Recalibrating Service-learning Program into Pure Online Activity

Jimi D. Caldea, De la Salle University, Philippines

Abstract

COVID19 pandemic has forced Higher Educational Institutions to recalibrate their syllabus into online learning. As De la Salle University (DLSU) prepares for online education, the Center for Social Concern and Action-Service Learning Program also must recalibrate its processes. To continuously remain relevant to society and its partner communities' needs, it pursues its Lasallian Mission and, at the same time, effectively carries out its educational work. Relative to this challenge, service-learning, regarded to have effectively brought social awareness and empathy to students that substantially develop the Lasallian core values of faith, service, and communion, deepening their resolve to contribute a life-changing action to the plight of the poor and marginalized, must be conducted online, as well. While apprehensions to E-Service-Learning were due to its being new to DLSU, literature shows that it can be successfully done and can still deliver the traditional service-learning objectives. The "Type IV Extreme E-Service-Learning: Instruction and Service 100% Online", identified by Waldner and colleagues, has been considered through an extensive literature review. This paper presents the recalibrated service-learning processes to match the pure online education setup of DLSU. Employing L.T. Burns' modules of the service-learning program (preparation, action, reflection, and evaluation), I detailed the ESL process flow and its corresponding work instructions for both students and faculty. It carefully embedded the Lasallian Reflection Framework and Kolb's model for experiential learning. ESL successfully emerged in its consistency to deliver student learning, project effectiveness, efficiency, Lasallian values, and program management.

Keywords: eService-learning, Lasallian Reflection Framework, De La Salle University

Introduction

On 27 August 2020, a Help Desk Announcement from the De La Salle University, Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Academics, addressed to the Academic Community, said: "In line with government pronouncements regarding no in-person classes before January 2021, course offerings have three types: A. pure online (no in-person classes at all); B. hybrid (with in-person classes in one week); and C. predominantly in-person (eight days of in-person classes in two non-consecutive weeks).... in-person deployment in external establishments shall remain suspended. Departments are urged to continue using online modes for such activities."

As DLSU is set to proceed with its response to face-face education restrictions brought about by the COVID19 pandemic, the Center for Social Concern and Action-Service Learning Program (COSCA-SLP) has also recalibrated its processes. To remain relevant to society and its partner communities' needs, COSCA-SLP pursues its Lasallian Mission and, at the same time, effectively carries out its educational work (DLSP, 2009). With a firm belief that service-learning effectively brought social awareness and empathy to students that substantially develop the Lasallian core values of faith, service, and communion, deepening their resolve to contribute a life-changing action to the plight of the poor and marginalized, COSCA-SLP persists in learning and adapts to the "new normal".

Service-learning, being a practical application of classroom knowledge and learning achieved by assigning students to work on community-based projects, is an effective teaching style fostering interactive learning by integrating classroom activities into communities (Helms et al., 2015). Therefore, service learning's presence in academics can enhance students' academics, professional readiness, social orientation, community involvement, and commitment to serving the community (Fiebig, 2014).

At the onset, COSCA-SLP apprehensively asked how it can continue service-learning in this time of pandemic? How can it serve and learn when community visits are restricted? And if ESL will continue to help respond or reach out to the poor and the marginalized? The E-Service-Learning (L. Waldner et al., 2010) was COSCA-SLP's proposed replacement to its traditional service-learning processes.

ESL, being a new framework and never been deployed in DLSU, was very positive and encouraging but very challenging, i.e., considering the course design and implementation schedule and partner communities' readiness in communication hardware and software. These are critical to the success of online or e-service projects and student learning (Helms et al., 2015). ESL comes with the primary consideration that it must carefully adapt its traditional SL foundation, the LRF, and its adapted SL definition. LRF serves as a guide for all Lasallian formation and action programs, projects, and activities (Galgo, 2017); and the adapted SL definition, as course-based, reflective, reciprocal in partnership, and civic education, where students serve to learn and learn to serve (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995).

Studies have established SL's applicability in online courses in terms of project completion, client satisfaction, student satisfaction, interaction, and skill-building of the traditional classroom (Helms et al., 2015; L. Waldner et al., 2010). Accordingly, DLSU-SLP has modeled its strategies for implementing service-learning on the "extreme e-service-learning" type of ESL, where both the course and service are conducted online (L. S. Waldner et al., 2012).

Thus, the need to recalibrate the current syllabus to pure online activity must carefully consider the new SL processes. It must adopt the learning activities and outcomes, active learning and assignments, communication among SL stakeholders, active and collaborative education, and reflection activities (Hathaway, 2013). Vibrant online collaborations and discussions among ESL stakeholders are the critical factors for its success (Shea & Pickett, 2005), including interaction with content, collaboration, conversation, intrapersonal interaction, and performance support (Northrup, 2002). Accordingly, COSCA-SLP embarked on various preparatory activities to guarantee all necessary SL elements are in place in pure online mode.

Although ESL in the United States has been in place for several years due to "online-learning" (L. Waldner et al., 2010a), DLSU's adaption of ESL is not due to the demand for online-learning but due to the conventional way or "face-to-face" restrictions to SL program.

In the Philippines, though we have some "distance learning" called "Open University Program" in the Higher Educational Institutions that limits "face-to-face" contacts between the faculty and the students, this, however, is not that patronized by Filipino students that would demand the conduct of ESL (Arimbuyutan et al., 2007).

ESL is encouraging because it can still deliver the expected outcomes; however, communication through the internet is acknowledged and is a big challenge in an online classroom. Thus, meticulous preparation and comprehensive organizing of every online course area in advance are vital (Bangert, 2018).

The process of creating the ESL comes with the primary consideration that it must carefully adapt the traditional Service-Learning foundations: the Lasallian Reflection Framework and the Kolb Model of Experiential Learning. Through extensive literature review, one of the emerging types of e-service-learning endeavors, the "Type IV (Extreme) E-Service-Learning: Instruction and Service 100% Online" (L. Waldner et al., 2010b), was deemed to be the new process flow. ESL process flow includes the list of activities and their corresponding requirements and work instructions for all stakeholders. It ensures to suit DLSU academic online activities. It was then presented to the College of Business, Management and Organization Department, who handles the Corporate Social Responsibility and Governance Course for their comments, suggestions, and eventually integration in their pure online course syllabus.

This paper employs Burns' modules of the service-learning program (preparation, action, reflection, and evaluation) (Burns, 1998) and the Lasallian Reflection Framework (LRF) that serves as a guide for all Lasallian formation and action programs, projects, and activities (Galgo, 2017) for recalibrating to ESL modality. This paper also faithfully framed its processes to Kolb's experiential learning model (McLeod, 2017). I detail the process flow and all its corresponding work instructions for both students and faculty. I then present the ESL students' online evaluation process and results. ESL emerged successfully in its consistency to deliver student learning, project effectiveness, and efficiency, Lasallian values, program management.

LRF and Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning

"E"-Service-Learning" or "Electronic" or "Online"-Service-Learning is the type of Service-Learning being adapted starting Terms 3, AY 2019-2020 at DLSU. ESL is just the result of

the intersection of traditional service-learning and online learning (L. S. Waldner et al., 2012).

DLSU ESL process flow is literature-based and a best practice-based process. Although there were identified challenges and limitations as reported by authors, this, however, has emerged successful in delivering the expected outcomes of the traditional service-learning in terms of student SL project output completion, partner communities and student satisfaction, interaction among stakeholders, and skills building, ESL is doable online (L. Waldner et al., 2010).

Authors have recommended that online courses assist SL that transforms learning while fostering civic engagement (Rutti et al., 2016). When deploying SL in online courses, faculty are encouraged to start with a small project, provide guidance for students, make strategies to contact partner organizations (PO), be ready for sudden outcomes, and have a reflection as an essential part of ESL activities (Strait & Sauer, 2004).

Bearing in mind the ESL best practices, the Lasallian formation component, which is one of the DLSU-SLP components, must be likewise observed throughout the ESL processes. The LRF, which is the pillar of any Lasallian formation in DLSU, is considerably embedded in the ESL process flow. It has likewise emphasized the meaning of why LRF is in a circular movement, i.e., from awareness building, analysis, and planning to a life-changing deployment of actions, which is supposed to repeatedly operate up to the accomplishment of the established objectives of community development intervention.

The LRF is embedded in the Service-Learning Process Flow, primarily because it is anchored to DLSU's core values of Faith, Zeal of Service, and Communion in Mission. It serves as a guide for all Lasallian formation and action initiatives, programs, projects, and activities. The Context of DLSU Service-Learning is deeply rooted in the Principles of Lasallian Education in the Philippines and on the Principles of Lasallian Social Development, which, in summary, are all manifested in the Five Core Principles of Lasallian Schools, i.e., on the faith in the presence of God, Concern for the Poor and Social Justice, Respect for All Persons, Quality Education, and Inclusive Community. It is why the LRF is a must and non-negotiable in the Service-Learning Process.

Another foundation of DLSU service-learning is Kolb's model of experiential learning. It is typically represented by a four-stage learning cycle in which the learner must undergo to achieve the learning, i.e., (1) Having A Concrete Experience where a new experience or situation is encountered, followed by (2) Observation of And Reflection on that experience which leads to (3) the Formation of Abstract Concepts or new idea which the person has learned from their experience, which is then (4) used to test a hypothesis or Active Experimentation where the learner applies their ideas to the world around them to see what happens (McLeod, 2017). Learning here is an integrated process, with each stage being mutually supportive of and feeding into the next. Effective learning only occurs when a learner executes all four stages of the model, i.e., no one stage of the cycle is effective as a learning procedure on its own (McLeod, 2017).

Creating DLSU ESL comes with the primary consideration that it must carefully adapt the traditional Service-Learning foundations: the Lasallian Reflection Framework and the Kolb Model of Experiential Learning.

Before presenting the ESL process flow, the following are the traditional or face-to-face service-learning processes. The first stage is the "see and experience" or *"masid-danas"* activity; the students go through community orientation through community tour and dialogue with the community's people. It is crucial because the students can never effectively proceed to the next stage if this is not undergone. In the second stage, in the "analysis and reflection" or *"suri-nilay"* activity, the students cognitively understand the context of the community's culture, environment, and problem crucial for their project proposal and for such to be impactful and life-changing. The third stage is the "commitment and action" or *"taya-kilos"* activity; the students implement and turnover their SL projects.

ESL Process Flow

Following the traditional service-learning process flow, the below table is the DLSU-ESL process flow.

Phases	Activities	Work Instructions
1. **Preparatory Phase**	1. SL faculty familiarization of e-S-L through orientation	1. SLP orients the Academic departments about ESL;
	2. Identify standard online technologies/platforms to be used	2. SLP Presents possible ways to carry out SL for online courses; and 3. SLP proposes ESL process for T3, AY 2019-2020
	3. Assessment of partner communities' capacity for e-S-L and select partner that is open to online engagement	1. COSCA Partners Network and Development Program (PNDP) prepares Partner Community's readiness to engage SLP through an online setting
	4. Identification of ESL Partner Communities	
	5. Training of partner communities for ESL	
	6. Pre-testing the technology before live sessions	
2. **Orientation Phase** (*See-Experience*)	1. Service-Learning Class Orientation using Synchronous and Asynchronous tools a) AVP of eService-Learning; and b) AVP of the	1. SLP sends faculty, (1) the ESL, and (2) the Partner Community Orientation Videos; 2. Faculty will share these videos with the class; 3. ESL Project ideas will be crafted by students based on these videos; and 4. Students will submit proposals to the faculty for review and to SLP for evaluation and then sharing with the class assigned PO's

	Partner Community	approval.
	2. ESL Project Identification and Planning	1. Students create ESL project plan using the "*ESL Project Proposal Form*" to be submitted to faculty and SLP; and 2. SLP stakeholders keep their communication line open for possible ESL Project-related questions and consultations
3. **Service Proper Phase** (*Analysis-Reflection*)	1. ESL Project Update Reporting and Feed Backing	1. Faculty shares with SLP updates of students' ESL projects, who, in turn, forwards the same to the class' PC for comments; 2. Updating can be done asynchronously. It can be prerecorded; and 3. SLP can send questions electronically before the updating activity for the groups to answer.
	2. ESL Experience Presentation and Group Reflection	1. Faculty shares GDrive with SLP the groups' ESL Experience PowerPoint Presentation
4. **Post Service Phase** (*Commitment-Action*)	1. Submission of ESL Project Outputs and Reflection Papers/Journals	1. Faculty shares the google drive with SLP the groups' ESL Final Project Output and Individual Reflection Papers/Journals; 2. With the asynchronous setup, it is vital to establish deadlines, i.e., in agreement with the PO for submission of the final ESL outputs; and 3. Students are provided with reflection prompts that related to academic enhancement, personal development, and Lasallian core values formation.
	2. Administration of Online Evaluation on Students' Satisfaction on ESL	1. SLP shares with faculty the link of ESL evaluation google form for students to accomplish; and 2. SLP discusses evaluation results and integrates them into the next academic term's processes.
	3. Facilitate Project Turnover	3. A careful evaluation in assessing the quality of the completed ESL project should be done before turning them over to Pos; and 4. SLP shares with PNDP the students' ESL outputs for turnover to class' PO

Table 1. DLSU-ESL Process Flow

It has four phases, the same as DLSU traditional SL. As illustrated, recalibrating the service-learning to the pure online course requires COSCA-SLP to prudently prepare and plot all schedules of the course delivery of topics, SL activities, and deliverables' compliance, and PO availability and readiness to engage SL online. Online platforms for communication must be somehow traditional and user-friendly for all stakeholders, especially for the PO. Everyone agreed and are comfortable with Gmail, Gmeet, Messenger, Viber, and Zoom Apps. Aside from capacity-building activity for the online setup to prepare some of the POs,

connectivity support and devices were also extended. Like the traditional conduct of SL, the preparatory phase is foremost to the success of SL.

ESL

The Orientation Phase (Masid-Danas[1] Activity)

Generally, using synchronous and asynchronous tools, students are introduced to the SL's theoretical backgrounds, Lasallian contexts, definition and elements, process flow, and the LRF through the prerecorded orientation video provided by COSCA-SLP. Another video is the class's assigned PO. It is where students are virtually immersed and exposed to their assigned PO through a center orientation and community tour. The students, grouped into 5-8 students, virtually see and experience their PO's mission-vision, programs, services, and needs from this orientation video. These two videos are crucial because students can never effectively proceed to the next stage of the LRF if this is not undertaken. Directly borne out of these materials, they will create and present their ESL project proposal to evaluate and approve the faculty, SLP, and the PO.

Relative to the ESL project proposal, the following are the suggested information needed: each group is expected to articulate the brief background of the PO; their identified need and its context or the surrounding circumstances that cause the problem for the PO; ESL project proposal itself, i.e., aligned, and responsive to the identified need. Students must specifically develop a unique project name, description, objectives, set of activities, deliverables, and the itemized needed budget; the PO sector, students, wish to be their direct beneficiaries (community parents, elderly, women, kids, or the PO itself). They also must identify the expected changes in their ESL projects to the PO; and the desired learning outcomes for them in terms of attitude, skills, knowledge, and values development.

The Service Proper Phase (Suri-Nilay[2] Activity)

After the proposal stage, students work immediately on their approved ESL projects. Students' activity includes understanding the context of the community's culture, environment, and problem cognitively, crucial for their ESL project preparations. It can make their ESL project more impactful and life-changing. During this time, constant communication and coordination among ESL stakeholders are playing a big part. It is essential along the way so that students' projects can be done correctly.

Before the ESL projects' turnover, each group would present their ESL project's final output and their whole ESL experience, from identifying needs to the group's preparations (in terms of challenges, learnings, and recommendations). They reflect on such experience and direct their attention to ESL's relation and relevance with their academic formation. Another aspect of the reflection activity is for students to share their personal development and the Lasallian values vis-à-vis the Lasallian core values of faith, service, and communion, they believe were enhanced.

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[1] The commonly used name Lasallians would call the first stage of the LRF. It is the Filipino translation of the "See-Experience" words.

[2] The commonly used name Lasallians would call the second stage of the LRF. It is the Filipino translation of the "Analysis-Reflection" words.

The Post Service Phase (Taya-Kilos[3] Activity)

The last stage or activity of the LRF is the students' implementation and turnover of their ESL projects to the PO. The faculty collates all ESL final project outputs and students' ESL reflection journals and shares them with CSCA-SLP, who turnovers the final projects to each class's assigned PO via Emails, for some information and educational materials, and via courier services, for the collated goods and supplies.

A week before the end of the academic term, students and faculty are requested to accomplish the online ESL Activity Evaluation Forms via Google Forms. SLP then collates and discusses the evaluation results and considers some of them for integration to the next academic term's ESL processes.

The last stage of the LRF emphasized that students should still be mindful of their PO now that their ESL project has been turned over already. It is stressed that *Taya-Kilos* is another form of *Madid-Danas* that can further explain or show the PO's realities and problems for another round of service activity and implementation strategy. Although it is no longer part of the class requirement, they are encouraged to be observant still of their PO's needs as suggested by the LRF's nature to continuously improve its social engagements until the PO's identified needs are fully addressed. We call the complete process of the cycle of improvement (Cole, 2016), where they determine the first ESL approach based on their *Masid-Danas*, deploy their activity, evaluate and look for some learnings. Then they integrate those learnings and recalibrate their original approach. It goes on and on up to the time PO's needs are entirely addressed.

Usually, ESL concludes in an ESL experience presentation and group reflection sharing that can be done either synchronously with COSCA-SLP and the PO via Zoom Meeting or asynchronously via a prerecorded presentation. It is one of the significant components of the total grades of the students. The reflection aspect is essential to deem the ESL experience not futile. Reflection activity is the only way that can make ESL enriching and meaningful. Through reflection, students gain a deeper understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of their discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

The reflection can extend learning beyond the online classroom. Service learning helps foster the development of a sense of caring for others. It is also a means by which colleges and universities can promote the civic engagement of students. The reflection process allows students to assess their service-learning achievements and determine their contributions to the community and beyond (Helms et al., 2015).

ESL Evaluation Process

Students' ESL performances are evaluated based on the ESL activities, i.e., the ESL project proposal submission, project preparation, coordination with the PO, final output presentation submission, and reflection journal submission. The faculty assess preparation activity based on students' eagerness towards the project, contributions, cooperation, coordination, communication, and documentation. It makes sure that everyone in the class is equally participating in their ESL activity.

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[3] The commonly used name Lasallians would call the third stage of the LRF. It is the Filipino translation of the "Commitment-Action" words.

The ESL program itself is also subjected to stakeholders' evaluation in its consistency in delivering student learning, project effectiveness and efficiency, Lasallian values, and program management. It is performed online, through google form, towards the end of the academic term, adapting the 4-point Likert-scale evaluation process, with scores ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

ESL Evaluation Result

The student ESL online evaluation results had 55% of students under the Corporate Social Responsibility and Governance Course for Term 1, AY 2020-2021. Based on the students' honest opinion, using the Likert scale, if they "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" with the statement. Generally, students "Strongly Agree" on the ESL evaluation relative to the following questions on Student Learning: 75% said that the e-SL is relevant to the course they are taking; 71% were able to see and understand the situation of the community/partner organization virtually; 73% were able to analyze and reflect on the symptoms and causes of the community issue/problem being addressed; 76% said the online project activity with the community/organization they did were appropriate and relevant to their own needs; 64% said that they had proper and smooth coordination, communication, and cooperation with the representatives of the partner organization; 63% were able to implement their e-SL project with minimal technical/connectivity problem; 80% said that their class/group received clear, relevant, and immediate communication from our Faculty in-charge for class online project-related concerns; and 75% said that they are happy and satisfied with their overall e-SL experience.

Relative to the most important lessons students learned from ESL, where they were asked to mark at least three choices that apply to them, the following were the three choices that have the highest marks: 83.6% marked on the "Understanding of Social Issues"; 75.8% marked on the "Collaboration and Teamwork"; and 65.5% marked on Civic responsibility.

Relative to the most significant challenges they faced in their ESL experience, where they were again asked to mark two choices that apply, the following were the three choices that have the highest marks: 62.4% on the "Technological gaps/challenges"; 55.8% on the "Internet Connectivity"; and 48.8% on the "Limited Engagement."

Three open-ended questions were also asked from the students. The following are some of the highlights written in the Google Form: on how they were able to overcome challenges: "*making sure to communicate well with my constituents to provide excellent output*" and "*committing to the whole process of the ESL project*"; on what are the impact/benefits of their ESL to the Partner Organization: "improved education opportunities" and "the kids (in the community) became more knowledgeable about what COVID19 is, and they will practice proper hygiene and sanitation during this time of pandemic"; and on their recommendations on how to improve ESL in the future: "*maybe make sure that each student group's project is not overlapping so that there will be a wide variety on the output for the partner communities*" and "*to broaden the range of possible partner organizations. Students can help because there are many social issues the students are actively concerned with.*"

Generally, I can say that students not only were able "to link theory to practice, which deepens their understanding of course materials, they also enhanced their sense of civic responsibility. The recalibrated Service-Learning Program designed to match the pure online educational setup of DLSU has established itself to deliver the expected outcomes

continuously. It has continued to reach out and extend various projects to our Partner Organizations. ESL Student Online Evaluation results validated ESL; thus, it is deemed effective and worth continuing as an option when education returns to its normal operation.

Conclusions

The blessings of ESL projects are undeniable among its stakeholders: students, faculty, the DLSU, and the POs. Though ESL is new to DLSU and apprehensions are unavoidable, the COVID19 pandemic, ESL processes itself, and its known challenges did not prevent COSCA-SLP from continuing its Lasallian mission and educational work. SLP took these challenges as enablers to further its resolve to be of service to the students and their academic, social, and values formation, and, more so, to the greater communities.

ESL-the marriage of online learning and service-learning (L. Waldner et al., 2010) appeared to be continually reciprocal among its stakeholders in terms of their respective expected outcomes: the students get to be service-driven and steeped in community service; the faculty gets to be socially engaged, the University becomes more socially responsible; and the POs get to be more empowered.

Though ESL was successful for DLSU, it also shared the same limitations and challenges experienced by other foreign universities. These, however, are all noted and extensively considered for integrations in our ESL processes, along with our efforts for continuous quality improvement.

DLSU will continue to increase its capacity to ensure effective and meaningful ESL program deliveries vis-à-vis training of faculty, POs, and even students. Bearing in mind the importance of collating all ESL experience learnings to develop ESL pedagogy in the pure online course, ESL's success will remain.

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