



SIES School of Learning and Leadership Development (SISSLDD)

TRAINING NOTE (015/2024-25)

on

Community Service Among Students

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Backdrop:

In a country like India where there is a huge diversity as well as inequality in terms of social and economic structure, there is a strong need for attitude of community service particularly among students. Besides developing social sensitivity, it enables them to take all decisions in future life keeping this important social dimension in mind.

Hence attitude of community service is an important attribute to be developed among students.

Importance of Community Service for Students:

Character Development: Community service instils qualities such as humility, compassion, and a sense of responsibility. It teaches students to prioritize others' needs, cultivating selflessness and empathy. These traits are critical for becoming a conscientious individual in society particularly in Indian context.

Skill Enhancement: Engaging in volunteer activities sharpens various skills like communication, leadership, time management, conflict management, and teamwork. These skills are transferable to academic and professional settings, making students better equipped for future challenges.

Social Awareness: Volunteering exposes students to diverse social issues, such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. It broadens their perspective and fosters an understanding of challenges faced by others, encouraging them to be proactive contributors to societal improvement. For example, visit to an orphanage will help in enhancing empathy for such unfortunate kids, and so on.

Mental Well-Being: Acts of kindness helps improving mental health of students. Community service provides a sense of fulfilment, reduces stress, and builds resilience, contributing to overall emotional well-being.

Career and Academic Opportunities: Participating in community service reflects positively on college resumes. It shows commitment, leadership, and the ability to work collaboratively, which are valued by educational institutions and employers alike.

Strategies to Inculcate Community Service Skills:

Start in a Structured Way: It can even begin with small initiatives, such as helping neighbours or participating in college-organized drives. Bodies like NSS provide an excellent platform. The beginning should always be in a planned and structured way.

Join Dedicated Clubs: In addition to NSS, many colleges have clubs dedicated to social work or community outreach. Joining these clubs provides excellent opportunities to develop relevant skills.

Set Clear Goals: Students with help from the faculty / mentors should have clear objectives for each community service activity. Whether it is improving a park, teaching underprivileged children, or organizing a charity event, or a blood donation camp, having clear goals helps focus efforts and measure progress.

Engage in Reflection: Students should always reflect on their such social experiences on a periodic basis. Giving and sharing feedback in groups can help them internalize learning, identify strengths and weaknesses, and result in continuous improvement.

Collaborate with Mentors: Students should take guidance from teachers, parents, or experienced volunteers who can provide insights into best practices and help students navigate challenges effectively.

Participate in Skill-Oriented Training: Students should also try to take part in workshops on communication, leadership, problem-solving, and similar other competency building initiatives. These will enhance their capabilities, making them more confident and effective in their roles.

Role of Academic Institutions:

The institutions at all levels starting from schools to post-graduate and beyond have an important role to play for imbuing this important attribute among students. The students of their own cannot undertake social / community service. It is the institutions that need to actively scout for such opportunities and encourage students to go in for such missions.

Community Service as a Part of Curriculum: All institutions should try to keep “community service” as a mandatory exercise once a quarter for various types of beneficiaries; this may include orphanages, schools / institutions with physical / mental challenged students, night schools, centres for life-long learning / special skill centres, old age homes, among others. Students should be encouraged to spend adequate time say, a

few hours on the spot and actively be part of such volunteering acts. This alone will help them to be sensitized with the real-life issues and challenges faced by various strata of people. These community services should be made part of the curriculum. After such visits, the students should be asked to reflect and journal their learning from these activities. This will help them to internalize the learning and better prepared as individuals in life.

Interactions with Social Activists / Entrepreneurs: This is the other strategy that needs to be adopted by the institutions. Such interactions will help the students to understand from the life stories of such individuals, the real pain points and how to tackle them. This might also motivate some students to become social entrepreneurs in future.

Integration of Social Cases: The teachers may adopt the strategy of discussing the social issues through some cases. For example, problems of school dropouts and growth of Akshaya Patra Foundation (APF) by ISKCON, among many others. This will help the students to better appreciate the social issues and relate to their solutions.

Moving Ahead:

Community service is more than just an extracurricular activity; it is a pathway to personal growth and societal change. For students, it provides a platform to cultivate essential skills, develop empathy, and make meaningful contributions to their communities. Through this process, students can not only excel in their academic and professional lives but also become responsible, compassionate citizens. Engaging in community service thus empowers students to create ripples of positive change, embodying the essence of active citizenship and social responsibility. This is one sure way of developing future citizens of the country.
