Research Paper

Building Bridges: Experiential Service-Learning Understanding at Viana do Castelo Polytechnic

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This article reflects the way cultural and social concepts in curriculum interventions were conducted within a Service-Learning (S-L) framework, in the context of Rural 3.0 project, in one Faculty of Viana do Castelo Polytechnic (IPVC), in northern Portugal. It draws upon the findings of four projects carried out by Higher Education students, oneprofessor, threebasic educationteachers(primary, middle and secondary education level) and six local rural organisations. The experience of Rural 3.0 project is examined in this context, in terms of a shared understanding of the impact of Service – Learning at the Higher Education level, in order to develop a basis for curriculum development leading to the publication of training materials.
Key Words: education, citizenship, development, service-learning, case studies

I. BACKGROUND

A concern with the relationship between Higher Education Institutions and communities around is common to educators in general and art educators in particular. Although both agreethat educational knowledge must be involved in concrete practice, they interpret practice and research differently. We live in a time when rural cultures are disappearing. Many of those who are over 50 and have a certain kind of traditional knowledge, will take that knowledge with them after they die, if not passed on to the next generations. What will happen to our traditions and cultural heritage will depend on how we manage them and take care of everything that characterizes our identity. The project themes were chosen by the local organisations and the Polytechnic professor and they were discussed with the Higher Education Students (HES).

Within education, the growth of programmes for teaching citizenship through all areas has seen a sharp increase across Europe. Our area of expertise in this project was Art, Humanities and Social Sciences and it has been an inspiration for aspects of what we have focused on Citizenship and Identity, using a new curricular approach which is the Rural Service-Learning (RSL).

1.1 Portuguese National Team

The case study included here describes four projects in different rural contexts in Northern Portugal and reports on the main findings for the *Rural 3.0* project. The national coordinator of the project in Portugal had a background in art and art education. Another member of the project had a Science background and acted as an observer.The participant students in the four projects had basic education and art and technology backgrounds. The participants included two partner members that are historians and members of the non-governmental organisation *International Amnesty*; one artist who is a member of a Performing Art Organisation-*Krisálida*(Fig. 1) and Drama teacher at ESE; one lawyer who is the representativeof the national *LAG AjDeão*; a cinema specialist who is amember of *Ao-Norte Association*; a specialist in nursery education who hasa lot of experience in non-formal education, and has worked in the *ACEP Association*; a specialist in sociology who works in the *Town Hall*.

Fig.1 Shadow Theatre at ACEP © Milena 2019

First Case Study
Methodology
1.2 Participant Entities
The curriculum actions were conducted in the following contexts:
a)   Escola Superior de Educação - aFacultyofthe Viana do Castelo Polytechnic;
b)   Deão AjDeão Association (Local Action Group);
c)   Three Basic Education Schools(one Primary, one Middle and one Secondary)
d)   Caminha - *Town Hall*, *Valadares Municipal Theatre, streets, and Municipal Museum.*
e)   *Cultural Centre, local market and Heritage Interpretation Centre* in Viana do Castelo.

1.3 Action
        Discussion relating to the meaning and definition of Service-Learning are gaining strength as they prove to have a basis and huge impact for research. Research in the area of citizenship through the Arts has been developed for the past 19 years at Escola Superior de Educação (ESE), particularly in relation to Basic Education. The challenge faced by the national Portuguese team was on how to engage Higher Education and the local community in meaningful projects that could address local needsby involving Higher Education students in so many different projectsoccurring insuch a short time.
        Culture was understood by the team as a key concept that should be addressed before any planning. The discussion with the local organisations was seen as the first step for any action.
        Several meetingstook place between the local organisations and all members of the national team in whichissues such as culture, citizenship, human values, migration, inequality, segregation, intolerance, exclusion and violence were discussed. These discussions were the basis of a framework for the future planning of the curriculum interventions.
        The management of common training sessions for all the Higher Education studentsinvolved in the Rural 3.0 project forced the use of wednesday afternoons for the seminars, a day without classes, as it is intended for teachers' meetings. Three training sessions were organised. The first one was developed in the auditorium of Escola Superior de Educação (ESE) in collaboration with the *Town Hall*. Two anthropologists (Fig. 2) reflect on the concepts of culture and cultural diversity. The second training session used the ACEP auditorium in a rural space so that the, local population could also be involved (Fig 2).

Fig.2 Intolerance of the Intolerance © moura 2019

The concepts of Culture, Identity and Human Rights were addressed, and two more organizations were introduced- *International Amnesty* and *AjDeão*. The third training session was moved to Monday afternoon as many students began to complain that the wednesday afternoon was not convenient for them. The issues of migration and rural development were discussed by two sociologists, one a member of the *Town Hall* and the other a *member of staff of the Rural 3.0 project* (Figs. 3 & 4).

Fig. 3 & 4 From Migration to Rural Development © moura 2019

The*Ao Norte* and *Krisálida*associationsworked directly with three groups of Higher Education students, involving them in art activities and giving them the opportunity to understand how the values of citizenship education can be promoted through the arts. They located the process of art making in a social context and emphasised the centrality of relationships to that process. Some students attended some cultural events promoted by the Town Hall, such as the *Entre Culturas Show* and the *Cozinhas do Mundo*, or World Kitchens (Fig.5)

Fig.5 Municipal Market © Milena 2019

The four projects described here were carried out by art teachers working at Escola Superior de Educação, Viana do Castelo Polytechnic who implementedRSL approaches in the rural context of Minho, Northern Portugal. The projects included students from different art subjects enrolled indifferent courses, such as Vocational Diplomaof Arts and Technology (Light, Sound and Image);Vocational Diploma of Education Intervention in Kindergarten; and Basic Education Degree. In so doing, it reflects on commonalities in the way art teachers conceptualise and operationalise educational RSL as well as methodological issues.

Here we reflected on some problems the participants came across while using educational RSL methodology and the implications of this new curricular approach in critical qualitative inquiry for the authors' teaching and research.

Project 1
Title: *Steps for a better Society*
Course: Basic Education – 3rd year
Subject: Art, Pedagogy and Critical Citizenship
• **Lesson plans (September 2019 to January 2020)**
This section provides a brief summary of the content of the training of future Basic Education Generalist Teachers at Basic Education level.

TABLE 1 SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS

Session 1 = 2 Hours Setting the scene Introduction to Multicultural concepts of Cultural and Social Education	**Sessions 2 to 4 = 6 Hours** Cine Poetry Project Concepts of Culture, Citizenship, Human Rights	**Session 5 to 6 = 4 Hours** Service-Learning Approach Planning the projects with International Amnesty
Session 7 to 11 = 10 Hours Planning the projects Preparation and Discussion of Resources Analysis of Selected Texts Setting up the Action	**Session 12 to 16 = 10 Hours** Intervention at the community and celebration level. Final Reflection of all Participants Oral presentation at the Faculty by all groups	

To challenge the ideas HES have about cultureit was necessary to engage a collective learning experience in order to deal with preconceived ideas and stereotypes.In addition to this, there was also face to face and online interaction between their Institution and local rural partners. The focus of this project was on Service-Learning itself as seen through a range of educational, social and cultural perspectives.

Of course, we had to face many difficulties which were at times disappointing and problematic, but as we all know, this often happen in research.A reflection on Education and RSL involves a cultural pedagogy that reflects on the injustice that characterises many of our attitudes and behaviours, through a commitment to the diverse forms of cultural diversity. Such an approach isclearly associated with a social concern that facilitates awareness of current issues in society, active participation, autonomy, interaction among all participants.This

can lead to the transformation of everyone involved. The collaboration with *Ao Norte Association* (Cine Club), through Cine Poetry project, helped students to understand image analysis as a pedagogical tool when addressing social issues (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6 Cine Poetry project- addressing social issues © martins 2019

Development at our Higher Education involved a collaborative approach, which included seminars conducted by specialists from different areas that helped to promote students' awareness of issues of equity and equality between different social and gender groups (Figs. 7, 8 & 9), as well as democratic participation (Delors, 2000: 71).

Figs. 7,8 & 9 Examples of resources and strategies used by HES ©AA; AB & SM 2019

> *From this project we were able to draw many positive learnings and we understand that working with International Amnesty was an asset for us and for our future as teachers.* (AB, 2020)
>
> *Service-learning is a concept that I did not know and that I found interesting because it is at the service of the community, it is a concept of proximity. In the current curricula it still does not fit in full, but with curricular flexibility it may become a reality in more educational institutions* (AC, 2020)

Project 2
Project Title: *Steps for a better Society*
Course: CTeSP AT (Light, Sound & Image)
• **Lesson plans (September2019 to January 2020)**

Sessions 1 to 3 = 12 Hours	Session 4 to 6 = 12 Hours	Session 7 to 11 = 20 Hours
Setting the scene	Planning the projects	Planning the projects
Introduction to Multicultural concepts of Cultural and Social Education	Service-Learning Approach	Preparation and Discussion of Resources
	Talks with artists andfield trips	Analysis of Selected Texts
		Setting up the Action
Session 12 to 15 = 20 Hours	**Session 16 = 4 Hours**	
Intervention at the community and celebration level: "*Cities for Life*"; MALUGA	Oral presentation at the Faculty by all groups	
Final Reflection of all Participants		

ESE-IPVC joined the International Amnesty local group and the International project Cities for Life - Cities Against the Death Penalty, on November 30, 2019, date that commemorated the first abolition of the death penalty, with light and image displays. As a symbolic act, students, members of Amnesty, teachers and several partners (City Hall, Ao-Norte, Krisálida, AjDeão, ACEP) lit up a public monument (Interpretation Centre of the Portuguese Coastal Way, located in the old hospital building) and projected films related to human rights.

The students received the visit of different guests in order to talk about different experiences in terms of production of artistic events. They also visited theatres, and observed rehearsals of shows (Fig.10), talked with artists and collaborated with different people in the organisation of cultural and artistic events.

Fig. 10 PlastikusArtistikus KRISÁLIDA © cardoso 201

Fig. 11 Poster designed by the students © cabral 2019

On November 30th, 2019, the event "Cities for Life" (Figs 11 & 12), *or cities against the death penalty, by International Amnesty, was developed by a group of students and teachers from the Escola Superior de Educação who joined in the struggle for life. Throughout the event we were able to apply our academic learning like, for example, image handling, sound and light. With this, and concluding, I think that Service-Learning is fundamental for the development of both personal and professional skills. We learned best when "cast to the wolves", putting into practice what is learned, and it is even better if what we learn is interconnected with a social need. In addition, SL promotes creative and entrepreneurial spirit* (Fig.13), *and also the ability to organize, communicate and teamwork.* (MS, 2020)

Fig. 12 HES, teachers, International Amnisty and AJDeão © gigante 2019

Fig.13 HES, teachers, Krisálida at MALUGA Puppet Festival © santiago, Caminha 2019
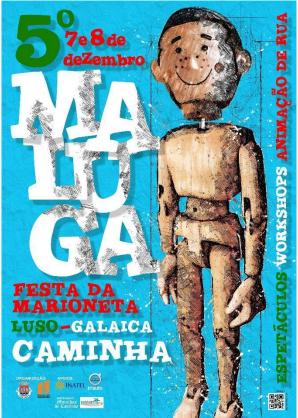

Fig 14 Fifth MALUGA- Puppet Festival © Krisálida, Caminha 2019

The students collaborated with the organisation of MALUGA (Fig.14), Puppet Theatre Luso-Galaic festival, which is the only in the Alto Minho region that promotes this Art between two cross-border regions (Alto Minho and Galicia). They supported MALUGA in the collection of images and other tasks, thus being able to work directly in the production of these performances, in the control of image, sound and light.
Project 3
Project Title: *Steps for a better Society*
Course: Basic Education – 1ˢᵗ Year

- **Lesson plans (September 2019 to January 2020)**

Session 1 = 2 Hours Setting the scene Service-Learning Approach Introduction to Multicultural concepts of Cultural and Social Education	**Sessions 2 to 4 = 6 Hours** Cine Poetry Project	**Session 5 to 6 = 4 Hours** Planning the projects Art Activities Heritage Education
Session 7 to 11 = 10 Hours Planning the projects with Deão LAG Preparation and Discussion of Resources Analysis of Selected Texts Setting up the Action	**Session 12 to 15 = 8 Hours** Intervention at the community and celebration level. Final Reflection of all Participants	**Session 16 = 2 Hours** Oral presentation at the Faculty by all groups

The students began with a sequence of seminars related to multicultural concepts and during three weeks worked with *Ao Norte Association* in the Cine Poetry project. The collaboration with *Ao Norte* helped students to understand image analysis as a pedagogical tool and a way to knowand understand culture.

The second stage of the teaching learning process in this class involved the collaboration with another Association- AJDeão. MC characterized in this way the Youth Association of Deão - AJD, partner of the Higher School of Education in the Rural 3.0 project:

> *It is of fundamental importance to mention that Deão, belonging to the Union of Parishes of Geraz do Lima (Santa Maria, Santa Leocádia and Moreira), a parish in the municipality of Viana do Castelo, located on the south bank, where the Lanheses bridge over Rio Lima is an important reference because it separates Lanheses from Geraz from Lima, it is a rural environment that has the privilege of "housing" AJD. Officially founded on April 19, 1997, it is an association that works with young people (about 80% of the members are under the age of 30) with the aim of enriching youth socially, culturally, artistically and sportively, covering as well a range of activities, such as volunteering, Erasmus projects, craft workshop, playroom, and much more. It is no coincidence that the rural environment is mentioned, the Youth Association of Deão is supported by the Rural 3.0 project: Service-Learning for the Rural Development, and with the help of rural partners (in this case, Deão), intends to alert to new methodologies of teaching together with schools and the community. One of the examples to mention is the class taught in the subject of Theories and Practices of Visual and Performative Arts in which the students of the Higher School of Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo received a visit of one of the members of the Association's governing bodies, Ana Paula Meira Dias. In that same class, the students got to know specific elements of Deão, such as the caroça or croça, cradle, hood, and other elements of the parish, such as palmitos and candles* (Figs. 15 & 16). *This concludes that what seems to be a problem is a learning, and it was with the service learning method that the students felt closer to their surroundings and effectively to their own identity, as AJD would say... "Faz-se caminhoaoandar, or It is done way when walking"*

Figs 15 & 16 Croça and palmito © moura, 2019

The last stage of the activities developed with these students involved drawing and painting related to the characterization of traditions, legends, artefacts and forms of playing in the past and present, at the rural community of Deão. All the artistic studies were transferred to the walls of a container and a wall next to the

building where the Association of Deão is located. Students from the Basic Education degree were divided into groups and together with children and teachers from the community painted 3 murals and celebrated the collaborative work with this rural community.

Project Title: *Steps for a better Society*
Course: Kindergarten Education Intervention – 2nd Year
• **Lesson plans (September 2019 to January 2020)**

Session 1 = 2 Hours Setting the scene Service-Learning Approach Introduction to Multicultural concepts of Cultural and Social Education	Sessions 2 to 4 = 6 Hours Creative learning: tradition and expression	Session 5 to 6 = 4 Hours Planning the projects
Session 7 to 11 = 10 Hours Planning the projects Preparation and Discussion of Resources Analysis of Selected Texts Setting up the Action	Session 12 to 16 = 10 Hours Intervention at the community and celebration level. Final Reflection of all Participants	

Students were invited by the Cultural and Popular Education Association (ACEP) to collaborate in the preparation of a scenario for a Christmas show and the promotion of artistic expression activities with children who during the week attend workshops in this institution. ACEP visited ESE and promoted a workshop that showed how to createthe rag dolls with which our ancestors used to play (Figs. 17 -22).

Figs. 17 &18 Creation of rag dolls at ESEVC © moura, 2019

ACEP is a private non-profit social solidarity institution since 1988 which finds its origins in "Meadela Youth Group" (MYG) created in 1970. This group that worked in the parish residence, started by developing activities in the areas of theater, journalism and sports.

Figs. 19 & 20 Plastic Expression activities at ACEP © ferreira, 2019

Figs. 21 & 22 Artistic Expression activities at ESEVC © ferreira, 2019

Benefits or the HES

The analysis of the questionnaires, the informal discussions of the focus group and classroom observations are summarised under the following heading below:

1. The students learned educational competencies from the direct contact with community partners

Cine Poetry was the first project developed with these students, which consisted of exploring poetic texts and an audiovisual language. During the action, the students in the class were divided into groups and analysed a text related to social issues. They participated in the making of a video based on the previously chosen text and students found out what resources are needed to develop a video record and how they were able to support the process during this 1st project that lasted three weeks. Planning together with an artist from *Ao-Norte* Association gave these students an insight into the impact the images can have in promoting social justice and how values and beliefs can be explored using them. Their film was shown on November 30th, 2019, in the city of Viana do Castelo, as a contribution to the celebration of "*Cities for Life*", under the responsibility of the Amnesty International Organization, in an old medieval hospital, currently the Pilgrim's Interpretation Centre to Santiago de Compostela.

2. The students used the new concepts in different formal and non-formal educational contexts

Before the project, most of the students had no experience. However, after the seminars and workshops they were organised in groups, in order to conduct observations and small interventions in real contexts. The 1st year Art & Technology students together with the 3rd year students of Basic Education were in charge ofthe

celebration of the "Cities for Life Day" on November 30th, whereas the 1st year students of Basic Education painted a mural in Deão rural village. The 3rd year students of Basic Education also visited formal and non-formal educational venues where they presented and discussed human rights in collaboration with International Amnesty [Fig.23].

Fig.23 Higher Education Students' Intervention© padrão 2020

3. The Basic Education students learned to design a project through engaging in teamwork with peers and local community

Savva (2013:75) states that "if art education is to be connected with art and life it has to be meaningful to each student. It has to be grounded to authentic practice…and it should create the necessary space for those art learning communities who can be critical-reflective and can act in the future as agents of change".

One of the students (SM, 2020) said:

> *In this Service-Learning approach, the results were not immediate, and the feeling of accomplishment was reflected in the first moment when I went away from Escola Superior. With the participation in this project I developed several competencies, such as the ability to organize and plan this theme, and be part of the planning session and everything surrounding it; the problem solving competency, or in other words, knowing how to solve problems when something does not go according to what we planned. For instance, I was able to change and adapt the project, when I found that a dice that was crucial for a game had gone missing and so I had to adapt the activity by using an App in the mobile; decision making was evident as decisions were made in groups and these had to be quite explicit since we did not know the class and they all had the pleasure of participating, that is, giving a little bit of their contribution to the project; teamwork was undoubtedly an important factor that was promoted throughout the three years of this degree, and when everyone participates and contributes, then it is definite that everything will work out; the ability to work in different cultural contexts, in this case, our project was in a primary school, being a place we already knew; adaptation to new situations, the fact that I have never experienced and worked with 4th year students, which demanded more from me, since the internship I had this semester was at the pre-school level; we emphasized on creativity so that children could maximize creative opportunities to better arouse students' attention and to produce satisfying and thoughtful outcomes; social motivation, in which I wanted to deepen my knowledge about the themes that we have been working on throughout the semester, to give my contribution to society; and last and not least critical thinking and the ability to be reflective and self-critical, since at the end of the implementation it was a moment of considerable reflection, where I was able to understand the true meaning of a service -learning approach, which is why I am proud to be part of an institution such as the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo, more specifically, Escola Superior de Educação, where Rural 3.0 Project is being developed (Fig.24).*

Fig.24 A class at Abelheira Basic Education School © elsaesteves 2019

SM (2019) stated:

> *The children's feedback was very positive, the enthusiasm was evident and both the competitive and collaborative spirit were very present in this intervention. Although it was the first time to be in contact with this group age, there was a great surrender and an enormous ease on their part, which greatly facilitated our service. It would be a pleasure to continue this service with this group, always taking different themes, as I am sure that we had a lot to learn from them and they with us. With regard to the schoolteacher, Elsa Esteves, we have to thank her for participating in our session as she was tireless with us from the very beginning till the end.*

4. The Art &Technology studentslearned technological competencies from the direct contact with teachers, artists and cultural agents

The main goals of the subject of *Production of Events* included the development of knowledge of media, technologies and agents involved in the main operations of production, management and promotion of events. The students took part in field trips, talks with artists and observation of performances. Regarding the visit to ACEP, RG mentioned: Excellent guided tour with lots of detail; The visit to the ACEP auditorium allowed us to see the materials that exist there and the development of a technical rider.

Work with and in the community involves lots of negotiation. The statement of the same student emphasizes this aspect. He expressed some positive and fragile aspects regarding the observation of another performance, *Encontro de Culturas*(Meeting between Cultures, October 12th, 2019, 21h30), at the Cultural Centre of Viana do Castelo, where the students of that class were invited by the City Council to capture the images. The observation of such event was considered very helpful by the students; however, the Town Hall did not properly manage authorizations for them to move freely in the space of the show and the same student referred the following:

> *The fact that the show is broadcast on a screen in real time, has given it a lot of value. However, the existing problems for the free mobility of some ESE students who were helping to capture images and observe the performance, would have been avoided, if the authorization for that had been from members of the City Council. This suggests the lack of communication between them and the other members of the event organisation was clear. Sometimes it became complicated to understand what the artists on stage were saying on the microphone.*

5. The Basic Education students learned to find their own resources needed to design and implement a community-based citizenship education lesson through the arts

> *Our educational intervention* (Fig. 25) *regarding the planning of a class on the gipsy ethnic minority, and socioeconomic condition, was implemented at the 2nd cycle (6th year of schooling- 11 years old), in the subjectof History and Geography of Portugal, at the Basic Education Abelheira School, in Viana do Castelo, on January 15th, 2020. (…) This experience of service learning enabled me to develop several*

competencies, such as the ability to analyse and organize information, creativity, teamwork, autonomous learning, the ability to work in different social contexts, more specifically the gipsy community. (AB, 2020)

Fig. 25 Abelheira Basic Education School, Viana do Castelo © brito, January 15th 2020.

6. The Basic Education HES learned to organize a community-based citizenship education lesson through the arts

AB (2020) said the following:

> (…) *After the end of this project, I can conclude that it was very enriching, since it allowed us to work on a theme so trivialized by society. It also allowed me to gain knowledge about the gipsy community, namely about their socioeconomic situation and why they are excluded from Portuguese society. It is also necessary that, when addressing this issue, our society understand this problem, and that they should stop being victim of racism and they should be integrated into our society. We can conclude that my research was successful, contributing to enrich my knowledge and to be aware of the strong role of the local Non-Governmental Organizations. Although I thought that throughout this discipline there were many doubts and uncertainties about the project and aims to be developed, I could conclude that it was a good contribution for my academic career.*

7. The Art &Technology students learned how Image, Sound and Light use their tools in an event

Regarding to *Entreculturas Event*, promoted by the Association of Alto Minho Folkloric Groups RO, an Art & Technology student mentioned the following:

> *This activity was very good, since it allowed us to have a better idea of how to perform a live show. The presence of the artists from different countries was excellent. I have no suggestions for improvement, it was just perfect.*

The same student referred to the work carried out in collaboration with International Amnisty and Krisálida President:

> *On November 30th, the group went to Praça da Erva to participate in the event "Cities for life". First, we saw a short film about the Legend of the cock of Barcelos*(performance developed by the 2nd year Kindergarten Educational Intervention students, with the support of the Drama teacher who is the President of Krisálida Association). *Then we were lighting candles on behalf of the people who unfortunately died due to the death penalty. And finally, we interviewed the members of AMNISTY and talked about the topic of death penalty…The importance of this activity is due to the fact that as we are working with an organisation, our class got a better idea of what it is like to work together with other entities.*

Problems that HES faced

The data collected during the semester through informal talks, small group discussions, written reflections indicated some constraints:

● The duration of the training for the planning of the intervention was too short, both for the HES, and the teachers and partners.

● The interaction between the local partners and other member of the community, such as schoolteachers, as well as the selection of contexts for the action should have been more organised.

● Some of the HES pointed out that some of the members of the staff team (teachers and partners) at the beginning did not communicate clearly what would happen.

● As the action was near the end of the semester, it was difficult for schoolteachers to arrange time to receive the HES and this resulted in the choice of some less suitable contexts.

● The lack of funding to travel to more distant schools in rural areas also made it difficult for students tomove around.

● Service-Learning demands a great deal of work fromall those involved and efficient time management.

II. SUMMARY OF POSITIVE OUTCOMES

The innovations were introduced into the syllabus by engaging a systematic collaboration with different partners/specialists in the areas of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. This could only be achieved through the effort of all those who participated in the implementation of the project.

Positive changes of this case study

Students were able to recognise the advantages of working with the different communities as it enabled them to share the knowledge they had acquired at the Higher Education Institution and, at the same time, learn with the partners' experiences when solving together common concerns. Service Learning helped them to understand the role and support of partners (i.e. Amnesty International, Ao Norte, ACEP, Deão and Krisálida associations), allowing them to see how all together they can support each other.

Students also reported that the RSL Approach helped them to improve their ability to deal with change and innovation, both personally and professionally. Most importantly, it gave them the opportunity to interact with several organisations which they did not even know they existed and by doing so they learned a lot with them and that has made them understand that there is still a long way to go. Despite feeling a bit lost at the beginning of the curricular experience, working in a real context helped them see the impact their work could have on a target audience. Positive feedback from the community and students was another aspect that wasoften emphasised by all students and partners

A research and curriculum development strategy that engages small teams of specialists/HE and Basic Education teachers/students/community partners in the implementation of innovation, change and that help to fulfil both social and cultural local needs, is undoubtedly the best.

Final comments

The Project received a grant of 999,138.80 euros provided by the Erasmus+ Program Knowledge Alliances and, of course, my institution also added more funds to support this innovative curricular intervention. The results of this case study are varied, some expected and others very unexpected. There are aspects that are innovative in terms of how higher education students can communicate face to face or online, but, in future, it is clear that teachers will have to explain very clearly to their students the different steps that are involved. In addition to this, appropriate autonomy must be given depending on the students´ level of training.

Students need to understand that the success of this type of methodology implies the acceptance and use of new teaching methods and strategies. The RSL Approach has proved to be the best way to make academia, students and the involving society work together in order to solve a specific social problem. Furthermore, it does not mean that HEI need to change the curricula of their degrees, all it takes is the implementation of this new methodology in one or more subjects within each degree.

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