Service-Learning: Promise and Possibility in Post-Secondary Education

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Abstract
Herein we identify and address promising practices, essential theories, and related cautions within service-learning. The argument that service-learning is an organized community service which is connected to curriculum in an effort to deepen learning around content was scrutinized and endorsed. We envisioned service-learning as more than a joint venture involving partnerships founded upon good intentions, as the components that combine to create effective service-learning outcomes were mitigating essentials. Service-learning theory and praxis was advanced herein as added value within curriculum rather than a unique pedagogical approach to achieve transformational outcomes. We recommend service-learning as a pedagogical approach that is valued in its own right and not simply added on in times of program need.

Keywords: Service-Learning, Post-Secondary Education, praxis

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Introduction

Service-learning continues to grow as "a vehicle to promote genuine, collaborative, community engagement benefitting students, faculty and community" (Curwood, Munger, Mitchell, Mackeigan, & Farrar, 2011). Recent, studies have highlighted the emergence of service-learning and the promise it holds to provide fertile learning ground that benefits participants (Curwood, Munger, Mitchell, Mackeigan, & Farrar, 2011).

We argue that an informed understanding of service-learning will positively impact the structure and design of educational initiatives. We also claim that the valued role of service-learning can be found embedded in organizational strategy that honors the importance of innovative partnerships to compliment the development of flexible learning choices and their contributions (Mohawk College, 2012). Taking the classroom to the community is a favored approach offered students to provide a "student-centered approach with a collaborative outlook…to deliver a custom experience for students" (Mohawk College, 2012, p. 2). The promotion of learning activities that engage stakeholders directly in the interactions of service provision prepares students, assists agencies, and contributes to effective partnering between colleges and communities (Desmond & Stahl, 2011). Post-secondary administrators who reported having successful experiences with service-learning cite the provision of support, validation, and recognition for all parties engaged in such partnerships as essential actions that improve results (Engstrom & Tinto, 1997). Similarly, faculty support "bridge building to the world outside of the walls of the classroom and the covers of the textbook" (Butin, 2007, p. 34) as a means to provide integrated initiatives that create momentum for service-learning. A drive to learn about the benefit of such practices as they related to the use of resources in organizations has also emerged recently in the delivery of curriculum activities (Fitzgerald, 2012). The conditions for increased use of service-learning in education appear to live within the possible partnerships that link community and institution to achieve common goals and provide mutual benefits. "Students' also achieve significant outcomes in terms of skill development and competencies, workplace experience, understanding of non-profit management and governance, career development and fulfillment of their *change the world* aspirations. Often these outcomes are ignored or trivialized" (Gemmel & Clayton, 2009, p. 5) by well-meaning institutions.

Problem

The increased prevalence of service-learning in post-secondary education as a means of curricular implementation requires that practices be examined to learn about effective design and implementation (Desmond & Stahl 2011; Tower & Broadbent, 2011). Chambers (2009) provided support for the increased use of service-learning concluding how,

> a scan of service-learning initiatives in Canadian postsecondary institutions by the Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning (CACSL, 2006) identified 30 separate institutions, with 40 separate service learning initiatives . . . because service learning is relatively new practice in Canada it is critical to establish a sense of the range of forms that service learning can take. (p. 79)

Service-learning can be an important pedagogical tool for connecting institutions and students to community need in diverse and unique ways. However, service-learning must be intentionally designed in order to be effectively utilized to achieve benefits. All too often service learning is viewed as an addition to curriculum rather than a unique pedagogical approach to achieve transformational outcomes (Butin, 2007). Service-learning "is not about the addition of service to learning, but rather the integration of service with learning" (Howard, 1998, p. 21). It is not an addendum to traditional classroom learning, as it is often assumed, but a synergistic blending of experience and reflection with an aim to enrich the connections between doing and knowing.

Despite growing prevalence, service-learning has had limited study regarding promising practices, approaches, and outcomes (Desmond & Stahl, 2011). Britt's (2012) view on current research

is that it does not "adequately acknowledge, investigate, or reflect that not all service learning is developed with the same end goals in mind" (p. 81). "While many speak strongly about community engagement, few are able or willing to develop sustained and consequential programs that further it" (Butin, 2007, p. 34). Enhancing the sustainability of service-learning is achieved through deliberate strategies that connect to organizational goals, the enhancement of long standing community partnerships, and branding the uniqueness of learning experiences (Vogl, Seifer, & Gelmon, 2010).

The nuances of service-learning relationships between educational institutions, students' learning, and community partnerships are essential elements for consideration at a time when the use of service learning is increasing. It is necessary to consider the unique complexities that embody partnerships whereby all parties' needs and expectations are equally valued and considered. In Taggart & Crisps' (2011) review of 17 empirical studies of service-learning at community colleges concluded that design, implementation, and evaluation of service learning varied significantly. All too often, learning activities remain void of supporting research to shape and sustain their effective delivery but are at the same time questioned for their benefit within the institutional framework (Vogel, Seifer, & Gelmon 2010). The increasing prevalence of service-learning pedagogy requires comprehensive study regarding theoretical underpinnings, practices, and cautions to provide for effective development and implementation.

Service-Learning

Service-learning includes reciprocity, reflection, and the integration of learning experiences to achieve outcomes (Britt 2012; Chambers, 2009; Taggart & Crisp, 2011). It is a form of active learning that "integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, 2009). Service-learning is the result of collaboration between community, educational institution, and learner to engage and produce mutual outcomes. The Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning (CACSL) incorporates the *community* aspect of the definition of service learning to describe "an educational approach that integrates service in the community with intentional learning activities. Within effective CSL efforts, members of both educational institutions and community institutions work together to toward outcomes that are mutually beneficial" (CACSL, 2004, p. 1).

Service-learning, is "a powerful pedagogical strategy that encourages students to make meaningful connections between content in the classroom and real-life experiences" (Engstrom & Tinto, 1997, p.10). The relationship between *service* and *learning* is further symbolized by the hyphenated punctuation in the term "service-learning" suggesting an equity between the two terms and a demand for integrated approaches in order for the balance to not only be maintained but also achieved (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Reflection

The process of examining experiences that reveal the internal dialogue to reflect the knowledge of the participant is key feature of service learning (Boud & Walker, 1998; Ryan, 2013). Eyler (2002) explains the hyphen in the term service-learning as it relates to reflection:

> Reflection is the hyphen in service-learning; it is the process that helps students connect what they observe and experience in the community with their academic study. In a reflective service-learning class, students are engaged in worthwhile activity in the community, observe, make sense of their observations, ask new questions, relate what they are observing to what they are studying in class, form theories and plans of action, and try out their ideas. (p. 517)

Reflection as defined by Mertler (2009) locates the learner as an active subject focused on "critically exploring what you are doing, why you decided to do it and what its effects have been" (p. 247). Reflection on action that contemplates learning after the experience, is an activity expected in the

effective design of service-learning. The act of capturing and recording this process "bridges the inner and outer world and connects the paths of action and reflection" (Baldwin, 1991, p. 9). Reflection is a dynamic process that facilitates deeper understanding as the participant synthesizes knowledge through the intentional consideration of an experience as it connects to course content (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Ryan, 2013). The Canadian Alliance for Community Service Learning (CACSL) (2004) defined reflection as a central element of service-learning that refers to "the process of deriving meaning and knowledge from experience and occurs before, during and after a service-learning project...that consciously connects learning with experience" (p. 2).

Community

Although the term community can be interpreted in various ways to refer to groups of individuals or locations, it is used herein to describe "a geographic group whose members engage in some face-to-face interaction" (CACSL, 2004, p. 6) and connected collaboratively via service-learning activities of the educational institution. It is important to highlight that communities are seen as partners in service learning who articulate their needs and shape service learning experiences from their particular interests and perspectives (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000).

Partnership

The interactions between community and campus in service learning "are a central and defining dimension of community-campus interactions that support service learning. According to Clayton, Bringle, Senor, Huq, and Morrison (2010)

> the label "partnership" is among the most frequently used terms in service-learning literature. The term partner "is used to indicate both a person in the community (e.g. staff member at a community organization) and an organization in the community (e.g. nonprofit or governmental agency); and the term "partnership" is most often applied to the relationship and interactions between the community and the campus. (p.5)

Curwood et al. (2011) identifies the collaborative features of partnerships as intentional connections with a specific focus in mind. Partnership is specifically indicated by the anticipated gain or benefit to all parties. Partnerships are defined with this expectation in mind "as collaborations between community organizations and institutions of higher learning for the purpose of achieving an identified social change goal through community engaged scholarship that ensures mutual benefit for the community organization and participating students" (Curwood et al., 2011, p. 16).

Background

The increased use of service-learning in post-secondary education is not surprising since it is "a means of promoting student development and aiding in the transfer of theoretical knowledge to practical application" (Woodside, Carruth, Clapp & Robertson, 2006, p. 5). Service-learning is a "powerful pedagogical strategy that encourages students to make meaningful connections between content in the classroom and real-life experiences and that strives to increase students' levels of civic responsibility and concern for social justice" (McHugh & Tinto, 1997). Benefits include having a positive impact on retention, student success, and the enhancement of personal and civic development during and beyond post-secondary education, as well as promoting critical reflection skills (Bringle, Hatcher, & Muthiah, 2010; Butin, 2007; Eyler & Giles, 1994). Institutions use service-learning as a vehicle to connect with community partners in meaningful ways that "engage student and faculty in activities that contribute to the community's quality of life" (Bringle, Hatcher, & Muthiah, 2010, p. 5).

The theoretical underpinnings of service-learning offer an eclectic menu of pedagogical rationale that include the centrality of experiential learning, the powerful influences of social learning theory, as well as liberatory education practices that connect learning to social change (Chambers, 2009). These theories contribute to the making of meaning so essential to participant outcomes.

Promising practices combine to form a resource pool that can be sourced to connect intentions to need, and also provide reciprocal benefits to both participants and recipients (National Commission on Service Learning, 2002). Findings regarding related cautions merge both service and learning to guide implementation that ensures resources, expectations, and roles align to benefit all stakeholders (Tower & Broadbent, 2011).

Essential Theories

While traditional lecture style teaching reaches students cognitively, service-learning pedagogy "appears to provide a pedagogical framework capable of maximizing the learning process and promoting civic engagement and democratic collaboration in college classrooms by connecting the campus to the community within the context of specific curriculum" (Fiume, 2009, p. 78).

Britt (2012) and Chambers (2009) articulated frameworks for interpreting service-learning pedagogy to highlight essential constructs. Britt (2012) suggests three typologies to aid with "a broader operational definition of service-learning pedagogy that acknowledges multiple approaches to linking service and learning" (p. 85). Similarly, Chambers (2009) provides a "conceptual framework of service-learning approaches that can guide the construction, development, and assessment of service-learning initiatives in Canadian post-secondary education" (p. 78). Commonalities regarding experiential, social learning and liberatory education emerge as these authors summarize historical contributions to pedagogical constructs that form the lens of service-learning pedagogy as a unique philosophy.

Experiential learning

Leading learning from the belief that knowledge is constructed rather than accumulated means being open to understanding how people actually make meaning from their experiences as perpetual learners. Experiential learning theory provides an underpinning for the development of service-learning as a distinct pedagogical framework. The personification of experience as a teacher is a foundational view influenced by Dewey (1938) who explained: "Experience as an important teacher because students could reflect on it, think critically about how knowledge and skills are used to address problems in the world, and apply the knowledge learned from such experience to new contexts" (p. 82). Education is not something that happens to you it is something you are a part of in every aspect of learning. The philosophical underpinnings of locating learners centrally in the process demands that leaders of learning strive to create naturally critical learning environments that support Dewey's assertion that "*how* students learn is inseparable from *what* they learn" (Chambers, 2009, p.80-81). This premise also connects to Kolb's belief that "concrete experiences form the basis of observation and reflection; in turn, these observations are used to develop one's ideas, including generalizations and theories, and from this development of ideas, new implications for actions can be discerned" (Chambers, 2009, p. 81). Service-learning facilitates a connection between process and the content of experience as it links to curriculum outcomes.

In service-learning the process expands the role of faculty as facilitators challenged to "think not only beyond the classroom in terms of the location of learning but also beyond the traditional idea of a student in a classroom to include other learners" (Moore & Ward, 2010, p. 49). Experiential learning involves practices that are grounded in the intention of transformation rather than transmission that is more often found in traditional teaching approaches (Howard, 1998). The experience itself in service-learning becomes a potentially transforming vehicle that contributes to efficacy. Britt (2012) referred to experience as the "practice of doing [that] becomes useful when students view themselves as being competent, see knowledge as relevant to real-world issues, and sense both a responsibility and an ability to act in the word" (pp. 83-84). The "skill-set practice and reflexivity" is embedded in service-learning that connects experience and theory with curricular outcomes (Britt, 2012, p. 82). "In traditional courses, academic learning is valued, whereas in academic service learning, academic learning is valued along with community-based experiential learning" (Howard, 1998, p. 24).

Social learning

The outcomes of service-learning that impact the development of students "as critical citizens simultaneously existing in and investigating relationships between people, values, and social issues in their communities" can be traced to social learning theory (Britt, 2012, p. 83). Service-learning theory prioritizes and encourages social responsibility via the teaching and learning process (Howard, 1998). From Bandura's belief that "people learn through observing others' behaviour and attitudes and the outcomes of those behaviours and attitudes" (Chambers, 2009, p.81) emerges a theoretical congruence with service-learning that promotes the development of personal characteristics through interactions with the collective. Palmer (2007) speaks to the strength in connection achieved through social learning theory: "The crucial, and often misunderstood, feature of relational knowing is that it turns our human capacity for connectedness into a strength" (p. 100). The relational aspects of learning are magnified through belonging to a group that is "governed by rules of observation and interpretation that help define us as a community by bringing focus and discipline to our discourse" (Palmer, 2007, p. 106). In creating what Howard (1998) refers to as *synergistic classrooms* the task is to "excite and motivate students to learn during the course and after . . . and to develop a set of overall values in the field of study" (pp. 27-28). Service-learning structures the relational aspects of learning as a place where "human behaviours are functions of the interaction between students' meaning-making processes and action choices, academic information, and human and environmental forces in the community in which they are engaged" (Chambers, 2009, pp. 81-82). Britt (2012) also connects service-learning to social learning theory suggesting,

> Learning then, is a social activity, an exploration into how knowledge contributes to the strengths of democracy...developing students as citizens in relation to others in their communities. This approach positions service as a way to consider values and commitments not in the abstract but in real interactions in communities and in focused reflection on the negotiation of self, society, and values. (p. 84)

The norm in the establishment of connection through community becomes "not a narrow band of intimate encounters but a wide range of relations among strangers" (Palmer, 2007, p. 94).

Liberatory education

The contribution of liberatory educational theory views the learner as an active agent of change. The creation of social consciousness that fuels a questioning of stereotypical views as well as an awareness of inequity and oppression is a predominant goal of this theory (Britt, 2012; Chambers, 2009). Fiume's (2009) notion that "democracy is a dynamic *lived* reality, not a passive abstract academic exercise" (p.76) illustrates how liberatory educational theory brings service-learning alive as a dynamic process that creates change and has the potential to be a powerful transformative vehicle to transport learning and learners alike. "Students are encouraged to see themselves as potential change agents who, supported by a critical pedagogical structure, begin to uncover systemic causes and pressures that lead to disparities in resources, rights, and dignity" (Britt, 2012, p. 85). Igniting the insights of learners to recognize and engage in discourse informed by critical consciousness is an introspective process that acknowledges privilege and social location. Chambers (2009) links this growth to an increased awareness of inequity,

> as individuals learn about themselves and understand their strengths and limitations, they are better able to recognize and understand the political, economic, and social conditions that impact their lives and the lives of community members. (p. 84)

Students involved in service-learning are more likely to attribute social issues to structural macro rather than personal micro factors (Hollis, 2002). Liberatory underpinnings ensure that service learning contributes to an understanding of social justice as it is used to address the "root cause of the needy situation rather than exclusively addressing symptoms of need in which service is reduced to stop-gap measures that only temporarily alleviate the need of those oppressed" (Maybach, 1996, p.

234). The theoretical foundations of liberatory education move service-learning closer towards Freire's (1970) vision of *true generosity*:

> True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the "rejects of life," to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands - whether of individuals or entire peoples - need to be extended less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working transform the world. (p. 27)

Liberatory theory influences the motivation of service-learning initiatives to be driven by a genuine intention to create awareness within the individual and the collective regarding oppression and the effects of marginalization.

Promising Actions

Increased interest in service-learning is often a means to engage students in active citizenship as well as serving to involve academic institutions in agendas of social action (Howard, 1998). Good intentions often fuel the initiation of service learning but, while it is not hard to conceptualize many possibilities for service-learning, the greater challenge becomes considering the actions that are needed to achieve positive outcomes. Service-learning that is effective has common elements of design, implementation, and evaluation that integrate service and learning (Rosing, Reed, Ferrari, & Bothne 2010).

Rosing et al. (2010) identify the complexity of such foundational considerations in a 3 year study analyzing over 2,000 student evaluations in their summarization that "service learning requires enormous logistical support to plan assignments that not only meet the leaning objectives of specific curriculum, but that arrive from and serve the interests of community agency partners"(p. 472). Their study also identified key procedures including ensuring meaningful contributions, promoting interactions that are substantive in nature between participants and recipients, providing well thought out preparation of students for service-learning and aiding in accessibility of experiences for students with multiple responsibilities (Rosing et al., 2019). Weigert (1998) identifies six principles essential to the design of models of service learning: (1) students make a contribution through service learning that is meaningful; (2) provision of service is designed to meet a goal; (3) need is primarily defined by the community through a collaborative process between faculty and community served; (4) course objectives provide the flow for service provided by students; (5) assignments requiring reflection on the service provided in light of course outcomes; (6) assignments are evaluated with the learning, not the service, in mind. The incorporation of service learning into curriculum is not an afterthought but the result of a focused and intentional approach to help students gain better understanding of course content and application (Hollis, 2002). Models for consideration, the role of reflection, and reciprocity in partnerships will be presented as the framework for promising actions.

Service learning models

Three models of service-learning approaches are presented. The logistics of service-learning are presented in the same eclectic manner as the diverse scope and application that exists within this pedagogy. Models such as Bringle & Hatcher's (1996) Comprehensive Action Plan for Service Learning (CAPSL), Chambers' (2009) dimensions of service-learning that serve as universal comparisons across various "touch points" (p. 85) on philosophical approaches, and Hollis' (2002) service-learning model that specifically builds on the key elements from Weigert's (1998) recommendations are explored in this section.

Bringle and Hatcher's (1996) CAPSL model "identifies four constituencies on which a program for service learning (for example, an office of service learning) needs to focus its principle activities: institution, faculty, students, and community... these four constituencies must be included for the initial efforts to be successful" (p. 224). The authors present ten actions to serve as a guide to

each area being considered. Planning, awareness, prototype, resources, expansion, recognition, monitoring, evaluation, research, and institutionalization make up "a sequence for strategic planning by prioritizing activities and providing a basis for monitoring progress" (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, p. 224). These activities provide the structure to order tasks for each constituency considered but do not infer rigid adherence over the need to respond to uniqueness's of critical stakeholders: "It is not assumed that progress across the constituencies goes at the same pace. Programmatic development will typically occur unevenly in a mix of small increments and a few big jumps" (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, p. 24). Instead, those designing and implementing service learning are encouraged to choose relevant areas for application of the model and key elements.

A study to investigate the institutionalization of service learning in higher education placed planning and awareness variables as the highest influential actions (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). Deliberate institutional planning along with an effective infrastructure to support service learning aids in the embedding service-learning into the active mandates of post-secondary education (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). This becomes a key action for the design process.

The second model of service-learning includes a multi-level conceptual framework and "faculty who teach service-learning courses can use the continuum of approaches as a guidelines for determining if and how their course objectives and pedagogy align with each approach's assumptions and dimensions" (Chambers, 2009, p. 92). For Chambers learning is "influenced greatly by the construction of the course, the learning expectations, the quality of teaching, and the faculty member's general beliefs about the intent of particular service-learning efforts" (p. 92). This less prescriptive approach allows stakeholders the room to consider such things as power relations, service learning participant preparation, the primary target of analysis, assumptions about learning, community, and change, as well as intended outcomes in service-learning design (Chambers, 2009). Tailoring components to fit the unique needs of all participants is a foundational practice that informs the design and implementation of the service-learning experience.

The third model builds upon "the lack of consensus regarding service learning . . . combined with a relative paucity of evidence that might show what actually works and does not work between different service-learning models" (Hollis, 2002, p. 200). The model has ten components which include: (1) implemented preliminary planning and goal setting in collaboration with a community organization; (2) involved student in formal orientation and review of the community organizations mandates and structures; (3) took into account student interests in designing the service work; (4) engaged students in meaningful work assignments; (5) included readings directly related to conditions of service work; (6) utilized critical reflective journals to articulate learning; (7) embedded in class discussions and reflection on service learning as it related to subject matter; (8) employed reflective evaluative tools and techniques to promote synthesis and identification of observations and experiences as they related to growth; (9) included evaluation that captured feedback from all stakeholders (students, faculty, and community agency) (Hollis, 2002). The study utilized a quasi-experimental design to compare students involved in a structured service-learning experience with those who involved in an unstructured model. Analysis of observations and reflections found that student participants in structured service learning were more likely to "better distinguish between social issues and personal troubles and to understand the structural correlates of poverty and inequality" (p. 211), demonstrated higher mastery of academic concepts on a comprehensive final exam, and had reduced tendencies to employ victim blaming explanations for poverty (Hollis, 2002). Providing structure to the service-learning experience along with intentional integration of focus discourse, reading, and reflective evaluation strengthens outcomes.

The role of reflection.

Reflection is a key component in service-learning that contributes to essential linkages between practice and theory (Ryan, 2012). Dewey's (1938) pivotal contributions to theories of learning are relevant to the role of reflection in service-learning in that learning to think well is achieved through the acquisition of the practice of reflecting. Dewey ascertained, "experience becomes

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educational only when critical reflection in relation to experience leads to new meaning that enables people to take informed action"(Fiume, 2009, p. 85). The use of critical reflection is especially useful where the need for integration of knowledge, skill, and application is essential (Ryan, 2012). Reflection must be well designed and embedded into the service-learning experience. Promising practice regarding reflection in service-learning avoids reflection on demand that is preoccupied with checklists and instead employs well thought out exercises to connect experience to learning outcomes. Reflection serves as a tool to help students make their own assessments, link concepts, and ponder their own interactions reflection serves as an essential practice (Ryan, 2012). "Journaling not only reinforces self-reflection, but also builds on curiosity hat students experience during their service learning experience...this does not preclude providing students an opportunity for more freeform writing about their experiences" (Woodside, et al., 2006, p. 20).

Pondering the echoes of experience is a key component in service-learning that sets it apart from community service. As Boud & Walker (1998) conclude, reflection requires purposeful design that allows learners to make their own meaning as it relates to relevant theoretical concepts; "without some direction reflection can become diffuse and disparate so that conclusions and outcomes may not emerge"(p. 193). Reflection that is devoid of learning emerges when there is a lack of "focus on conceptual frameworks, learning outcomes and implications"(p. 193) in which learners can become inward but uncritical in the analysis of the service-learning experience (Bound & Walker, 1998). Critical reflection is achieved when students begin to "make and question assumptions by asking for evidence to support their current thinking and challenge their once held assumptions" (Woodside et. al., 2006, p. 21).

Creating written reflective assignments to link learning is helpful but so too is the facilitation of focused classroom discussions that allows for ideas, observations and understandings as well as to allow for the articulation of the independent development of theories and connections rooted in the service-learning experience (Barber, 1992). Hollis (2002) found her research supported the use of in class discussion regarding community work as it "allowed students to share experiences and observations and to learn from each other. Students often had observed facets of the community that others had overlooked, and frequently they were empowering by sharing their knowledge and providing other students with valued insight" (p. 206). These discussions aided in linkages to more macro issues of social justice for Hollis' subjects as discussions often led to students sharing "mounting frustration over the seeming permanence of the social conditions in the community. This was a particularly important moment for some of the students in their understanding of how social problems persist due to apathy or oversight in the mainstream society" (Hollis, 2006, p. 207).

Reflection is a means of heightening emotional intelligence to seek to understand, monitor, regulate feelings, and use this knowledge to inform decisions and behaviours (Smith, 2005). It exposes the internal world of the writer and "provides a medium for developing empathy with oneself and others, for exploring the larger realm of the individual experience for problem causality and solution" (Smith, 2005, p. 86). Reflection serves as a place for intentional contemplation and "provides opportunities for students to mull over ideas, uncover inner secrets, and piece together life's unconnected threads" (Hubbs & Brand, 2005, p. 62). As Smith (2005) points out, the journal provides an outlet for students as they "consider on a deeper level their emerging self-perceptions and apply that knowledge to various areas of their lives" (p. 89) resulting in increased self understanding.

Along with enhanced skills and knowledge that emerge from the practice of critical reflection comes an inherent dilemma with trying to contain reflection to focus on learning concepts that the educator hopes to target. The nature of critical reflection creates a discourse that can "lead students to focus on personal distress, oppressive features of the learning environment, the programme of study, resources provided, assessment practices and so on" (Boud & Walker, 1998, p. 194). Critical reflection that is associated with service-learning pedagogy can invite challenges for those facilitating learning as students question and examine inequities from various perspectives. Howard (1998) offers an interpretation on the emergence of discomfort that accompanies new ways of teaching and knowing: "academic service learning is not for the meek...as a counternormative pedagogy, instructors who

accept this challenge can expect initial resistance from students, periodic self-doubt about their own teaching accomplishments"(p. 28). Classroom support that acknowledges the emotions that can be activated by critical reflection is most helpful to achieve positive service-learning outcomes. Classroom discussion and/or writing assist students to process cognitive and affective reactions. Cognitive dissonance, emotion, and experience can be supported through feedback and interaction to monitor growth, reactions, and learning (Slavkin, 2007). Recognizing that context is unique to all learners in terms of their own meaning making process is important in managing the impacts of critical reflections that may push boundaries of the service learning experience (Boud & Walker, 1998).

Reciprocity in partnerships

An essential value in service-learning is that the nature of partnerships is reciprocal. "Service-learning lends itself to equal opportunities...partnerships built on each other's strengths to address each other's needs" (Desmond & Stahl, 2001, p.12). This strength based approach provides the foundation for interpretation of promising actions that point to the knowledge that the best service learning is tailored to meet needs of participants and community (Slavkin, 2007). "Principles of good practice in service-learning and civic engagement recommend that community relationships be mutually-beneficial as a minimum standard" (Clayton et al., 2010, p. 18). In all phases of developing service-learning the priority needs to be the coordination of the partnership between the institution and the community in all phases to nurture reciprocity (Desmond & Stahl, 2001). The identification of community need must be defined by the community not the campus in order to be reciprocal and represents the distinct mutuality of this form of community engagement (Fiume, 2009). This requires that communication, commitment to outcomes, and responsibility for related and relevant tasks are shared among stakeholders in the partnership from faculty to agency personnel. Communication is valued along with the investment of necessary time to the evaluation of the partnership not just at the end of projects but through the process of engagement as well (Desmond and Stahl, 2001).

In order to be effective, the partnership must be rooted in mutual cooperation. "Service learning is a joint venture. Successful partnerships require much more than good intentions; they require true collaboration" (Desmond & Stahl, 2011 p. 13). The reciprocity of the service-learning partnership is best attained when there is an engrained commitment of belief in the investment of resources and structures that value collaboration. "Effective partnerships with community groups begin with a commitment in the institution's mission to work beyond the campus boundaries and require a host of interconnected structures, policies, and practices that need to be deeply embedded within the campus" (Butin, 2007, p. 35). Reciprocity ensures the valuing of goal achievement by each partner and is essential to effective partnerships (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002).

Relationships between stakeholders should nurture conditions that support the growth of everyone. The measurement of transformational characteristics of service-learning relationships using the Transformational Relationship Evaluation Scale (TRES) was conducted by Clayton et al. (2010). Information gathered from 20 faculty engaged with service-learning in their courses to measure indicators of transformational relationships in community partnerships positioned participants as co-generators of knowledge with a commitment to a "shared developmental journey"(Clayton et al., 2010, p. 15). Indeed, the experience of faculty indicated that they wished for more transformational outcomes as opposed to transactional benefits from service-learning exchanges (Clayton et al., 2010). Faculty shape and are shaped by their involvement in service-leaning in ways that have the potential to impact the reciprocity of such community engagement.

Related Cautions

The motivation behind Gemmel and Clayton's (2009) lengthy report entitled *A Comprehensive Framework for Community Service-learning in Canada* was to mitigate misconceptions that challenge the merit of service-learning:

> Community Service-Learning was perceived as more complicated, as more expensive, and as potentially challenging traditional models and definitions of knowledge and teaching. We needed to develop better ways to document the academic gains that students experience, and we needed to broaden the scope of our understanding of key outcomes beyond the academic arena. (p. 2)

Research on service-learning warns against lacking resources, unprepared students, unequal partnerships, wary faculty, absence of professionalism, as well as failing to solicit or evaluate student complaints (Clayton et al., 2011; Curwood et al., 2011; Desmond & Stahl, 2011). Butin (2007) suggests that engagement with communities has been mis-framed as an add-on initiative in many institutions when it should be viewed as "an overarching reform model that should be adopted by departments across the entire institution" (p. 35).

Resources

Partnerships can be both professionally and personally gratifying but research indicates that the momentum required for the planning, design, and steering of community partnerships can quickly become a full time job (Brown & Kinsella, 2006). Successful service-learning initiatives require genuine investment of resources at all levels of the organization and institution in order to become more than a well meaning exchange. "Community-university partnerships that move beyond the rhetoric of collaboration require universities to shift the university culture to (a) value community knowledge and share power with community stakeholders (b) value and support faculty and student time, labor, and the outputs of community -engaged scholarship" (Curwood et al., 2011, p. 24). Such investment requires a systemic effort to engage, value partnerships, but also to commit resources systemically throughout the institution. In fact, the designation of resources is seen as a key factor in successful service-learning initiatives. Butin's (2007) article on wariness regarding service-learning includes the concern that many institutions do not have needed resources designated to support what their mission statements say that they value regarding community engagement. Campus Compact, with a membership of over 1000 college and university presidents committed to promoting community engagement revealed that service-learning initiatives often reside "on the co-curricular side of an institution's administrative structure . . . operate on a minimal budget of less than $60,000 a year, with no dedicated full-time staff focused on linking service with academic work" (Butin, 2007, p. 34). Butin (2007) further spoke about the need for institutions to ingrain resources and recognized that service-learning endeavors "require a host of interconnected structures, policies, and practices that need to be deeply embedded within the campus" (p. 35). Curwood et al., (2011) explored the tension created due to inadequate funding during a long term partnership in a doctoral program which failed to secure funding ahead of time.

> No financial resources were allocated to the partnership by either the department or the University, and no external grants had been sought prior to partnership development . . . therefore, the team had to struggle with issues including compensation for research participants and funding for interview and focus group transcription. (Curwood et al., 2011, p. 20)

Butin's related discourse addresses a trend that can lead to media friendly projects that are marketable but lack in sustainability due to the "reliance on *soft money* from external grants to support community engagement projects, which lead to highly publicized but short-lived initiatives" (Butin, 2007, p.35).

Preparation and readiness.

The lack of designated resources in institution and community partnerships places great importance on the need for preparation and readiness surrounding all phases of service-learning design. "Planning in the early stages of the partnership by both university and community leaders is essential and should include potential successors and means of support" (Brown & Kinsella, 2006, p. 71). Consistently, the investment of preparatory activities as they relate to all aspects of service-learning collaborations is paramount to positive outcomes. Guidelines for readiness largely focus on the community and this can lead to faulty assumptions regarding integral aspects of preparedness for

service-learning endeavors such as "faculty buy-in, commitment of institutional systems including departmental as well as high level administration...deliverables to the community, common visions and values" (Curwood et al., 2011, p 19). The development of questions that institutions ask themselves to evaluate their collaboration readiness address features that are contextual, between group, and within group factors to ensure that needs and dynamics are anticipated (Curwood et al., 2001). Conversely the work of Gemmel & Clayton (2009) examining community service learning in Canadian post-secondary institutions revealed "relationships were often structured unilaterally between specific organizations and courses or departments, and the institutions did not seem to be engaged with groups or processes to look at community needs, questions, or concerns more broadly" (p.4). This challenge exists in the framework of many post-secondary settings due to a lack of recognition regarding the need to investment resources at all organizational levels.

Students also react to experiences in service learning when they are not adequately equipped, supported, or mentored. Brown & Kinsella (2006) in their comparison of two university/community partnerships in human services studied challenges for students such as managing community dynamics, responding to client needs, and reacting to held views that could be stereotypical. Challenges exist in the diverse service-learning experiences and how individuals react and manage. "Students need skills to appropriately manage the conflict that erupts...preparing students for what to expect from their service learning internship work is difficult. Some students experience discomfort with the day-to-day problem solving required when charting unfamiliar territory" (Brown & Kinsella, 2006, p. 71). Hollis (2004) used comparative case studies to examine the concern that service-learning "may actually reinforce the tendency to blame victims of social problems for their own conditions" (p. 575). Outcomes point to structured learning approaches as being most impactful at aiding students in examining the structural elements of social issues instead of victim blaming (Hollis, 2004). Structured learning consisted of adequate orientation and preparation and leads to greater understanding.

Cautions that relate to service-learning focus on the need to be aware of and responsive to student complaints. Rosing et al. (2010) analyzed the qualitative responses of student evaluations on service learning experiences across a 3 year period. Patterns of critical feedback from over 2000 student evaluations were directed most frequently to concerns about the community site, the range of choices over sites, and time and scheduling. "Students frequently desired more structure to their learning placement process, site orientation, and task supervision in order to feel more comfortable and productive" (Rosing et al., 2010, p. 475). Orientation, planning, training, supervision, and evaluation are key concepts for successful service-learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). Rosing et al., (2010) found that students also needed support during their experiences to feel that the agency was ready to host and supervise, connect the value of their service when completing menial tasks, and requested more information about the specific community and organization they would be engaged with. Service-learning experiences can be very profound but also very disappointing and burdensome for students if they lack adequate design (Rosing et al., 2010). Feeling as though time is wasted, or being frustrated by apparent lack of readiness or receptiveness can exacerbate these concerns. Service-learning is best seen as an interdependent relationship between all participants rather than an additional learning experience that is overlaid onto existing curriculum (Hollis, 2004). Service learning that considers the additional roles that students fill, adapts to draw on their skills and knowledge, and honors their existing experience (especially for non-traditional aged students) is more impactful for student participants (Rosing et al., 2010). Additionally, "a lack of professionalism and preparation can seriously harm the image of and partnership with the organization" (Desmond & Stahl, 2011, p. 10).

Faculty roles

Service-learning is often initiated by faculty who value the transformative potential of such types of community engagement. There are a number of challenges that are noted regarding faculty roles from the perspective of administrators as well as faculty themselves (Butin, 2007; Carrecelas-Juncai, Bossalier, & Yaoyeneyoung, 2009). Senior administration concerns focus on the perception of faculty resistance to pedagogical philosophies, curriculum design, and the appropriate adherence to

key aspects of successful service-learning. Faculty concerns revolve around acknowledgement, support, and validation of service-learning involvement and investment (Butin, 2007; Carrecelas-Juncai, Bossalier, & Yaoyeneyoung, 2009).

Engstrom & Tinto (1997) examined service-learning partnerships and two critical factors for successful service-learning were cited as "support and validation from senior administration, and recognition of the jurisdiction, knowledge, and skills of faculty and student affairs professionals" (p. 12). Challenges regarding faculty roles included "dealing with diverse purposes and philosophies of service learning on a campus, integrating service learning into the body of the course, and addressing resistance from faculty about the need for reflection" (Engstrom & Tinto, 1997, p. 13). Giles & Eyler (1998) forecasted these challenges in their article that gathered questions for a service-learning research agenda that was to serve 5 years. Almost 15 years later, the research on faculty cautions remains focused on the practical difficulties related to implementation, issues of educational reform and where responsibilities lie for the provision of support and funding, as well as structural realities surrounding the challenges of linking service-learning to scholarly work that will be honored (Butin, 2007; Carriacelas-Juncai et al., 2009). Institutions that provide for the development of faculty regarding their knowledge and skill surrounding service-learning are more effective in achieving service learning outcomes. However, "educational institutions rarely acknowledge the importance of the faculty role in supporting the student community engagement initiatives or the importance of faculty functioning as role models through their own civic engagement activities (Fiume, 2009, p. 82).

Brown & Kinsella (2006) caution however that "faculty having an interest in such work should explore the commitment by the university and greater community to sustain such a partnership prior to its development" (p. 71). Butin (2007) emphasizes the need for training, investment and clarity regarding faculty expectations surrounding the myriad of service-learning practices to ensure that they are relevant: "community engagement has immense potential to improve that situation, but today's faculty are not trained, prepared or rewarded for linking their courses to their communities; grounding their research in real-life community dilemmas; or disseminating their research to non-academic audiences" (p. 37). Working towards transformative learning and working as an effective educator means recognizing that "service-learning and the scholarship of teaching share the same aims"(Carriacelas-Juncai et al., 2009, p. 31).

Faculty themselves are wary of taking on such massive responsibilities due to the demand on their time and the lack of recognition regarding the time that community engagement takes to infuse into curricular activities and outcomes (Brown & Kinsella, 2006). Changing the paradigm of classroom engagement philosophy impacts all involved. Engstrom & Tinto (1997) recognize the learning curve that may leave some involved with service learning uncomfortable as "faculty introducing service-learning for the first time are really co-learners with their students"(p. 14). Their insights acknowledge the potentially exposed feelings of faculty when they implement the territory of such pedagogy whereby "encouraging students to construct rather than receive knowledge from their instructor typically are invitations for faculty to enter a foreign territory leaving them feel uneasy and vulnerable" (Engstrom & Tinto, 1997, p. 14). Butin (2007) speaks to the vulnerability that can be evoked for faculty in his analysis of service learning:

> Community engagement, in short, forces faculty members to confront the limits of their identity...they must move from the classroom, a controlled environment where they are the experts, to a s messy chaotic word in which they are not the only source of knowledge ...face the fact that there lectures do not speak to the situation that students encounter in their community organizations. (p.35)

This sense of exposure can create a cautiousness regarding future roles in institutions where service-learning is avoided by tenured faculty and left for newer educators who receive less recognition for their efforts. The activities of publishing are at times given more credence in educational institutions rather than service learning which requires great investment of time and energy but may be less recognized (Butin2007).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Herein we have worked to interlace service-learning pedagogy, with promising actions, and related cautions with the hope of synthesizing related literature and findings to provide an understanding that is both current and accessible. "The current field of service-learning represents the confluence of several streams of pedagogical and institutional approaches to increasing student and community capacity and strengthening connections between universities and communities" (Britt, 2012, p. 82). The need for intentional planning, design, and implementation is consistency reinforced in literature and research on most aspects of service-learning. The central place of reflection, not just as a learning tool but a key element for transporting reaction, discourse, and transformative realizations that are born in the activities of service-learning is important to acknowledge. Similarly, the recognition service-learning as a viable and rich pedagogy that holds as much wisdom for the future when it is employed successfully as it does when does not capture what was hoped for is equally essential for future development. Approaching, infusing, or creating new initiatives for the use of service-learning in education must be grounded by an understanding of theoretical frameworks, promising actions, and related cautions.

Planning emerges as an activity from which to begin when engaging in service-learning that has positive effects on students, agencies, community, and educational institutions (Britt 2012). The time is right for investing in service-learning as a viable pedagogy that achieves many outcomes through one experience. Despite the incorporation of words that appear to favor community service-learning in mission statements, little is often done to ensure that those words convert into sustainable and meaningful initiatives that engage all parties genuinely (Fitzgerald, 2012). The far reaching impacts on community, institution, students, and faculty are apparent in the literature. The barrier appears to be the actual investment of resources needed to ensure the embedding of service-learning in post-secondary institutions. Planning includes the macro issues of institutions and requires that they consider the strategic implications, the climate and values of students and faculty that forms the culture of the institution, and the resources and obstacles for embracing such a mandate (Bringle &Hatcher, 2000). Further study on whether the barrier for this action lies in strategic plans, funding, or the authenticity of valuing time and resources on multiple organizational levels to truly engage with community in a responsible and reciprocal manner is required.

The long standing benefits of service learning for students include increasing belief in their ability to make a difference, heightened engagement and becoming "less likely to blame social service clients for their misfortunes and more likely to stress a need for more equal opportunity" (Giles & Eyler, 1991). In order for these and other benefits to be preserved in service-learning it is essential to recognize that faculty are often at the front-lines of implementation and will require acknowledgement and support in this role. "The classroom instructor cannot just lecture about the value of multiple ways of knowing, he/she must take a genuine interest in, and explicitly acknowledge the basic worth of everyone in the room" (Fiume, 2009, p. 91). Facilitating the learning of others from this perspective will require more training and support for faculty to understand and appreciate fully the impactful nature of this pedagogy. The motivation to implement service-learning is connected to scholarship and those connections need to be better understood and promoted;

When faculty decide to integrate a service-learning component in the classroom, they   seek transformation and greater understanding in their students; yet, there is a lack of information in the published literature about how this very process also transforms and increases understanding within the faculty using the pedagogy, ultimately leading faculty toward the scholarship of teaching. (Cariacelas-juncai et al., 2009, p. 32)

Promoting educational frameworks that engage and connect education with community needs to be better grounded in an "ethic of doing, of acting on, of pushing forward that permeates the entire effort" (Fiume, 2009, p. 91). This leads to the consideration of how service learning impacts all participants including those who are receiving help as the recipients of the service. There is a role for

service-learning to work as a collaborative alternative to traditional models of teaching that fits naturally in disciplines that include community development and social justice. It is essential that we strive for experiences that are strengths based in all aspects "ultimately, the service ethic should focus praxis that embraces mutual empower of people in the process of addressing the root causes of need" (Maybach, 1996, p. 231).

Finally, the need for service-learning to become a pedagogical approach that is valued in its own right is an overriding recommendation. "Service activities must be tied directly to one's special field of knowledge and relate to and flow out of this professional activity...serious demanding work requiring the rigor and accountability traditionally associated with research" (Boyer 1990 as cited in Fitzgerald, 2012, p. 102). There is a need to challenge educational institutions to engage in the talk of service-leaning pedagogy and implementation from a sincere perspective instead of being included in mission statements and strategic plans without being fully developed nor sustained. Often such declarations serve to create the illusion of community engagement but remain relatively unappreciated nor attended to. Conversely, post-secondary institutions need to set the pace for such innovative strategies and approaches to community engagement that can be seen to run through relationships, structures, and policies.

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