

## Early Collaborative Service Learning Activities and Suggestions

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**ABSTRACT:** This study is aimed to improve students' achievement in reading comprehension using WebQuest. This study was conducted by using classroom action research. The subject of this research was the ninth grade students of SMP N 5 Surakarta. It was carried out in two cycles including 6 meetings. Based on the research, it is proven that teaching reading in elementary students by using WebQuest simultaneously improves students' reading comprehension. However, it is worth to note that using webQuest is effective and efficient if the activities and materials involve the students. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers should be more creative to use various material resources and create an interesting form of WebQuest in teaching reading to make the students more interested and actively involved in teaching learning process. In addition, WebQuest can also improve the classroom climate including students' participation and motivation in class, which can be seen from the students' attitude in joining all activities during the research.

**Keywords:** application, community, employability, higher education, teaching method

### I. INTRODUCTION

Service learning (SL) has a long traditional origin of existence and it is defined by Barbara (1996) as a form of experiential education in which students participate in community activities to address the community needs, combined with structured opportunities for learners' reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes. Similarly, Xing (2013) stated that SL is a form of learning that occurs as students work with their peers through applying their academic knowledge to community needs, and simultaneously students reflect their experience and the real outside-world knowledge relevant to their skills. This teaching approach has been employed in various American HEIs for over three decades and this approach has been expanded in application in East Asian universities, especially in Hong Kong and Japan for over a decade. However, SL has, in fact, still seemed to be new in the Vietnamese HE context. As academic researchers working at An Giang University (AGU), located in the Mekong Delta region, the authors have gained some opportunities to attend international SL conferences at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPU) and at Ateneo de Manila University, the Philippines. We have had a valuable time to learn models and experiences of the SL practices applied in Hong Kong and Filipino universities. The writers of this paper aimed to provide the basic literature reviews of the SL approach and models used in foreign HEIs as well as in Vietnamese ones. This is followed with the volunteering practices and the beginning SL appearance AGU. Finally, the authors suggested needs to introduce some SL course forms that can be applied in this university to enhance the core quality of voluntary activities implemented by its Youth Union and Student Association and to promote students' sense and empathy for communities.

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading Comprehension Kennedy (1981, p. 192) states that reading comprehension is a thinking process by which pupil selects facts, information or ideas from printed materials, determines the meanings the author intended to transmit decides how they relate to previous knowledge he has acquired and judges their appropriateness and worth for meeting his own needs and objectives. Andersonin Aebersold and Field(1997, p.16) states that successful readers can comprehend the text well if they are able to:

1. Recognize words quickly
2. Analyze unfamiliar words
3. Read for meaning, concentrate on constructing meaning
4. Guess about the meaning of the text
5. Distinguish main ideas of the text

### **III. METHODOLOGY AND STUDY RESULTS**

The authors used a document analysis to review previous studies to learn about SL benefits and understand the SL practices in the current Vietnamese HEIs. In order to learn about the participative AGU students' SL perceptions in June 2018, the authors designed an open-question survey to learn about their positive and negative perceptions, and difficulties they got when joining this year's SL project. The survey was sent to 14 participative students via email. All 14 responded surveys were obtained. The 14 respondents greatly appreciated the practical meaning of the SL project conducted by the HKPU's Nursing School. These engaged students reported that they learned and developed lots of necessary skills and academic knowledge from this year's SL project. They all had positive perceptions about the SL projects. They included: (i) recognizing the civic responsibility for community and society, (ii) developing communication skills, teamwork skills, money and time management skills, and interview skills, (iii) improving intercultural communicative competence with Hong Kong peers in their work groups, (iv) having a sense of heartfelt empathy towards disadvantaged people and local communities, (v) having initial senses of wider regional ASEAN citizenship and global citizenship, (vi) improving their pedagogical competence and translation skills, (vii) learning difficulties in life of the local people, (viii) learning some basic healthy lifestyles, and (ix) developing foreign friendship and having close foreign friends. For difficulties, most of them admitted that they did not have much difficulty when participating in the project. Specifically, one respondent said that perhaps Hong Kong friends had more difficulties in food, culture than AGU students had. Another student stated that he had some difficulties in communicating with their Hong Kong peers on initial days due to lack of vocabulary to express, but then he could overcome these difficulties in next days and they had better mutual understandings and became good friends. In brief, AGU students had lots of positive perceptions and emotions about the SL project in 2018, expanded their international friendship, and they themselves developed their senses of civic social responsibility and community engagement.

### **IV. DISCUSSION**

The classroom action research was conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of planning stage, acting stage, observing stage, and reflecting stage. The acting stage was conducted in one meeting (2 x 35 minutes) that was performed during the teaching-learning process. The researcher needed a collaborator to observe what was happening in the classroom and to take some notes. The presence of collaborator was to minimize the subjectivity of the researcher while interpreting the data. The data was collected in the form of students' assignment, and field notes. In the first cycle the problems that happened in this cycle were the situation in the class. Students still confused, but they were indicated that they are interested with it. Students liked to watch the movie trailer, but they were still not enthusiastic to read the text or answer aloud. It could be seen when teacher asked one of students to come to the front of class. There were some improvements on students' reading comprehension. The improvements were in some aspects of reading comprehension. They were the skills in finding the main idea, finding the supporting idea, recognizing stated details, finding the meaning of words and referent. The result for the students' mean score in the first was 6.76. It was categorized as Average.

### **V. CONCLUSION**

The conclusions of this research are: 1) The students' reading comprehension had improved by using WebQuest. 2) The students' reading comprehension had improved from the first cycle to the second cycle when WebQuest applied as the media in teaching and learning process. The mean score in the first cycle was 6.76, the second cycle was 7.68. 3) Teaching reading using WebQuest could positively involve the students in the process of teaching and learning activity. WebQuest could improve students' attention and participation in reading class activity. 4) The WebQuest is an appropriate media is an appropriate using for young learners.

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