**Reflective Essay**

This year I signed up for service learning, as many others did, thinking it would be a good thing to do that wasn’t so hard and would look good when I go to university, however at the time I did not understand the full connotations of signing up to the coarse. During the year I was able to see how much help was really needed in this country, and I was also able to experience what it was like to really be useful and truly appreciated. I saw how I could help those close to the end, dying in such appalling conditions at the state run Cancer hospital, and also those just starting out their lives, already knowing hardship as we shall probably never know it, by helping them with there ever so crucial education. During my year as a Service Learning student I have had the opportunity to make a difference at the site of my project, I was able to become a better person and I am more able to truly understand the bigger picture of the problems facing this country.

Although we often put a fairly large amount of effort and work into or projects it is hard to judge whether or not we are actually making a difference. However, happily, I believe I can say that I have made a difference at the Found Africa Child Learning Centre (FACLC). We went to the FACLC with the aim of providing supplementary teaching in English on a Saturday and Maths on a Tuesday. In this I can say with some certainty that I have been able to make a difference as it is easy to see how the students I have had a part in teaching have progressed in these fields. When I first went to the FACLC the students were able to speak fairly good verbal English however they had very little ability at all to read or write in the language. However over the last few weeks I have seen them being able to read and write simple sentences with a certain level of proficiency. More importantly they actually began to understand why the verbs were conjugated in that manor or why those words made that sound. It was much the same with their maths as at the beginning they could do simple problems but their times tables just seemed like they were driven into their memories without any true understanding. However recently they have shown a real understanding for not only their multiplication but also division and simple exponents. However I believe what is most important is the way we were able to almost become friends with the Students. On one Saturday we took a small group of students into the CAC to play football and it was like we were just hanging out with friends. As a result of all this I believe that I have actually been able to make an impact by attending the FACLC.

However it was not just the students at the FACLC that were able to benefit from the service work I did, I was also able to come out of it with new academic learning and personal development. During the time I spent at FACLC I gained a basic skill of how to teach someone even the simplest of practices to some pretty bright kids. Before hand I had taken for granted the work done by the teachers I have had whilst not truly understanding how hard their job can be. I have gained the skill of being able to make someone else understand and fully comprehend a new theory or practice. This is a skill that I have been grateful for and is also a skill that now affects some of my day to day interactions and conversations, especially with my school piers. My experience in the Service Learning class has also evoked personal changes within myself about how I view others and my attitudes towards them. It has enabled me to truly appreciate how lucky I am to be in the position in which I am with a good quality of life and strong prospects for the future. I am now also more aware of the need of people like myself to help those less fortunate. Taking everything into consideration I am very grateful for the things I have learnt, and the changes which have occurred within me as a result of my experiences in Service Learning and would encourage others to take the class for this reason.

My experiences as part of this class have also enabled me to see the bigger picture and truly understand the issues facing this country. It has helped me to understand the magnitude and gravity of the plight of the poor, here, living beside us. Previously to my volunteering to help at FACLC I had never really thought of their being a large body of Sudanese refugees in Cairo. Since however I have learnt about the problems in their own country that have forced them to leave as well as the problems they face once they get here. For example the FACLC school is supposed to be funded and run by a section of the government dedicated to refugees in Egypt, but in fact it relies heavily on charity work. This was similar to my experience when we went to the state run cancer hospital, l as although it was funded and run by the state it was in a poor state of neglect. These are just a handful of problems that my eyes have been opened to after joining the Service Learning Class, and my attitude has changed from just observing and commenting on problems to seeing if there is any way in which I can help.

After sighing Up to the CAC Service Learning class I have had the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others, been able to learn new skills and achieve personal development as well as being more able to reflect upon the bigger picture. I have helped those less fortunate than myself with what is possibly the most important help I could give, with their education. This is the thing I am most grateful for coming out of this year. However my experiences in Service learning have also helped me become a better person and given me an insight into the skills of being a proficient educator. I believe I am better for the experience I have had this year as part of this class and would recommend taking it to other students.