



Secondary school teachers' perceptions of the quality of service-learning

Brenda Bär

University of Barcelona

Email: brendabar@ub.edu

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4263-4007>

Anna Escofet*

University of Barcelona

Email: annaescofet@ub.edu

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2230-8802>

Mónica Gijón

University of Barcelona

Email: mgijon@ub.edu

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2696-6415>

Esther Luna

University of Barcelona

Email: eluna@ub.edu

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6913-4742>

Xus Martín

University of Barcelona

Email: xusmartin@ub.edu

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4404-1026>

ABSTRACT

Assessing the quality of service-learning projects is essential to understanding the level of impact they can have on students and to advancing proposals that improve and optimise this practice in educational centres. With the aim of assessing the pedagogical quality of service-learning projects, a descriptive *ex-post-facto* quantitative diagnostic study was conducted on a sample of 62 service-learning projects carried out in 38 compulsory secondary schools in Barcelona and its metropolitan area. A rubric was used to collect information, allowing for the self-assessment of service-learning experiences and facilitating reflection and awareness among teachers. The results obtained analyse the basic pedagogical and organisational dynamics of each project and their correlations, showing the need for a systemic and coordinated approach to all of them and highlighting the importance of service, participation and critical reflection for a meaningful and transformative learning experience.

Keywords: service learning, self-assessment, quality, rubric, teacher reflection.

*Corresponding author: annaescofet@ub.edu

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1. Introduction

The desire to ensure that children have real experiences of participation in community life stems from different pedagogical approaches that are concerned with and committed to the formation of active, critical and democratic citizenship. Thus, alongside the usual classroom activities aimed at creating knowledge and generating reflective and deliberative processes among students, it is necessary to incorporate practices that enable action in the environment and foster the development of civic competence.

Citizenship practices share the objective of offering children and adolescents in education opportunities to carry out activities and get involved in the common good while acquiring and developing civic virtues (Puig, 2021). Proposals such as project work, reflective activity, problematisation of reality, cooperative work and mediation are just some of them. Among the different practices, service learning (SL) stands out for its educational potential. It is a proposal that goes beyond the educational centre and is relevant for achieving learning about citizen participation, promoting a sense of belonging to the community and mobilising young people in the defence of their rights as citizens. Service-learning is based on the contributions that authors such as Dewey began to develop in the early 20th century. It later adopted the name service-learning in the United States and solidarity service-learning in Latin America (Tapia et al., 2023). In our immediate environment, service-learning is an educational approach that combines learning and service in a single coordinated project through which children acquire knowledge, values and skills while working to meet the needs of the community with the aim of improving it (Puig, 2021).

The widespread adoption of service learning in recent decades in educational centres in our country has been a significant step forward in involving young people in the common good, contributing their efforts to optimise it (Batlle and Escoda, 2019). However, like any educational practice, the formative impact of service learning depends on the quality of the activities carried out. Its educational potential may remain latent if the projects and activities carried out do not explore and mobilise the various dynamics inherent to it. For all these reasons, researching the quality of service-learning projects (Moral Education Research Group (GREM), 2015; Lorenzo and Belando, 2019) is essential not only to understand the level of impact they can have on children, but also to advance proposals that improve and optimise this practice in educational centres.

In Catalonia, the establishment of the Community Service Decree of the Department of Education of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Article 16 of Decree 187/2015) meant the mandatory incorporation of service-learning as a methodology for service-oriented projects in the third and fourth years of compulsory secondary education. Under the name of Community Service, a space was created that requires students to perform between 10 and 20 hours of community service. The aim of Community Service is to encourage boys and girls of compulsory school age to experience and take part in civic engagement activities, learn about citizenship, and apply their knowledge and skills to the service of the community.

2. Review of the literature

After years of expansion and proliferation of service-learning practices that have demonstrated their benefits at different educational stages, it is important to focus on improving the quality of the actions carried out. As always happens when a practice becomes widespread, at the moment of generalisation its quality may suffer setbacks or fail to reach the expected levels of rigour and effectiveness (Martín, 2022).

2.1. Quality assessment

Various aspects can be considered relevant when evaluating the quality of service-learning projects, among which the following deserve special mention: the definition of basic elements such as learning and service, the intensity and duration of the project, the design of demanding activities, the relationship with the community, its sustainability, its contribution to ethical and civic learning, its institutionalisation, and student participation (Furco et al., 2023).

There are a significant number of evaluations of service-learning projects that focus on studying the impact on students (Furco, 2008), and others that provide specific information on identifying the quality elements to be considered to improve the impact on these students (Matthews et al., 2023). Likewise, there are evaluations that consider the impact on the community or on the entities with which they collaborate as elements of quality. In this regard, Rodríguez-Izquierdo et al. (2017) propose evaluating teachers' perceptions of the quality of the collaboration established.

There are also proposals that evaluate quality based on the design and organisation of service-learning projects. In some cases, this is done using assessment scales related to specific project design criteria (Tocto and Palacios, 2013) or by considering the phases and participating agents (López-de-Arana et al., 2023; Lorenzo and Belando, 2019). In other cases, they review the essential elements of service learning, such as duration and intensity, links to the curriculum, meaningful service, the participation of children and young people, partnership with the community, diversity, reflection and the capacity for review and improvement (Billig, 2009) or its formative dimension of acquired skills, reference learning and community service (León-Carrascosa et al., 2020). Finally, other studies incorporate aspects such as the level of participation, the skills acquired, the types of service and satisfaction with the experience (GREM, 2015). Among the pedagogical elements, reflection stands out as one of the key factors in the development of quality

service-learning experiences, with those that present the most rigorous and structured reflection having the greatest impact on other aspects of quality linked to satisfaction with learning (Lorenzo et al., 2021).

López-de-Arana et al. (2023) consider that research has endorsed the effects in the academic and community spheres, but there is little experience of evaluating projects specifically in terms of guiding their development and quality. In this regard, Allen et al. (2021) demonstrate the importance of achieving higher quality projects, since when students perceive them as such, they report more effective participation and an increase in the positive impact of the practice on their leadership skills, self-efficacy, self-efficacy in community service, cognitive commitment, affective commitment and behavioural commitment. This highlights the commitment that educational centres and institutions should have to achieving higher quality projects. These positive effects are not only detected by students but are also considered aspects that improve the impact of actions according to the perception of both students and teachers (Billig, 2009). Furthermore, the importance of evaluation in educational practices is growing progressively as it opens processes of reflection and moves away from visions primarily linked to control tasks (Cano, 2015). This openness has facilitated the creation of working tools that allow activities to be evaluated according to their complexity and the diversity of student learning. It also allows for the assessment of their pedagogical characteristics and the conditions in which they are carried out. The evaluation of service-learning practices has also been impacted by new systems and instruments designed to encourage reflection and dialogue among those involved (Ruiz-Corbella and García-Gutiérrez, 2019).

2.2. Rubrics as an assessment tool

Various tools are used in quality assessment, including rubrics or matrices that aim to specify the quality elements for monitoring and evaluating service-learning projects (Darby and Willingham, 2022; GREM, 2015; López-de-Arana et al., 2023; Redondo-Corcoba and Fuentes, 2020; Steinke and Fitch, 2007) or their institutionalisation (Furco, 1999; Santos Rego and Lorenzo, 2018). When rubrics are used as a self-assessment tool, they have an initial impact on individual and collective reflection on the task itself (Alsina, 2013). The pedagogical debate they generate allows for the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the activity, facilitates a precise analysis for introducing realistic changes that are sensitive to the context, and encourages awareness (Cano, 2015).

2.3 Teacher reflection

To improve the quality of service-learning practices, teachers need to evaluate them and reflect on them (Puig et al., 2017). Reflection is crucial in their professional practice (Martín, 2022), as it allows them to identify aspects of their work that they wish to change and become aware of procedures and strategies that work for them in the classroom. Perrenoud (2004) goes so far as to consider it a stance, a form of identity or a *habitus* for all teachers. Reflecting on one's actions, questioning one's own intervention, distinguishing the solutions one gives to problems or having access to habits and routines that have not been critically examined is essential to optimise, devise and test new strategies.

Reflective practice is a source of continuous learning, but also of autonomy for teachers, helping them to build their own repertoires of competencies and skills based on continuity. These elements are particularly important given that service-learning practices have a positive influence on different dimensions of teaching professional development by improving teaching quality beyond the specific project being carried out: increasing teacher motivation, the acquisition of new knowledge, the rethinking of teaching practice and their commitment to teaching (Mayor et al., 2023). Through service-learning activities, teachers change their perceptions, beliefs, or prejudices and develop greater critical reflection on their own thoughts and practices (Opazo, 2015). In addition, they develop the skills necessary to provide quality teaching (Root et al., 2002), take a greater interest in diversity (Vázquez et al., 2017), and better adapt the curriculum to the demands of students and the needs of the environment (Root, 2005).

The above outlines a study whose main objective has been to assess the pedagogical quality of community service projects using a service-learning methodology carried out in compulsory secondary schools in Barcelona and its metropolitan area.

3. Method

The methodological decision to carry out this research rests on the nature of the information gathering technique, the rubric. That is why a quantitative, *ex-post-facto* descriptive diagnostic investigation was carried out, as we approached reality with the utmost respect for the natural situation without manipulating it and focusing solely on the object of study to describe it.

3.1. Sample

A total of 62 service-learning projects in secondary education in Barcelona and its metropolitan area were selected and analysed. These projects were selected using non-probabilistic convenience sampling.

3.2. Information gathering instrument

In order to gather information and correctly carry out the diagnostic study to assess the perception of the pedagogical quality of service-learning projects carried out in secondary education, an SL rubric (GREM, 2015) was used, which allows for the self-assessment of service-learning experiences and facilitates reflection and awareness on the part of the teachers responsible for the service-learning projects. The rubric used, in addition to being an instrument used in academic research, has been used by educational teams in schools, leisure centres and socio-educational entities interested in analysing, and subsequently improving, the quality of their service-learning activities (Cea and Muñoz, 2024; Samino, 2023).

The rubric consists of three main dimensions (basic, pedagogical and organisational dynamics), with their corresponding indicators. Each indicator is specified in an item with four assessment levels (1=*none*; 4=*a lot*). Below is a list of the dimensions and indicators that constitute the analysis variables that guide the analysis of the information collected after its application:

Table 1
List of dimensions and indicators of the assessment rubric. Own elaboration

Dimensions	Indicators
Basic dynamics	Needs
	Learning
	Sense of service
	Service
Pedagogical dynamics	Participation
	Group work
	Reflection
	Recognition
Organisational dynamics	Assessment
	Partnership
	Consolidation

The basic dynamics refer to the core of service-learning experiences (needs, service, sense of service, and learning). Pedagogical dynamics address the formative dynamics that shape educational proposals (participation, group work, reflection, recognition, and evaluation). Finally, organisational dynamics deal with the logistical and institutional aspects of service learning (partnership and consolidation). In total, there are 11 dynamics that correspond to the variables of analysis.

3.3. Research procedure

The research lasted 13 months (April 2023-May 2024) and was carried out in three phases. Phase 1 focused on selecting community service experiences using a service-learning methodology carried out in secondary schools in the Barcelona metropolitan area (April and May 2023). To contact and access the schools, an agreement was established with the Centre for the Promotion of Service-Learning in Catalonia, which enabled us to obtain projects participating in the research. The selection considered a wide range of experiences in relation to the areas of service. As for the data collection process, i.e. the application of the rubric to the teachers responsible for service-learning projects in secondary schools, an email was first sent to all secondary schools in Barcelona and its metropolitan area, followed by a reminder email and telephone calls to encourage them to complete the rubric. In total, 62 service-learning projects participated.

Phase 2 carried out the diagnosis of Community Service projects using a service-learning methodology (June to December 2023) by applying a rubric for the self-assessment of service-learning projects. This allowed us to ascertain the status of the eleven dynamics (basic, pedagogical and organisational) and to assess the pedagogical quality of Community Service projects in Barcelona and its metropolitan area based on the perceptions of the teachers leading the projects in the educational centres. The evidence obtained in this phase allowed us to identify the most developed dynamics in the projects and those that involved a greater degree of difficulty.

Phase 3 enabled us to analyse the quality of the service-learning projects (January to May 2024). Once the information had been systematised, we obtained an analysis of the pedagogical quality of the Community Service with service-learning methodology of the participating projects.

It should be noted that *the University of Barcelona's Code of Ethics and Good Practice* (Ethics Committee, 2019) has been complied with as the research is characterised by the fact that its members, to whom it applies as staff of the University of Barcelona, have worked

with honesty, responsibility and rigour throughout the research, as can be seen in the research procedure carried out, as well as in the application of a rubric that has already been validated in previous research.

3.4. Data analysis

The rubric allows for the creation of a graph that facilitates the visualisation of the strengths and weaknesses of each of the projects, inviting participants to decide on which aspects to focus the debate. In the research in question, and in order to respond to the perception of the pedagogical quality of the 62 secondary education service-learning projects participating in the research, the data obtained in the rubrics were automatically transferred to an Excel document, which we then transferred to the SPSS+ v.29 statistical software programme in order to perform a descriptive analysis of the whole. In addition, a classification analysis with criterion variables was performed to analyse the relationships or associations between all the variables using SPAD software (Sánchez-Martí and Ruiz-Bueno, 2018).

4. Results

Thirty-eight secondary schools participated in the research, all of them located in Barcelona and its metropolitan area. A total of 62 service-learning projects were analysed. Table 2 shows the distribution of projects in relation to service areas, which are divided into service actions aimed at children and young people (8), older people (9) and people who are ill or disabled (4). In addition, there is another type of project in which the focus is not on the age of the target audience but on the type of service. Thus, we find actions for sustainability (4), actions for social inclusion (10), blood donation campaigns (4), and sports and cultural activities (8). Finally, there is a group of projects that have in common the fact that they are solidarity actions in the local environment (15), which, without being aimed at a specific age group, include small projects of various types that always have in common their connection with the local area.

Table 2

Distribution of service-learning projects according to service areas. Own elaboration

Service areas	Number of projects
Actions aimed at children and young people	8
Actions aimed at older people	9
Actions aimed at people who are ill or disabled	4
Actions for sustainability	4
Actions for social inclusion	10
Blood donation campaigns	4
Sports and cultural activities	8
Charity initiatives in the local area	15

For each of the participating service-learning projects, the teachers responsible were asked to complete the rubric for self-assessment and improvement of the SL projects. The results for each of the eleven dynamics are detailed below, visually structured on a 4-level Likert scale: the first describes the occasional and unorganised presence of the dynamic and the fourth indicates its maximum development. In addition, a level 0 is included when the teachers responsible do not evaluate the section.

Figure 1 shows the results of the self-assessment carried out by the teaching staff responsible for service-learning projects in relation to basic dynamics.

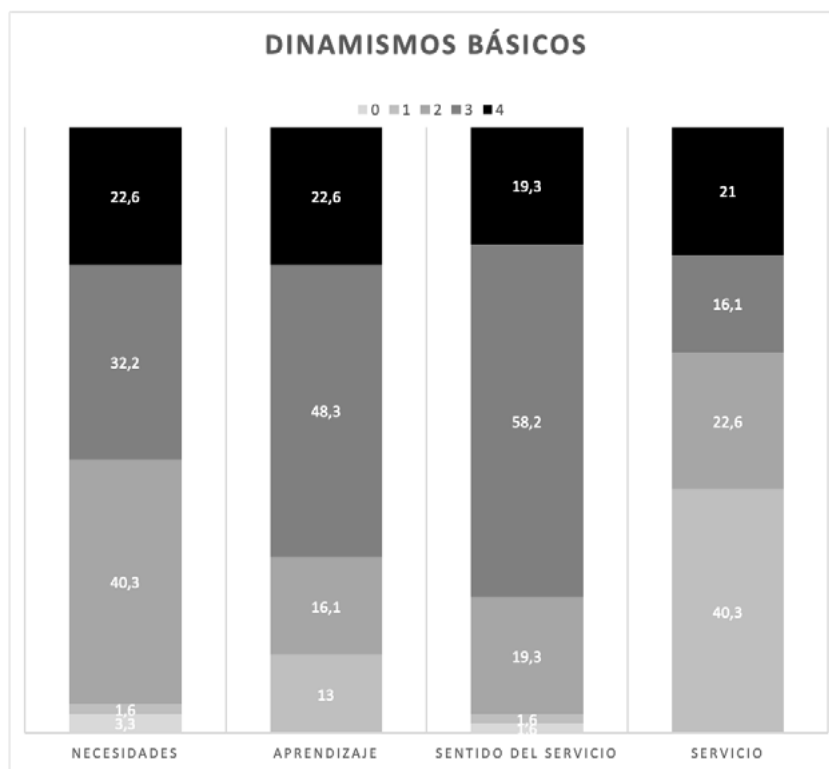


Figure 1. Basic dynamics. Own elaboration.

The needs are related to social issues that the service-learning projects aim to address. As shown in the figure, almost half of the projects are at level 2, where boys and girls have no decision-making power over the needs to be addressed, and the other half are distributed between levels 3 and 4, where students analyse and decide on the needs they want to address.

Learning also scored highly, with 71% at high levels. This dynamism reflects the link between the content developed in the service-learning project and the content, skills and values covered in the school curriculum. Levels 3 and 4 imply that learning is planned and that training activities are closely related to the service.

The sense of service refers to the degree of awareness that students have of their actions and their importance for the recipients, the immediate environment or the wider environment. As can be seen, almost 78% scored between 3 and 4, which implies that they perceive that they are responding to a need in the community and are aware of its social and political dimension.

Finally, service refers to tasks carried out altruistically to respond to a need. As shown in the figure, this is the basic dynamic with the highest number of projects at level 1 (40.3%), a level characterised by short-term services and simple tasks.

In relation to pedagogical dynamics, Figure 2 shows the results obtained.

Participation dynamism accumulates an equal number of responses in level 1 (24.2%) and level 2 (25.8%), compared to levels 3 (33.9%) and 4 (16.1%). Participation refers to the design, planning and evaluation of the various service activities. Lower levels of participation imply that students are limited to performing the tasks assigned to them, without the possibility of making modifications.

The rest of the pedagogical dynamics (group work, reflection, recognition and evaluation) have scores distributed across the four levels. The first three (group work, reflection and recognition) accumulate a high number of responses in level 2. Thus, in group work, 30.6% are in level 2, which is based on minimal collaboration. In contrast, 37% are at the cooperative level, which involves coordinating various tasks to achieve the set objective.

In relation to reflection, 54.8% are at levels 3 and 4, which means that participants carry out reflective activities during the project, even making new contributions to the community.

In terms of recognition of service activities carried out, 27.4% are at level 2 and 53.2% are at levels 3 and 4, which involves the development of initiatives to celebrate the service.

The last pedagogical dynamic is assessment, which has the highest scores, almost 60%, consistent with the scores obtained in the basic learning dynamic. Both highlight the planning and programming of teachers in relation to both content acquisition and project assessment activities.

Finally, high scores were observed for both organisational dynamics, revealing that service learning is part of the culture of educational centres and that there is a genuine collaborative relationship between entities in the surrounding area. Figure 3 shows that the

partnership relationship is viewed positively (69%) by a large majority of the teaching teams that responded to the rubric, which implies that an educational centre and a social organisation design the project to be developed subsequently, jointly at the highest level.

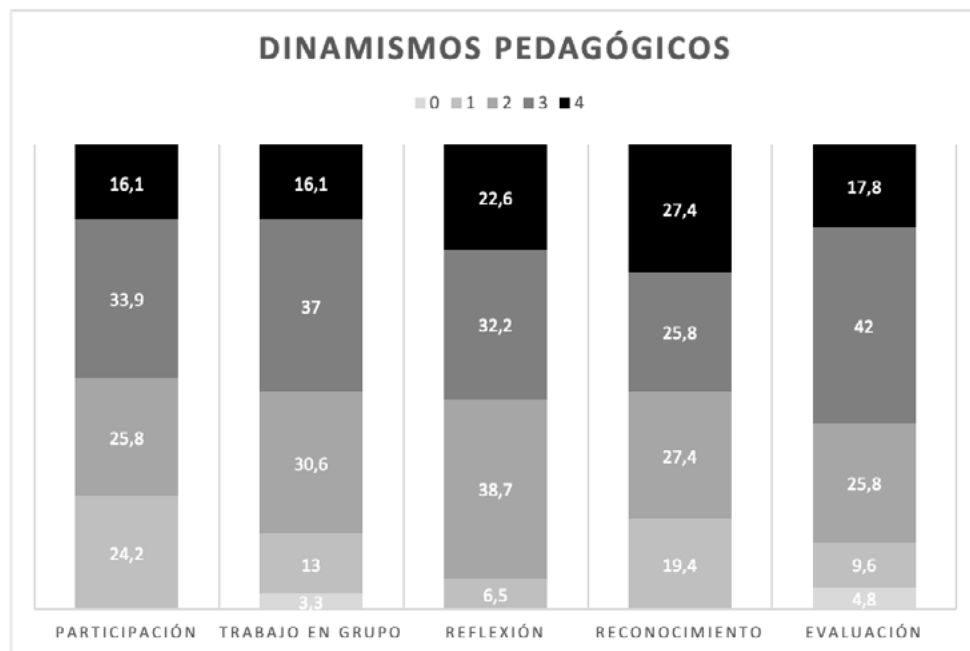


Figure 2. Pedagogical dynamics. Own elaboration



Figure 3. Organisational dynamics. Own elaboration

Regarding the dynamism of consolidation, most teachers (almost 73%) consider that the projects developed are consolidated, which means that service-learning becomes part of the culture of both the educational centre and the community organisation.

Next, the relationships or associations between all variables were analysed. Table 3 shows all correlations, with significant correlations highlighted in grey. It should be noted that all significant correlations have a positive Pearson coefficient, i.e., as one dimension increases, so does the other. Thus, for example, the “service” dynamic correlates positively with the “learning”, “participation”, “group work”, “reflection”, “recognition” and “support” dynamics “partnership”. In any case, it should be noted that none of the correlations exceed 0.6, indicating that the relationships are not very strong, as they do not approach 1. Finally, the table also shows that the dynamics “needs”, “sense of service”, “evaluation” and “consolidation” do not correlate with any of the other dynamics.

Table 3

Correlation analysis. Own elaboration

		Needs	Service	Sense of service	Learning	Participation	Teamwork	Reflection	Recognition	Assessment	Partnership	Consolidation
Requirements	Pearson correlation	1	0.212	0.004	0.204	0.231	0.091	-0.026	0.068	0.010	0.174	0.101
	Bilateral significance		0.093	0.973	0.106	0.067	0.473	0.838	0.595	0.938	0.170	0.426
Service	Pearson correlation	0.212	1	0.441	0.662	0.565	0.547	0.521	0.521	0.349	0.518	0.439
	Bilateral significance	0.093		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.005	0.000	0.000
Sense of service	Pearson correlation	0.004	0.441	1	0.216	0.301	0.359	0.405	0.209	0.237	0.284	0.130
	Bilateral significance	0.973	0.000		0.086	0.016	0.004	0.001	0.098	0.059	0.023	0.304
Learning	Pearson correlation	0.204	0.662	0.216	1	0.592	0.529	0.520	0.538	0.357	0.511	0.304
	Bilateral	0.106	0.000	0.086		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.004	0.000	0.015
Share	Pearson correlation	0.231	0.565	0.301	0.592	1	0.502	0.638	0.409	0.397	0.224	0.159
	Bilateral significance	0.067	0.000	0.016	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.075	0.208
Group work	Pearson correlation	0.091	0.547	0.359	0.529	0.502	1	0.569	0.429	0.390	0.338	0.201
	Bilateral sign	0.473	0.000	0.004	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.001	0.006	0.111
Reflection	Pearson correlation	-0.026	0.521	0.405	0.520	0.638	0.561	1	0.591	0.472	0.413	0.155
	Bilateral significance	0.838	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.001	0.222
Recognition	Pearson correlation	0.068	0.521	0.209	0.538	0.409	0.429	0.591	1	0.421	0.449	0.333
	Bilateral sign	0.595	0.000	0.098	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000		0.001	0.000	0.007
Evaluation	Pearson correlation	0.010	0.349	0.237	0.357	0.397	0.390	0.472	0.421	1	0.234	0.250
	Bilateral sign	0.938	0.005	0.059	0.004	0.001	0.001	0.000	0.001		0.063	0.046
Partnership	Pearson correlation	0.174	0.518	0.284	0.511	0.224	0.338	0.413	0.449	0.234	1	0.201
	Bilateral significance	0.170	0.000	0.023	0.000	0.0751	0.006	0.001	0.000	0.063		0.111
Consolidation	Pearson correlation	0.101	0.439	0.130	0.304	0.159	0.201	0.155	0.333	0.250	0.201	1
	Bilateral significance	0.426	0.000	0.304	0.015	0.208	0.111	0.222	0.007	0.046	0.111	

5. Discussion and conclusions

The work carried out has focused on evaluating the quality of Community Service projects carried out using the service-learning methodology in Barcelona and its metropolitan area, based on self-assessments carried out by the secondary school teachers involved, using a rubric. The purpose of the evaluation was to obtain data on the quality of the projects carried out since community service became compulsory in secondary education in Catalonia.

Below, we present eight conclusions about service learning as a complex practice, about various dynamics, and finally, about the use of rubrics as an assessment tool.

First, we will refer to the systemic articulation and pedagogical quality of service learning. We agree with the specialised literature that service learning is a complex practice with high educational, critical, and democratic potential (Furco and Root, 2010). The theoretical review showed that much evaluative research focuses on partial aspects such as motivation, or isolated dynamics such as learning, reflection or service (Billig, 2009; Lorenzo et al., 2021). These contributions are undoubtedly interesting but insufficient for assessing the pedagogical quality of service-learning. Analysing the quality of a complex practice such as service-learning requires a systemic and coordinated approach to all its elements. The significant correlation observed in the research between most of the dynamics suggests that improving quality cannot be considered in isolation. This aspect may encourage teachers to abandon fragmented approaches focused on learning or service and to evaluate projects by integrating all their dynamics.

Secondly, we would like to highlight the dynamism of service, the driving force behind SL projects. The data shows the importance of service actions in the quality of projects. When service is oriented towards social justice (Hawes et al., 2021), the tasks transform students into citizens capable of contributing to the common good. Young people do not merely observe and critically analyse the reality that surrounds them; service gives them the opportunity to transform and improve it. This aspect gives greater meaning to the experience, learning and exercise of citizenship (Santos Rego et al., 2025). In this sense, improving the quality of service-learning projects invites us to think about service tasks that are closer to community challenges, connecting the school with the community and oriented transversally towards justice.

Thirdly, the research shows the significance of the dynamics of learning and reflection. It seems that the learning that students acquire in service-learning projects becomes meaningful when it is real, involves participation and joint construction, and is worked on using different reflective and critical understanding strategies. We agree with López-de-Arana et al. (2023) that the quality-of-service learning has an impact on improving learning and academic performance, a finding that calls for further research to compare quality results with student academic performance. Fourthly, we would like to refer to the joint culture of collaboration, the dynamism of partnership. Collaboration between secondary schools, social entities and public administration is essential for the quality of service-learning projects. Community partners value collaboration and the strengthening of relationships with educational institutions (Rinaldo et al., 2022). In this sense, improving quality surely involves expanding and consolidating these relationships, understanding and respecting institutional cultures, and designing projects in which all institutions experience that they gain from the process. The quality of the partnership increases when collaborative relationships are consolidated and strengthened.

Fifthly, the research shows the dynamic nature of recognition. Actions of recognition make students visible as responsible actors in citizenship and enable them to give meaning to and integrate their experiences and learning (Santos Rego et al., 2025). The research reveals that teachers perceive that reflection is mainly carried out critically, contributing to the community. In this regard, we agree with Lorenzo et al. (2021) when they point out that rigorous and structured reflection is key to pedagogical quality. This calls for improving reflection and recognition tasks to improve the quality of projects.

Sixthly, participation and group work reflect the leading role played by young people. It seems that greater student participation improves service-learning projects. In this regard, we agree with Allen et al. (2021), Billig (2009) and León-Carrascosa et al. (2020) in suggesting that one of the improvements in service learning in secondary education could be directed towards greater leadership, responsibility and protagonism of students at different stages of the project. Student participation can be a good compass for assessing their capacity for agency and their commitment to the community. Seventhly, we would like to mention the needs and the challenge of quality in projects. Research has revealed that the dynamism of needs does not correlate with other dynamics. In educational centres, needs analysis is usually presented by teachers or by social entities that collaborate with the centres, minimising the potential for situated learning that involves students working in depth on community needs. We agree with Shi and Cheung (2021) that a reflective and intense analysis of needs is a crucial component of situated learning. In this sense, the quality of service-learning projects would increase with analytical and critical work on this dynamic, an aspect that

would give greater significance to the projects.

Finally, we would like to refer to the rubric, the instrument for complex evaluation. The rubric used offers possibilities for evaluating the basic pedagogical and organisational dynamics in service learning. On the one hand, the gradation of levels in each dynamic is very useful for understanding the state of practice. On the other hand, it systematises all the dimensions and points to elements for analysis and reflection with the aim of improving the evaluated project. In this regard, we agree with Darby and Willingham (2022), Redondo-Corcobado and Fuentes (2020) and Santos Rego et al. (2025) when they point to the need for a complex evaluation with rubrics or similar instruments for service learning. In this research, the rubric has provided information to recognise strengths and weaknesses in the projects and points to ways of optimising their dynamics.

Finally, we present the limitations of the study, which could be considered in future work. The data obtained are quantitative, but for a more in-depth analysis, it would be necessary to incorporate qualitative data. In this sense, the voices and experiences of teachers and students in service-learning projects can be very useful. It would be necessary to incorporate discussion groups, working groups and interviews to collect narratives, testimonies and knowledge from real life. Qualitative data would allow us to identify the experiences of participants, highlight optimal aspects and limitations in each dynamic, and design improvement actions that can be shared and transferred between participating projects.

Another limitation of the study is the promotion of reflective and improvement processes in teaching teams. Projects do not improve on their own but require collective processes that allow different points of view to be shared and changes to be promoted in the weakest areas. This requires time and space in professional teams to share, discuss and plan improvements. Pedagogical quality requires generating processes of reflection and debate within teaching teams. As explained above, service learning is a complex practice that also requires reflective, collective and diverse review and improvement processes that incorporate the voices of all participants.

Another difficulty in the study was the lack of published studies analysing service learning in each territory. It would be interesting to obtain data from other territories to identify trends and, in a broader sense, to carry out comparative studies between cities or even between autonomous communities to extract data that would provide a picture of the state of service-learning quality. Other parameters could also be considered, such as the size of the territories and the level of coordination between entities and local authorities to host service-learning projects. The quality of the practice can also be analysed in terms of its local impact, and in this regard, it would be interesting to analyse the local development of service-learning.

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