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Service Learning

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Reflective Essay

According to a famous Chinese proverb, “One generation plants the trees; another gets the shade”. With these wise words, it becomes clear that the actions that one generations commits to for the benefit of the next generation display utmost importance. In the Service Learning class of CAC, the students have become increasingly aware of this very issue, revolving around the sheer significance of doing what we can, specifically directed to those in need, such as orphans, in an optimistic attempt to improve their quality of life, but more importantly, give them something they can use throughout their lives, the power of knowledge. With that being said, a group of students, consisting of me and other individuals, decided to take on a project, dealing with a group of orphans in Yanbooe El Nour, teaching these needy children basic English skills. Indeed, throughout my experiences with these kids, I have come to learn several things.

First, it is of great importance to note the academic learning. Clearly, I can say that I have learned some new basic skills, specifically, I expanded my interaction abilities with the lower-class community of Egypt, for the majority of those who were at the orphanages were among this group. Furthermore, I expanded by teaching skills, for I have clearly noted improvement with the children whom I have been teaching, which I mainly attribute to my rather good teaching skills. Also, I learned more about those orphans. Some orphans had no parents, while others had parents who could simply not afford to have them. Also, I learned about the difficulty of raising orphans, for at a certain age, they would start to ask questions regarding their parents, and it was at that point, according to the head of the orphanage, that their future was determined, depending on whether or not they decided to accept the truth and live on or whether they would dwell on the past and become uneducated thugs. Finally, I feel like my decision making skills have drastically improved. For one part, we had to often decide the quantity of the rewards that we would give to the orphans. Moreover, we also faced tough decision making skills when we found one child who was academically behind his fellow orphans. Thus, my academic learning was expanded and greatly benefited from this experience.

In addition, my personal development also saw great increase through this experience. I became more aware of changes in myself, for before interacting with these children, orphans were merely a concept in my mind, however, now, they became a reality. I also started to feel great remorse and sorrow for these children, for I could never imagine growing up in such conditions. Also, I developed a sense of community, for these children were part of our beloved Egyptian community, and deserved to be treated equally as all other members of the society, including us. Throughout the experience, we found several obstacles. One such obstacles was one’s child’s inability to even memorize the alphabet. While all other orphans were doing more advanced work, I was helping out this orphan. Also, another obstacle was to, in fact, get to the site, for it was not near any of our residences. However, we persevered and found ways of getting there, for helping these orphans was of the utmost importance.

Reflecting on the actual project, I could say that we would have probable made a more significant impact if we had obtained a larger number of students to help us in our endeavors to educate these orphans, for often times, there were too many orphans for us to handle. However, I strongly believe that we made a significant impact on these orphans, for before we arrived to their help, a few of them were not able to recite the alphabet, however, after our arrival, all of them became able to spell certain words in English.

After having spent such valuable time with these poor individuals, I became aware of certain issues that actually caused such problems towards orphans, such as lack of education and poor shelter. The main cause of all these hurdles was, of course, poverty. Egypt is a rather poor country, and the government claims that it cannot simply afford to create such suitable accommodations to suit the lives of these children. However, one will find that the most effective of orphanages are privately owned and administered by caring individuals.

Ultimately, I feel like I can take these skills that I have learned to broaden my impact on the Egyptian society. Despite the considerable small interactions that I have shared with these less fortunate individuals, I feel like I am now ready to help those who are in further need of aid, such as the homeless and the extremely poor. I feel like now, I can actively communicate with them and offer them aid in the most effective manner. Thus, I feel that I greatly benefited from my experiences at this orphanage.