Mar 27th, 4:00 PM - 4:45 PM

Service-Learning and the Attainment of Course Objectives: A Study in two Disciplines

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SERVICE-LEARNING AND THE ATTAINMENT OF COURSE OBJECTIVES: A STUDY IN TWO DISCIPLINES

Dr. Nancy McBride Arrington
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&

Dr. Adrienne L Cohen
Assistant Professor of Sociology
acohen@georgiasouthern.edu
And the audience says...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Poor</td>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Above Average</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Your level of understanding of SL
2. Your level of implementation of SL
3. Your affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Higher Ed</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is your definition of service-learning?

• Service-learning is a course-base, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995).
“Service and learning components of course should enrich each other” (Furco 1996).

PARC
- (a) Preparation
- (b) Action
- (c) Reflection
- (d) Celebration (Anderson, 2008).
Service-learning in teacher education can strengthen the entire community of learners by promoting mutually rewarding learning relationships among teacher educators, education students, and the children they serve. Mutual learning occurs in mentoring projects when teacher and learner interact in ways that prompt new insights and growth” (Swick, 2000, p. 261).
“Students provide meaningful service to the community, by engaging in direct contact with members of the populations they are studying while integrating course content with real-world experience” (Brown and Roodin, 2001, p.89).
Three major directions of contemporary SL in universities

- Enhancing academic learning
- Promoting leadership
- Civic Engagement (Ehrlich, 2005)
HOW I GOT INVOLVED IN SoTL

– SoTL Faculty Learning Community
– Mutual interest in Service Learning

Dr. Nancy Arrington
COE

Course Objectives

Dr. Adrienne Cohen
CLASS

GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
Two Projects with One Focus

• P-5 Curriculum Methods Course in COE
• Aging Course in CLASS (Sociology)
“Will students who participate in a service-learning project of the course be able to apply their experiences to course content and achievement of the course objectives?”
Joint Methods

- IRB application
- Pre/Post Evaluation
- Service Learning
- Reflective journals
- Student reflections on the attainment of course objectives
P-5 Curriculum Methods Course

- Early Childhood Education (ECED)
- Junior level
- Class meetings: 15 weeks; Two 75-minute meetings
- Field experience requirement: 10 weeks for 2 hours
- Assigned Pre-K to 5th Grade classrooms (60-mi. radius)
Introduction to Service-learning

- College Professor—former practitioner with service-learning experience
- Service-Learning Student Facilitator—former P-5 student; successful service-learning project
Making a choice…

Service-learning (SL) option
  • 20-30 minutes minimum of each 2-hour visit devoted to the SL project

VS

Traditional field experience (2 hours)
  • Clinical Supervisor (CS) prescribed activities/observations
METHODOLOGY

Mixed Methods

25 Juniors

- 23 traditional age females (20-22 yrs. old)
- 1 non-traditional age female (33-yr-old mother of 2)
- 1 traditional age male (21 yrs. Old)

8 students chose the Service-learning option (SL)
(6 traditional age females, 1 non-traditional age female, 1 male)

17 students chose the traditional field experience (NSL)(all traditional age females)
QUANTITATIVE

• Analysis of the Pre-Post Assessment (30-item multiple choice test)
• Analysis of final grades
• Analysis of the beginning-, mid-, and end-point rating scales

QUALITATIVE

• Analysis and coded themes in written narrative descriptions in beginning-, mid-, and end-point reflections
Rating Scale – Part I

What is your basic understanding of each of the following course objectives at this point?
Rating Scale – Part II

To what extent do you agree that this experience is *contributing* to your understanding of each of the course objectives?
COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Defining curriculum, and its organization/structure (Curriculum);
2. Describing components of the learning environment (Learning Environment);
1. Identifying and selecting Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP);
2. Planning to include goals, objectives, activities and assessment (Planning);
3. Selecting appropriate resources to meet diversity (Diversity);
4. Identifying different classroom behavior management models, strategies, and Techniques (Behavior Management);
5. Identifying different curricular areas within the P-5 curriculum (Curricular Areas);
8. Describing the roles of collaboration, cooperation, and collegiality within the educational setting (Three C’s).
## RESULTS - Quantitative

### Means of Service-Learning Participants and Non-Service-Learning Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Pre-Test__/30 M (SD)</th>
<th>Post-Test__/30 M (SD)</th>
<th>Final Grade__/100 M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service-Learning</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15.38 (2.20)</td>
<td>23.38 (2.88)</td>
<td>95.89 (3.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Service-Learning</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.65 (2.62)</td>
<td>23.65 (2.50)</td>
<td>93.23 (5.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Results from an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) test indicate that one group did not outperform the other on the post-test with any degree of significance, $F (1, 22) = 1.62, p > .01.$
Understanding

SL

NSL

Series1
Series2
Series3

SLU-Curriculum
Learning Environment
DAP
Planning
Diversity
Beh. Management
Curr. Area
Three C's

NSLU-Curriculum
Learning Environment
DAP
Planning
Diversity
Beh. Management
Curr. Area
Three C's

Georgia Southern University
College of Education
Nervous
Excited

I would like to see previous work done by the student or even some tests. This would allow me to see what the students [sic] struggles with and I can adjust accordingly...."
“There are two different bulletin boards in their classroom used as a spot to display the student’s work. Neither one of these boards have any work displayed on them so my service learning project is to change this” (SL1).
Figure 1. The bar graph displayed in the cafeteria of (...) Elementary School. This graph shows our Clinical Supervisor’s zero participation in the pop tab campaign before our service-learning project (SL5 partnering with SL4).
• Bulletin Board. “A few of the students have been selected to put their essays into an essay contest. Those students could not have been happier knowing they have a chance to win a prize in the contest” (SL1).

• “He also felt comfortable enough with me on our last day together to read the entire book to me” (SL7).

• “A bonus I have gotten to see towards the end of my time with him is watching his AR scores improve” (SL7).
Although they are willing to supply pop tabs very eagerly, I feel the source of their motivation is the reward, not making a difference in someone’s life…(we) decided to add an additional activity to the service-learning project...the class will create ‘Get Well’ cards for a children’s hospital. This assignment will give students an opportunity to personally connect to the service-learning project” (SL1 and SL2).
**REFLECTIONS - NSL**

• “... Aside from running a few errands, I am given the privilege to assist these kids in completing their assignments....” (NSL9).

• “Some of the activities I have been involved in include pairing up with inclusion students and allowing them to read (their) AR book ...to me, assisting them during AR tests by reading aloud the questions ..., and pairing up with students to practice their “sight words” which are on flash cards” (NSL11).
• “During Morning work time, I walk around and mostly observe what the students are working on…..From time to time during morning work I help a student spell a word or get their thoughts down on paper” (NSL19).

• “…..Other than my observations, Mrs. C… was always very willing to give me any helpful information such as educational websites, samples of her classroom behavior management plan, classroom rules, and more” (NSL21).
# CONCLUSIONS

## Comparing the Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL</th>
<th>NSL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set goals</td>
<td>More variety of activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More focus on select activity</td>
<td>More observation opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richer experience</td>
<td>Focus on their own experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More critical reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the students’ success</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIMITATIONS

• Small Sample Size
• Lack of diversity in gender and age
• Construction of pre-post test
• As per course design, instructor does not attend the field experiences.
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue implementing SL in the course
- Provide more instruction/training in the theoretical basis/understanding of SL
- Establish SL partnership schools for future classes
“There is no better feeling than knowing you helped a child change for the better” (SL6).

“I would recommend for all Curriculum students to participate in a service-learning project in their field placement” (SL7).
Aging Course

Sociology course focusing on the physical, emotional, social and policy aspects of aging in society

5000 level course

Class meetings: 15 weeks; Three X per week

No field experience required but service learning was an option

The other option was to watch 4 feature films and do 2 interviews with an older adult

Service learning took place at the local public library

Students taught one-on-one computer lessons to elders
Objectives of the research:

• to determine the effect of a service learning component relative to the attainment of course objectives
• To determine if a service learning component should be removed, optional or required for my course
28 of 33 students in the class participated in the study:
- 21 women and 7 men
- 18 traditional age and 10 nontraditional age (23-54)
- Range of majors
  - 11 sociology, 7 psychology and the rest a mix of various majors

10 students chose the Service-learning option (SL)
  - 8 women and 2 men, 5 nontraditional age, 4 sociology majors

18 students chose the alternative assignments (NSL)
  - 13 women and 5 men, 5 nontraditional age, 7 sociology majors
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Learning</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>final grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>19.78</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Service Learning</td>
<td>16.37</td>
<td>18.94</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>89.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>16.335</td>
<td>19.36</td>
<td>3.025</td>
<td>91.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Journal Entry</td>
<td>To what extent do you agree that your service learning experience or feature film/interview assignment has contributed to your understanding of each of the course objectives?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is your basic understanding of each of the following course objectives at this point?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Service Learning</td>
<td>Alternative Assignment</td>
<td>Service Learning</td>
<td>Alternative Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the multidisciplinary nature of the field of gerontology</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the tremendous variability in aging</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how the experience of aging is defined by the life course</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how aging is shaped by social location (generational cohort, gender, race, social class)</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how aging both influences and is influenced by societal factors</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the differences between assumptions and realities of aging</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Analysis

- Entered all journals from all students into Nvivo
- Created a codebook of themes
- Both my student assistant and I coded the entries to allow for comparisons
Results – Qualitative

• Are there particular topics we have talked about in class or you have read in the textbook that relate to your service learning (alternative) experience?

• Overall more variation in thematic coding among students doing the alternative assignment relative to how their experience related to course content.
By participating in the service learning project this semester, I have learned several different things. One is that older adults function just like the rest of the population in terms of ability and knowledge. Of the three older adults that I worked with, one was very proficient in terms of her computer literacy and she only needed help with more complex operations. Another was only moderately proficient and could accomplish most basic tasks. The last older adult I worked with very computer illiterate and never seemed to be able to grasp even the most basic of tasks. All of these experiences helped me to better understand how to interact with older adults and that not all older adults suffer from diminished mental capabilities as they age.
“My time doing service learning has contributed to my learning about aging by seeing the different ways in which we age. The lady I am teaching is 89 while the man I am teaching is in his 60’s-early 70’s. It is amazing to see the difference between the two and their computer knowledge. It is teaching me that much like we do not age the same, we do not have the same life experiences that teach us the same skills.”
Implications

- Sample size on all quantitative assessments were too small for any real results
  - 28 students (10 service learning and 18 alternative)
- Journal entries indicate that students doing the alternative assignment received a more diverse learning experiences
- Additional research is required
Course Redesign

• Change course objectives to clarify them and include one that directly relates to service learning:

  Apply knowledge gained in their academic experiences to their service learning experiences and to apply knowledge gained in their service learning experiences to their academic experiences.

• Create a Service Learning requirement
• Require both the interview and group film assignments
• Allow for a range of service learning options
• Do a new SoTL study looking at differences in learning between students doing a various service learning options to see if there is a difference in their learning
• Implement an attitude questionnaire as the pre/post
• Collaborate with a colleague teaching families in late life to increase the sample size for the study
COMPARING THE TWO PROJECTS

COMMONALITIES

• Journal Reflections
• Ratings at various points to determine understanding and rate contributions to course objectives
• Goal: Attain Course Objectives
Commonalities (Cont.)

• Too few students in both courses to allow for statistically significant quantitative assessment
• Continuing to refine the implementation of service-learning into the courses
• Presenting and publishing results
DIFFERENCES

• Required vs. elective courses
• Student diversity
• SL sites
• Alteration of course objectives and course requirements
CHALLENGES

• Optional Assignment: Only 1/3 of students selected the option

• Premier SL course in both departments; no clear processes or requirements in place for adoption of SL

• Course Revision Process
CHALLENGES (Cont.)

• COE: This is the first course in the ECED program with field placement; difficulty identifying need; dependent on CS cooperation

• TIME:
  – COE: Limited time based on their prescribed field experience and academic schedule
  – SOC: All students were not able to do the full 10 hours of service
SUCCESSES

• Achievement of course objectives
• Three potential articles
• Integration of a service learning requirement
“Will students who participate in a service-learning project of the course be able to apply their experiences to course content and achievement of the course objectives?”
RESOURCES

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse
www.servicelearning.org
- Service-Learning Ideas and Curricular Examples (SLICE)
- Fact Sheets
- Toolkits

Learn and Serve America www.learnandserve.gov
- Grant Opportunities
- College and Universities
QUESTIONS
ENJOY THE REMAINDER OF THE CONFERENCE AND YOUR TIME IN SAVANNAH!