Service-Learning as a Transformational Pedagogy: Connecting Learning, Life, and Community

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Overview

- Typical Challenges/Issues
- Service-Learning as a Transformational Process
- SL Course Design in 5 “Easy” Steps
- Teaching/Learning Strategies
- Assessment Methods
- Resources
"I don't know if this is such a wise thing to do, George."
Historical Analysis of Service-Learning

- Do something good
- Do something good and learn something
- Make a difference and become different
- Co-create the world you want to live in
National Level Service-Learning Challenges

- Student comment: “You mean we only have to serve dinner to those homeless guys and we can skip the final exam? Excellent!”
- Student reflection: “If the parents just got involved with their kids’ education we wouldn’t have to be here.”
- Community partner message: “Could you please discuss with your class why the term ‘orientals’ is not appropriate.”
- Department chair: “We’re an academic department not a social service.”
Teaching/Learning Challenges

- Instructors:
  - I don’t know how to do it
  - I won’t get promoted

- Students:
  - It was fun
  - I hated my group

- Community Partner:
  - The students were self-righteous
  - I felt used by the university
National Level
Teaching/Learning Challenges

“Grading in the SL course was easy, my professor just wanted a journal turned in at the end of the semester”

Lack of academic integration and reflection
“If poor families cared more about their kids’ education there wouldn’t be so many juvenile delinquents on the street”

Lack of preparation in entering communities and understanding economic, social, cultural issues

“I gave up on my group and just do everything myself”

Lack of support and skills for collaborative learning and decision making

“My department chair told me that I will never get promoted if I teach SL courses”

Lack of institutional support and integration into reward system
SL Course Problem Outcomes

- Students feel forced to volunteer while paying tuition
- Students don’t take their role seriously
- Students resent teacher, classmates and community partner
- Student misunderstanding of community issues
- Student misunderstanding of academic knowledge and skills
- Community partner frustration and disappointment
- Faculty lack of scholarship and promotion
Hoped for Teaching and Learning Outcomes

- “I learned how to talk effectively with others and how to resolve professional differences without anger.”
- “I learned to understand myself and to overcome a lot of biases I had toward the homeless community.”
- “The empowerment given to students created a sense of responsibility and commitment.”
- “I used Boyer’s concepts of the Scholarship of Teaching and the Scholarship of Engagement in my service learning work and ultimately received promotion and tenure.”
Definition:
Service-learning combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity change both the recipient and the provider of the service. This is accomplished by combining service tasks with structured opportunities that link the task to self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and knowledge content.
Service-learning is *not*:

- An episodic volunteer program
- An add-on to an existing school or college curriculum
- Logging a set number of community service hours in order to graduate
- Compensatory service assigned as a form of punishment by the courts or by school administrators
- One-sided: benefiting only students or only the community
Service-Learning Characteristics

- Links to academic content and standards
- Involves individuals in helping to determine and meet real, defined community needs
- Is reciprocal in nature, benefiting both the community and the service providers by combining a service experience with a learning experience
- Can be used in any subject area so long as it is appropriate to learning goal
The National and Global Landscape

- Corporation for National and Community Service: Learn and Service America Higher Education

- Campus Compact: Embedding engagement more deeply in the institution
  - Improving educational access and success
  - Developing global citizens

- Continuums of Service Conference
  - Using engagement to address critical issues
    - Educational attainment, health, immigration, environmental sustainability, global understanding
The Scholarship of Service Learning:  
*Connecting Learning, Life, & Community*

- Critical Thinking Skills
- Academic Knowledge
- Leadership Skills
- Communication Skills
- Problem Solving Skills
- Collaboration Skills
- Acceptance of Others
- Acceptance of Ambiguity
- Efficacy for Future Community Involvement
Course Process Challenges and Strategies

- Finding time to read and comment upon student journal/reflections
- Handling stereotypes and ignorant comments
- Groups that hate one another
- Community partners that experience change, flux, or instability
- Assigning grades to service and projects
- Unexpected bumps and failures
- Student break-downs

- What is Service-Learning
- Identifying a Community Partner
- Group Work/Projects
- Intercultural Competence
- Academic Connections
- Assessment

Stylus Publishers
Teaching Activities

- What is...Citizenship, Democracy, Volunteerism, Service, Service Learning, CBL
- Pre-Service Checklists of Rights and Responsibilities
- Hopes, Fears, and Needs for Service
- Marshmallows & Spaghetti as Leadership
- Action & Learning Plan for Serving (ALPS)
- Cultural Paradigms
- Learning Outcomes and Community Impacts
Service-Learning as Transformational

- Community Partners
  - Intentions: charity vs. reciprocity
  - Outcomes: hours vs. learning and change

- Students
  - Explicit knowledge and skills
  - Explicit connection to academics/curriculum

- Faculty
  - Teaching and learning logistics/ideas
  - Integration into Scholarship/reward structure
Service-Learning as Transformational (not additive)

Transformational Learning is an epistemological change, rather than merely a change in behavior or increase in the quantity of knowledge.

(Kegan, 2000)
Service-Learning as Transformational

Transformational Learning:
The process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action.

(Mezirow, 1996)

- “Homelessness is due to the fact that people are lazy or crazy or both.”
- “While individual choices can be factors in homelessness, I now better understand the interplay of economic and social/cultural issues and how they can impact people’s lives. We must work with our city leaders to inform them about these issues too.”
Transformational Learning

Transformations in Habits of Mind:

*Epochal* — sudden, dramatic, reorienting insight and reframing of perspective(s)

*Incremental* — progressive series of shifts in view that culminates in a transformation
Learning as Transformational

Discuss a student in whom you witnessed transformational learning? What happened? How? What was your role?

Epochal—sudden, dramatic, reorienting insight and reframing of perspective
Incremental—progressive series of shifts in view that culminate in a transformation
Service Learning Design Challenges

- “Adding on” service-learning to an already full syllabus and course
- Developing service-learning objectives
- Having department/institutional support
- Identifying/developing a community partner
- Integrating service hours and projects
- Creating assignments and activities
- Letting go of traditional instructional roles
Service Learning Option: 20 hours of service in lieu of final exam

Learning Objectives: Non-existent and/or not related to SL

Assignment: Class presentation and political action plan (no service req)

SL Project: To meet academic major admission requirements
Syllabus Categories

- Course Description
- Learning Objectives
- Thematic Topics
- Readings
- Assignments
- Grading/Attendance
- Classroom Expectations
- Service Expectations
Course Design Review—
5 “Easy” Steps

1. **Connect**—Academic and Experiential Components
2. **Create**—Collaborative and Reciprocal Community Partnerships
3. **Curb**—Conflict and Miscommunication through Intercultural Competence
4. **Choose**—Reflection for Critical Inquiry and Action
5. **Construct**—Assessment for Learning and Impact (and future commitment)
History: European Thought & Culture, c.1750-present

This course encourages you to explore your relationship between the individual, society, and government in the context of major intellectual, cultural, and social forces that shaped European life from the mid-eighteenth century to the present.

Through community-based learning, this course encourages you to consider the extent to which such forces have affected, or may yet influence, the ways in which we experience and understand our own roles in an increasingly complex, global society. This dual focus permits us to examine what remains a highly contentious issue in modern Europe and much of the world: the proper relationship between theory and praxis.
Course Description

- Sociology: Social Inequality
- We will draw on a variety of sociological perspectives to consider the development, maintenance, and consequences of social inequality. We will focus on race, class, and gender as major axes of inequality in the United States.
- To help us understand both how inequality operates and how we might change it through social action, students will engage in a service-learning project that will support the development of skills in political engagement and community organizing.
Spanish: Hispanic Cultural Studies

This class is a survey of pre-Columbian civilizations and the impact of the Encounter with Europe, modern socio-historical, cultural, and political events which shape present day Latin America. This semester will focus on cultural resistance to colonization and other forms of social injustice.

Service-learning is an important component of this course, and it will take place at a Latino community center for the elderly. Students will share with the residents writings and visual texts by survivors of state generated violence or other forms of marginalization.
Course Design

Step 1: Connect Academic and Experiential Components

- Connect to Linfield Learning Principles: Solve, Adapt, Synthesize
- Connect course description/goals/content with service-learning experience
- Attend to terminology, definitions, issues
  (Read Chapter 1 “What is Service-Learning?”)
- Develop specific SL learning outcomes and objectives
- Utilize Bloom’s taxonomy
- Identify student assignments/activities/assessment
Writing Service-Learning Objectives

- Clearly identify **service** (experiential) and **learning** (content, knowledge, skills) objectives
- Articulated by faculty, students, partners
- Objectives should progress from actions that are measurable and demonstrable (list, identify, describe) to a complexity of material integration (analyze, apply, synthesis)
- Attend to developmental/experiential level of students
Writing Service-Learning Objectives (Bloom’s Taxonomy)

- **Knowledge Level (verbs & behaviors)**
  - List, identify, name, find, label, recall, record

- **Comprehension Level**
  - Summarize, describe, explain, show, restate

- **Application Level**
  - Apply, demonstrate, model, practice, solve

- **Analysis Level**
  - Examine, compare/contrast, infer, formulate

- **Synthesis Level**
  - Create, design, organize, build, produce

- **Evaluation Level**
  - Argue, critique, defend, validate, recommend
Writing Service-Learning Objectives (Bloom’s Taxonomy)

- Identify and describe the needs of the community population (*Knowledge*)
- Explain the role of the community organization in addressing needs (*Comprehension*)
- Model professional learning behavior to youth/clients (*Application*)
- Analyze economic, political, and social factors contributing to the challenges (*Analysis/Synthesis*)
- Recommend leverage points for creating systemic change on the organizational and community levels (*Evaluation*)
Course Design

Step 1: Connect Academic and Experiential Components

- Connect course description/goals with service-learning experience and Linfield mission
- Attend to terminology and definitions
- Develop specific SL learning outcomes and objectives
- Utilize Bloom’s taxonomy
- Identify assignments/activities/assessment
Course Design

Step 2: Create Collaborative and Reciprocal Community Partnerships

- Utilize institutional resources for logistics and support: pre-identify site(s) and project(s)
- (See Chapters 2, 3, & 4 “Building…Becoming Community”)
- Identify student assignments/activities: individual, class, citizen, community partner
- Clarify instructor role: Facilitator & Feedback (formal and informal)
Pedagogical Techniques and Service-Learning Outcomes

- Racial/Ethnic Readings
- Lecture***
- Civic Responsibility Readings/Discussions
- Social/Political Discussions
- Women/Gender Readings
- Student Selected Content
Course Design

Step 3: Curb Conflict and Miscommunication through Intercultural Competence

- Intentionally examine the cultural dimensions of service: power, privilege, politics
- Add Readings on Contemporary Issues (social, political, economic, religious)
- Add Readings/Research on Individuals/Groups (gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, dis-ability)
  (See Chapter 5 “Creating Cultural Connections”)
- Prepare students to Enter and Re-Enter communities
- Identify student assignments/activities
- Intercultural.org—Intercultural Communications Institute
“We do not see the world as it is. We see the world as we are.”
Cultural Intelligence Test

- Think of a number
- Double it
- Add 8
- Divide by 2
- Subtract your original number
- Determine which letter of the alphabet your number relates to: A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, E=5…
- Think of a **Country** that begins with your letter
- Think of an **Animal** that begins with the Last letter of your Country
- Think of a **Color** that begins with the last letter of your animal
- What’s your **Color**?
Development of Intercultural Sensitivity

Experience of Difference

Denial  Defense  Minimization  Acceptance  Adaptation  Integration

ETHNOCENTRIC STAGES  ETHNORELATIVE STAGES

(Bennett & Bennett, 2004)
Course Design

Step 4: Choose Reflection for Critical Inquiry

- See Chapter 6 “Reflection in Action”, Chapter 7 “Failure with the Best of Intentions”, Chapter 8 “New Views of Course Concepts”
- Guide students in Critical “thinking”
- Guide students in Conscious “living”
- Identify student assignments/activities
**Connie E.**
Emphasizes student interactions as important. Believes that fully understanding nuances of student needs and interests is essential to effective learning. Places high value on the relational aspects of teaching.

**Randy O.**
Carefully observes situations before making judgments and revising curriculum. Looks for core meaning of issues and willing to take the time to do so. Places an emphasis on viewing issues from different perspectives.

**Avita C.**
Logically analyzes ideas and plans systemically in decision making. Acts on intellectual understanding of key concepts, principles, and ideas. Places an emphasis on the rationality/reason of research.

**Averly E.**
Willing to take risks and try new approaches in teaching and learning. Prefers active problem-solving to elongated discussions or research. Places value on quick action and involvement.
Kolb’s Cognitive Processing Styles

Degree to which you emphasize--

- abstractness over concreteness
  “thinking”       “feeling”

- action over reflection
  “doing”          “watching”
Kolb’s Cognitive Processing Cycle

Concrete Experience (CE)

"Feeling"

Active Experimentation (AE)

"Doing"

Reflective Observer (RO)

"Watching"

Abstract Conceptualization (AC)

"Thinking"

Connie

Averly

Avita

Randy
Reflection Strategies

- **Concrete Experience**: Describe an interaction between yourself and someone else in the community partnership. Be neutral in your description while outlining verbal statements, nonverbal behaviors, and environmental contexts. What implicit values or principles might have informed individual meaning of the situation?
**Reflective Observation**: Describe the possible perspectives of at least 3 individuals at the community site. What expectations or assumptions might each hold? What might influence the frame or paradigm from which each view their experiences? How might you facilitate a non-judgmental approach to interactions?
Reflection Strategies

- **Abstract Conceptualization:** Using readings and research from this course and/or your academic major, explain the nature of the community partnership. What concepts or theoretical models explain the underlying processes and outcomes? What larger local, state, national or global issues influence the interactions?
Reflection Strategies

- **Active Experimentation**: How have your plans for future community involvement changed as a result of this experience? Has this experience changed your view of what you know and what you do? What might you do differently next time? When and how might you get involved again?
Course Design

Step 5: Construct Assessment for Learning and Impact

- (See Chapter 9 “Beyond a Grade” and Chapter 10 “Looking Forward”)
- Identify student assignments/activities
- Assess for future action: individual, community, systemic
- Expand teaching evaluation information
Methodological Framework

- What do we want to know?
  - Core Concepts

- How will we know it?
  - Measurable or observable indicators

- How will we gather the evidence to demonstrate what we know?
  - Methods, Sources, Timing
## Assessment Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>1.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>B.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Community Example

- What is the service-learning impact on community partners?
  - Concepts: capacity to fulfill mission, economic impacts
  - Indicators: # of clients, impact on resource/funding utilization, staff changes, program insights
  - Methods: focus groups, interviews, document reviews, survey
Student Example

What do students know about their communities?

- Concept: awareness of community
- Indicators: knowledge of issues, ability to identify assets/needs
- Methods: interviews, focus groups, observations in class/community, survey
Faculty Example

- How does service-learning influence faculty pedagogy?
  - Concepts: philosophy of teaching, teaching and learning methods
  - Indicators: teaching roles, class format, organization, environment
  - Methods: observations, interviews, syllabi, survey
Question Examples
(poor ones)

- I am generally satisfied with the diversity on my campus.
- The experience enhanced my civic capacity skills.
- I felt the service-learning was meaningful.
Assessment for Learning and Impact

Service-Learning as Transformational for:

- **Students** (knowledge, skills, attitudes)
- **Community** (impact)
- **Faculty/Instructor** (profession/discipline)
- **College** (organizational culture, grants)
## Results: Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Intl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Goal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become a Community Leader</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self Ratings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Ability</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>71*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Leadership in Others</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>66*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*statistically significant (p<.01)
Leadership Summary

- **Good News (Transformational):** International students report significantly increased leadership abilities including the desire and skills to help others develop leadership.

- **Bad News:** However, only about 1/3 of International and US students desire to become a community leader.

- **Recommendations (Action):** Investigate student definitions of *community leader* and make this a more intentional service-learning goal. (Resources needed)
Publication Outlets/Resources

• Campus Compact(s): National and State
• National Service Learning Clearinghouse
• Michigan Journal of Service Learning
• Journal of Applied Research in Community Colleges
• Journal of College Student Development
• International Service Learning Research Research Conference
• Continuums of Service Conference
• Stylus Publishers Website
• Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning
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Thank You