Using Service-Learning for conducting research: A Case Study of a Health Profile of Yunnan Province, China

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Agenda

- Why is Service-Learning used as a way for research?
- Collaborative Community-based Health Profile Study through Service-Learning in Yunnan, China
- How does the collaboration work?
- Findings
- Action Taken with Service-Learning Program
- Challenges
Why is Service-Learning Used for Conducting Research?

- S-L involves theoretical and practical exploration and investigation of social issues (Andrew Furco, 2001).

- Research helps to identify the community problems and generate the solutions based on the research findings (Enos and Troppe, 1996).

- Using Service-learning as a form of participation research increase the potential for implementation of recommendations from the research (Reardon, 1998, p.59).

- Community and student’s development also benefit from the collaborative community-based research.
Collaborative Community-based Health Profile Study through Service-Learning in Yunnan, China

- S-L project: ‘A Village Adoption Project in Yunnan, China’ (since 2007)
- Office of Service-Learning
- Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu
- The Asia-Pacific Institution of Ageing Studies (APIAS)

The collaboration involves faculty members from research departments, service-learning students, service-learning staff, Deloitte volunteers, and the village leader in Yunnan
Health Issues in Rural China

- PHC should be socially acceptable, financially affordable and universally accessible to every individual in communities (Declaration of Alma-ta)
- Urban-rural disparity of healthcare service and education
- PHC systems are under-developed in remote rural area
- Lack of people-oriented health care system for ethnic minority groups
Objectives of Study

- Understand the practice of PHC system in rural China
- Identify the health needs of Yi minority in rural village
- Build up a health data-base for the village, as well as for the service-learning program development in the village
Target Village: Gezhangla

- Village located at the Northwest part of Gaoqiao of Kunming, seated over 3000 meters above sea level
- Predominantly made up of members of the Yi (彝) minority
- Approximately 450 individuals and roughly 98 household units in the village
- Main Crop: Tobacco
How does the Collaboration Work?

- The World Health Survey (WHS) by the World Health Organization was adopted in the study.
- Researcher is involved in field visit with S-L coordinator since 2007.
- Questionnaire was revised based on the researcher’s on-site experience and the communication with villagers.
- Researchers train the S-L students and volunteer to observe, interview and photograph the villagers’ living environment and relevant risk factors.
Data Collection

- Home visit and face-to-face interview
- 172 adult villagers were successfully reached and completed the interview
- S-L project contributes to data collection
- Reliable and trusting relationship among the villagers and S-L coordinators was built up through different S-L program
- Regular S-L visits allow the villagers to be familiar with strangers and the interview
Findings: Self-assessed Health Condition

- The villagers had a positive attitude toward their self-assessed health condition (43% rated “excellent”, “very good” and “good”).
- Able to conduct self-care tasks without any difficulties (87%).
- However, the mobility (40%), pain (60%) and sleep (43%) are outweighed the WHS report figures by more than 10%.
- Women and elderly were at higher risk of health hazards, attributed to their inequitable social status and the dual roles in the household.
Food supply was secure in the village.
Smoking (36%) and alcohol consumption (29%) reflected similar figures to the WHS Report of China.
Drinking habits are shaped by traditional Yi culture.
Findings: Risk Factors

- Tobacco production poses negative impacts on villager’s health
- 99% of households had water pipelined into their houses, compared with the figure of rural China of 61% (WHO – WHS, 2002)
- No well-installed septic systems
Villagers did not consistently receive relevant diagnosis and treatment
Lack of formal health education
Practice old-fashioned concept of health
92% of the respondents joined the New Cooperative Medical Scheme (NCMS)
Medical centre just have simple medical equipment and medicine
The access of PHC outside of the village was restricted by long distance, long times taken, and expensive services.
Community-Based Research

Impact on the community, faculty and student development

Action for the community (S-L)
Action for the Transformation of Health Knowledge

Women health education

Women Health Ambassador
Action for the Transformation of Health Knowledge

Children health education

Children Health Ambassador
Action for the Transformation of Health Knowledge

Health Check-up

Study arouse health discussion among villagers
We took the initiative to talk with the villager leader and government official about the tentative results of the study.

Sent it to the town government in order to raise their concerns in the village’s development.
Impacts on the Academic Development of Faculty and Student

- Over 80% of participants knew more about the health situation in the village through the health check and study.
- Over 90% of participants deeply realized the importance of health promotion in the rural village.

Quote from BSS student:

“...I studied the Research Method of Social Sciences. What I learned in the class was very useful during the survey. There is a lot of experience and knowledge that you cannot learn from the book...”
The sustainable S-L project presents a lasting effect on the health profile study.

The collaboration is a “win-win” situation, the knowledge exchange between the community and the University and between the villagers and students. Knowledge exchange flows in both directions.
Challenges

- Faculty needs to spend more time outside of the classroom to involve in the community and communicate with the community leaders
- Building mutual trusting relationship with community leaders
- Unstable and short-term involvement of student
Conclusion

- The study sets the milestone for the path of improvement of the living conditions of niche groups in China through S-L.
- The success of study and related S-L programs could encourage other universities to pilot similar projects in rural China.
- Encourage contribution to the rural development of China.
Thank You