‘TAWASOL’: INTERNATIONAL SERVICE LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN JORDAN AND LEBANON.

PROJECT REPORT 2014
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‘Tawasol’ in Arabic means ‘share’, ‘interact’ and ‘engage’ - and this is the aim of this report - to share the work that ‘Tawasol’ has done.

The intention of the report is to interact with teachers and students involved in Service Learning, while engaging with community and civil society organisations, so that together, we can work to build our societies.

‘Tawasol’ is a consortium of universities from Jordan, Lebanon, the United Kingdom, Sweden, the Republic of Ireland and Bulgaria.

In Jordan, Service Learning is led from the new Centre for Service Learning at Hashemite University, and in Lebanon. It is led from the Centre for Civic Engagement and Community Service a the American University of Beirut and by the University of Balamand Task Force on Civic Engagement and Community Service appointed by the University’s President.

Combining the knowledge and skills of all these universities has been an exceptional experience in cross-cultural cooperation. Since 2010, ‘Tawasol’ has been partaking in Service Learning activities and developing Service Learning programmes across the curriculum. The approach taken emphasises reflection, practical engagement, learning by doing, civic participation, and working with local communities.

Staff involved in ‘Tawasol’ come from all sorts of disciplines and backgrounds – from computer science to health services, and from engineers to social scientists. Working together, ‘Tawasol’ has been able to introduce hundreds of students to the benefits and joys of Service Learning and civic engagement. It has also trained many academics in the enhancement that Service Learning can bring to their course and curricula.

‘Tawasol’ believes that Service Learning and civic engagement have the power to be a real force for change in our societies. As students go into their communities, they not only ‘serve’, they also ‘learn’. And as academics, by breaking down the walls that sometimes separate academia from the local community, we have also been able to ‘serve’ and ‘learn’.

We hope you enjoy learning about ‘Tawasol’ in the following pages. Perhaps you might even join us in this important and exciting work!

Dr Randa Mahasneh
Co-Director Tawasol and Director of the Hashemite University Centre for Service Learning, Jordan

Dr Michele Lamb
Co-Director Tawasol, University of Roehampton, London
INTRODUCTION – DEVELOPING SERVICE LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN JORDAN AND LEBANON (SLACE)

The Tawasol Network was established in January 2010 with funding from the European Commission Education, Audio-Visual and Culture Executive Agency under the Tempus IV Joint Project Curriculum Reform category (second call for proposals n° eac/01/2009), the European Union’s programme which supports the modernisation of higher education in Partner Countries, mainly through university cooperation projects.

Service Learning brings together academic study and voluntary service in the community, linking the personal and social development of students with their academic and cognitive development.

The end result is individuals who can ‘play an active role in development of the community because they will be capable of recognising and solving local problems’.

The seven objectives of the Tawasol project were:

1. The establishment of cross-curricular Service Learning and civic engagement centres in universities in Jordan and Lebanon, focusing on health, education, technology and the environment.
2. The training and education of administrative and academic staff in delivering Service Learning and civic engagement partnerships and programmes.
3. The preparation and training of students.
4. The development of Service Learning procedures and agreements.
5. The creation of consistent quality assurance and control systems.
6. The establishment of effective community engagements and partnerships with enterprises.
7. The promotion of cross-cultural learning and understanding.

This report contains an overview of the Tawasol project, and documents its major achievements from four perspectives - staff, students, universities and communities.

Michele Lamb,
Project Co-Director,
University of Roehampton
SERVICE LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN JORDAN AND LEBANON – PROJECT OUTCOMES

Service Learning began in the United States in the 1980s, and has its roots in Dewey’s (1938) notion of ‘experiential learning’, especially the idea that the educational experiences of students and their lives outside educational institutions should be intricately linked.

The Tawasol Project identified seven key objectives;

1. **Establish centres for cross-curricular Service Learning and civic engagement**
   Two centres for Service Learning are now fully established with senior management support that ensures sustainable growth and a strong foundation for future development (see profiles on pages 7 and 8). The University of Roehampton, American University of Beirut and Hashemite University, are all members of the Talloires Network, an international network of universities engaged in Service Learning. Through this network, these universities continue to promote and disseminate the work of Tawasol.

2. **Training and education of administrative and academic staff**
   Staff from all five participating universities have been trained through international workshops hosted in the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Lebanon and Jordan.

3. **Preparation and training of students**
   Students have taken part in training and development workshops in the Republic of Ireland, United Kingdom and at an international conference in Hashemite University, Jordan.

4. **Development of Service Learning procedures and agreements**
   University staff have been trained in the need to establish robust agreements between staff and students; students and community groups; and universities and the communities they serve.

5. **Consistent quality assurance and control systems**
   Through the project, good practice and quality assurance guidelines for the development of Service Learning curricula have been developed (see pages 15 and 16). These guidelines work at modular level, giving support to academics and staff who are introducing Service Learning, providing them with the information they need to ensure that modules meet learning objectives and outcomes.

6. **Effective community engagements and partnerships with enterprises**
   Project participants have established databases of local partners through which ongoing and sustainable relationships between university, community and students have been established.

7. **Cross-cultural learning and understanding through working together**
   Over three years, the partners, universities and students have developed enduring relationships and an eagerness to go forward together.
The Tawasol website (www.tawasol.org) has grown significantly from its humble beginnings. Originally a space aimed at academics keen on embedding Service Learning in the curriculum, it is now an impressive resource hub for Service Learning and community engagement. Hosted and run by the Centre for Service Learning at Hashemite University, Jordan, the website also acts as a valuable tool of effective communication for more than 200 members of the Tawasol online community. This community consists of stakeholders from the partner countries of Jordan, Lebanon, Sweden, Bulgaria, Ireland and the UK, who continue to engage with one another long after their participation in the project’s Service Learning courses.

**Resource Hub**

As a place of reflection and research, the website houses all relevant Tawasol resources, including publications, case studies, videos, projects and blogs on Service Learning. Members of the Tawasol community are able to post resources on the website. Conference presentations, published reports, media articles and book reference lists on Service Learning and the project have been widely shared and read on the website. Videos of past events, including those of the International Student Exchange in Galway, resources on Service Learning and reports of projects that arose out of participating in Service Learning courses are all available to view on the Tawasol website.

**Connecting Students**

The website is designed in a way that encourages students to participate in reflective learning, to engage with fellow students in partner universities, share experiences and ideas, and to simply keep in touch.

Having an online community enables one to set up personal profiles, encouraging communication and engagement. The ‘Groups’ section of the website gives all stakeholders the ability to form group discussions and add posts according to specific topics. Community members are also able to post comments in response to posts, reply to authors and share posts via a ShareIt tool on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr.

As part of the International Student Exchange programmes, students were asked to submit coursework on their experiences of Service Learning and on their community placement, which were then uploaded onto the website for sharing. Students were also asked to use the ‘Groups’ section of the website to blog about their experiences as they unfolded. This was intended to develop reflection skills throughout the programme, and also to allow a space for students to read each other’s contribution, thereby supporting cohesion in the group. Arabic-speaking students are also able to post information and messages in Arabic and English.

**A place of reflection and research**

The Tawasol online community continues to grow, with new members joining in the discussion on Service Learning and volunteering. Students, researchers, civil society organisations, and anyone wishing to learn more about Service Learning and gain inspiration from the projects, are welcome to use the Tawasol website as a research tool and space to network and share ideas. www.tawasol.org.
CASE STUDY: THE CENTRE FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (CCECS) AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

Mounir Mabsout, American University of Beirut

Service Learning at AUB – The TEMPUS Tawasol Experience

The Centre for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS), an interdisciplinary centre, was established at the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 2008 under the Provost’s Office. It aims to develop a culture of service and civic leadership within the university community. One of its primary objectives is to promote integration of service to society with academic study and research in a variety of disciplines, with particular emphasis on incorporating the centre’s service activities into academic curricula, thus developing (CBL) or Service Learning (SL) programs.

The inception and implementation of Service Learning at AUB have been supported primarily by the EACEA Tempus Grant #158914: Developing Service Learning and Civic Engagement. In summary, the Tawasol group of leading/partnering universities, which stemmed from the TEMPUS grant, concentrated efforts in all campuses, and tangible and substantive outcomes at AUB were achieved on Service Learning and civic engagement.

Between 2010 and 2013:

Eight CBL-related workshops and seminars were conducted with 60 AUB faculty members trained. Ten courses were developed/offered and/or supported with seven departments and 16 faculty members contributing to the development.

Several community-based academic interdisciplinary projects were researched/studied and implemented in partnership with departments and units at AUB, as well with external organisations and funders. They included vital community development initiatives such as rainwater harvesting and traditional water conservation practices, greening and urban/alternative agriculture, and inclusive environment and design, leading to social and economic development. These took place in different settings in Lebanon such as in the neighbourhood of AUB, in the remote village of Marwaheen in South Lebanon, in the underprivileged Palestinian camp of Ein El-Helwe, and most recently, the heavy engagement of AUB in the Syrian Relief Project throughout the nation, which is currently a most critical social crisis in Lebanon and the region.

These various initiatives fed directly into the academic setting of the university, with students being key recipients and participants in workshops, courses, projects, and meaningful activities. They also partook in dedicated study tours and training courses conducted at/with the key partnering universities in Europe, Jordan, and Lebanon.

The current initiatives led and conducted/coordinated by the centre paved the way towards disseminating and entrenching Service Learning and civic engagement across AUB.

Various units and groups have formed as a result of the workshops and support offered by the centre via the TEMPUS grant, such as: The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), through a ‘Faculty Learning Initiative’, funded two faculty groups in English literature and in health sciences to develop Service Learning in their area courses, in collaboration and with the support of the CCECS.

The CTL has included a special track on Service Learning in their annual ‘International Conference on Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education’, which the CCECS supports. Several courses on community engagement in various departments have started, which are open to all majors (leadership in political studies, health sciences, psychology, medical and nursing, community landscaping, etc.) - a collaborative effort between AUB Landscape Architecture and the American University in Cairo (AUC) to develop mutual learning on design and narrative community engagement.

At a national level, efforts to generalise Service Learning in institutions where this is a novice educational model were put in place...
to strengthen collaborative efforts with a few universities in Lebanon. As such, AUB and the University of Balamand (UOB; TEMPUS partner in Lebanon) will be organising the first consortium of Lebanese universities to instigate a collaboration on civic engagement between campuses during the Spring of 2014, under the auspices of the Ministry of Higher Education.

AUB will also organise a conference meeting with community organisations (NGOs and others) for the purpose of training and sharing knowledge. AUB and the University of Balamand (UOB) are also hosting the annual Takaful Conference 2014 in partnership with AUC in June 2014, which is the most renowned conference on civic engagement in the region.

With all of the above, the CCECS is currently presenting its strategic planning for the next five to ten years to the Provost Office and academic community, where the formalisation of Service Learning at the institutional and programmatic levels is clearly defined and structured for implementation. By embedding Service Learning in the academia with the CCECS leading the way, this will ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of civic engagement as a culture at AUB.

CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY PROVISION IN SERVICE LEARNING AT HASHEMITE UNIVERSITY (HU)

Randa Mahasneh, Hashemite University

For the Hashemite University (HU), Service Learning provides a sustainable method for delivering HU’s mission. This mission is “to actively participate in achieving the goals of the comprehensive national development through preparing loyal men and women who are not only technically competent in their professional fields, but also life-long learners who have a breadth of vision, loyalty to their nation, and a sense of civic and moral responsibility and a devotion to the fundamental values of human life”.

Through Tawasol and the collaboration with the universities from EU, Lebanon and Jordan, HU established its Service Learning centre. The vision of the centre is to see students engaging with and participating in their local and national communities and to be well prepared as citizens. Its mission is to link the personal and social development of its students with their academic and cognitive development. This will result in individuals who can play an active role in the development of the community, because they will be capable of recognising and solving problems in their community.

The centre was established to serve as a local and regional training centre for instructors, to establish ties with the community, and to identify community needs in order to provide constructive services. Since its establishment, the centre has collected data about civic organisations and created a database which is growing day by day, as it collaborates with new organisations.

During the past three years, the partnership has developed familiarisation and training programmes for HU staff and students, which involved travelling between the EU, Jordan and Lebanon. After receiving professional training on Service Learning as a pedagogical tool, several professors integrated Service Learning in different subject areas such as nursing, education, biology, geology, tourism, nutrition, engineering and IT.

These professors integrate Service Learning goals and activities in their course plans and explain them to students at the beginning of the semester. They ask their students to form groups of four to six and to contact the Service Learning centre in order to organise their placement. The centre provides them with names and locations of civic organisations that need services, and asks them to fill forms to explain what they are going to do in the
service location. The centre then issues a letter to the organisation with the names of students and the service they are planning to provide.

Students from different areas of specialisation have served schools, kindergartens, orphanages, centres for older people, health centres, hospitals, and charity organisations. The centre received thank-you letters, which gave positive feedback from the served organisations. Almost all served organisations were happy with the service and said that they were looking forward to future cooperation with the university.

In terms of students’ evaluation, staff are using several types of assessment tools and strategies including; reflection papers, group presentation supported by videotaping of the service they provided, peer evaluation, and the organisation evaluation.

Service Learning is a very demanding and time-consuming teaching strategy, which requires lots of effort from both the staff and the students. However, students benefit from Service Learning experiences at personal, educational, and social levels.

Reading through students’ reflections shows that their experience;

• Enriches their learning of the course material.
• Engages them in active learning that demonstrates the relevance of academic work for their life and career choices.
• Increases their awareness of current social issues.
• Broadens their perspectives of diversity and enhances their critical thinking skills.
• Improves their interpersonal skills
• Develops their civic responsibility
• Fosters the ethic of service and civic participation through active community involvement.

“I believe that Tawasol succeeded in spreading the culture of civic engagement in HU through both staff and students. The collaboration between the centre and the trained and enthusiastic staff will allow the energy and passions of students to contribute effectively to our society.”
The Tawasol Network in Jordan and Lebanon has been a place to build on existing expertise, as well as develop new courses and programmes. University of Balamand (Lebanon), Zarqa Private University, Jordan and Al Albyatt University, Jordan have all developed diverse approaches to Service Learning that build on their disciplinary orientation and strengths. Redesigning existing courses to incorporate Service Learning has been a key accomplishment of the project.

**The University of Balamand – Inspiring students and communities through human rights**

The University of Balamand already had significant experience in the field of Service Learning and civic engagement prior to the start of the project through the University SEED programme, in which students undertake community work as part of their courses. Through Tawasol, this existing commitment has grown and strengthened, benefitting from greater institutionalisation through highlighting the project to senior management within the university. Staff training has expanded, and in particular, the enthusiasm, energy and commitment of the student body at Balamand has inspired Tawasol participants across the region.

A good example of the impact of Tawasol at UoB was the redesign of a course on human rights as a community-based service course. The class and syllabus were developed out of Tawasol training and for assessment, students kept reflective journals and wrote a final report. Through this sort of innovation, students have been able to develop new skills of critical awareness, as well as a new understanding of the role of relationships between community and education. Students were also involved in various activities to disseminate and expand human rights ideas and practices through NGOs. In the most recent offerings of the course, students were organised into groups and became involved in addressing issues and problems of Iraqi refugees, Syrian refugees, women in prison, and migrant workers.

**Zarqa Private University, Jordan – Technological Development for students and communities**

Zarqa University in Jordan houses the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Colleges of Computing and Information Society of the Association of Arab Universities. It is also the permanent residence of the general secretariat of the International Arab Conference on Information Technology (ACIT). It is therefore in the area of Service Learning and computer science and information technology that Zarqa has developed its Service Learning capacity. In particular, the value of Service Learning for future employability in areas of information technology and computing has been emphasised. The university also hosts a national database on NGOs, which supports the development of university/community links in Jordan.
CASE STUDY

Al AlBayt University, Jordan –
Engineering in the local community

Al AlBayt University was opened in October 1994, and was officially inaugurated in March 1995. It started with the study of Islamic Studies, but this has changed and shifted to different faculties. It now has 11,500 students with a focus on law, humanities, I.T., nursing and engineering. Engineering courses at Al Albyatt have particularly benefited from involvement in Service Learning, giving students the opportunities to develop their engineering skills in projects that also benefit their local communities. At Al-Albayt, the King Abdullah Fund also has local offices on campus to promote community engagement with small NGOs, the primary focus being on voluntary work in the community.

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

“The training in Ireland will be a new milestone in my story of Service Learning and community service. This training has provided me with a greater understanding of my volunteering past, and has opened new horizons to make even more improvements for society.”
Samer Sfeir, American University of Beirut

“Volunteering with Amnesty International has taught me that people should be informed about their rights, as well as about the ways to control their prejudice and learn how not to let it dominate their opinions of others. I also learnt that we need to learn how to appreciate our own culture, for it is the basis of any change that should happen in our societies. I believe intercultural interaction is why such projects are so important in order to promote change in the way we, as people from different backgrounds, view each other and communicate. We learned how to accept, tolerate and respect one another and I feel motivated to bring my acquired skills with me back home to spread the idea of change.”
Tarek Tamer, University of Balamand

“You learn about self-growth, in addition to new methods and techniques of Service Learning and civic engagement. When you learn about Service Learning and civic engagement, you contribute to the development of the community. It doesn’t matter whether you’re young and old, male or female, able-bodied or disabled; there is something you can do! The Tawasol project has really helped me to develop my skills, to put theory into practice, developing skills and experience that lead to paid work. I’m grateful for this wonderful opportunity.”
Farah Ahmad Najem, Hashemite University

“Service Learning and civic engagement were very ambiguous concepts for me until I got involved in the Tawasol workshops and events. I found out what they really mean and how important they are to academic institutions and communities. When I partook in the workshops, I came to realise that voluntary student work and Service Learning are completely different. In the future, my vision is to make the idea of Service Learning and civic engagement popular in my community, and of course, in my university, so I am going to introduce these concepts to students through workshops.”
Abd Alrahman Aladlan, Al al-Bayt University

“Human Rights is the most important thing to me, and I am mainly interested in children’s rights. Back in my country, there is so much poverty, child labour and illiteracy. It also has many NGO’s, actually too many, one NGO for every 550 citizens. From what I see, they are not doing that much to help solve these real life problems. It is so sad to talk about my own country that way, but it is the truth, and I think it’s time to make this truth history. Jigsaw, where I did my community placement, gave me many ideas of how I can help fix the situation back in my country, and I hope, with the help of others, to open a place like Jigsaw in Tripoli, where many children need it.”
Loujine Fattal, University of Balamand
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMME TO GALWAY

Organised by academic and administrative staff from the Tawasol Partner Universities, students travelled to Galway, Ireland for the International Exchange Programme from 23 September to 6 October 2012. With overall coordination and academic support from staff at NUI Galway, 22 students from Hashemite University, Zarqa Private University, Al al-Bayt University, American University of Beirut, University of Balamand, University of Gothenburg, University of Plovdiv and University of Roehampton, joined their counterparts from NUI Galway to participate in a programme of activities focused on Service Learning, civic engagement and intercultural exchange.

The 14 female and 8 male students were selected to take part in the programme on the following criteria:

- Good academic profiles.
- Enrolled in an Undergraduate or Masters level programme (and had at least one year of their programme remaining after the visit).
- A good command of written and spoken English.
- Experience of volunteering in some capacity.
- Registered on relevant programmes within the disciplines or faculties of the staff participating in Tawasol.

Academic Learning

As part of the exchange programme, students were expected to participate in an academic learning and training session and to produce written work, along with a group presentation. During a ‘Reflection Workshop’, students were introduced to the practice of deep reflection in Service Learning. They were shown examples and were able to identify the differences between ordinary examination of experience and deep reflection. Students were given an introductory talk on the history, definitions and characteristics of Service Learning and volunteering by Lorraine McIlrath, Coordinator on the Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI) at the National University of Ireland, a Tawasol Partner. Two academics from different disciplines presented to students the ways that Service Learning is embedded into their programmes, highlighting the benefits of using Service Learning as a pedagogical tool. In another session, students were also given insight into the different ways volunteering operates within communities and were made aware of the cultural and social dimensions of working in different communities. A separate session prepared students for their community placement experiences in Galway.
Volunteer Fair
NUI Galway held a ‘Volunteer Fair’ to highlight opportunities in the community. The students attended the fair and were exposed to a wide range of community partners working to counteract disadvantage and discrimination. Many of the organisations hosted students as part of their two-day community placement. Students were able to identify their organisation, approach them and make initial contact and arrange to further engage in Service Learning and civic engagement. Among the organisations represented at the ‘Volunteer Fair’ were the Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Belarussian Orphanage Project, COPE Galway, Enable Ireland, Galway Community Circus, Galway Simon Community, Hope Foundation, Irish Cancer Society and more.

Community Placement
During the second week of the exchange programme, students spent two days working with community partners in an organisation of their choice. This allowed them to put into practice some of their academic learning from the preceding days. Students were able to support the work of organisations in a variety of ways. Just some of the Galway community partners involved in providing placements for students are - Deaf Hear, Rahoon Youth Project, Jigsaw, Galway Rape Crisis Centre, Amnesty International Galway, Galway Traveller Movement, SERVE Galway, EXPLORE Initiative NUI Galway and more.

Intercultural Training
The intercultural training sessions were offered over two days and emphasised activities that demonstrated to students their own responses to cultural differences. They were encouraged to learn about the importance of intercultural interaction and communication as it eliminates stereotyping and discrimination between people, strengthens the principles of respect, tolerance and acceptance, changes perspective, fosters knowledge and awareness and celebrates difference.

Social/Cultural Encounters
An important part of the programme was for students to mix with each other and learn about life in different parts of the world. Social events were timetabled into the schedule, in particular in the first two days and at the weekend, rounding it up with a farewell dinner. An icebreaker session was held on the first day of the programme, where students from each university presented on their country’s cultural background and university life. This was an animated session where students were highly engaged and sparked conversations and questions. Students also had the opportunity to socialise during group dinners and an intercultural picnic. At the picnic, students brought food to share from their own countries. A final group dinner also took place after student presentations and awarding of certificates.
“Universities are both apart from and a part of society. They are apart in the sense that they provide a critically important space for grasping the world as it is and, importantly, for re-imagining the world as it ought to be. The academic freedom to pursue the truth and let the chips fall where they may isn’t a luxury; in fact, it is a vital necessity in any society that has the capability for self-renewal. But universities are also a part of our societies. What’s the point unless the accumulated knowledge, insight and vision are put at the service of the community? With the privilege to pursue knowledge comes the civic responsibility to engage and put that knowledge to work in the service of humanity.”

Higgins, M.D. 2012

As well articulated by the President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins, universities are a part of, and play a leading role, within society through the provision of spaces to both grasp and reimagine the world. From our individual and collective experience within the Tawasol Project, we acknowledge that Service Learning is one manifestation where knowledge and the pursuit of knowledge can be put to work for the ‘service of humanity’. My experience of partnering the Tawasol Project on behalf of the National University of Ireland, Galway has been an enlightening and enriching process in my own pursuit of knowledge. To see my work (and that of the university where I work) from different cultural lenses has forced me to question my theories and practices; and the interaction has ultimately enabled me to enhance my work and the overall quality of Service Learning.

But what is Service Learning?
Service Learning is highly contextual and as a result, defining it can become a contentious process. As articulated within the Service Learning academic literature, there is both confusion and “definitional anarchy” in terms of defining and understanding the pedagogy (Sandmann 2008). But it is important to be clear about what it is meant by Service Learning... if we don’t understand what it is we wish to achieve from the pedagogical approach, then how can we strive towards its development and mainstreaming?

At the 2012 Tawasol International Service Learning and Civic Engagement Conference hosted by the Service Learning Centre at the Hashemite University in Amman, Jordan, a group of academics and students from Lebanon, Ireland, Jordan, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, and Sweden came together to define what is meant by the term. This diverse group went far to highlight the vast dimensions and purposes of Service Learning and a number of important features emerged.

Firstly from their collaborative perspectives, they saw Service Learning as a wake-up call to face community challenges (in particular, the ramifications of the Arab Spring) and to both question and change political structures, while also contributing to the quality of community. Key to this process is the development of partnership – partnership between those within the university (namely students, administrators and academics) and those outside the university, namely the community (local, national and international). As a pedagogical approach within higher education, it was seen by this group to have the potential to empower students to reflect on their experience and theory, while also enabling a ‘learning by doing’ dimension that can, at times, be missing from a university experience.

In my experience of partnering the EU Tempus Tawasol Project since 2009, there are similarities and differences, points of commonality and
There are five important aspects to consider in assuring the quality of Service Learning: Delivering different forms of Service Learning, co-operation amongst community partners, reflection, assessment and evaluation of Service Learning.

Delivering different forms of Service Learning
There are many ways to integrate Service Learning into a course, curricula or study program. Service Learning may be integrated into courses or curriculum or delivered in the form of stand-alone modules or credits.

Curricular Service Learning works best when it is used to help students meet course objectives and when community needs are taken into consideration when formulating the aims of a course or a study program. There is more than one model on integrating Service Learning into a course or curriculum.

- When constructing a course, the alignment of Service Learning and intended learning outcomes are of prime importance.
- When Service Learning is added to an already existing course, it requires teachers to reconsider the course objectives.
- The varying levels of experience with community work among students, as well as their cognitive development, should be considered.
- The needs of communities should shape the development of Service Learning courses.

Service Learning can also be organised as stand-alone modules or as credit options. Internships are an example of this and they are best organised in the form of a stand-alone module, where students usually spend a few weeks engaged in a placement. Students may also choose to spend a certain number of hours per week over a period during a semester or a full academic year engaged in Service Learning.

- Stand-alone Service Learning modules or credit options are usually labour-intensive, as students can choose individual projects or placements that completely differ. This form of Service Learning works best if there is a Service Learning centre or a type of organisation that has the capability to organise, monitor and evaluate the Service Learning students are participating in.
- There should be two supervisors available to support students – one faculty member and one staff member at the partner community organisation providing placements.
• An agreement between the community partner and the educational institution is required. The agreement should state the number of hours the student is expected to do, the activities that the student will take part in and the responsibilities required of the supervisor at the placement. Students should receive support and feedback from the supervisors during the period of the placement.

Whichever course of Service Learning the student participates in, it is important that teachers define the intended learning outcomes and service expectations and brief students about requirements and options when introducing the course.

**Co-operation among community partners**

Community partners can be local, national or international, depending on the discipline and the course or program. In either case, it is important to consider the following when establishing co-operation with a community partner:

• There should be reciprocity in giving and gaining.

• The activity the student is involved with in the placement should be of relevance for the student’s academic and civic development, as well as for the needs of the community partner.
The work done should be meaningful for both the student and the community partner.

- Effective partnerships with community partners are ones that are consistent from year to year and have direct faculty involvement.

**Reflection**
The opportunity for reflection is vital for the quality of Service Learning experienced. Reflection should be well structured, and necessary time should be planned for it. The quality of reflection is enhanced if time is set aside for it, both before and during students’ engagement in Service Learning. Before their proposed activities, students may take part in planning Service Learning elements to their placements or courses. During their placements, they may reflect on Service Learning by having discussions with their peers and teachers, either in the classroom or online. Students may also write journals outlining their progress to encourage ongoing reflection. They may also do a summative reflection in a variety of forms, depending on the discipline and course. This can be a written paper, portfolio, poster, video, art work or any other creative form that encourages reflection.

Student reflection should be part of the assessment of the course, and can also be taken into consideration when the faculty evaluates the program and when the curricula are being revised.

**Assessment**
Assessment of Service Learning covers the academic, personal and civic learning process of students. Academic learning is usually assessed through written analytical papers or oral academic presentations. Personal and civic learning requires different forms of reflective assignments such as written essays, journals, reflection sessions, videos, and so on. The quality of assessment, and the results for the students, is improved when there is a variety of assignments that are both formative and summative.

**Evaluation**
Students should be given the opportunity to do written evaluations of the Service Learning experience at the end of the course. Questions should focus on their experiences of Service Learning, their learning process throughout the course and the relevance of Service Learning in relation to the intended learning outcomes.

It is a good idea for faculties to have course conferences or similar forms of evaluation systems in which Service Learning courses and modules are evaluated by peers with a certain regularity, in order to further develop Service Learning activities and intended learning outcomes. When faculties evaluate Service Learning, they can use the reflective assignments and evaluation done by students, and also experiences of community partners captured in surveys or interviews. The evaluation done by students and community partners may be used to revise aims and learning goals of courses and programs.

“The opportunity for reflection is vital for the quality of Service Learning experienced. Reflection should be well structured, and necessary time should be planned for it. The quality of reflection is enhanced if time is set aside for it, both before and during students’ engagement in Service Learning.”
The International Service Learning and Civic Engagement Conference took place on 13 November 2012 in Jordan at Hashemite University under the patronage of HRH Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan. She was represented by Professor Wajih Oweis, Minister of Higher Education and scientific Research and President of Hashemite University Professor Kamal Bani Hani, who welcomed the participants.

During the opening ceremony, a former student of Service Learning at Hashemite University, Dania Alkateeb, presented a film of a community project that she developed. Dania has since received an award from the International Youth Foundation (IYF), a US aid organisation in Jordan. She entered a competition called ‘Baader’ (an Arabic word which means take an active role, or initiate), and received $5,000, plus professional training for her and her team on leadership by that organisation. She is working with her team in another school these days.

The opening ceremony was followed by a keynote speech by Mike Laycock, an independent educational development specialist, whose presentation focused on the achievements of the project. This was followed by a discussion by representatives of the project on ‘Service Learning and its contribution to Society today’.

In the afternoon, a discussion involving the audience on the subject of ‘engaging communities and interdisciplinarity’ was held. On the second day, student representatives gathered to present a reflection on what they had learned through the international student exchange.

In the final part of the conference, Dr Randa Al Mahasneh and Dr Mounir Mabsout discussed the future of Service Learning and the role of the Centre for Service Learning (Hashemite University Jordan) and the Centre for Civic Engagement (American University of Beirut, Lebanon).
Following the integration of Service Learning in courses in partner universities in Lebanon and Jordan, community placements and the international student exchange to Galway, students have been inspired to implement what they have learned by establishing projects within their own communities.

American University of Beirut: The Neighbourhood Study for Karm El Zeitoun
The Neighbourhood Study for Karm El Zeitoun in Beirut is a pilot project in collaboration with the Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development (HFSHD), the Centre for Civic Engagement and Community Service (CCECS) and the Landscape Design and Ecosystem Management (LDEM) Department at the American University of Beirut (AUB).

In serving as a model for (CBL) at AUB, the aim of this project was to involve both the learning community (i.e. students), young graduates from AUB and the community from the neighbourhood of Kazrm El Zeitoun, a marginalised zone with poor environmental conditions.

The short-term goal was to map the open spaces and survey the community activities of the neighbourhood, then choose a site for intervention and implementation of a design that would foster community life and enhance the open space situation.

On a long-term level, the project could evolve into a comprehensive study of the area in order to improve the quality of life and livelihood of the community. The project intervened in several sites, including turning a street into an attractive landscaped pedestrian market place, rehabilitating the façades of 14 buildings, upgrading the paving of a plaza, reconstructing a flight of stairs on a hilltop, turning it into an attractive open air gallery for artists and artisans in the neighbourhood, and planting vegetation and greening for aesthetic appeal.

Hashemite University: Business Club
The students belonging to the Business Club, who had taken part in Tawasol Service Learning courses, organised the ‘Nasheron Festival for Arts, Poetry and Science’ that was attended by the Jordanian Minister of Culture. The festival activities, including scheduling and stage preparations, an art gallery, entertainment and kids’ party, were organised, managed and delivered by the Business Club students. They harnessed the knowledge they gained from Service Learning to participate in meaningful civic engagement, which also fit in with the needs of the community. (picture: )

University of Balamand: Mediterranean Development Forum
The Mediterranean Development Forum (MDF), a non-profit organisation housed in, and sponsored by the University of Balamand (UoB), has seen the participation of students who were part of Tawasol’s Service Learning courses. MDF is entirely organised by the students at UoB, with a group of 30 students from different majors forming to organise and work on the development of the forum.

The MDF is the first of its kind in the Middle East and North African region. It is an annual convention where reputable speakers share their experiences and knowledge with students, the leaders of tomorrow. In the MDF, student participants from diverse backgrounds receive the opportunity to attend lectures, workshops, as well as partake in cultural activities. Over three days, students will be encouraged to contemplate the question; “What do we need in order to develop?”. The major aim of the MDF is to enhance development in the region through identifying current problems, thus shedding a light on opportunities that students can benefit from. MDF also aims to spark interaction between students from different countries and cultures.
LIST OF RESOURCES ON INTERNATIONAL SERVICE LEARNING

- The EU Tempus Tawasol Project http://www.tawasol.org
- Community Knowledge Initiative at the National University of Ireland, Galway http://www.nuigalway.ie
- The Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning (www.mjcsl.umich.edu) is a peer-reviewed journal in the field
- Campus Compact (www.compact.org) is a US-based organisation of which NUI Galway is an international member. Their website includes a wide range of useful items including a syllabus section which provides examples of Service Learning activities in different subject disciplines.
- Campus Engage – the Irish network for civic engagement in higher education http://www.campusengage.ie
- Kenworthy-U'Ren, A. L. (2008) A Decade of Service Learning: A Review of the Field Ten Years after JOBE’s Seminal Special Issue: Journal of Business Ethics, Springer
CONCLUSION

The Tawasol project brought together nine very different universities, developing a common aspiration to bring the community into the classroom, and to take the classroom to the community.

This would not have been achieved without the cooperation of the partners who have given their time, energy and enthusiasm to the project. The project has demonstrated that Service Learning can find enthusiastic support across widely different cultural, political and religious boundaries. It can, and does work, despite different cultural interpretations within institutions, between institutions in the same country and between different countries in the Middle East.

Through its experience, the Tawasol Consortium has also identified the following key issues that must be addressed for the future so that a sustainable culture of Service Learning can be established in the region. These are: the need for both top down AND bottom-up pressure for curriculum change, greater support for pedagogical innovation; the need to reward and recognise staff and students participating in service learning; and recognition and support at the national/ministerial level for service learning and civic engagement pedagogy.

If these issues are addressed, the benefits of introducing Service Learning in universities will be far-reaching, including:

- Enhancing the reputation of the university.
- Expanding the academic development and employability of its students.
- Increasing recruitment to the university through enhancing student experience.
- Widening interaction between universities and the communities they serve.
- Serving communities and enhancing citizenship.