Faculty Experiences with Community Based Learning: A Different Perspective

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Definitions

- Action learning
- Experiential learning
- Service learning
- Community based learning (CBL)

Study Purposes

- Gain understanding of faculty perspectives and experiences of CBL
- Develop recommendations for improving CBL for faculty
Methods

- Purposive sampling (n= 7)
  - Diverse faculty & courses
  - History, rhetoric & composition, psychology, economics, international development
  - 5-18 students in class
  - 0-5 years of CBL experience
- Semi-structured interviews
- Digital audio-recording
- Manual transcription
- Thematic coding

Interview Questions

1. What kind of community-based learning have you been doing in your classes so far?
2. What motivated you to include CBL into your classes?
3. How did you prepare your students for the experience?
4. What went well with the CBL component?
5. What do you think could have gone better?
6. What kind of support did you get from the university or other locations?
7. How do you personally benefit from integrating CBL in your courses?
8. How has CBL affected you negatively?
Results. Motivations for CBL

- Bridging two personal interest areas
- Greater student engagement in course
- Authentic learning
- Greater critical thinking and deeper analysis of the concepts
- Greater student civic engagement and service for less fortunate
- Enhance communication skills
- Obvious applicability to course material

Results. Student Preparation

- Info about community (statistics, photos, slides, video, films, etc.)
- Discussion/paper on expectations and anxieties
- Brainstorming ideas
- Initial site visit

Results. Benefits & Gains

- Experiential understanding of course concepts
  - Internalization of learning
- Exposure to disadvantaged populations
- Ethical & moral development
- Pride over students’ behaviors & dev’p
- Student leadership & initiative
- Enhanced communication skills
- Enhanced critical thinking
Results. Benefits & Gains
- Better sense of community (with class, etc.)
- Student commitment to the community
- Greater meaning and personal service
- Learning from the experience & students

Results. Challenges
- Isolation in faculty’s department
- Students’ hesitation & negative attitudes
- Alternatives for students who do not do project
- Connecting project to course goals/reading
- Flexible planning and coping with unexpected
- How much structure, involvement needed
- Scheduling and time constraints

Results. Challenges
- Excessive time commitment & extra work
- Logistics, transportation
- Resources
- Language & cultural barriers with community
- Socio-political barriers
- Truly serving the community
- (Concerns about tenure & promotion)
- (Impact on social & personal life)
Results. What Helps & Could Help

- Technical support
  - Ideas and NGO contacts
  - (Development of syllabus, grading rubrics)
- Support from department
- Support from Gerhart Center & university
- Prior information on the community
- Stable contact person from community
- Greater University support

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