


Chapter 8


Global Service–Learning on a Continuum: Shallow and Deep Service– Learning in Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

This book chapter explores student learning and growth after participating in the Science, Society, and Service-Learning in Rwanda study abroad program. The students participated in what the authors define as deep service-learning, one experience that took place over a few days, allowing for more meaningful engagement, and shallow service-learning, two separate experiences that each occurred over a few hours, allowing for less interaction. The authors used Likert-scale and open-ended post-trip questions to assess the students in three categories: 1) global competency and cultural awareness, 2) personal growth and development, and 3) communication and teamwork. The students rated the first category the highest. The authors also assess the effectiveness of the service-learning experiences by including the perspectives of the Rwandan community partners.

Over a decade ago, in 2012, the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) in the United States launched a service-learning study abroad program to Rwanda, focusing on the intersections of science, society, and service-learning. *Science, Society, and Service-Learning in Rwanda* was originally developed in collaboration with Rwandan Presidential Scholars attending UCA to promote science education outreach into primary schools in an attempt to introduce hands-on science activities based on the Rwanda primary

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-2133-1.ch008

school science curriculum guidelines. Prior to departing the United States, faculty and students spent considerable time studying common Western misconceptions about the African continent, the history and geography of Rwanda, the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi, the governmental policy of Unity and Reconciliation, basic Kinyarwanda (the native language of Rwanda), and Rwandan cultural norms. Faculty leaders worked with in-country partners to develop an itinerary that blended important cultural and historical sites, ecotourism experiences, and multiple opportunities for various forms of service-learning.

The emphasis of the program has shifted over the years and now focuses primarily on service-learning in a rural village in northwest Rwanda. The UCA contingent visited the village briefly during the inaugural program year and has since developed a long-term partnership with village leadership to collaboratively plan and implement an ongoing improved cookstove project in the form of site built rocket stoves. The history and community-based participatory research nature of the project have been previously described (Horton, 2022). In brief, the village partner is situated in a remote region in northwest Rwanda and is home to approximately 900 families, many of whom are in the first and second *Ubudehe* categories (most highly subsidized) of the national community-based health insurance scheme. Poverty is endemic in the village, very few families can afford to connect their homes to electricity, and almost everyone depends on firewood as their primary source of fuel. The traditional cooking method in the village is the three-stone fire. Horton (2022) compared the firewood efficiency of the traditional three-stone fires to site built rocket stoves and found the rocket stoves reduced firewood consumption by an average of 32.74%, leading to significant savings of wood, time, and money. Due to the design of the rocket stoves, there is also less wood smoke exposure thereby improving health outcomes of stove users. The primary limitation of Horton's study was the small sample size as only ten families in the village had rocket stoves and an ongoing goal of the partnership has been to build more rocket stoves in the village.

Since the inception of the *Science, Society, and Service-Learning in Rwanda* program, students and faculty have worked with various partners and programs to conduct what we refer to as deep and shallow service-learning. Deep service-learning is characterized by student engagement with community partners over multiple days during which students and community members have the opportunity to form connections, share experiences, and build relationships. In contrast, shallow service-learning is characterized by service performed during a short period of time, typically no more than more than 2-3 hours, which does not provide opportunities for genuine connection and relationship building. The faculty leaders feel that both deep and shallow service-learning are valuable experiences for students. This chapter will explore project development, relationship and trust building with global partners, as well as student perspectives and reflections on both types of global service-learning experiences. The article will close with suggestions for faculty and administrators seeking to develop collaborative, global service-learning programs on their campuses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service-learning is considered in higher education as a high impact practice that blends classroom learning with community engagement in an attempt to bolster student learning of course content as well as various skills and dispositions such as citizenship, perspective taking, and intercultural awareness (Kuh, 2008; Meyers, 2009; Welch & Plaxton-Moore, 2019). Faculty and students can participate in a variety of service-learning activities including direct service, indirect service, advocacy, and research (Welch & Plaxton-Moore, 2019). Morton (1995) asserts that service-learning includes three paradigms

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