Вредносне оријентације нових нараштаја

Зборник радова научних конференција Учитељског факултета на мађарском наставном језику

Az új nemzedékek értékrendje

A Magyar Tannyelvű Tanítóképző Kar tudományos konferenciáinak Tanulmánygyűjteménye

Vrijednosne orijentacije novih naraštaja

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Value system of younger generations

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„SERVICE LEARNING"
A MODEL OF LEARNING THROUGH WORKING WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY
Overview, tracking and evaluation of school projects[1]

BOJANA PERIĆ PRKOSOVAČKI, SARA RAKOVIĆ , MELINDA TOMIĆ
Medicinska škola „7. April", Novi Sad, Republic of Serbia
Kolping društvo Srbije (Kolping Society of Serbia), Novi Sad, Republic of Serbia
bojana.peric-prkosovacki@mf.uns.ac.rs, sara.rakovic@kolping.rs, melinda.tomic@kolping.rs

Summary

Service learning is learning through the application of academic knowledge in the local community.

Service learning is an almost unfamiliar term in Serbian literature, there have been only a handful of papers dealing with this topic. In the region, the outlook is brighter, however, definitely not enough for this term to be well known or recognized in the scientific and expert community.

On the other hand, it is interesting to notice that in the 2014/2015 school year on the territory of Serbia there have been 10 local activities in 8 primary and secondary schools, and this number has grown over the years. In 2018/2019 there were 18 schools who actively implemented this type of learning. Therefore, service learning by working with the local community is practically present in our schools, which further clarifies and justifies the idea behind this paper.

Also, the results of tracking and evaluating the aforementioned project activities show that both the direct and indirect participants confirmed the need of and gave justification for the use of this type of practice in our schools.

Keywords: *service learning, working with the local community*

1. Introduction

It is particularly important to develop, with both students and teachers, the consciousness of social responsibility towards the community that they live in. The process of teaching and educating, just like any other human activity, is subject to changes that elevate and improve them. Thanks to the service learning model, a potentially innovative education method, you learn from your own experience applying directly the acquired academic knowledge. The service learning model encourages active learning through volunteering, in community service or working with the community on planned, organized activities that meet the needs of the community. This is how the service learning method differs from practical work in education and volunteering, as it is normally applied in schools and local communities (Dacić & Džabegović, 1995).

This pedagogical model was developed in the United States where it has a significant tradition and where its purposefulness and value is emphasized compared to the goals of the educational system in the contemporary society. Service learning should include components of the academic, practical, expert and personal education and development, alongside the development of the consciousness regarding social values, responsibility and positive community engagement (Mišić Ilić & Mihajlović, 2019; Speck & Hoppe, 2004).

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[1] The paper was developed as part of the "Service Learning" project of the Kolping Society of Serbia

By educating socially responsible and active citizens, universities and schools are able to accomplish their civil mission in the local community. As social institutions, it is their responsibility to offer the public a clear concept of student engagement and encourage their role as responsible and active citizens. The purpose is to orient them toward the right direction so that tomorrow they could engage in all the various segments of everyday life of the community, which would lead to an improvement of living in a community and maintaining the democratic culture in the society (Dacić & Džabegović, 1995). Stable and sustainable democratic society depends on how many citizens are actually ready to actively participate in their community. The history of the development of democratic societies shows that it cannot live without democrats. Democratic institutions are not enough for the democracy to fully come to life – there needs to be a democratic culture that is able to support and maintain the democratic system (Koopmann, 2002). Many authors agree that citizens engaging in civic duties is key in maintaining democracy, and active citizenry is the educational ideal that contemporary society should strive for (Ledić & Ćulum, 2010).

Strategies that incorporate "action as service learning" (Voll 1998, 122, according to Koopmann, 2002), instead of constantly repeating patterns of teaching and instructive learning, lead towards strengthening individuals as active citizens. Pedagogical efforts that are invested in order to utilize the strategy of strengthening people's identity as citizens is reflected in the offer of learning through participative experiences. We allow kids and the youth to discover their own power, to feel their responsibility, gain insight into political processes and commit themselves to a moral and ethical ideology (Koopmann, 2002).

In the practice of American high schools, especially in the area of social sciences and arts there is an idea that education prepares students to be responsible citizens, actively participate in civic life and to gain responsibility towards the community. Higher education should provide a combination of a highly specialized expert education and a broader general education. The response to such a goal was recognized in the service learning method (Mišić Ilić & Mihajlović, 2019; Speck & Hoppe, 2004). A study (Ward, 1996) done in the late 1990s dealt with institutional support to the method of service learning that was implemented in the late 1980s as the national program of higher education. The study was initiated in order to improve the service learning in the following domains: revising what history saw as service learning; changing the definition of the service that includes service learning within campuses (i.e. work of committees at faculties) and public services (e.g. research done in order to help with solving local problems). The study has shown that service learning is a means to gather various parties in the community and the campus in order to satisfy the needs of the community and encourage social changes. The results of this study say that successful service learning demands vision, leadership, financial support and teacher participation. In order for service learning to be more than a "movement", a modern academic trend, it needs to be integrated in the foundation of an institution (Gelmon, Holland & Spring, 2018; Ward, 1996).

Service learning in Europe has been mostly non-present among the generally accepted educational methods of higher education. The community learning program that has been developed since 2001 at the Institute for Technology in Dublin is the only one real example of service learning. The program was designed as the experience of students that combine learning and skill acquisition, at the same time improving the quality of life in the marginalized communities of Dublin. It was designed for students who are interested in developmental education, community volunteering or advocacy (www.ceastudyabroad.com/program/program-details/service-learning).

In the neighboring countries, there has been research that analyses the possibility of introducing a service learning model into the academic activities at faculties. In Croatia, service learning is seen as the practice that encourages the civic mission of the citizens. Research results show that in Croatia there are 14.2% of university teachers ready to change their teaching practices and research in order to introduce the service learning model, while 33.7% are neutral regarding this. However, according to the analyzed aspects of the civic mission and its principles they are important purposes of higher education. The University of Zagreb has a model of service learning since the 2008/2009 school year as a standalone elective course "Service learning in information sciences" (http://inf.ffzg.unizg.hr/index.php/en/service-learning-projects) (Jelenc, Preradović, & Mujević, 2008; Mikelić Preradović, Kisiček & Boras, 2010).

The service learning model is a learning strategy that integrates purposeful services to the community with academic learning (Preradović, 2011). Through this model, students learn not only how to connect

theory and practice, but also how to help others and create caring relationships with others in their community. The goal of service learning is to help students see the importance of their new knowledge in the real world, but it can also be seen as the solution to include the institutions of the community, labor market and higher education in Croatia.

Similar research regarding the attitudes towards the introduction of service learning in practice was done at the University of Travnik, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Dacić & Džabegović, 1995). Results have shown that 73% of surveyed teachers and assistants were familiar with the term and meaning of service learning, while only 42% of the surveyed thought that service learning could be implemented in the educational system of Bosnia and Herzegovina. An interesting piece of information is that all the surveyed thought that service learning would be beneficial for the students, while 73% thought that it could be useful for the employers as well. Out of the surveyed teachers, 94% stated that they are ready for the change of the teaching process in order to introduce service learning (Dacić & Džabegović, 1995).

2. Service learning concept and model

According to the Europe 2020 Strategy, knowledge is the most valuable source of economic growth, while an educated population is the most important economic capital of Europe (European Commission, 2010). The fact that has been pointed out and caused controversy was the lack of a formal system of education that would prepare children and young people for a successful integration into the economic systems and the general society. What is more, the concern is greater regarding the social cohesion in the context of sudden social changes. The consequent threat of a rising alienation of individuals from the society implies a critical need for strengthening the democratic population, demanding from people to be informed, interested in the society and active participants in it (Gregorová, et al. 2016).

To answer this need, the Council of EU and the European Parliament brought about the European Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in 2006. Key competencies have been identified that are considered to support personal fulfillment of individuals, social engagement, active citizenship and employment based on knowing society. These are: communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic scientific and technological competencies, digital competency, learning how to learn, social and citizenship competencies, the feel for initiative and entrepreneurship, as well as cultural awareness and expression (European Commission, 2007). The implementation of the given competencies for lifelong learning can be seen through service learning.

A translation of "service learning" as "learning through socially useful work" was provided by Mišić Ilić (2013) and defined as learning through community work where students affirm and enrich their knowledge by applying the previously gained knowledge in appropriate social context. On the one hand, students participate in an organized work activity that satisfies the needs recognized in the community, and on the other, they think about the said work activity in the light of the content of the given academic course and wider scientific discipline. The author points out that this increases the understanding of the curriculum and students are encouraged to think about their work experience.

When we look at service learning in this way, we see it as a teaching method that allows for a better insight in what is taught in class with the application of obtained theoretical knowledge, while it increases the level of critical thinking and provides concrete experience and a degree of independence in real situations (Speck & Hoppe, 2004). To evaluate the quality of service learning one can look at: academic results, personal development, social development, citizen activism development and intensity and duration of services (Conway, Amel & Gerwien, 2009).

The influence of volunteering and solidarity activities that add to the complexity of understanding reality and forming personal attitudes and values for knowledge transformation was explained by the authors Puig Rovira (2011) and Furco (2003). They systematically present the educational influence of service learning according to development aspects (Table 1). They consider that the wealth of service learning lies in the integration of the two elements – investing in the community and meaningful learning. On the one hand, working in the community transforms and gives purpose to learning and, on the other hand, active and sensible learning improves work in the community. These elements, apart from this, allow for the creation of reflexive and critical competence and encourage the development of dedication to local community (Puig Rovira, et al. 2011). In publications from the Spanish speaking area, service learning is called *servicio solidario* and and the name itself shows that it includes the

development of solidarity in children and young people. The spectrum of activities is certainly wider, however, any activity should create a responsible relationship towards the community.

Table 1, *source: Puig Rovira, et al., 2011; Furco, 2003*

Educational influence of service learning according to some development aspects	
Academic and cognitive	Better results in standard tests; More developed conceptual knowledge and skills; Higher dedication, motivation to attend and keep going to school; Better average grades; Higher ability to analyze and synthetize complex information
Civic	Better understanding of state politics and activities; Increased participation in the community and public work; Better achievement of rights and responsibilities as a citizen; Higher awareness and understanding of social questions; Dedication to the community
Expert and professional	Expanding awareness and professional abilities; Improving expert skills; Better understanding of work ethics; Better preparation for the world of work
Moral	Greater exposure to new viewpoints and perspectives; Positive changes in ethical judgment; Higher ability to reach independent decisions regarding moral questions
Personal	Higher abilities and developed leadership skills; Increased self-respect; Higher self-esteem; Higher resilience and personal efficiency
Social	Stronger unity among teachers/students; Higher capability when working in teams or working with others; Ability to reject prejudice; Improvement of prosocial behavior

Regional professional literature has written little about this model. There is no consensus in Serbia regarding the translation of the term service learning into Serbian. In Croatia they use *learn by working with the community*, and the argument for this translation is based on: analyzing goals, characteristics and outcomes of this model and correlating with the term and concept of civic mission that this model systematically influences (Ćulum & Ledić, 2009). Some authors have offered the term *socially useful learning* as one of the possible translations for the model of service learning (Jelenc, Preradović & Mujević, 2008). Apart from the discussion around the term, there are numerous others regarding learning and investing in the community.

The Alliance for Service Learning in Education Reform offers one of the most comprehensive and widely accepted definitions, according to which "the service learning model through which students learn and develop through active participation in carefully designed, planned and organized activities that respond to the needs of the community, coordinated by both the school and the community; integrated in the academic curriculum, allowing time for reflection, discussion and writing about the experiences gained by participating, providing students the need to apply the newly gained knowledge and skills in realistic life situations in their own communities; advancing what has been taught in school, expanding the space for learning to the social community; encouraging further development of social responsibility of the individual and the care for others (The Alliance for Service learning in education Reform, 1993; Mikelić & Boras, 2006).

In order to provide a better understanding for the service learning model, a group of experts from the Oklahoma University developed a conceptual model for its definition (Ledić, Ćulum, 2010). The model shows the connection between four factors – academic knowledge from a field of scientific discipline, efforts in academic work, knowledge about the civil society and investing in civic missions. According to this conceptual model, in order for the students to possess the knowledge from the field of scientific discipline, they need to do academic work which points them towards and leads them to the knowledge of a civil society. Just as much, in order to really possess the knowledge of a civil society, students

should have experience of investing in the community. This is a cyclical model in its nature, so that the students continually, through their experience and service learning, create new knowledge and skills (Ledić, Ćulum, 2010).

This brings us to the definition of service learning as a concept. Service learning can be seen as having multiple meanings and can be explained as:
- special approach to teaching that connects the academic knowledge and real problems in the community and the society in the broader sense;
- teaching method that encourages active learning with students as an service learning model;
- pedagogical approach that integrates the study program and investment in community;
- process of practical and direct application of existing resources of educational institutions in the community with the goal of answering the recognized needs of the community, while the students learn from their own experience;
- movement for social change (Ćulum, 2009).

Mišić Ilić and Mihajlović, the authors from the Department of English at the University of Niš, translate service learning and learning through community work, stating that in the broadest sense it represents the teaching method that combines formal teaching with appropriate work in the community. They point out that students affirm and enrich what they have learned when applying it directly in the appropriate social context (Mišić Ilić & Mihajlović, 2019).

Having in mind all of the above, we can conclude that service learning is an innovative teaching method that encourages active learning from one's own experience. The individual learns by participating in the planned and organized activities that respond to the needs of the community, applying the gained academic knowledge.

3. Service learning in Serbia

The Kolping Society of Serbia completed the first, three-year cycle of the "Service Learning" project starting from the school year 2014/2015. The next cycle was planned for the period from 2018 to 2020. During the first cycle, 8 schools (6 secondary, 1 primary and 1 vocational school) implemented 10 socially beneficial actions, in which more than 250 students directly participated. The training for teachers, which preceded the local activities, proved to be useful, as it helped them to understand the whole project and facilitated the exchange of ideas. Teachers expressed great enthusiasm for the application of this innovative method in regular teaching practices, while the students were motivated and committed during the activities in their communities, through which they helped: children without parental care, the elderly, children in hospitals, old craftsmen, unemployed youth, young people in traffic, people with disabilities, and other students.

In addition to initial meetings and teacher training, Kolping provided mentoring to schools during local activities, as well as financial support for the procurement of materials for the implementation of activities.

The closing conference was held in Novi Sad. A publication on the service learning methodology, the project, as well as a brief overview of the implemented local actions were prepared and distributed. After participating in the project, some schools continued to organize similar solidarity actions on their own initiative, which further confirms the importance of the given methodology both at the individual and local level.

In the second cycle, whose main goal is the accreditation of the given program, 15 schools from all parts of Serbia participated every year, and 30 teachers were trained. The added value of the project stems from the fact that other community members have also contributed to improving the quality of life of their fellow citizens as well as to environmental protection. [2]

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[2] A promotional video about the project was posted on the YouTube channel:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=CE_fgR7JcQY&feature=youtu.be, as well as details from the closing conference:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Z5wD7T07c4

4. Evaluation of the "Service Learning" project of the Kolping Society of Serbia

4.1. Purpose, methods and instruments

The research was conducted after the end of the first project cycle, during the closing conference in Novi Sad. The purpose of the research was twofold: A) the evaluation of the effects of the implementation of the "Service Learning" project by teachers and students, B) the examination of the attitudes of teachers and students towards the implementation of the "Service Learning" project.

Within the project evaluation, anonymous evaluation questionnaires were used to examine the attitudes of students and teachers regarding the experience of applying the new teaching method, as well as the participation in local activities. The questionnaires contained open-ended and closed-ended questions, and they were created to follow the project implementation process and to express and explain to us the attitudes of teachers and students regarding the project implementation.

The questionnaire "Evaluation of service learning by students" in addition to basic demographic data (gender, residence, school they attend), contained questions related to previous volunteer experience, target group and time allocated for project activities, as well as questions examining the level of satisfaction with participation in the project and potential benefits in the context of school learning, as well as in personal development. Furthermore, students were asked to list the advantages and disadvantages of the project itself, for the purpose of its improvement.

The questionnaire "Evaluation of service learning by teachers" contained questions related to their previous experience in the field of education, as well as to the potential benefits of service learning for students and the school.

4.2. Sample description

Teachers: The evaluation was attended by 43 teachers who participated in the implementation of the project "Service Learning", organized by the Kolping Society of Serbia. The work experience of the surveyed teachers in the education sector ranges from 1 to 36 years. The average length of work experience of participants is 15 years, with a standard deviation of 9 years.

Students: 20 students of the School of Economics and Trade from Bečej, 6 boys and 14 girls, who were part of the service learning program at the school, participated in the evaluation. Four of them (20%) had previous volunteer experience in the community. They were involved from 1 to 300 hours in a service community-based learning program.

Results and discussion

5. Teachers' attitudes towards participation in the project "Service Learning"

Teachers mostly agree with the statement that service learning develops responsibility and empathy in students, the average answer on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 - I do not agree at all, 5 - I completely agree) is 4.84, while they least agree with the statement that investing into service learning requires spending a lot of school resources. They strongly agreed that service learning should be a part of school activities to a greater extent given the fact that schools lack activities in which students can learn through experience. Detailed results are given in Table 2.

Table 2. *Teachers' answers on the examined scales*

	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
The school lacks activities that involve students in a practical way.	2	5	4.00	.756
Service learning develops responsibility and empathy in students.	3	5	4.84	.433
Service learning requires spending a lot of school resources.	1	5	2.53	.960
Service learning should be part of regular school activities.	3	5	4.67	.522

By using Pearson's correlation, the connections between years of service, program participation, and attitudes about service learning were examined. The data show that longer participation in the program raises awareness that service learning develops responsibility and empathy in students. The correlation is statistically significant, the correlation coefficient is 0.399, $p < 0.05$.

The relationship between individual attitudes was also examined using Pearson's correlation. Teachers who believe that there is a lack of activities in the school that involve students in a practical way are more aware that service learning develops responsibility and empathy in students. The correlation is statistically significant, the correlation coefficient is 0.364, $p < 0.05$.

5.2. Answers to open-ended questions

1. How do you think Service Learning contributes to the students involved?

Most teachers answered this question by pointing out the multiple benefits of service learning for students.

Half of the answers emphasizes the quality of learning, as well as the development of professional competencies: service learning contributes to the acquisition of functional and meaningful knowledge, connecting theory and practice, acquiring practical skills in a real environment, strengthening professional capacity, as well as to acquiring better and longer lasting memory. Students gladly participate in these activities because they are interesting to them. They learn with ease and purpose, don't feel like they are studying, see the products of their work, and have a sense of satisfaction.

The other half of the answers emphasizes personal development and acquisition of social values, such as: creativity, self-confidence, solidarity, team spirit, empathy, tolerance, sense of belonging to the community, activism, cooperation, communication, sensitivity to different vulnerable groups, environmental awareness, ability to think critically and expressing ideas.

2. How do you think community-based service learning contributes to school?

Teachers' answers are intertwined, pointing to the multi-faceted and broad importance of service learning for the school and the school system. It is possible to group them into three categories.

The first category is cooperation with the local community and networking. The teachers pointed out that, through their participation in this project, they gained experience for further work, which they can pass on to other teachers. The school connected better with its environment, and received funds for the purchase of equipment that enables better work, and students acquired the habit of taking care of school property. The school's openness to the community is growing and the learning community is strengthening. It contributes to a more efficient and functional implementation of the curriculum, democratizes the teaching process, facilitates the work of teachers and makes it more interesting, connects the school to the local community and the non-governmental sector as a resource. It intensifies the sense of belonging to the school, encourages care about the preservation of school space and cooperation among peers, connects the school at all levels with the nearby institutions.

The second most common group of answers is about the improvement of quality and innovation in working with students, their active participation, the development of cooperation with teachers and internal school connections. During their participation in this project, teachers recognized a better atmosphere, better teamwork and communication with students, and saw community-based learning as a "connective tissue" between the learning material, which is often incomprehensible and extensive, and its actual practical application. Classes are richer, students get to know real life in a practical way.

The third group of answers which can be singled out is about the promotion of the school in the local community and the strengthening of its social responsibility aspect. Service learning contributes to a healthier atmosphere, general satisfaction and quality of all aspects of school life. It improves the working conditions of the institution and networking, encourages the engagement and creativity of teachers. It facilitates the implementation of ideas that are difficult to implement without the help and support of other partners. The school is becoming recognizable for its positive actions. Through service learning it becomes socially useful in one more way.

6. Student attitudes regarding their participation in the "Service learning" project

Before presenting the student's answers, it is important to mention that only students from one school participated in the evaluation of the project activities. Concretely speaking, students from the department for the education of future insurance agents noticed the problem of the lack of textbooks that unify the most important topics regarding the various types of insurance and present clear examples and explanations to successfully master this field. After several months of hard work they have created the "Guide for work in a virtual insurance company" that they put on the school's website (http://vzruvod.webs.com), so that it could be available for all who are interested. These students have heeded the call to the final conference in large numbers, where the evaluation of the project was done. For Kolping Society of Serbia the direct feedback from the students was certainly important, although this fact narrows the range and variety of answers, as well as the representation in the sample itself.

The questions "How were you involved with the project?" the respondents answered in several sentences. They primarily contributed to the creation of an expert handbook by designing its content, gathering information, presenting data, checking mistakes, as well as organizing the promotion of the handbook (creating invites, receiving guests, developing the presentation).

In the answers to the question "Who did the activities you have carried out helped?" they stated the students involved in the process, as well as the future, younger generations, people working in the said field, and the teachers.

The vast majority of students felt satisfaction after participating in the project. They pointed out the significance of the effort, teamwork and helping others. The project helped them improve their self-esteem, revise and consolidate the learning materials, as well as gain new expert knowledge through examples and research, and competencies that are not directly related to the content of the curriculum.

Respondents answered on a four-point scale (1- I fully agree, 4 − I fully disagree) regarding how much they agree that service learning helped them gain certain skills, knowledge and interests, as well as to learn new things about their community, become more active in it and increase motivation for socially beneficial work. The percentual presentation of their answers can be seen in the table below.

Table 3. *Student answers on the tested scales*

Service learning helped us to:	1-I fully agree (%)	2- I agree (%)	3- I disagree se (%)	M	SD
Learn new things about our community	20	75	5	1,85	0,489
Become more active in the community	75	25	/	1,75	0,444
Become more motivated for socially beneficial work	30	55	15	1,85	0,671
Develop empathy	10	65	25	2,15	0,587
Develop tolerance	16	84	/	1,84	0,375
Develop negotiation skills	60	30	10	1,5	0,688
Develop communication skills	70	25	5	1,35	0,587
Realize that civic engagement can help the community	25	75	/	1,75	0,444
Develop solidarity	35	60	5	1,7	0,571
Learn how we can be active citizens	30	65	5	1,75	0,55
Become aware of the problems in the society	35	60	5	1,7	0,571
Develop consciousness regarding our goal in the society	35	60	5	1,7	0,571
Understand the curriculum better	35	60	5	1,45	0,605
See how the school curriculum can be useful in real life	60	40	/	1,4	0,503

The level of motivation and readiness of students, following the participation in this project, to engage in similar activities in the future was also tested (1-yes, 2-maybe, 3-no). The overview of answers can be found in the table below.

Table 4. *Student readiness to participate in similar activities in the future*

After this experience would you like to:	1-YES (%)	2-MAYBE (%)	3- NO (%)	M	SD
Help those in need in a similar way	79	21	/	1,21	0,419
Participate in other activities regarding service learning	84	11	5	1,21	0,535
Participate in activities organized by the school	53	37	10	1,58	0,692
Participate in the activities of the organization in your community	47	37	16	1,68	0,749
Encourage others to join the service learning	79	21	/	1,21	0,419
To solve problems in the community of your own accord	45	44	11	1,67	0,686

Students' answers to the question "What would you change to improve the activity you have realized?" show how much they care about the project results themselves. One third of the students said that they would not change anything. However, a certain number of them had a more critical attitude and stated the opinion that technical aspects, work conditions, promotion and presentation could be better.

Students answering the question "What did you like the most about service learning" stated that they like the entire project very much, while most of them were happy with all aspects. Some of them specified learning in a new way, helping others, and primarily teamwork, working together. It is obvious that students value the possibility of revising and systematizing the curriculum, and they stated that the most effective way of revising was through service learning.

The answers to the questions "What did you like the least?" show that there are things that the students did not like – some of them were related with the work process and task assignment, the improvement of the product and the fact that not everyone was able to present the results in a public event.

7. Conclusion

According to the available and analyzed literature and according to the results gained in the evaluation of our work, remarkable contribution of the service learning method to the quality of education was noticed. There was a special focus on results of the researchers who dealt with the service learning method in higher education. This tells us that same or similar studies need to be done in the area of primary and secondary education. This would encourage reflection of the expert and scientific community regarding this innovative method and allow for its growth and development.

The application of the "Service learning" project has recorded and once again confirmed that service learning develops responsibility and empathy with students, creativity, self-esteem, solidarity and teamwork. The sense of belonging to the community encourages children and young people to actively participate in the local community and empowers them to recognize the problems in the community that could be solved by teamwork. Children and young people develop cooperation, good communication, critical reflection and expression of their own ideas. They are made aware to notice the problems of different sensitive groups, ecological awareness is awoken, as well as empathy and tolerance.

Furthermore, this method contributes to a more efficient and functional realization of the curriculum, democratizes the teaching process, makes teachers' job easier and more interesting, ties the school to the local community and the non-governmental sector as a resource. With children it strengthens the feeling of belonging to the school, the sense of preserving school space, encourages cooperation among the peers and connects the school at all levels to the institutions in the area.

Teachers have recognized a better atmosphere, better quality of teamwork and communication with other teachers and students. Service learning was symbolically dubbed the "connecting tissue" between the curriculum and the teachers and students, social institutions and the local community.

The evaluation of the "Service learning" project can be seen as the pilot study on the application of the service learning method. The deficiency of the study is the lack of samples. The data received is what is holding us back in generalizing the facts, however, we can use them to further shed light on the application of service learning in Serbia and the world. Respondents have claimed that they would love to participate in these types of activities and encourage others to join service learning.

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