The Effect of Service-Learning Programs on English Language Learning Motivation: An Empirical Study In Secondary School

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Abstract

Service-Learning is a form of experiential learning where students apply academic knowledge and critical thinking skills to address genuine community needs and promote social change. In this contribution a service-learning program implemented in the subject of English as a foreign language at secondary school will be described and its effects on English learning motivation, analyzed. Participants (n=106, age=14,8) belonged to three separate Spanish high schools and were divided into two groups: the control group and the experimental group, where the intervention (i.e., the service-learning program devoted to the elderly) was implemented. The design of the study was pretest-posttest control group, and the instrument used was a 5-point likert scale adapted from Pintrich and De Groot (1990). Qualitative data was also collected by means of open questions. Results showed that the program positively affected English learning motivation and contributed to improve both intrinsic and instrumental motivation. In the open questions students highlighted the relevance of the program to develop their communicative skills and the positive feeling they experienced when committing themselves and helping elderly people. This study is innovative, since although service-learning is an approach that is gaining momentum in the educational arena there is a dearth of empirical studies focused on its impact on learning outcomes.

Keywords: Commitment, Education, Innovation, Intrinsic Motivation, Emotional Competence