



Unfolding value transformation by humanizing higher education through Outreach Programme and Experiential Learning Ecosystem

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ABSTRACT:

Academic competence alone is not enough in modern higher education to produce graduates who are compassionate and socially conscious. Values like empathy, accountability, civic duty, leadership and community orientation are increasingly expected of institutions. Experiential platforms including the National Service Scheme (NSS), field engagement initiatives and guided mentorship offer significant educational pathways that humanize learning by linking students with communities and real-world concerns. However, there isn't much empirical data on how these programs work together to influence learners' value transformation.

This study looks at the combined effects of organized mentorship, community-based fieldwork and NSS engagement on students' value development. The paper highlights a research gap on how experiential ecosystems mediate value formation in higher education by drawing on literature from experiential learning, transformative learning theory, student engagement frameworks and creative/human pedagogies. A study with 300 undergraduate and graduate students from Mulund College of Commerce (Autonomous) participating in quantitative questionnaire emphasizing on indicators like empathy, accountability, leadership, teamwork, and civic consciousness were measured using standardized instruments and mentor-mentee relationships and transforming experiences were recorded through introspective conversations.

The study delves into the following topics: student experiences in NSS, field involvement and mentorship; pedagogical procedures that support transformation; changes in important values; and how students view transformative learning. The impact of experiential engagement on value outcomes and the mediating function of mentoring are tested by hypotheses. By demonstrating how experiential learning promotes comprehensive value transformation and advances a humanized education paradigm, findings seek to close the empirical gap. An integrated experiential paradigm is suggested in the study's conclusion to support value-based education in higher education establishments.

[Keywords: Experiential Learning, Value Transformation, NSS, Mentorship, Field Engagement and Humanized Education etc.]

1. Introduction:

Academic proficiency alone is insufficient in the ever-changing world of higher education. The development of empathy, accountability, moral leadership, community orientation and social sensitivity in students is a growing responsibility of educational institutions. By putting students in touch with communities, real issues and real responsibilities, the National Service Scheme (NSS), field engagement activities and guided mentorship are effective, experiential value-based pedagogies that humanize the learning process. This study highlights a comprehensive development strategy that goes beyond textbooks and tests by examining how various experience pathways influence learners' value transformation.

2. Review of Literature:

❖ The National Service Scheme (NSS) is a well-known youth development program that encourages student volunteering, empathy, leadership, and community involvement, according to the literature evaluated by Lobo and Nekkar (2024). Previous research continuously demonstrates the need of social skills for both academic achievement and employment, particularly in engineering education where technical knowledge alone is insufficient. These abilities include communication, teamwork, leadership, and flexibility. Experiential activities like NSS greatly improve interpersonal and leadership skills, according to research on service-learning and community-based programs. Research from a variety of academic fields also demonstrates that NSS involvement enhances students' teamwork and communication abilities. The authors point out a glaring study gap, nevertheless, as no empirical research has particularly looked at how NSS helps engineering graduates build their social skills. Therefore, their analysis highlights the necessity for targeted research within the engineering context while positioning NSS as a relevant experiential platform with tremendous potential to enhance important social skills. (**Sonia Lobo, 2024**)

❖ Drawing from well-known engagement and transition models, the MacArthur and Amy Lean (2024) organize their review around three fundamental aspects of first-year student engagement: affective, cognitive, and behavioral. They draw attention to studies that demonstrate how students' sense of relevance, belonging, and adaptability to changing social and academic contexts have a significant impact on retention. The review explains how changes in students' self-identities and ways of thinking can result in more profound and long-lasting engagement using transformative learning theory. Additionally, it incorporates research on mentorship in higher education, highlighting its function in encouraging participation and assisting with transformative change. The authors defend their case-study approach by pointing out a gap: although mentoring is widely acknowledged, the precise mechanisms connecting emotional and cognitive growth to long-term behavioral retention are still little known. (**MacArthur, 2024**)

❖ Abegglen, Burns, Maier and Sinfield (2020) contend that colleges should stop 'bringing students up to speed' and instead embrace them for who they are, particularly in circumstances where involvement is expanding. They do this by drawing on dialogic ideas and critical pedagogy. The chapter highlights how local realities-diverse student backgrounds, institutional market pressures, and the 'global university' identity-require teaching that is both creative (through multimodal, expressive practices) and humane (attuned to voice, agency, ethics) in the context of a globalized higher education environment. The problem of favoring some cultural capitals over others is framed by earlier research on increasing participation, diversity and higher education stratification; the authors examine studies that demonstrate how typical academic habits disadvantage non-traditional students. They then develop their argument that dialogic, inclusive curriculum design may promote staff and student agency by citing research on creative pedagogies, student voice, and emancipatory practice. The authors use their case studies of first-year modules and staff development to explore how creativity and humanizing techniques intersect with global/local tensions, notwithstanding the review's conclusion that many programs focus on involvement. (**Abegglen, 2020**)

3. Research Methodology:

3.1 Research Problem:

Despite widespread efforts in NSS, community outreach, and mentorship programs, higher education institutions lack empirically grounded evidence on:

- How these initiatives collectively influence value formation?
- What pedagogical processes facilitate transformation?
- Which specific values (e.g., empathy, civic responsibility, leadership, accountability) are most impacted?

The humanization of education through real-world engagement remains under-researched.

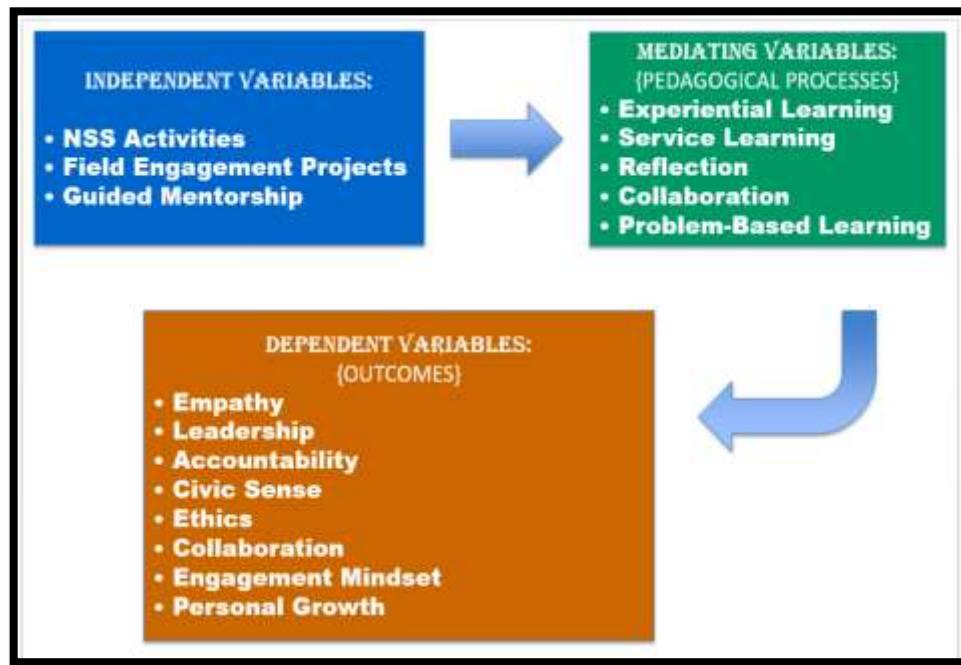
3.2 Research Gap:

- Limited studies integrate NSS, Field Engagement and Mentorship as a combined pedagogical ecosystem.
- Value transformation is often discussed theoretically but is rarely measured empirically.
- Existing research does not sufficiently explore learner perspectives on how experiential participation shapes their values, identity and citizenship mindset.
- Lack of models showing how experiential learning *mediates* the relationship between community engagement and value formation.

3.3 Research Objectives & Hypothesis:

Research Objectives:	Null Hypothesis H0:	Alternative Hypothesis H1:
To explore student participation and experiences in NSS, field activities and mentorship.	H01: Participation in NSS does not significantly enhance empathy, civic responsibility, and social sensitivity.	H11: Participation in NSS significantly enhances empathy, civic responsibility, and social sensitivity.
To identify the pedagogical processes through which experiential engagement fosters value transformation.	H02: Field engagement experiences do not influence students' leadership and teamwork skills.	H12: Field engagement experiences influence students' leadership and teamwork skills.
To assess changes in empathy, responsibility, leadership, teamwork, and civic awareness among learners.	H03: Guided mentorship does not mediate the relationship between experiential engagement and value transformation outcomes.	H13: Guided mentorship mediates the relationship between experiential engagement and value transformation outcomes.
To examine perceptions of students and mentors regarding transformative learning outcomes.	H04: Students involved in all three components (NSS + field engagement + mentorship) do not exhibit higher levels of value transformation compared to those engaged in only one component.	H14: Students involved in all three components (NSS + field engagement + mentorship) exhibit higher levels of value transformation compared to those engaged in only one component.
To propose a holistic humanized education model integrating NSS, field engagement and mentorship.		

3.4 Research Framework / Model:



3.5 Research Design:

- Quantitative: Surveys measuring value indicators
- Qualitative: Interviews, focus groups, reflective essays

Population: Undergraduate and postgraduate students actively engaged in NSS, field projects and guided under mentorship

Sampling: Purposive and Stratified Sampling

Sample size: 300 NSS enrolled students representing different programmes under the faculty of commerce from the different colleges located at Mulund.

3.6 Data Collection Tools:

- A structured questionnaire (google form) measuring:
 - Empathy (Interpersonal Reactivity Index)
 - Responsibility (Accountability scale)
 - Leadership (Student Leadership Practices Inventory)
 - Civic engagement scales
- Interview and focus group guide exploring:
 - Transformative experiences
 - Reflections on community work
 - Mentor-mentee interactions
 - Value-in-action moments

3.7 Limitations of the study:

- The study is limited to students from a single autonomous college, restricting wider generalization.
- Data is self-reported, which may involve social desirability and response bias.
- The study measures perceived changes rather than tracking actual behavioural outcomes.
- The framework does not control for external influences such as family background or prior volunteering experience.

4. Data Analysis:

Quantitative: Descriptive statistics, Reliability testing, Regression, Correlation and One Way ANOVA

Qualitative: Thematic analysis and coding

Reliability Test:

k	42	The scale has 42 questions being tested for reliability
sum of item variances	10.07664	Overall dispersion within each question
Variance of Total Scores	126.8258	Total test score difference across respondents
Cronbach's Alpha	0.943	Excellent internal consistency and reliability

Sr. No.:	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Test Applied	Result
1.	Level of social connect through community engagement and field work	Level of improvement in Problem Solving skills	Correlation	0.853273
2.		Level of improvement in Confidence		0.857843
3.		Level of belief in Team work		0.423113
4.		Level of Empathy and Responsibility		0.945313
5.		Level of improvement in Civic Sense		0.319474
6.		Level of improvement in Social Sensitivity		0.563127
	Variable 1	Variable 2		
7.	Level of encouragement received from the mentor	Level of development in Collaborative skills	One Way ANOVA	p = 0.340814 (> 0.05); F = 0.908815
8.	Level of encouragement received from the mentor	Level of participation in Social and Civic activities		p = 0.000955 (< 0.05); F = 11.02304
9.	Level of development in Collaborative skills	Level of participation in Social and Civic activities		p = 0.009102 (< 0.05); F = 6.847328

5. Findings & Conclusion:

Sr. No.:	Empirical Finding	Interpretation	Corresponding Conclusion
1	Very strong positive correlation between engagement and problem-solving skills	High engagement substantially enhances students' analytical and practical competencies	Experiential engagement significantly strengthens value-based skills, supporting H1
2	Very strong positive correlation showing engagement builds confidence	Increased engagement boosts students' self-belief and confidence	Experiential learning facilitates value transformation and confidence building, supporting H1 and H2
3	Moderate correlation between engagement and teamwork orientation	Engagement has a meaningful but moderate influence on teamwork skills	Experiential exposure develops teamwork and responsibility, confirming H2

4	Exceptionally strong relationship: involvement → heightened empathy and responsibility	Deep involvement leads to major emotional, ethical and social development	Students exhibit broad improvements in empathy and sensitivity; experiential learning enhances core values (H11, H12)
5	Weak to moderate correlation	Engagement has limited but noticeable influence on select value attributes	Some attributes show smaller effects, but overall experiential gains remain significant
6	Moderate to strong correlation: involvement boosts social sensitivity	Engagement increases social awareness and sensitivity	Experiential activities strengthen social sensitivity, supporting H11
7	No significant difference in collaborative skills due to mentorship levels	Mentorship alone does not affect collaboration	ANOVA confirms mentorship does not significantly alter collaboration
8	Highly significant effect: mentor encouragement → higher civic/social participation	Mentorship strongly increases civic engagement and social responsibility	Mentorship significantly boosts civic participation; maximum transformation occurs when NSS, fieldwork and mentoring combine (H14)
9	Significant relationship: collaboration → higher participation	Stronger collaboration predicts more active civic and social involvement	Collaborative skill development enhances civic participation, reinforcing experiential learning outcomes

6. Suggestions & Recommendations:

The findings demonstrate that community engagement, fieldwork participation and structured mentorship significantly contribute to students' development in problem solving, confidence, empathy, responsibility and civic participation, thereby supporting the alternative hypotheses. Accordingly, the study recommends:

- ❖ Strengthening experiential learning through focused field activities, reflective tasks and collaborative projects and embedding value-based pedagogies within the curriculum.
- ❖ A triadic integration of NSS involvement, field engagement and guided mentorship should be institutionalized to maximize value transformation.
- ❖ Enhancing teamwork competencies, promoting civic-awareness programmes and building partnerships with NGOs and local bodies can reinforce these outcomes.
- ❖ Systematic monitoring mechanisms should be established to assess value-based growth and sustain a holistic, humanizing education model that cultivates socially responsible and community-oriented learners.

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