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Implementation of Service-Learning as a Strategy to Foster Intercultural Coexistence in the Local Community: A Case Study

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Abstract: Service-learning (SL) is a participatory teaching–learning methodology through which students learn certain content while also meeting a number of real social needs in their environment. The implementation of SL in different areas and educational stages has been extensively described. However, its potential as a community and intercultural development strategy at the local level has not been widely studied. Through a documentary analysis, the present work sought to understand the characteristics of socio-educational interventions, which, based on the service-learning methodology, aim at improving coexistence in local communities with a high degree of cultural diversity. A total of 18 projects were included in a community programme implemented in the municipality of Elche (Spain) between 2010 and 2016. They all focused or included the promotion of intercultural coexistence among their objectives. The study design was quantitative, with a descriptive and explanatory, univariate and bivariate analysis using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences 26. The results showed that service-learning can contribute to the improvement of intercultural coexistence. Moreover, a number of SL basic, pedagogical and organisational components are enhanced when integrated into broader community development processes.

Keywords: service-learning; intercultural coexistence; community education; local development; evaluation



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1. Introduction

1.1. Cultural Diversity and Coexistence at School

According to Regueiro and Pérez [1], Spain has always been characterised by its cultural diversity, shaped throughout history by the multiple contributions of the peoples who have occupied the land. Today, this diversity is reflected in the different languages, traditions, ways, customs and many other cultural expressions that have been reshaped thanks to the distinct creative capacity of human beings. Moreover, this heterogeneity has expanded further with the incorporation and settlement of immigrant populations of foreign origin.

According to data from the National Institute of Statistics [2], over the last two decades, the number of immigrants in Spain has risen from 923,879 in 2000 to 5,434,153 in 2021. That is, some 11.4% of Spain's total population is immigrant. This increase in the immigrant population of foreign origin, together with the presence of indigenous cultural minorities such as the Roma people [3], has played a key role in configuring the current policies of diversity management in the education system. The system is facing—and has faced—the challenge of teaching–learning in a context of new multicultural realities [4].

Cultural diversity, however, is not the only challenge that the education system, in particular, and Spanish and European society, in general, need to rise up to. So is individualism. Both can lead to social inequality if not adequately addressed. According to the latest editions of the European Values Survey, a notable part of the population approaches their life project, social relations and participation in the public sphere from an individualistic, self-sufficient and private profit standpoint [5,6]. As Aristotle remarked,

we are relational beings, but a fragmented and polarised economic, social and political context, such as the one we are in today, does not help us to understand how to relate properly, or indeed how to be able to relate. Authors such as Fernández and López call relational illiteracy that “absence of the basic social skills necessary for adequate social interaction” [7] (p. 45).

Giménez identified three modes of sociability that can be found in both a community and in an educational community: conviviality, coexistence and hostility [8]. Coexistence is the fact of sharing space and time without maintaining any significant relationships with one another. It represents the major tendency in Spanish areas with high levels of cultural diversity [9,10]. This author divides coexistence into nine dimensions that allow us to measure and achieve it [11]: (1) the relational dimension, that is, the existence and maintenance of relationships between people and/or groups in the community; (2) the attitudinal, i.e., the existence of attitudes of acceptance, inclusion and recognition of diversity; (3) the normative, i.e., the existence of a normative framework of known and shared citizenship; (4) the axiological, that is, the existence of common values of respect, pluralism and solidarity; (5) the participatory, i.e., when individuals and/or groups are actively involved in the community regardless of their personal traits; (6) communication, referring to respectful messages between people and/or groups; (7) the conflictual, i.e., when mechanisms for the prevention, regulation or peaceful resolution of conflicts exist; (8) identity, referring to feelings of belonging, esteem and identification with the community; and, lastly (9), the political dimension, i.e., trust in public institutions and the equal enjoyment of rights.

1.2. School in the Community, and Vice Versa, and Service-Learning Methodology

Community education is closely related to the concept of intercultural coexistence [12] and the well-known “learning to live together” phrase included in the classic Delors Report [13]. This type of education is the one implemented in the community, for the community and with the community. The community represents the shared physical and relational realm in which we can collectively build a positive management of diversity [14–16], although the purposes and methods may vary depending on the socio-political diversity management model [17]. Not only is the community educated in it, but it also actively educates through the organisation of its different agents, among which, school institutions are included [18]. Regarding the latter, and from this perspective, Sales and Moliner refer to schools that are included within territories, overcoming the division between the school and the community [19].

Community education is, above all, an act of socialisation, consisting of the weaving of social and intercultural bonds in order to identify and solve social needs and problems [20]. It encompasses practices such as educating cities, learning communities and service-learning experiences, among others [12].

Based on the results obtained in an action research experience in Queensland (Australia), Lathouras, Westoby and Shevellar argue that community education contributes to local development, integrating people in community actions related to structural change [21]. Educational processes are linked to the social, economic, cultural and political processes that take place in every community [22], with the community’s capacity for self-development constituting an educational objective in itself [23].

Service-learning (hereinafter, SL) is a participatory teaching–learning methodology through which students, in their role as active subjects, take part in a project and learn certain contents, competences and values while also improving their environment by meeting certain real social needs [24–26]. Teaching–learning through concrete projects has become popular in recent years for, among other reasons, the positive effects it has on students’ academic performance [27].

For Uruñuela [28], SL is: (a) a way of understanding citizenship based on its contribution to the betterment of society; (b) a way of understanding learning based on social responsibility; and (c) a way of understanding values-education based on experiential learning. This vision coincides with the benefits that community participation brings to

personal and social development [29]. SL benefits not only those who receive the service, but also those who offer it, contributing to democratic health by facilitating the active participation of students—as citizens—in decisions that affect their living conditions [30]. From this perspective, the practice is one of participatory democratic education [31].

The application of SL in different educational settings and stages has already been extensively described in recent studies [32,33], together with its impacts on civic awareness [34], creativity [35], social bonding [36], participation [37], critical thinking [38] or sustainability [39], to provide but a few examples. According to Furco, SL improves educational performance and content learning, as well as participation, commitment and motivation to learn [40], while also helping to link theory and practice, reflection and action [41].

Although the potential of SL as a local/territorial development strategy has been less valued than its implementation in concrete and isolated experiences [42], SL is deemed to have been successfully integrated into a broader context of local/territorial policy [43], and even to have contributed to the implementation of global agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, Batlle and Escoda systematised 100 experiences in Spain linked to the SDGs that involved a total of 300 schools and 430 social entities. They found that Goals 4 (quality education), 17 (partnerships to achieve the Goals), 10 (reducing inequalities) and 11 (sustainable communities and cities) were the most widespread in the case of students aged between 3 and 18 years [44].

Traver, Moliner and Sales performed a case study framed within an action-participatory study and found, among other results, that: (1) SL relates the interests of the participating actors, as well as those of the school curriculum with those of the territory; (2) SL turns the participants into educators and learners at the same time; (3) SL enables community planning and evaluation (social participation, democratisation of decisions, school-community collaboration and shared knowledge); and (4) places students at the centre of educational action [45].

Despite its importance in the development of any educational project, one of the most problematic aspects of SL is its evaluation. Indeed, there is a certain tendency to overlook the evaluation of the processes, results and impacts of experiences, or to do so superficially [46], partly due to the complexity involved in assessing qualitative processes in quantifiable terms [47]. Puig et al. [48], among other authors [49], have sought to rectify this by advancing a proposal to conduct SL evaluation regardless of the educational field and stage. This evaluation tool is structured into three dimensions, each based on a series of SL components: basic elements (social needs, service, sense of service and learning), pedagogical elements (participation, group work, reflection, recognition and evaluation) and organisational elements (partnership, consolidation of schools and social entities). In turn, each component has four possible levels of development.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

In accordance with the above, the general objective of this study was to understand the characteristics of socio-educational actions which, in accordance with the SL methodology, aim at improving local coexistence in highly culturally diverse communities. We took into account the profiles of the institutions and the participants, the issues addressed and the pedagogical components of the experiences, exploring their relationships with variables linked to broader organisational and territorial development processes.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Sample

This work was a case study [50] on the use of SL in an intercultural community intervention programme implemented in the Carrús neighbourhood of the municipality of Elche (province of Alicante, Spain) between 2010 and 2016. The study was based on the documentary review of 65 documents (18 reports of activities and 47 min of meetings) that were part of 18 SL projects, which were launched with and/or were related

to the intercultural community intervention programme. This programme was carried out simultaneously in sixteen other Spanish territories, applying a common community methodology of study–diagnosis–planning–execution–evaluation. The main objective was to foster local coexistence through the promotion of intercultural relations; a sense of belonging; and the participation of government agents, professionals and the population in the improvement of neighbourhoods [51,52]. Within the project, various SL projects were developed, along with other community education initiatives to foster coexistence—such as open schools [53]—based on a territorial vision of education.

The review included SL projects that took place in the Carrús neighbourhood in the primary or secondary stages (6–18 years) between 2010 and 2016. The inclusion criteria were that they had to be sufficiently documented and that they focused on or included the promotion of coexistence, or a similar term, among their objectives. Seven experiences that did not meet these criteria were excluded.

2.2. Instrument and Procedure

Quantitative and qualitative data from activity reports and meeting minutes were systematised through document analysis [54], and, in the case of qualitative data, transformed into quantitative data. Quantification is the process of assigning numerical values to data conceived as nonnumerical [55]. It was conducted to facilitate the recognition of patterns or, failing that, to extract meaning from qualitative data, allowing us to discern and show regularities or peculiarities in qualitative data that would not be visible otherwise [56–58]. The qualitative data were converted into quantitative data to put qualitative data into a form that could be subjected to statistical analysis together with other data that were already quantitative.

The qualitative data were turned into quantitative data over several stages, according to the documentary analysis and quantification process described below:

- Reading: The documents were first read in order to become familiar with the qualitative data.
- Categorisation: Secondly, the information was organised into significant analytical categories related to the purpose of the study.
- Codification: Finally, analytical categories were transformed into codes and the SL experience data were collected into a data matrix. The resulting final variables used to analyse the SL projects are presented below.

1. SL project characteristics:

- Type of institution leading the project.
- Type of institution participating in the project.
 - Profile of the people participating in the project (role in the projects, gender, cultural diversity, immigrants or members of cultural minorities).
- Project theme (according to the SDGs): zero hunger; good health and well-being; quality education; gender equality; clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation and infrastructure; reduced inequalities; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; climate action; life below water; life on land; peace, justice and strong institutions; and partnerships for the goals.
- Priority group.

2. Development of the SL project:

- Elements of the project: The basic, pedagogical and organisational elements evaluated were established according to the proposal of Puig et al. [48] and were measured using a 4-point Likert scale, in which 1 indicated the lowest level of development of the element and 4 the highest.
- Links between the project and the intercultural community programme: We believed it was important to contextualise each SL project within the framework of the wider

community programme in which it took place. To this end, the following aspects were considered:

- The project's contribution to coexistence: The main coexistence dimensions evaluated were established according to the proposal of Giménez [11]. They were measured using a 4-point Likert scale, from 1—Strongly disagree to 4—Strongly agree.
- Socio-educational intervention logic: Project based on social needs collected in the community study–diagnosis (analysis carried out by 197 people, between professionals from different institutions and neighbours of different origins and ages), a project integrated into the neighbourhood's community programme.
- Prior training and qualification: Realisation of an associated training seminar.
- Dissemination of the project's results: Dissemination of the results to the participants, results outreach in the rest of the community, media impact (TV, radio, press).

As mentioned above, the data collection process was carried out through the document analysis [52] to systematize the variables of interest. The qualitative data were converted into quantitative data according to the process described. In the case of the elements of the project, we used the available data from a questionnaire on the perception of the promoting institutions on the degree of development of the SL methodology in each project. In the case of the project's contribution to coexistence, we used the data available from a questionnaire on the promoting institutions' perceptions of the degree to which each SL project had contributed to establishing or developing the main coexistence dimensions of interest.

All data sources (activity reports and meeting minutes) were dated between 2010 and 2016.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis included a univariate and bivariate descriptive and explicative analysis.

According to the literature on data analysis [59–63], the descriptive analysis was based on descriptive statistics used to summarise the projects' characteristics, as well as on measures of central tendency (mean, median) and dispersion (standard deviation, range) used to describe the characteristics of the projects measured using ordinal variables (development of SL elements, contribution to the coexistence dimensions). The explanatory analysis was based on correlation coefficients and differential group analysis. Spearman's rho coefficient was employed to evaluate the relationships between ordinal variables. Given the sample size ($n < 30$) and the ordinal level of quantitative data, nonparametric tests were applied for group differential analyses: the Mann–Whitney U test for independent samples ($k = 2$) and the Kruskal–Wallis one-way ANOVA test ($k > 2$) (completed with a Mann–Whitney U test and Bonferroni correction).

All statistical analyses were performed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences 26 software.

3. Results

3.1. SL Project Characteristics

Of the total number of projects analysed, three quarters (78%) were launched by secondary education, baccalaureate and/or vocational training schools, while the rest (22%) were promoted by pre-primary and primary education schools, as shown in Table 1. Regarding the total number of participating organisations, secondary education, baccalaureate and/or vocational training schools (89%), as well as the Elche City Council, stood out. They participated in about 70% of the cases (67%), followed by early childhood and primary education schools (44%) and third sector entities (39%).

A total of 398 people participated in the SL projects, among which, immigrants or those belonging to indigenous cultural minorities accounted for 15%. They were thus in the minority compared to the total (Table 2). In terms of roles, persons with significant cultural diversity ranged from 0% of public representatives to 16% of citizens. By gender, female citizens (17%) were somewhat more numerous than male citizens (16%).

Table 1. SL project organisations.

| | <i>n</i> | % |
|--|----------|------|
| Promoter organisation | | |
| Early childhood and primary education schools | 4 | 22.2 |
| Secondary, baccalaureate and/or prof. training schools | 14 | 77.8 |
| Participant organisation (multiple choice) | | |
| Merchants' association | 2 | 11.1 |
| Rural development partnership | 1 | 5.6 |
| Parent association | 5 | 27.8 |
| Sports association | 2 | 11.1 |
| Neighbourhood association | 3 | 16.7 |
| City council | 12 | 66.7 |
| Early childhood and primary education schools | 8 | 44.4 |
| Secondary, baccalaureate and/or prof. training schools | 16 | 88.9 |
| Health centre | 3 | 16.7 |
| Sports centre | 2 | 11.1 |
| Police force | 1 | 5.6 |
| Third sector entity (social services) | 7 | 38.9 |
| Media | 3 | 16.7 |
| Small business | 2 | 11.1 |
| Animal protection | 2 | 11.1 |
| Residence for the elderly | 1 | 5.6 |
| University | 2 | 11.1 |

Table 2. SL project participants.

| | | <i>n</i> | | | % | | |
|--|------------------------------------|----------|-------|-------|------|-------|-------|
| | | Men | Women | Total | Men | Women | Total |
| Participants | | | | | | | |
| | Politicians/public representatives | 9 | 6 | 15 | 60.0 | 40.0 | 100.0 |
| | Professionals | 28 | 54 | 82 | 34.1 | 65.9 | 100.0 |
| | Citizens | 361 | 299 | 660 | 54.7 | 45.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 398 | 359 | 757 | 52.6 | 47.4 | 100.0 |
| Participants with cultural diversity (among all participants) | | | | | | | |
| | Politicians/public representatives | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| | Professionals | 4 | 5 | 9 | 14.3 | 9.3 | 11.0 |
| | Citizens | 57 | 51 | 108 | 15.8 | 17.1 | 16.4 |
| | Total | 61 | 56 | 117 | 15.3 | 15.6 | 15.5 |

Table 3 presents the main themes and priority groups of the SL projects. The topics were good health and well-being, quality education and/or gender equality, each of which were found in a third of the projects (33%). Around one in four projects focused on reducing inequalities (28%) or sustainable cities and communities (22%). The rest of the topics were present in less than four projects of the total (responsible consumption and production; life on land; decent work and economic growth; peace, justice and strong institutions; and partnerships for the goals). No projects addressed the following themes: climate action; life under water; clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; zero hunger; and industry, innovation and infrastructure. For their part, the priority groups were highly heterogeneous. Most projects targeted groups with specific needs associated with age—childhood, youth or the elderly (44%). In the same way, the main recipients of one in four projects were groups with specific needs—people with disabilities, migrants or homeless people (28%). Other parts of the projects targeted the general population (17%) or other target audiences (11%).

Table 3. SL project characteristics: main theme and priority population group.

| Characteristic | <i>n</i> | % |
|--|----------|------|
| Project theme (multiple choice) | | |
| Partnerships for the goals | 1 | 5.6 |
| Sustainable cities and communities | 4 | 22.2 |
| Quality education | 6 | 33.3 |
| Gender equality | 6 | 33.3 |
| Peace, justice and strong institutions | 1 | 5.6 |
| Responsible consumption and production | 3 | 16.7 |
| Reduced inequalities | 5 | 27.8 |
| Good health and well-being | 6 | 33.3 |
| Decent work and economic growth | 2 | 11.1 |
| Life on land | 3 | 16.7 |
| Priority population group | | |
| General population | 3 | 16.7 |
| Groups with specific needs by age (childhood, youth, elderly) | 8 | 44.4 |
| Other groups with specific needs (with disabilities, migrants, homelessness) | 5 | 27.8 |
| Other | 2 | 11.1 |

3.2. Development of SL Projects

The level of development of the basic, pedagogical and organisational elements of the projects varied according to the aspect considered (Table 4):

Table 4. Development of SL projects: development of SL elements and contribution to intercultural coexistence dimensions.

| | <i>n</i> | Mean | SD | Median | Range |
|---|----------|------|-------|--------|-------|
| Development of SL elements | | | | | |
| Social needs | 18 | 3.28 | 0.958 | 4.00 | 2 |
| Service | 18 | 1.83 | 0.985 | 1.50 | 3 |
| Sense of service | 18 | 2.67 | 0.907 | 2.50 | 3 |
| Learning | 18 | 2.78 | 0.647 | 3.00 | 2 |
| Participation | 18 | 3.00 | 0.594 | 3.00 | 2 |
| Group work | 18 | 3.17 | 0.707 | 3.00 | 2 |
| Reflection | 18 | 1.89 | 0.758 | 2.00 | 2 |
| Recognition | 18 | 2.83 | 1.150 | 2.50 | 3 |
| Evaluation | 18 | 1.78 | 0.647 | 2.00 | 2 |
| Partnership | 18 | 2.56 | 0.984 | 2.00 | 3 |
| Consolidation of schools | 18 | 1.89 | 0.832 | 2.00 | 2 |
| Consolidation of entities | 18 | 1.78 | 0.808 | 2.00 | 2 |
| Contribution to intercultural coexistence dimensions | | | | | |
| Relational | 16 | 3.31 | 0.479 | 3.00 | 1 |
| Attitudinal | 16 | 3.25 | 1.000 | 4.00 | 3 |
| Normative | 16 | 2.88 | 0.885 | 3.00 | 2 |
| Axiological | 16 | 2.75 | 0.931 | 2.00 | 2 |
| Participatory | 16 | 3.13 | 1.204 | 4.00 | 3 |
| Communication | 16 | 2.88 | 1.408 | 4.00 | 3 |
| Conflictual | 16 | 2.94 | 0.772 | 3.00 | 2 |
| Identity | 16 | 3.06 | 1.289 | 4.00 | 3 |
| Political | 16 | 1.94 | 0.443 | 2.00 | 2 |

The aspects with the highest perceived degree of development were social needs, group work and participation.

The aspects in which a high degree of development was perceived were recognition, sense of service and partnership.

The aspects in which an average development was perceived were as follows: reflection, consolidation of schools, service, evaluation and consolidation of entities.

Regarding the links to the community programme the projects were part of, the degree of their contribution to the coexistence dimensions also varied according to the dimension considered (Table 4):

The dimensions in which a greater degree of contribution was perceived were the relational, attitudinal, participatory and identity dimensions.

The dimensions in which a high contribution was perceived were the conflictual, communication, normative and axiological dimensions.

The dimension in which an average contribution was perceived was the political dimension.

Table 5 shows how most projects were based on the needs detected in the neighbourhood's community diagnosis (72%), and almost half were integrated into the broader planning of community actions (44%). However, in the latter case, it should be noted that more than one third of the projects (39%) lacked data in this regard in the documents analysed, which was partly due to the fact that they were developed before reaching the community programme phase in the overall programme.

Table 5. Development of SL projects: intervention logic and previous training activities.

| | <i>n</i> | % |
|--|----------|------|
| Intervention logic: based on the needs collected in the community diagnosis | | |
| Yes | 13 | 72.2 |
| No | 5 | 27.8 |
| Intervention logic: integrated into community planning | | |
| Yes | 8 | 44.4 |
| No | 3 | 16.7 |
| No data | 7 | 38.9 |
| Training activities prior to the start of the project | | |
| Yes | 12 | 66.7 |
| No | 6 | 33.3 |

Finally, in two out of three experiences, training and training activities were carried out prior to the start of the project (67%).

Regarding the dissemination of the results of the SL projects, in most cases, the results were disseminated to a variable degree according to the recipients (Table 6):

Table 6. Dissemination of SL project results.

| | <i>n</i> | % |
|---|----------|------|
| Dissemination of the results to the participants | | |
| Yes | 16 | 88.9 |
| No | 2 | 11.1 |
| Dissemination of the results to the community | | |
| Yes | 12 | 66.7 |
| No | 6 | 33.3 |
| Media impact (TV, radio, press) | | |
| Yes | 10 | 55.6 |
| No | 8 | 44.4 |

Dissemination to project participants (89%).

Dissemination to the community (67%), although this dissemination did not take place in one in three projects.

Media impact (57%). However, the results were not disclosed in these media in a high percentage of projects (44%).

3.3. Service-Learning and Intercultural Coexistence

The level of development of the elements of the SL projects and the degree of contribution of the projects to the coexistence dimensions varied significantly depending on certain characteristics.

First, the level of perceived development of the SL elements showed significant differences according to the following variables:

Priority group: The perceived degree of development of the partnership was significantly different depending on the project's priority group ($H = 10,697$; $p = 0.013$). Differences were found between projects aimed at the general population and those aimed at groups with specific needs other than age (disability, migrants, homelessness). In the former, the partnership's perceived degree of development was significantly higher (mean = 3.67; $DT = 0.577$) (median = 4; range = 1) than in the second groups (mean = 1.60; $DT = 0.548$) (median = 2; Range = 1).

Intervention logic: Link to community diagnosis. The perceived level of development was significantly different depending on whether or not the projects were linked to the community diagnosis regarding the following SL elements: social needs ($U = 12,000$; $p = 0.019$), group work ($U = 13,000$; $p = 0.036$), reflection ($U = 9500$; $p = 0.015$), evaluation ($U = 10,500$; $p = 0.015$), partnership ($U = 7500$; $p = 0.009$) and consolidation of centres ($U = 11,500$; $p = 0.028$). The differences observed indicated that the perceived degree of development was significantly higher in projects linked to the community diagnosis than in projects without this link (Table 7).

Table 7. Group differences in the development of SL elements and contribution to intercultural coexistence dimensions by intervention logic (based on the needs collected in the community diagnosis).

| | Link to Community Diagnosis ($n = 13$) | | | | No Link to Community Diagnosis ($n = 5$) | | | |
|---|--|-------|--------|-------|--|-------|--------|-------|
| | Mean | SD | Median | Range | Mean | SD | Median | Range |
| Development of SL elements | | | | | | | | |
| Social needs | 3.62 | 0.768 | 4.00 | 2 | 2.40 | 0.894 | 2.00 | 2 |
| Group work | 3.38 | 0.650 | 3.00 | 2 | 2.60 | 0.548 | 3.00 | 1 |
| Reflection | 2.15 | 0.689 | 2.00 | 2 | 1.20 | 0.447 | 1.00 | 1 |
| Evaluation | 2.00 | 0.577 | 2.00 | 2 | 1.20 | 0.447 | 1.00 | 1 |
| Partnership | 2.92 | 0.862 | 4.00 | 2 | 1.60 | 0.548 | 2.00 | 1 |
| Consolidation of centres | 2.15 | 0.801 | 2.00 | 2 | 1.20 | 0.477 | 1.00 | 1 |
| Contribution to intercultural coexistence dimensions | | | | | | | | |
| Communication | 3.31 | 1.182 | 4.00 | 3 | 1.00 | 0.000 | 1.00 | 0 |
| Identity | 3.54 | 0.877 | 4.00 | 3 | 1.00 | 0.000 | 1.00 | 0 |
| Political | 2.08 | 0.277 | 2.00 | 1 | 1.33 | 0.577 | 1.00 | 1 |

Intervention logic: Integration into the community programme. The perceived level of development of social needs was significantly different depending on whether or not the projects were integrated into the neighbourhood's community programme ($U = 3000$; $p = 0.034$). The data showed that the perceived degree of development for this element was significantly higher in the projects integrated into community programmes (mean = 3.50; $DT = 0.926$) (median = 4; range = 2) than in projects where such integration did not occur (mean = 2.00; $DT = 0.000$) (median = 2; range = 0).

Associated previous training: The perceived degree of development was significantly different depending on the existence or nonexistence of previous training associated with the following SL elements: sense of service ($U = 14,000$; $p = 0.028$), group work ($U = 15,000$; $p = 0.031$), reflection ($U = 7000$; $p = 0.004$), evaluation ($U = 8000$; $p = 0.003$), partnership ($U = 8000$; $p = 0.005$) and consolidation of centres ($U = 9500$; $p = 0.008$). The results indicated that the perceived degree of development in projects with previous training was significantly higher than in those that did not execute such training (Table 8).

Table 8. Group differences in the development of SL elements and contribution to intercultural coexistence dimensions by training activities prior to the start of the project.

| | With Associated Previous Training (<i>n</i> = 12) | | | | No Associated Prior Training (<i>n</i> = 6) | | | |
|---|--|-------|--------|-------|--|-------|--------|-------|
| | Mean | SD | Median | Range | Mean | SD | Median | Range |
| Development of SL elements | | | | | | | | |
| Sense of service | 3.00 | 0.853 | 3.00 | 2 | 2.00 | 0.632 | 2.00 | 2 |
| Group work | 3.42 | 0.669 | 3.50 | 2 | 2.67 | 0.516 | 3.00 | 1 |
| Reflection | 2.25 | 0.622 | 2.00 | 2 | 1.17 | 0.408 | 1.00 | 1 |
| Evaluation | 2.08 | 0.515 | 2.00 | 2 | 1.17 | 0.408 | 1.00 | 1 |
| Partnership | 3.00 | 0.853 | 3.00 | 2 | 1.67 | 0.516 | 2.00 | 1 |
| Consolidation of centres | 2.25 | 0.754 | 2.00 | 2 | 1.17 | 0.408 | 1.00 | 1 |
| Contribution to intercultural coexistence dimensions | | | | | | | | |
| Participatory | 3.42 | 1.165 | 4.00 | 3 | 2.25 | 0.957 | 2.50 | 2 |
| Identity | 3.50 | 0.905 | 4.00 | 3 | 1.75 | 1.500 | 1.00 | 3 |
| Political | 2.08 | 0.289 | 2.00 | 1 | 1.50 | 0.577 | 1.50 | 1 |

Community information: Participant dissemination. The perceived level of development of the Participation was significantly different depending on whether or not the project had disseminated the results among the participants ($U = 1000$; $p = 0.012$). The empirical data showed that, in the cases of projects whose results were disseminated to participants, the perceived level of development of this element was higher than in projects where this dissemination was not carried out (Table 9). However, this result should be taken with caution since there were only two projects in which the dissemination mentioned above did not take place.

Table 9. Group differences in development of SL elements and contribution to intercultural coexistence dimensions, by participant dissemination.

| | Participant Dissemination (<i>n</i> = 16) | | | | No Participant Dissemination (<i>n</i> = 2) | | | |
|---|--|-------|--------|-------|--|-------|--------|-------|
| | Mean | SD | Median | Range | Mean | SD | Median | Range |
| Development of SL elements | | | | | | | | |
| Participation | 3.13 | 0.500 | 3.00 | 2 | 2.00 | 0.00 | 2.00 | 0 |
| Contribution to intercultural coexistence dimensions | | | | | | | | |
| Communication | 3.14 | 1.292 | 4.00 | 3 | 1.00 | 0.000 | 1.00 | 0 |
| Identity | 3.36 | 1.082 | 4.00 | 3 | 1.00 | 0.000 | 1.00 | 0 |

Community information: Dissemination to the community. The perceived degree of development was significantly different depending on whether or not the project had disseminated the results to the community in relation to the following SL elements: service ($U = 15,500$; $p = 0.038$), sense of service ($U = 14,000$; $p = 0.028$), reflection ($U = 14,000$; $p = 0.027$), evaluation ($U = 16,000$; $p = 0.035$), and consolidation of entities ($U = 13,000$; $p = 0.021$). The differences observed indicated that the perceived degree of development with respect to these elements was significantly higher in cases of projects whose results were disseminated to the community than in those in which they were not (Table 10).

Community information: Media impact. Finally, the perceived level of development of the recognition element was significantly different depending on whether the project had had any media impact or not ($U = 3000$; $p = 0.000$). The results showed that, in projects with media impact, the degree of perceived development of the recognition element was significantly higher (mean = 3.70; $DT = .675$) (median = 4; range = 2) than that of projects that did not have these impacts (mean = 1.75; $DT = 0.463$) (median = 2; range = 1).

Table 10. Group differences in the development of SL elements and contribution to intercultural coexistence dimensions by community dissemination.

| | Community Dissemination to the (<i>n</i> = 12) | | | | No Community Dissemination (<i>n</i> = 6) | | | |
|---|---|-------|--------|-------|--|-------|--------|-------|
| | Mean | SD | Median | Range | Mean | SD | Median | Range |
| Development of SL elements | | | | | | | | |
| Service | 2.17 | 1.030 | 2.00 | 3 | 1.17 | 0.408 | 1.00 | 1 |
| Sense of service | 3.00 | 0.853 | 3.00 | 2 | 2.00 | 0.632 | 2.00 | 2 |
| Reflection | 2.17 | 0.718 | 2.00 | 2 | 1.33 | 0.516 | 1.00 | 1 |
| Evaluation | 2.00 | 0.603 | 2.00 | 2 | 1.33 | 0.516 | 1.00 | 1 |
| Consolidation of entities | 2.08 | 0.793 | 2.00 | 2 | 1.17 | 0.408 | 1.00 | 1 |
| Contribution to intercultural coexistence dimensions | | | | | | | | |
| Communication | 3.45 | 0.036 | 4.00 | 3 | 1.60 | 1.342 | 1.00 | 3 |
| Identity | 3.64 | 0.924 | 4.00 | 3 | 1.80 | 1.095 | 1.00 | 2 |

No significant differences were observed in the level of development perceived depending on the institution promoting the project.

Second, the degree of contribution of the SL projects to the development of the coexistence dimensions showed significant differences in some cases according to the following variables:

Intervention logic: Link to community diagnosis. The degree of the perceived contribution of the projects was significantly different depending on whether or not the projects were linked to the community diagnosis in the communication ($U = 3000$; $p = 0.013$), identity ($U = 1500$; $p = 0.007$) and political ($U = 6000$; $p = 0.008$) dimensions. In the projects linked to this diagnosis, their degree of perceived contribution to the dimensions mentioned above was significantly higher than in the projects without this link (Table 7).

Previous associated training: A project's degree of perceived contribution to the development of coexistence also varied significantly depending on whether or not the project was associated with previous training, in particular in the participation ($U = 8000$; $p = 0.031$), identity ($U = 9500$; $p = 0.050$) and political ($U = 11,000$; $p = 0.021$) dimensions. In all the dimensions mentioned, the degree of contribution received was higher if the project had previous associated training (Table 8).

Community information: Participant dissemination. In the same way, the level of contribution of the projects to the communication ($U = 3000$; $p = 0.050$) and identity ($U = 2000$; $p = 0.033$) dimensions was significantly different depending on whether the project disseminated its results to the participants or not. In both dimensions, a greater degree of contribution was perceived in projects that conducted this dissemination compared to those that did not (Table 9). However, this result should be taken with caution since there were only two projects in which the dissemination did not take place.

Community information: Dissemination to the community. Finally, there was also evidence of a significantly different degree of contribution to the development of the communication ($U = 9000$; $p = 0.019$) and identity dimensions depending on whether or not the project results were disseminated to the community. As for the previous variable, a greater degree of contribution was perceived in both dimensions in the case of the projects that performed this merger compared to those that did not (Table 10).

No significant differences were observed in the degree of perceived contribution to the coexistence dimensions according to the promoting institution, the priority group, integration into a community programme and media impact.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

An essential objective when working with local communities with a high degree of cultural diversity is to establish encounters and exchanges between the people, groups and institutions that compose them and live in them [52]. In short, the aim is to establish an inclusive model of management for cultural diversity [51]. In this article, we described a

case study of the use of service-learning, a participatory and educational methodology, to achieve this objective.

The projects were evaluated from a dual or, one could also say, triple perspective. On the one hand, we considered the structural characteristics of SL projects: the type of institutions that promote them and participate in them, participant profiles, the topics addressed and the targeted priority groups. On the other, we assessed them according to their dynamic components [48], that is, the basic, pedagogical and organisational elements that shape them. Finally, we analysed their contribution to the community's intercultural coexistence [11]. Table 11 summarises group differences in the development of basic, pedagogical and organisational SL components and the contributions to intercultural coexistence dimensions by each project characteristic; in other words, the SL elements and the intercultural coexistence dimensions in which significant statistical differences were observed according to different characteristics of the projects.

The results showed that SL projects represented a meeting point for multiple and different institutions from various domains—not just educational ones. This outcome partly resembled what was observed in the practices systematised by Batlle and Escoda [44]. One implication is the need to assume that a community's social, cultural, sports or health institutions adopt an educational role; at the same time, school institutions need to recognise the educational role of other institutions [42]. The involvement of formal schools is necessary but not sufficient to develop a genuine community education [12,20].

The involvement of the city councils in two out of three cases was a factor that reflected the local/territorial orientation of the projects. The literature on community work in Spain widely recognises the central role of the local administration as a catalyst for the participation of the population and of all public and private technical resources in matters of general interest [7,16]. Other recognised factors include experiences such as that of Barcelona (Spain), in which the Diputació de Barcelona helps local authorities to implement SL initiatives through training, communication and technical support actions, among others [43].

It is worth noting that the projects analysed contemplated and promoted the participation of three types of actors: (a) politicians/public representatives, (b) professionals and (c) citizens, especially when the local/territorial development process was understood to have resulted from—positive or negative—interactions among them [16], each according to their own roles and without confusing them [52].

Generally, the results of the projects under study indicated a medium-to-high perceived development of the set of basic, pedagogical and organisational elements proposed by Puig et al. to evaluate SL experiences [48].

Notable among the elements that obtained the highest scores was the identification of social needs by the participating students. The objective of this identification was to understand not only social situations that could be of concern to the people living and/or working in the community, but also the potential for educational action in terms of resources. SL projects must be based on the existing social reality and on the recognition of its weaknesses and strengths [24,42]. In this case, the students had access to the identification of social needs as well as to the elaboration and execution of the corresponding proposal of services to the community. This element was enhanced in cases where SL was incorporated into a broader intercultural community programme, through which local governments, professionals and citizens participated both in the analysis of realities and in the consequent improvement of actions. This result supports that of other works [42,45], which stressed the value of participants' mobilisation and the shared construction of knowledge with respect to their own reality.

Other SL elements with a significant impact were group work and participation. SL fostered the groups' capacity of development and organisation in the face of the community's social needs. Within the collective work process, participants coordinated their contributions in order to modify some aspect of the realities linked to health and well-being, quality education and gender equality, among other issues. These results were compatible

with those of previous studies [24,28,30,32,37,40,45], in which participation was considered to somehow take shape based on group work in the different phases of SL development.

Table 11. Summary of group differences in development of SL elements and contribution to intercultural coexistence dimensions by project characteristics.

| Variables with Statistically Significant Differences According to Project Characteristics | Project Characteristics |
|---|---|
| Development of SL elements | |
| Social needs | - Link to community diagnosis - Integration into community programme - Community dissemination |
| Service | - Community dissemination |
| Sense of service | - Associated pretraining - Community dissemination |
| Learning | — |
| Participation | - Participant dissemination |
| Group work | - Link to community diagnosis - Associated pretraining |
| Reflection | - Link to community diagnosis - Associated pretraining - Community dissemination |
| Recognition | - Media impacts |
| Evaluation | - Link to community diagnosis - Associated pretraining - Community dissemination |
| Partnership | - Priority group - Link to community diagnosis - Associated pretraining |
| Consolidation of centres | - Link to community diagnosis - Associated pretraining |
| Consolidation of entities | - Community dissemination |
| Contribution to intercultural coexistence dimensions | |
| Relational | — |
| Attitudinal | — |
| Normative | — |
| Axiological | — |
| Participatory | - Associated pretraining |
| Communication | - Link to community diagnosis - Participant dissemination - Community dissemination |
| Conflictual | — |
| identity | - Link to community diagnosis - Associated pretraining - Participant dissemination - Community dissemination |
| Political | - Link to community diagnosis - Integration into community programme - Associated pretraining |

The perception of the development of group work differed significantly when it was associated with the intercultural community programme variables, specifically, the

community diagnosis. Group work perception increased when the SL was connected to the local community through this participatory research process. A similar situation applied to other elements: reflection, evaluation, partnership and the consolidation of schools. All of them improved their performance to a greater or lesser extent. This could be explained in part because true community participation—organisation—i.e., that which creates social networks of action and incorporates other local agents beyond the initial group—begins with community diagnosis—not when the diagnosis has already been elaborated [52]. Community diagnosis goes beyond a mere description of problematic social situations, as it highlights improvements to these situations, actively involving leaders, professionals and citizens in decision-making [52]. It represents a method of research and social dynamization aimed at facilitating the collective processes of reflection, planning and action within communities [7,16,52].

The existence of prior SL methodology training led to significantly more favourable perceptions regarding the development of several basic, pedagogical and organisational project elements. Specifically, these elements were related to service, group work, reflection, evaluation, partnerships and the consolidation of schools. Prior training is a necessary and important action, but it must be pursued through other training proposals that respond to specific demands and each community's particular identity [42].

The latter also applies to project dissemination. In cases where the projects were disseminated, we observed a greater degree of perceived development with respect to the following elements: social needs, service, sense of service, participation, reflection, recognition, evaluation and consolidation of entities. Bär, Campo and Rubio have also defended the importance of making the work visible to the community [42]. As Marchioni et al. [52] argue, a local/territorial development process cannot take place without extensive and continuous information on the actions that sustain it since participation and sustainability are not possible without information.

Finally, the perception of the contribution of SL projects to the development of some intercultural coexistence dimensions (identity, the political dimension, communication and participation) was significantly higher depending on some of the characteristics of these projects (link to the community diagnosis, integration into community programming, prior associated training, dissemination to participants and dissemination to the community). Thus, we can affirm that the SL projects analysed were conducive to promoting coexistence in communities with diversity. However, unlike the case described by Ochoa and Pérez [37], the coexistence here developed beyond the school boundaries. From the perspective of the promoting institutions, the projects fostered relationships among individuals, groups and institutions, enhancing a sense of identification with the diverse community. These data are significant because they indicate that SL had an impact on how community members related to each other. These findings support Essomba and Leiva [12], who maintain, in the same line as Giménez [8,11], that placing people from different backgrounds and/or cultural belongings within the same space–time dimension does not necessarily lead to intercultural coexistence. Other anthropological conditions are required: adequate relationships, attitudes of respect, shared norms and values, active participation, communication, conflict management, awareness of belonging and political action. Based on the results obtained, SL can help to facilitate these conditions.

To finish, the study presented a number of limitations. First, the number of SL projects analysed was small ($n = 18$). Second, all of the SL projects studied took place within the same geographical area (the Carrús neighbourhood in the municipality of Elche, Spain). The results cannot, therefore, be generalised. Moreover, it was based entirely on the analysis of secondary data. To obtain further information on how SL can locally contribute to intercultural coexistence, it would be necessary to broaden the sample of experiences, diversify the geographical locations and incorporate primary sources of information.

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