

Abstract: Reimagining Service-Learning for the UN Sustainable Development Goals: A Qualitative Study of Selected Asian Educational Institutions

As the global community accelerates toward the 2030 deadline for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), educational institutions across Asia are undergoing a fundamental paradigm shift. This transition involves moving beyond traditional, sporadic community service and volunteerism toward strategic, comprehensive, and goal-aligned Service-Learning (SL). This qualitative study offers an in-depth, critical exploration of this evolution in SL, primarily by analyzing the crucial integration points within the standardized SL Process Workflow.

Employing a literature review design, the study meticulously examines three critical, interconnected dimensions: (1) the structural and substantive of SL program documentation and curricular frameworks to precisely mirror the metrics and targets of global sustainability agendas; (2) the shifting and deepening perceptions of sustainability from a purely environmental focus to a more holistic understanding encompassing social equity, economic viability, and institutional resilience, within the diverse Asian educational landscape; and (3) the institutional mechanisms and pedagogical practices employed to bridge the gap between aspirational SL policy and effective, on-the-ground implementation.

The theoretical foundation of this research is firmly grounded in Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, particularly its emphasis on the cyclical process of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This framework is synthesized with contemporary critical approaches to sustainable development and social innovation.

The principal findings of the study reveal a critical and immediate need for robust, institution-wide interdisciplinary synergy. This synthesis is required to enable SL programs to move beyond isolated, project-based service activities and to foster systemic social innovation and address the root causes of regional inequalities. Furthermore, the results highlight a significant disparity. While there is a universal high level of stakeholder "intention to act" and institutional commitment to the UNSDGs, there remain profound and persistent gaps in institutional "capacity to integrate" these global goals into core curricula and operational structures.

The study concludes with a forward-looking perspective, asserting that the future efficacy and relevance of Service-Learning in the Asian context hinge upon two critical pillars: (1) the establishment of robust, sustained teacher and faculty capacity-building initiatives focused on reflective practice, partnership brokering, and cross-disciplinary collaboration; and (2) the systematic localization of global visions, ensuring that student-led innovations are meticulously designed to be both culturally grounded, resonant with local needs, and globally significant, contributing measurable data toward the achievement of the UNSDGs.