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21-24 June 2021



Service Learning for Enhancing Student Civic Engagement

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NEXUS - Promoting the nexus of migrants through active citizenship

The NEXUS* project is an ERASMUS+ project running from 2019 to 2022 focused on empowering students (especially migrants) to:

- exercise their rights
- uphold human values
- contribute constructively to the society around them and the global community in general

As newly arrived, migrants are at higher risk of feeling detachment because of [-] lack of social identity, sense of belonging and social engagement.

nº ref.: 2019-1-ES01-KA203-065861; <https://nexus4civics.eu/>



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The Focus

The service learning landscape in the context of enhancing civic engagement and the development of a service learning course scenario which will help convert students with migrant backgrounds from **objects** into the **subjects** of service learning.



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The Contemporary Concept of Service Learning

The **definition** of the European Association for Service Learning in Higher Education:

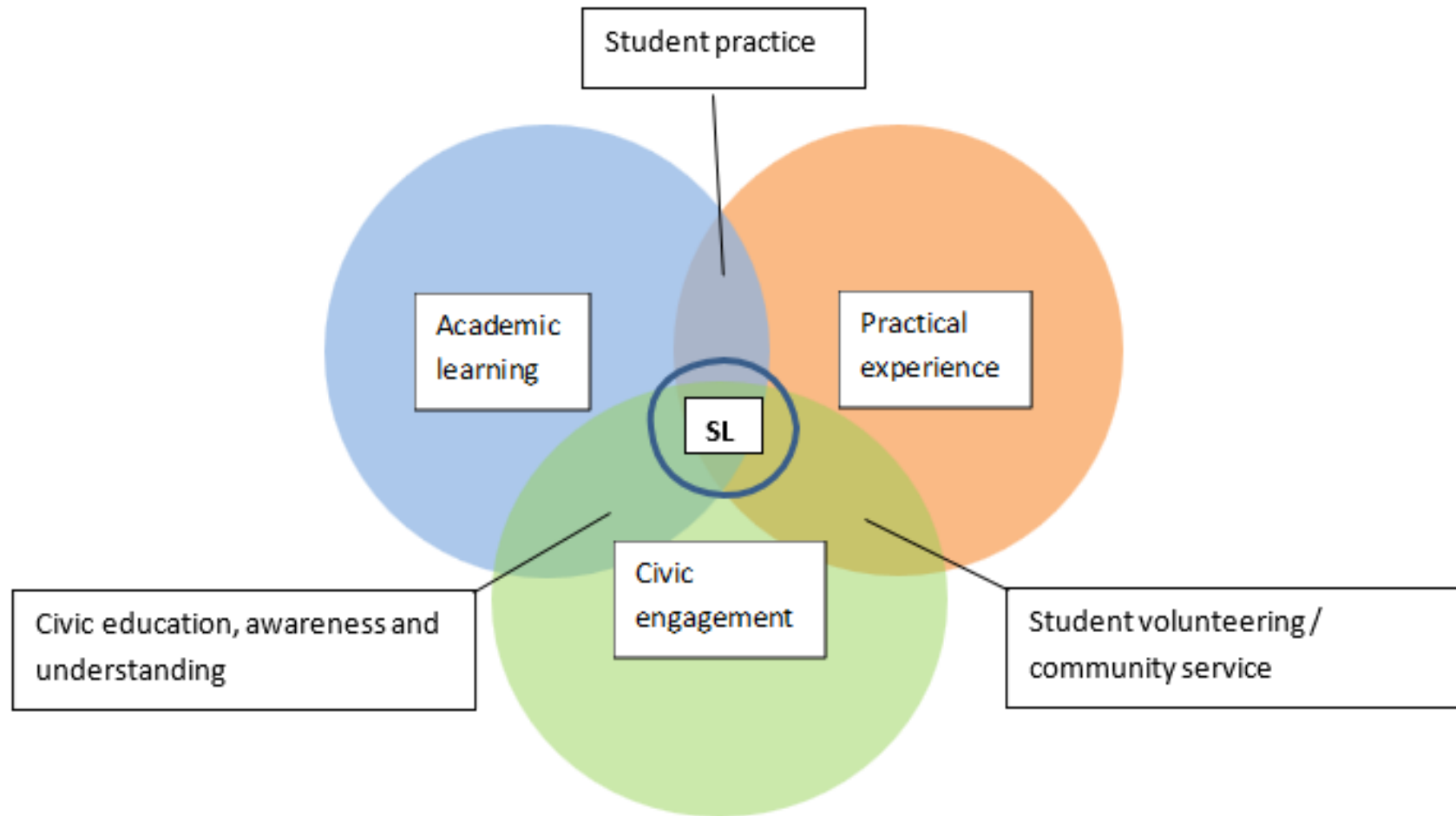
“an educational approach that enhances students’ civic engagement, brings them closer to different social realities while allowing them to work in a real environment. It involves structured and graded student placements in organisations in response to the needs of the community and is different from volunteering because it is part of mandatory coursework” (EASLHE, 2021)



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The Contemporary Concept of Service Learning



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The Contemporary Concept of Service Learning – the Civic Aspect

- the civic aspect of service learning has been explored from the 2000s on
- the importance of combining theory and practice in order to achieve the goals of socially responsive knowledge according to Altman (1996):
 - to educate students in the problems of society
 - to let them experience and understand first-hand social issues in their community
 - give students the experiences and skills to act on social problems



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Principles of Service Learning

- **Reality:** student engagement should be based on real, identified and previously researched problems, challenges and needs of a community
- **Reciprocity:** all the parties involved should benefit from the exchange of knowledge – the students, the teachers/higher education institution and the community
- **Reflection:** a revision of the connection between engagement and educational content must be ensured



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Service Learning Stakeholders

The 3 key stakeholders in a service learning programme:

- the students
- the higher education institution (represented by the teacher)
- the external partner



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Using Service Learning to Enhance Civic Engagement

- the **third mission** of higher education institutions
- service Learning is community-based learning and can contribute to HEIs' connection with the local communities
- higher education institutions' capacity for community engagement can be reinforced by embedding Service Learning into the curriculum and syllabus design
- students gain awareness of different types of societal needs and get first-hand experience of engaging in the community and addressing these needs



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Defining and Reaching the Target Group

- the purpose of NEXUS is to primarily reach newly arrived migrant students and promote their civic engagement
- migrant students are not a homogeneous group within higher education institutions!
- the receiving country's language courses which higher education institutions offer for newly arrived foreign students are courses with a high probability of migrant students' participation
- second language courses usually contain elements of culture and society of the receiving - such courses will lend themselves to Service Learning initiatives



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A Service Learning Course Idea

- a service learning experience aims to build a sense of how the receiving community is organised and how civic engagement contributes to solving societal challenges
- numerous examples of good practice of implementing Service Learning projects which involve migrants and/or persons with a migration-related background
- most of them involve migrants as **objects**, i.e. as the end users - the ones who are receiving the students' help and/or benefiting from the students' service learning activities



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A Service Learning Course Idea

- the NEXUS project aims to make the students with a migration-related background/newly arrived students **the subjects** in Service Learning projects
- Subjects are active participants – the ones who implement community service activities in order to achieve the learning outcomes of the courses and at the same time become actively involved in the community and hence increase their level of civic engagement



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A Service Learning Course Idea

- Malmö University's course package aimed at international students, Swedish Language, Culture and Society I—IV (Centre for Teaching and Learning: Education) - teach and assess culture and society in English to ensure content on an academic level.
- external partners are organisations from the community which will provide the students with the opportunity to interact with the community through community service activities is crucial:
 - local organisations engaged in promoting human and civil rights and dealing with other current societal issues of the receiving country
 - enable students to gain a better understanding of the society and culture and the pressing issues



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Challenges Arising from COVID-19

- COVID-19 has imposed a new delivery mode on education by suddenly moving all teaching and learning online.
- Service Learning elements easily transferred to an online learning environment:
 - preparation (students receive instructions from the teacher)
 - the final reflection part (the students reflect on their community service activities)
 - assessment and grading
- Service Learning Online Challenges:
 - the community service part - mostly tasks that are completed on site and depend on interaction with the community.



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Conclusion

- the novelty of the suggested course outline:
 - the academic content for the students to develop in practice is within the field of culture and society
- the language course has the role of a vessel for the Service-Learning outcome



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