement**, whether on an individual or a collective basis. (Folgueiras, 2005: 87, our emphasis)

Table I shows the key elements of Folgueiras's citizen participation analysis.

**Table I:** Key elements of Folgueiras's citizen participation analysis

Participation as a <i>right</i>	'...collective and social action' spaces for coexistence and inclusion where relationships can be horizontal, symmetric, and based on dialogue, must be created for participation to be a right.
Participation as a <i>responsibility</i>	'...a shared responsibility' where power and responsibility are shared. Participation is seen as a compromise and a responsibility that individuals must exercise in order to reinforce its collective construction and avoid creating a feeling of submission to power.
Participation as a <i>tool for improvement</i>	'...it creates opportunities to develop skills' because it enables individuals to enhance both their group and personal dimensions.
Participation as a <i>need</i>	'...feeling of identity towards a community' – participation is therefore key to create a citizen identity that enables individuals to maintain 'their interests and experiences' and, hence, to have a feeling of recognition and to produce values based on equality.

These four elements for citizen participation seen as a responsibility, need, right, and tool for improvement encourage 'a social and educational process that looks for change, transformation and improvement' (Folgueiras, 2005: 87). Consequently, it could be argued that participation is key in social and educational transformation. These four elements show the construction of

participation's strength and potential. All of them interact reciprocally and strengthen each other. On the other hand, each of them, separately, encourages other favourable elements for citizen participation to spring up. For a further analysis of these four elements, see Luna (2010).

**Service learning: A pedagogical proposal for developing citizen participation**

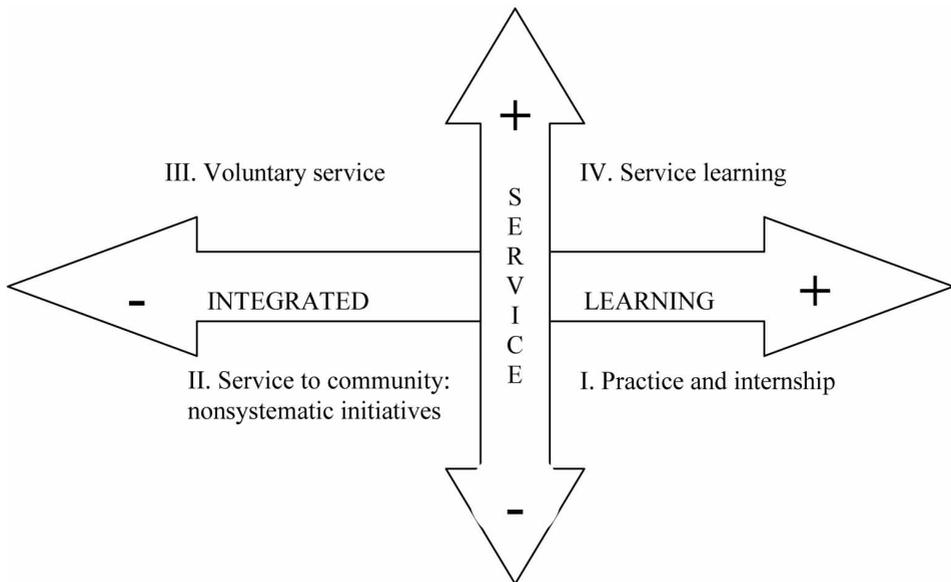
Taking into account our concept of citizenship education and citizen participation as key transforming processes, service learning is one of the most important roads to learning citizenship. Service learning is a pedagogical methodology included in education for citizenship projects that promotes citizen participation and has the aim of establishing a reciprocal link between the school and the community by means of integrating participation into the curriculum.

There are several meanings of service learning (Cabrera and Luna, 2008; Exley, 2004; Furco, 2003; Tapia, 2001); each of them underlines certain aspects that define and extend the concept:

- it is student centred
- it responds to community need or needs
- it is integrated into the school curriculum
- it carries out a service project to respond to identified key needs
- it is always followed up by critical debate and discussion.

As well as several meanings, service learning can also have various labels. In the US it is referred to as Community Action Learning (Bell, 1992) and Course-Based Service (Gray *et al.*, 1999). In South and Central America, we may find Curricular Service in Mexico and Educational Volunteering in Brazil.

Service learning as a pedagogical methodology varies from other similar approaches. Tapia (2001) gathered such approaches in the Service-Learning Quadrants at Stanford University, California (Service-Learning 2000 Center, 1996):



**Figure 1:** Service-learning quadrants

Source: Tapia (2001)

Looking at the Service-Learning Quadrants, we see 'practice and internship' in the first quadrant (I). These involve research activities that engage students with the community. At the same time, the community is seen as the object of study; students get to know it and do not intend to change it or to be of use to the community. Knowledge of the community is, therefore, the main aim of this type of activity.

Quadrant II deals with 'service to community: non-systematic initiatives'. These types of action may be barely linked to any formal/academic learning. They are suggested by the school and happen from time to time. They are intended to provide help or assistance. For example, cases of food or non-perishables may be collected to help victims after catastrophes such as earthquakes and floods.

Quadrant III includes 'voluntary service', and such volunteering is done through official organizations and institutions. Such volunteering practices provide the community with a sustainable and efficient service. This encourages reflection on social values and pro-social attitudes but it is not part of the school curriculum.

However, service learning in Quadrant IV includes activities and experiences that facilitate formal/academic content learning as well as an active service to the community.

### **Psycho-pedagogical basis: Tradition and changes**

Freire, Tyler, and Taba describe the pedagogical principles of *social constructivism*. Such principles play a key role in service learning. Service learning allows students to learn through experience and gives the teacher the role of guide or coach. The teacher-coach will therefore involve and engage students in planning their learning experiences.

Service learning is also associated with Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, and other constructivists' theories, where learning happens as a result of the interaction with the context. Context is also the place where one builds one's own meanings and at the same time these meanings contribute to restructuring initial schemes. Students play an active role in their own learning and in this way they build their own learning, drawing from experience. Teachers guide, orient, enable, and support the students' learning processes. Teachers do not teach knowledge as in a regular classroom; they walk students along and give support during their service-learning experience.

Collaborative learning is another relevant pedagogical principle. Students share their experiences and focus on group discussion and group values, considering the existence of different learning styles (Ferreiro, 1998).

Learning through experience or *experiential learning* is also present in service learning since it involves active participation in a community project. It is characterized by reflective observation through questions whose answers should lead to further reflection and analysis. In his *Theory for Experiential Learning*, Kolb states that service learning provides a specific experience that can stimulate conceptual growth and the learning of students, if the experience is accompanied by a critical analysis of how service learning can be integrated into the curriculum (Tyson, 2004).

*Case work studies*, *project work*, and *problem-solving-based learning* are other key principles in service learning. The latter has clear educational aims to be achieved through a set of actions, interactions, and resources that may lead to solving a problem. It also works by considering students' interests and motivations in order to cater for significant learning about the surrounding context and reality. It departs from a situation that might lead students to a cognitive conflict and it also guides them towards looking for a solution to overcome such conflict and go back to the initial problem. It also promotes solidarity, group interaction, and cooperation, since all these are necessary to accomplish the task at hand (Bottoms and Webb, 1998).

It could therefore be argued that service learning is a new learning methodology that includes several traditional pedagogical principles. At the moment, the novelty of service learning is the educational co-responsibility. Furthermore, we can talk about other novelties, such as its curricular integration; its reciprocal and balanced relationship with the community; and its cooperative and interwoven work system with the different social institutions in the community.

Consequently, the significance of experiential learning lies in the ways in which it:

- enables contextualized learning
- caters for different learning styles
- develops social sensitivity in students
- promotes taking control of the learning process
- develops transversal academic and professional skills
- improves academic attainment through cooperative and participative learning
- enables subjects to be interdisciplinary
- allows for mutual enrichment between the schools and the community.

(Cabrera and Luna, 2008)

### **Curricular integration**

Service learning can be implemented in schools in many different ways and at many different levels, depending on its degree of integration into the curriculum (Bhaerman *et al.*, 1998; Cabrera and Luna, 2008; Duckenfield and Swanson, 1992):

*Level 1. Extra-curricular.* In this case, service learning happens after school hours. The school suggests service learning as an extra-curricular activity or it encourages students to deliver assignments related to this experience on a voluntary basis (in order to certify that such extra-curricular activity is taking place).

*Level 2. Teaching unit.* The teaching staff include service learning in the scheme of work. It will therefore have academic aims but it will not be part of the school activities nor of the curriculum.

*Level 3. Compulsory or optional module/course.* Service learning is seen as a 'traditional' lesson included in the school programme/curriculum within a social science discipline, combining academic and community service experience. In this case it could be associated with the subject of Education for Citizenship (as suggested by Dirks, 1993) or as a credit activity summary, tutorial, or similar.

*Level 4. Curriculum integration.* This stage of implementation is the most extensive, whereby the whole school curriculum would aim to help and support the community. Such a perspective includes the students' full participation, as well as the involvement of all subjects. It would be part of a holistic educational proposal to enable work in different service-learning projects at different stages of the educational key stages. Because of the aim of full commitment to the community, it must engage the whole educational community and all teaching staff, families, and mentors. Implementing service learning to this extent means the whole school must accept a work ethos that aims to promote social justice and this should be reflected in all school activities and behaviour.

### **Stages in implementing service learning**

To carry out service-learning projects and to secure their successful functioning and results, certain implementation stages are required. Such stages have been described before (Cabrera and Luna, 2008) and we list them below:

*1. Preparation: Raising awareness, and motivation*

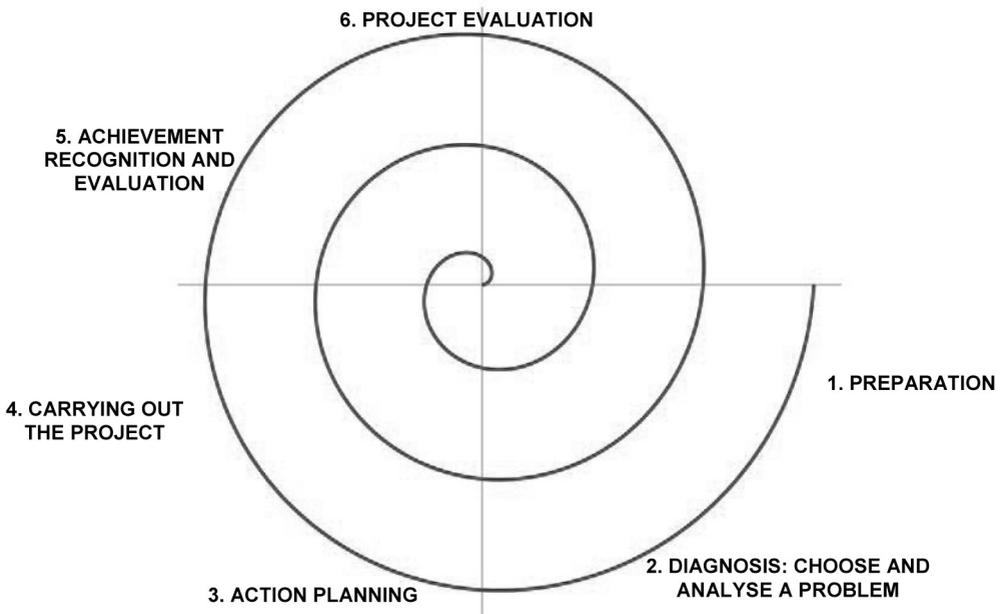
This stage should secure a project’s viability and both institutional and individuals’ commitment. At this stage it is necessary to unveil the service-learning work method. It is also convenient to discuss and assess its pros and cons if there has been no previous experience of service learning. It is also necessary to assess whether it will be possible to carry out the project, as well as to start creating work groups. This is the time to identify the project’s academic goals, the starting point, and the key skills to focus on (citizenship participation, knowledge of the community, work in groups, and so on). After identifying such areas it is also necessary to think about them (active citizenship, collective action value, rights and responsibilities, and so on).

*2. Diagnosis: Choose and analyse a problem or issue*

At this stage it is necessary to carry out an analysis of the surrounding context in order to identify a problem or issue on which to work. All people interested in the project should participate in a collaborative diagnosis of the issue at hand. Two diagnostic processes are recommended:

- direct analysis: through questionnaires, studies of the community, its history and changes that might unleash new issues, such as new arrivals to the community, and so on
- indirect analysis: through reading archives and inviting guest speakers to raise awareness about certain issues (a speaker could be a member of an NGO, social services, neighbourhood watch, or similar).

After the diagnosis, an issue must be selected by all participants. The next stage would be analysing the issue selected and thinking about the possibilities to make a difference (from an institutional, personal, or academic perspective).



**Figure 2:** Stages in a service-learning project

### 3. Action planning

The careful planning of actions to be carried out is essential. Such planning must determine all necessary actions, the resources needed, and the place or places where such actions will occur.

Places for action can also involve many actions, which can be classified as follows:

- direct service: actions are carried out in the same place where the need/issue is identified; for example, language classes for speakers of other languages in the community; help for a neighbourhood association with administration duties on their premises; environmental and conservation activities (tree planting, road maintenance, and so on)
- indirect service: ideas, resources, and experiences happen in the classroom or in the school, for example, writing stories for hospitalized children
- actions to raise awareness and fairness: these could include organizing awareness campaigns through direct mailing, rallies, and so on
- search: relevant information and data from the community is gathered in order to create a local history booklet, a community resources guide, or similar.

Individuals' functions and duties must be distributed at this stage. It is also necessary to discuss procedures, goals, and motivations from both personal and collective/institutional points of view. It must also be clearly stated that all aims are common – to the extent that students involved in the project have the same aims to achieve – and for the benefit of the community.

### 4. Carrying out the project

This stage might require adjusting initial planning to match the reality of the project. It is also a key stage to assess the participants' commitment and performance as well as to log what is happening, lessons to be learnt, difficulties encountered, and achievements.

### 5. Achievement recognition and evaluation

This is the time to assess what knowledge has been acquired by the students and to evaluate such knowledge according to the outlined academic aims. It is also the time to give students recognition for their work. Recognition is a key element in service learning and it can be done through a public presentation/talk, rally, radio broadcast, or similar.

Another important step at this stage is to evaluate students' knowledge as well as their academic achievements at a personal and social level. Such evaluation cannot be conducted using traditional testing methods but by using other means through which both results and learning processes can be assessed and where self-assessment is also encouraged. Consequently, students must think critically about their performance, commitment, and attainment throughout the work.

### 6. Project evaluation

Lastly, the project results, its academic goals, and its impact on the participants involved and the community must be sustainable. At this stage students should also think about aspects, circumstances, and conditions (be they personal, institutional, structural, etc.) that have helped, and about those which have hindered. Unlike the previous evaluation (Stage 5), this stage is concerned with the evaluation of the project and not the assessment of the students.

## From the School to the Community: A training programme that promotes service-learning projects

The From the School to the Community programme (Cabrera *et al.*, 2007)<sup>2</sup> is a set of teaching materials for secondary schools that produces service-learning processes through several group activities, each with its own steps to follow and a methodology focused on learning through fairness in secondary school.

a) Programme learning outcomes:

1. to analyse the group's strengths and weaknesses
2. to get to know the community, its institutions, its issues, its people's values, and so on
3. to develop the necessary analytical, active, and social skills to participate actively in the life of the community
4. to develop a positive attitude towards community service as a valuable good
5. to use debate and discussion to build up a personal learning process.

b) Scheme of work

The programme is structured in five extensive modules articulated sequentially. These are its outcomes:

**Table 2:** From the School to the Community programme modules and specific learning outcomes

Modules	Specific Learning Outcomes
Module 1	To find the need to belong to a group and to find the positive aspects of group work.
Module 2	This module is divided into five smaller modules with the following goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To find out significant and representative elements of the community the participants live in.</li> <li>• To know the history of the community through its prominent people, prominent buildings and sites, important events, etc and understand the community's change through time.</li> <li>• To know the diversity of the community inhabitants considering indicators such as age, gender, nationality, etc.</li> <li>• To use resources at hand to obtain data about the community's inhabitants.</li> <li>• To know what the community's most significant associations and activities are and to encourage young people to participate actively through full- or part-time volunteering.</li> <li>• To develop necessary basic numeracy and literacy skills in order to administer questionnaires, extract data. and draw conclusions from them.</li> </ul>
Module 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify those community issues which could be acted upon.</li> <li>• To analyse issues and problems and outline possible solutions.</li> </ul>
Module 4	This module is divided into two smaller modules with the following goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be able to assess the viability of real action.</li> <li>• To draw an action plan.</li> <li>• To be able to follow up objectives and actions planned at earlier stages.</li> </ul>
Module 5	To learn to be aware of the impact our actions may have on our attitudes, on our newly learnt instrumental skills, social skills and, last but not least, on the knowledge we may have acquired.

Each module is integrated by a set of activities. They can be carried out by small or large groups, inside or outside the classroom. They are aimed at promoting students' learning autonomy. The

teacher's role is to help, support, and guide all groups and to stimulate debate and discussion. Each module comprises a set of guidelines for teachers in order to liven up activities and to help students carry out the activities. The modules should be worked through consecutively from Module 1 to Module 5. Each module should be worked on separately, with outcomes being selected that will be more appropriate and of greater interest to the group.

### The validation of the programme in a secondary school classroom

The evaluation of the programme is carried out by means of an evaluation study that enables us to articulate, contrast, and validate the information coming from both a variety of information-gathering strategies (observation, interviews, and so on) and also from the various participants in the programme's development (student, teacher, other teachers in the school, family, and more) all of whom add value to the process and supply varied and contextualized information. The study is carried out in three stages: initial evaluation, the process itself, and the analysis of the results. The objectives, instruments, strategies, and information sources in each of the stages are described below:

**Table 3:** Stages, objectives, instruments, and information-gathering strategies and information sources

Stage	Objectives	Instruments and strategies	Information sources
Initial evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adapt the programme to the needs and interests of the school.</li> <li>Analyse the initial viability of the project and examine the possibilities of carrying it out in practice and confirm that the basic requirements needed to carry the programme through to its conclusion are fulfilled.</li> <li>Analyse the initial state of the student sample in terms of the key dimensions of the programme.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>document analysis</li> <li>field diary</li> <li>interview</li> <li>classroom dynamics</li> <li>questionnaires</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>school</li> <li>head of school</li> <li>student tutor</li> <li>students</li> </ul>
Evaluation of the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the feasibility of programme implementation, analysing the level of adequacy between the practical aspects, the theoretical framework, and the design plan.</li> <li>Assess the achievements that were obtained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>field diary</li> <li>interviews</li> <li>student portfolios</li> <li>questionnaires</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students</li> <li>teachers</li> <li>families</li> </ul>
Evaluation of the results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the changes the programme produces in the students, both in the school and in the community.</li> <li>Identify 'good practices' in order to facilitate the optimum development of the programme for future implementation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>field diary</li> <li>student portfolios</li> <li>questionnaires</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students</li> <li>teachers</li> </ul>

As far as the sample goes, the evaluation was carried out in a group of 3<sup>o</sup> ESO (15- to 16-year-olds) in a secondary school in Santa Coloma de Gramenet, Barcelona (using Level 3 of implementation: compulsory or optional module/course). This group was characterized by its lack of interest in traditional forms of study, and for a high level of conflict and absenteeism.

The choice of centre was made using criteria of accessibility and interest in the implementation of the programme. The school selected fulfilled both criteria, in particular since one of the

teachers in the school participated in the programme design and was the tutor of the chosen group. This meant interest in evaluating the programme, as well as free and full access to the school and the group were guaranteed from the outset.

The school chosen has a reputation for being an innovative and active one, being itself a living testimony to the projects which are carried out there, with sensitivity towards diversity and a positive attitude to processes of continuous evaluation which is complete, diversified, coherent, integrative, and reciprocal. This institution covers both stages in secondary education – both compulsory and post-compulsory – although our study fell entirely within the compulsory stage. After a long and detailed evaluative research stage and the triangulation of the data collected, we present the outcomes obtained, which highlight three key dimensions, considering them as the final contribution of this research. These dimensions cover the objectives of the programme and synthesize the achievements attained by the students:

- a) strengthening of the natural support networks
- b) preparation for active and responsible citizenship
- c) development and strengthening of individual and group identities.

#### **a) Strengthening of the natural support networks**

In this respect we can decisively conclude that the programme produced a notable improvement in relations between the students themselves, and in particular in terms of their ability to recognize the value of collective action. Group work enabled them to enter a learning process which implied a far better knowledge of their own community. At the same time, and as Ichilov (2003) suggests, such processes involve the development of capacities for expression, discussion, deliberation, the negotiation of differences, and the resolution of conflicts, and in this way generate an inclusive space which improves group functioning and mutual understanding.

At the same time we have been able to see how work in small and large groups is able to generate collaborative dynamics between group members, where the emphasis moves to the importance of learning to live and work jointly with others rather than in competitiveness (Camps, 1998). This collaboration enabled the students to provide mutual help, understanding it to be beneficial. Thus, as Novella (2005) argues, working collaboratively implies projecting and constructing at one and the same time.

The programme has developed, by means of group work, two key aspects which may be considered essential for the creation of an inclusive space: firstly, the capacity for collaboration and mutual help between students, leading to, secondly, a better classroom environment.

#### **b) Preparation for active and responsible citizenship**

The programme permitted the students to experience democratic processes in the micro-context of the classroom, generating an active and responsible citizenship, which respects the norms of communal life and develops faculties of critical judgement and social skills.

This becomes evident once the specific citizenship skills are unbundled. The students acquired social skills such as speaking in public and better organizational ability. In terms of content, they learnt to gather and present statistical data, to construct historical narratives, to identify the elements which constitute the culture of a given neighbourhood, to use the internet to conduct information searches, and so on. They participated as citizens to the extent that they discovered new activities in which to engage in their neighbourhoods during their spare time. They learnt to analyse the needs of their communities and how to approach the local authorities, valuing the

importance of participation in a democratic society. They learnt how to develop a set of their own values as part of a process of active, responsible, critical, and intercultural citizenship; values such as cooperation, intercultural dialogue, responsibility, and respect for their peers.

These values are displayed in behaviour, such as showing interest in work, the level of group involvement, personal effort, positive conflict management, and the skills needed to achieve consensus; in following the rules and the routines of the class, which reflect a philosophy of just and equalitarian treatment; and in a strong feeling of belonging to a community.

In this way, this second dimension (preparation for active and responsible citizenship) is directly related to the previous one (strengthening of natural networks of support). As Novella (2005) asserts, the promotion of the natural support networks between students encourages the establishment of values, the development of skills, and the acquisition of knowledge. Thus the development of common norms and values facilitates an improved level of group cohesion and involvement in the community and encourages group identification, making communal life more cohesive both at the level of the classroom and the level of the community (Bartolomé and Marin, 2005).

### **c) Development and strengthening of individual and group identities**

The student lives the experience of the programme and the community action process with a feeling of success, one which adds to the self-esteem of both the individual and the group, in some cases even to the point of opening up plans for further academic progress which were previously non-existent.

As regards individual identity, it is worth mentioning that the programme encourages a positive feeling of self-esteem among students insofar as it develops the latent potential of the student as translated into social skills (expressing their ideas) and academic skills (written and artistic expression). It also promotes companionship as a value and as a cooperative attitude, as explained in connection with the previous dimension. In this way both the development of the potential of the student as a value, and the attitude which this promotes, generates more security in the student themselves and an improved level of confidence, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, the students offer each other mutual support to the extent that this is necessary to carry out the tasks they are good at (potential), and in this way achieve positive recognition.

Thus we can say that the programme promotes empowering processes among students in terms of their self-awareness and confidence, with a positive impact on their level of social capital. This aspect also helps them to identify and resolve the needs of others, and in the process strengthens communities and the individual identities of their members.

Following this line of reasoning, Johnston *et al.* (1994) draw attention to the role of collective emotions in the development of individual identity as an important nuclear component in the construction of group identity. This identity is formed through a process of individual definition of the shared situations where members of a group become aware of the fact that they belong to that group. This was clear in our study to the extent that the students perceived the classroom as a unit of communal life where they became able to express themselves with growing freedom and confidence.

As a result, we conclude that this dimension confirmed that the programme encouraged the development of both individual and group identity between students by generating an affective bond between them.

## Conclusions

The service-learning methodology is characterized by a learning process which transcends the traditional limits of classroom-based activity. It is a methodology and a way of learning which is derived from a new model of the relations between school and community, one which offers to all those involved in this relationship (pupil, teacher, family, community representatives, and so on) the opportunity to develop participative citizenship competences committed to the collective project of creating a society which is more just, more egalitarian, more inclusive, and more diverse.

Service learning may be defined as an educational process which emphasizes academic learning linked to some form of community service project. It is in the dual dynamic 'academic learning–work in the community', where both parties benefit from a mutual learning process, that the power and attractiveness of service learning lies.

Furthermore, the results of the research also permit us to highlight the adequacy of the service-learning methodology insofar as:

- It allowed the students to experience democratizing processes which encouraged their participation and the recognition of their needs and interests, strengthening in the process the feelings and exercise of citizenship.
- It accentuated those values and citizenship practices which are associated with the concept of citizenship: commitment, intercultural dialogue, mutual respect, responsibility, equity, and social justice. In this way the expression 'citizenship' is used in a broad sense emphasizing associated characteristics such as intercultural, active, responsible, and critical characteristics.
- It stressed the dimension of citizenship as a process which is constructed via the process of putting it into practice, through meeting others, working together, and acting as a citizen.
- It promoted the involvement of the students in tasks and activities that require participation and responsibility in decision-making processes, in this way transforming the school into a privileged space for citizenship learning.

In this way it is possible to say that service learning as a methodological strategy for promoting the programme provides a harmonization framework that provides meaning and coherence to the group of objectives, contents, and activities which form the core of the educational programme of citizen participation. That is, to the extent that the programme is more practical than theoretical, more conceptual than routine, and more responsible and committed with a process of social transformation than a simple information transmission mechanism.

Finally, and recovering the definition of participation advanced by Folgueiras (2005) with which we started, we believe that the service-learning programme promotes participation as a right, a responsibility, an instrument for improvement, and a need, considering it as an effective tool for educational and social transformation.

## Notes

1. GREDI – Grupo de Investigación en Educación Intercultural (Research Group for Intercultural Education) – is based in the Pedagogy Faculty at the University of Barcelona. It was launched in 1992, and it has developed a citizenship model that has been validated by a range of research.
2. This material is part of a training programme by GREDI ([www.ub.edu/gredi](http://www.ub.edu/gredi)) to promote intercultural citizenship.

## Notes on contributors

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