

The Implementation of Service-Learning Projects by National Education Teachers: Principals' Perspectives

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the extent to which National Education teachers in the Bani Ubaid Directorate of Education implement service-learning projects in their teaching, as perceived by school principals. A descriptive survey methodology was employed, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire completed by 54 principals. The findings indicated a moderate level of service-learning project implementation by National Education teachers (overall mean = 3.32, SD = 0.97). These results highlight the need for greater institutional support, including curriculum guidance, teacher training, and school–community partnerships, to move from moderate to higher levels of meaningful service-learning practice. The study recommends increased support from the Ministry of Education for collaborative service-learning initiatives and the development of stronger partnerships with community institutions, such as municipal councils and health centers.

Keywords: National Education, Service-Learning, School Principals, Community Engagement.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Theoretical Framework and Previous Studies

Service-learning projects are educational initiatives that integrate academic instruction with meaningful community service. This pedagogical approach involves engaging students and teachers in community-based activities that apply academic knowledge to real-life challenges. It is a form of experiential learning aimed at expanding students' engagement beyond traditional classroom settings.

National Education serves as a foundational framework that addresses political, social, and economic issues, along with the relationship between the citizen, their environment, and their

community. Its significance lies in its strong association with numerous educational institutions in promoting national priorities through teaching. It is an educational strategy through which students acquire essential concepts, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective participation in public life, while fostering a sense of responsibility, belonging, and patriotism (Freihat & Freihat, 2024).

Hoffman (2000) asserts that the embodiment of civic values such as justice, altruism, loyalty, freedom, and cultural respect cannot be achieved solely through curricula, but through rich educational experiences that transcend classroom boundaries.

In this context, National Education teachers can play a significant role in instilling national values and identity by encouraging students to participate in community service activities. Citizenship is grounded in concepts of belonging and loyalty, and its educational objective is to equip individuals with values and skills that translate into positive social behaviors. Service-learning promotes volunteerism and active community participation, contributing to a cohesive society (Reynolds, Brown, Williams, 2008).

Burnett, Long, and Horne (2005) define service learning as structured experiences that foster the acquisition of academic, civic, and professional competencies. Al-Qahtani (2002) describes it as a pedagogical strategy tied to curriculum content where students engage in projects that serve local community needs, thereby enhancing their skills, attitudes, and knowledge.

Service-learning projects develop students' analytical, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration skills while raising awareness of social and environmental issues. They also promote moral and social values such as compassion, responsibility, and justice (Tomkovick, Lester, Flunker & Wells, 2008).

1.1.1 Previous Studies

Al-Qahtani (2002) aimed to explore the perspectives of National Education supervisors and teachers on the importance of service learning in teaching National Education, as well as the obstacles that hinder its implementation. The study also investigated the feasibility of incorporating service learning into the National Education curriculum by proposing relevant projects. To collect data, a questionnaire was administered to gather opinions from the study sample. Additionally, a content analysis was conducted. The results indicated that 86% of the respondents agreed on the significance of service learning in teaching National Education. The content analysis of secondary-level National Education textbooks showed that integrating service-learning projects is feasible, especially those aligned with voluntary and developmental objectives. However, challenges such as heavy teaching loads and the extensive curriculum content were identified as barriers.

Khader (2012) sought to identify key service-learning projects that should be emphasized in National and Civic Education textbooks for grades 8, 9, and 10 in Jordan. The study also examined existing projects in the textbooks and analyzed their distribution. A list of 27 proposed service-learning projects was developed and validated. The content analysis revealed that the textbooks included only 7 service-learning projects across the three grades. Furthermore, the study found no significant differences among the textbooks in terms of the number or distribution of service-learning projects. Several recommendations were proposed to enhance service-learning integration.

Talafha (2012) investigated the extent to which National and Civic Education teachers at the upper basic level implement service-learning projects and identified major obstacles preventing

their adoption. The study included 131 teachers from the First and Second Irbid Education Directorates. A two-part instrument was developed: one part measured the extent of project implementation, while the other assessed implementation barriers. The instrument demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability. Findings indicated that the level of implementation was low, and the barriers to implementation were significant. The study also found that gender, academic qualifications, and teaching experience significantly influenced the extent of implementation. A moderate correlation was found between project implementation and the perceived obstacles.

Jacobson, Oravec, Falk, and Osteen (2011) conducted a study involving 143 undergraduate students majoring in Family Studies at Metropolitan University in the eastern United States. Participants engaged in a service-learning project for two and a half hours per week. The researchers utilized a scale developed by Diaz, Hesls, Yamada, and Gallegos (Furco), which measured four dimensions: academic achievement, professional perceptions, empowerment, and civic responsibility. The scale was administered before and after the service-learning experience. The results indicated that service-learning enhanced students' academic learning and improved their perceptions of career options. However, no significant effects were observed regarding empowerment and civic responsibility.

Ashour, Abu Ashour, and Karasneh (2022) examined the extent to which faculty members at Jordanian universities practice social responsibility, the challenges they face, and the solutions they propose. The study employed a descriptive survey approach and included a questionnaire covering three dimensions. A sample of 423 faculty members from various public and private universities was surveyed. The results showed a moderate level of engagement in social responsibility practices. No statistically significant differences were found based on gender, college, academic rank, or university type—except for academic rank, where assistant professors showed higher levels of practice. The study concluded that institutional challenges such as workload and limited curricular integration hinder greater involvement in social responsibility. Recommendations included incorporating social responsibility and service-learning concepts into academic programs and course content.

In summary, the reviewed studies collectively emphasize the importance of integrating service-learning into educational settings and recognize its potential benefits for students, educators, and communities. Al-Qahtani (2002), Khader (2012), and Talafha (2012) focused on the context of National and Civic Education in Jordan, highlighting both the conceptual value of service learning and the practical barriers to its implementation, such as heavy teaching loads, limited textbook content, and insufficient institutional support. Jacobson et al. (2011), by contrast, examined service learning in a higher education context in the United States, emphasizing academic and professional development outcomes, though they noted limited gains in civic responsibility and empowerment. Ashour et al. (2022) similarly addressed service-learning-related practices through the lens of social responsibility in Jordanian universities, identifying moderate levels of engagement and systemic obstacles similar to those faced by schoolteachers. While the local studies underscored curricular and structural challenges in primary and secondary education, the university-level studies pointed to broader institutional and cultural factors that affect the sustainability of service-learning initiatives. Together, these studies highlight a common concern: although service learning is broadly viewed as beneficial, its effective implementation requires curricular integration, institutional commitment, and support structures across all educational levels.

What distinguishes the current study from previous research is its focus on the perspectives of school principals, rather than teachers or university faculty, regarding the implementation of service-learning projects in National Education classrooms. While earlier studies primarily examined teacher practices, textbook content, or student outcomes, this study provides administrative insight into the actual application of service-learning at the school level. By capturing the views of principals in the Bani Ubaid Directorate, the study sheds light on institutional and organizational factors that may support or hinder the integration of service-learning in schools. This perspective is critical, as school leadership plays a vital role in enabling or limiting the success of such initiatives. Moreover, the study offers actionable recommendations to strengthen community partnerships and enhance ministerial support, aiming to create a more enabling environment for meaningful service-learning practices in National Education.

2. Problem of the Study and Its Questions

Based on their professional observations, the researchers noted a decline in the implementation of service-learning projects by National Education teachers. This decline weakens the connection between educational content and real-life application, thereby limiting students' understanding of their civic responsibilities and impeding the development of active, effective citizenship.

Accordingly, the study seeks to answer the following research question: What is the extent to which National Education teachers in the Bani Ubaid Directorate of Education implement service-learning projects, as perceived by school principals?

3. Objectives and Significance of the Study

3.1 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to assess the extent to which National Education teachers in the Bani Ubaid Directorate of Education implement service-learning projects in their teaching, as perceived by school principals.

3.2 Significance of the Study

1. **Theoretical Significance:** This study aligns with the directives and initiatives of the Jordanian Ministry of Education, which emphasize linking educational experiences to real-life contexts and promoting active citizenship. It underscores the role of service-learning in fostering students' sense of responsibility, community involvement, and contribution to addressing social, environmental, and economic challenges thereby supporting the goals of sustainable development.
2. **Practical Significance:** The findings offer valuable insights for policymakers and education leaders regarding the actual application of service-learning in National Education classes. This knowledge can inform strategic planning, curriculum development, and teacher training initiatives. Moreover, to the researchers' knowledge, this is one of the few studies to explore this topic from the perspective of school principals, providing a unique and practical viewpoint.

4. Study Terms

Service-Learning Projects

Educational strategies that integrate community service with academic instruction, enhancing learning while addressing societal issues. These projects aim to foster student-community interaction, encourage problem-solving, and promote mutual growth.

National Education

A subject within the Jordanian educational curriculum that seeks to strengthen students' national awareness and identity by teaching history, culture, and civic responsibility. Its goal is to nurture informed, engaged citizens.

National Education Teachers

Educators who deliver the National Education curriculum, imparting civic knowledge, values, and cultural heritage. They play a key role in fostering national consciousness and social responsibility among students.

5. Limitations of the Study

- **Objective Limitations:** The study focuses exclusively on the employment of service-learning projects in National Education classes in the Bani Ubaid Directorate.
- **Human Limitations:** The study sample is limited to school principals in the Bani Ubaid Directorate.
- **Time Limitations:** The study was conducted during the second semester of the 2022/2023 academic year.
- **Spatial Limitations:** The research was restricted to schools under the authority of the Bani Ubaid Directorate of Education.

6. Method and Procedures

6.1 Study Method

To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers adopted the descriptive survey method, which is suitable for obtaining information directly from a defined group of individuals. The primary tool used for data collection in this study was a questionnaire.

6.2 Participants

The study sample consisted of 54 school principals from the Bani Ubaid Directorate of Education.

6.3 Instrument of the Study

In alignment with the study's objective—to examine the extent to which National Education teachers implement service-learning projects in Bani Ubaid schools from the perspective of school principals—a questionnaire consisting of 32 items was developed by the researcher. The items were formulated based on a comprehensive review of relevant literature, previous studies in the field of service-learning and civic education, and the objectives of the National Education curriculum in Jordan.

Content Validity

To ensure content validity, the initial version of the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of (10) educational supervisors from various education directorates. The panel evaluated each item for linguistic clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives. Based on their feedback, a series of linguistic revisions and content adjustments were made to enhance clarity and ensure appropriateness. Following these modifications, the questionnaire was approved for use in the study.

Construct Validity

To verify construct validity, the correlation coefficients of the questionnaire items with the total score were calculated using a pilot sample of 20 school principals (not included in the main study sample). The correlation coefficients ranged between 0.59 and 0.86, indicating acceptable levels of construct validity. Table (1) presents these results.

Table (1): Correlation Coefficients Between Each Item and the Total Scale Score

Item Number	Correlation Coefficient	Item Number	Correlation Coefficient	Item Number	Correlation Coefficient
1	0.70**	12	0.79**	23	0.69**
2	0.72**	13	0.68**	24	0.73**
3	0.61**	14	0.83**	25	0.86**
4	0.86**	15	0.76**	26	0.82**
5	0.82**	16	0.65**	27	0.63**
6	0.67**	17	0.64**	28	0.73**
7	0.59**	18	0.77**	29	0.77**
8	0.72**	19	0.71**	30	0.83**
9	0.66**	20	0.73**	31	0.77*
10	0.83**	21	0.61**	32	0.73**
11	0.65**	22	0.68**		

*Statistically significant at the significance level (0.05).

** Statistically significant at the significance level (0.01).

Instrument Reliability

The reliability of the instrument was assessed using two methods. First, test–retest reliability was examined by administering the questionnaire twice to a group of 20 principals from the Al Mazar Directorate of Education, who were not part of the main study sample. The Pearson correlation coefficient between the two sets of responses was 0.89, indicating high stability over time. Second, internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha (α), which reached 0.84 and is considered acceptable for the purposes of this study.

Instrument Scoring Criteria

To interpret the arithmetic means of the responses, a five-point Likert scale was used. The response options ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). To determine the level of agreement, the scale range (1–5) was divided into five equal intervals of 0.80. The categorization of mean scores is presented in Table (2).

Table (2): Categorization of Mean Scores

Mean Score Range	Degree of Agreement
1.00 – less than 1.80	Very Low
1.80 – less than 2.60	Low
2.60 – less than 3.40	Moderate
3.40 – less than 4.20	High
4.20 – 5.00	Very High

7. Findings

To address the research question, arithmetic means and standard deviations were calculated to determine the degree to which National Education teachers in the Bani Ubaid Directorate of Education implement service-learning projects, from the perspective of their school principals. The items are ranked in descending order based on their mean scores, as shown in Table (3).

Table (3): Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations of the Degree to Which National Education Teachers in the Bani Ubaid Directorate of Education Employ Service-Learning Projects (Ranked in Descending Order)

Rank	Item No.	SMA	Std. Dev.	Degree	Item Description
1	16	3.52	1.35	Medium	Teacher directs students to improve/protect the environment (e.g., cleaning streets, planting trees, recycling).
2	7	3.51	1.28	Medium	Teacher provides real opportunities for environmental service-learning projects.
3	3	3.47	1.42	Medium	Teacher guides students to tutor others (e.g., extra academic support).
4	31	3.43	1.32	Medium	Teacher enables students to assist with tutoring or academic help projects.
4	8	3.43	1.47	Medium	Teacher directs students to raise health awareness (e.g., nutrition advice, campaigns).
6	14	3.38	1.36	Medium	Teacher enables students to implement health awareness projects.
7	15	3.37	1.21	Medium	Teacher directs students to address social issues (e.g., child violence, discrimination).
7	12	3.37	1.37	Medium	Teacher enables students to address important social issues.
9	29	3.36	1.34	Medium	Teacher directs students to develop craft skills for community service.
10	9	3.35	1.41	Medium	Teacher enables students to use craft skills in service-learning.
10	1	3.35	1.44	Medium	Teacher directs students to create historical exhibits.
10	13	3.35	1.43	Medium	Teacher enables students to create historical exhibits.
10	4	3.35	1.35	Medium	Teacher directs students to develop technological skills for service.
14	18	3.33	1.4	Medium	Teacher enables students to apply technological skills in service-learning.
14	10	3.33	1.43	Medium	Teacher directs students to raise awareness on human rights/tolerance.

16	26	3.32	1.42	Medium	Teacher enables students to raise awareness on human rights/tolerance.
16	32	3.32	1.25	Medium	Teacher links student learning outcomes to service-learning projects.
18	11	3.31	1.32	Medium	Teacher has a plan to implement service-learning projects.
18	23	3.31	1.4	Medium	Teacher motivates students during project implementation.
18	2	3.31	1.36	Medium	Teacher follows up on Ministry updates about student integration.
21	6	3.3	1.33	Medium	Teacher motivates students to participate in school exhibitions.
21	25	3.3	1.31	Medium	Teacher motivates students to launch community initiatives.
21	5	3.3	1.37	Medium	Teacher follows up on the impact of student-led initiatives.
24	28	3.28	1.37	Medium	Teacher evenly distributes students in project implementation.
25	17	3.27	1.44	Medium	Teacher reminds students about general health/safety rules.
25	27	3.27	1.36	Medium	Teacher assigns students to provide feedback on projects.
27	19	3.26	1.4	Medium	Teacher uses technology to inform students about service projects.
28	22	3.25	1.37	Medium	Teacher encourages students to maintain a safe school environment.
29	24	3.2	1.23	Medium	Teacher hosts volunteers to assist in project implementation.
29	30	3.2	1.28	Medium	Teacher invites parents to support service-learning projects.
31	21	3.19	1.31	Medium	Teacher checks tools and equipment before implementation.
32	20	3.11	1.38	Medium	Teacher thanks parents who support service-learning projects.

Overall Mean: 3.32

Overall Standard Deviation: 0.97

Overall Level: Medium

Table (3) illustrates that the degree to which National Education teachers in the Bani Ubaid Directorate of Education employ service-learning projects, from the perspective of their school principals, was moderate. The overall arithmetic mean was 3.32 (SD = 0.97) on a 1–5 Likert scale, which corresponds to a moderate level of engagement according to the categorization in Table (2).

Analysis of the questionnaire items revealed that the means ranged from (3.11) to (3.52). The highest-rated item was paragraph No. (16), which states: *"The National Education teacher directs students to participate in projects to improve and protect the surrounding environment, such as cleaning streets and parks, planting trees, and recycling waste,"* with an arithmetic mean of (3.52) and a standard deviation of (1.35). This result still reflects a moderate level of application. In contrast, paragraph No. (20), which states: *"The National Education teacher thanks the parents who support service-learning projects,"* came last with a mean of (3.11) and a standard deviation of (1.38), also indicating a moderate level.

When comparing these results with previous studies, such as Khader (2012) and Talafha (2012), which concluded that teachers' engagement with service-learning projects was low, it

becomes clear that there has been progress over more than a decade. The current study shows a shift from a low to a moderate level of implementation, suggesting growing awareness—albeit gradual—of the significance of service-learning as a pedagogical tool. This progress also reflects a broader transformation in educational approaches, moving towards more student-centered learning environments and an emphasis on self-directed learning skills.

Despite this improvement, several challenges may limit the effective application of service-learning in schools. One major challenge is the lack of sufficient time available to National Education teachers, who are often burdened with a full teaching schedule. Students, too, are committed to other core academic subjects, making it difficult to allocate time for additional activities. There also appears to be insufficient follow-up and support from educational supervisors responsible for these types of projects. Furthermore, many schools face financial constraints, lacking the necessary resources to implement and sustain service-learning initiatives effectively.

In addition to these factors, formal educational structures may contribute to the limited use of service-learning. The national curriculum and educational policies approved by the Ministry of Education in Jordan tend to emphasize theoretical knowledge and traditional examinations, leaving little room for experiential learning methods. Moreover, teachers may encounter difficulties due to a lack of training and professional development opportunities in implementing such innovative educational strategies. The emphasis on standardized assessment systems can also discourage teachers from adopting approaches that require additional time and effort, such as service-learning.

In conclusion, while the current level of implementation is moderate, it represents a positive trend in the integration of service-learning into National Education curricula. To further enhance this integration, it is essential to strengthen teacher training programs, increase the availability of financial and logistical support, and revise educational and assessment policies to value practical, community-based learning experiences. Encouraging collaboration between schools, families, and local communities will also contribute to creating an environment that supports and sustains meaningful service-learning opportunities for students.

8. Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the integration of service-learning projects in the National Education curriculum:

- **Curriculum Development:** Curriculum developers should design a practical guide for National Education teachers that includes service-learning projects aligned with curriculum objectives. This guide should outline clear steps for project implementation and evaluation to ensure consistency and effectiveness.
- **Support from the Ministry of Education:** The Ministry of Education is encouraged to address structural challenges by reducing teachers' workload and providing adequate financial and logistical support. Furthermore, it should promote cooperative service-learning initiatives by facilitating partnerships with civil society organizations, such as municipal councils, health centers, and non-governmental organizations.
- **Teacher Training:** Comprehensive training programs should be offered to equip teachers with the necessary skills to design, implement, and assess service-learning projects. These programs should focus on both pedagogical strategies and practical execution.

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- **School Leadership Support:** School principals should empower teachers by granting them the autonomy to carry out service-learning activities. They should also allocate appropriate financial resources to support these initiatives within school budgets.
 - **Parental and Community Engagement:** Awareness campaigns should be launched to inform parents about the benefits of service-learning. Encouraging parental involvement can enhance student participation and foster stronger school-community relationships.
 - **Student Motivation:** Schools should implement strategies to actively motivate students to engage in service-learning projects, emphasizing the value of civic responsibility, real-world application of knowledge, and personal development.
 - **Further Research:** Future studies are recommended to investigate the challenges teachers face in implementing service-learning, as well as their attitudes toward integrating such projects into the National Education curriculum.

Ethics Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the Jordanian Ministry of Education and the participating institutions. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant committee, and all procedures complied with accepted research ethics guidelines.

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Not applicable.

Data Availability

The datasets used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Conflict of Interest

Not applicable.

Authors' Contributions

Bassmah Fraihat: Conceptualization, writing – original draft.

Eman Fraihat: Writing – original draft, methodology.

Amani Al-Refai: Formal analysis, resources.

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