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Problems, Politics, and Possibilities of a Progressive Approach to Service Learning in a Community College: A Case Study

Kevin L. Burr
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Introduction

Change -- it is easy to determine when change is needed and even what needs to be changed; the problem is effective implementation. Cohen and Brawer (1989) said that community colleges still have not found a way to implement alternative learning methodologies.

It is reasonable to assume that in an institution dedicated since its inception to 'good teaching', new instructional forms will be tried. However, despite the spread of reproducible media, traditional methods of instruction still flourish. Visitors to a campus might be shown mathematics laboratories, the media production facilities, and computer-assisted instructional programs. But on the way to those installations, they will pass dozens of classrooms with instructors lecturing and conducting discussions just as they and their predecessors have been doing for decades. (p. 155)

Progressive Education

The concept of progressive education has reemerged into the post-secondary arena; however, the implementation of these principles remains inconsistent. John Dewey introduced many of the progressive education ideas of the twentieth century. Dewey's concepts developed as he studied and worked in his little laboratory school through the University of Chicago to see what experience in real life applications could do for children. He worked mostly with practical and applicable experiential learning situations, most notably gardening. His documented results were astonishing as demonstrated by the remarkable knowledge acquired by his participants. Even though each of them had learned differently than their peers, all had found effective learning applications (Lauderdale, 1981). Hence, John Dewey hit upon the first designated progressive learning environment. His research role earned him the title of the "Father of Progressive Education."

This philosophy was not entirely new, however. Dewey's thoughts were influenced by his background in philosophy and pedagogy as he studied the works of James, Pierce, and other noted pragmatists who seemed to support his beliefs on education. James (1904) indicated in his essay, "A World of Pure Experience," that experience is to be an ultimate reality, a process, and no point of view can ever be the last one. Also, early American philosophers such as William Penn and Benjamin Franklin professed attitudes toward a more progressive approach to learning. Licht (1992) stated that Benjamin Franklin championed a useful learning methodology and criticized traditional Latin grammar school education.

Featherstone (1991, p. xiii) speculated on the more current role of progressive education. He stated,

Intellectually, certain basic ideas and approaches linked to progressive education are already becoming fashionable in many university and foundation circles. One straw in a rising wind is the "Curriculum Congress," held in the fall of 1990 by the Educational Commission of the States and CHART, an ambitious collection of Rockefeller-supported curriculum projects. A variety of mainstream groups -- everyone prominent in curriculum development participated -- reviewed recent projects in the humanities. They issued a draft manifesto which included among other progressive-sounding statements the following. Higher education standards for all students, not just college bound; ... more heterogenous grouping of students and less ability tracking; ... more responsiveness to the diverse needs of an increasingly diverse student body; ... more active learning. This is news.

Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that learning occurs as part of the activity or experience in which it occurs. This concept contradicts the traditional thought with most classroom approaches where knowledge is acquired through abstract environments. Interaction with others and collaboration is important to the concept of progressive learning. This system of cognition can then develop a certain maturity in learners, building their respective confidence in learning, and taking them from novice to competency.

Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989, p. 34) explained,

To explore the idea that concepts are both situated and progressively developed through activity, should abandon any notion that they are abstract, self-contained entities. Instead, it may be more useful to consider conceptual knowledge as, in some ways, similar to a set of tools. Tools share several significant features with knowledge. They can only be fully understood through use, and using them entails both changing the user's view of the world and adopting the belief system of the culture in which they are used.

The analogy of tools as knowledge implies that anyone can obtain a tool but the effective use of that tool becomes another topic altogether. People may be able to talk the talk but can they walk the walk? The distinction between the traditional classroom settings where students learn through abstract environments represents what Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989) referred to as the mere acquisition of inert concepts and an active learning environment where learners develop useful and robust knowledge.

Today, for the most part, community college faculty who continue to train in the traditional sense for job entry are not taking advantage of progressive principles. Duckworth (1991) expresses concern that the current climate in community colleges is to oversimplify the curriculum and calls for a railing against that climate. She indicated that progressive concepts can take steps toward the alleviation of an oversimplified curriculum. While many of the principles thought to be radical in early progressive education have become conventional wisdom in contemporary educational thought, they are not always put in action.

The Progressive Concepts of Service Learning

Can the progressive principles of service learning provide an effective learning environment for higher education? Can service learning be more than just doing service -- but performing service also in order to learn?

Kahne and Westheimer (1996, p. 593) stated that service learning incorporates progressive education principles. They indicated that

Students in a service learning project might analyze and monitor the composition of nearby swamp lands or produce an oral history of their community. They might work with the homeless or initiate a cross-age tutoring project. In addition to helping those they serve, such service learning activities seek to promote students' self-esteem, to develop higher-order thinking skills, to make use of multiple abilities, and to provide authentic learning experiences -- all goals of current curriculum reform efforts.

Kinsley (1994, p. 41), the Executive Director of the Community Service Learning Center, stated that

Service learning is grounded in both common sense and in sound education theory; it goes all the way back to Aristotle. In our own century, John Dewey, and more recently, Ralph Tyler and Hilda Taba have reminded us that students who actually do things, who engage in activities related to school subjects, learn more efficiently, more effectively, and remember what they have learned much longer than students who don't.

For Dewey, it had to do with the fact that 'the mind is not individual but social, and that learning is a by-product of social activities.' For Tyler and Taba, the point was simply that 'learning occurs through the active behavior of the student. It is what (the student) learns, not what the teacher does.' Those principles have been borne out by study after study, and in the work of such widely respected -- and diverse educators as Jean Piaget, James Coleman, and David Kolb, to name a few.

Kinsley (1994, p. 41) further defined service learning as an "education process - not a program - that involves students in service experiences with two firm anchors. First, their service experience is directly related to academic subject matter, and second, it involves them in making positive contributions to individuals and community institutions."

Service learning methods help students to learn and develop through active participation. Service learning activities provide students with opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real life situations in their own communities and enhance and reinforce what is taught in the classroom. These opportunities help to foster and develop a sense of caring for others in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet actual community needs.

Also, optimum service learning activities should coordinate in collaboration with an institution of education and should provide structured time for the student to think, talk, and write about what they experienced during the service activity.

Service Learning as Learner Centered

Learning centered around the learner which fosters the identification of valued community needs is a primary progressive principle in service learning. Students involved in progressive education should be free to participate in decisions that affect them, to plan their own learning activities, and to be free in the performance of their work. Programs should be highly individualized and relations between students and teachers informal. A cooperative rather than a competitive atmosphere should prevail (Lauderdale, 1981).

Service Learning as Learning Outside of Classroom Walls

Aronstein and Olsen (1974, p. 37) said,

In order to provide a full educative experience for youth, we can no longer limit teaching/learning situations to the school. If we seek to develop values and attitudes for our (students) toward their life roles, their careers, and their perception of society, we must develop new avenues of approach. We feel that outside-of-school experiences are as important as in school experiences and that teachers must be willing to explore new pathways into the community through such approaches as the community service project. (p. 37)

One of the major progressive strengths of service learning is the possibility of gaining learning experiences which are not affiliated with the traditional classroom. Niemann (1996) indicated that traditional schools cover many of the important basics but play a relatively small role in the overall learning experience. A conventional education will not provide all the information necessary to carry one through a working lifetime.

The literature indicates that many students in fact learn cognitive skills more effectively when the subject is taught in the context of real world problems connected to career options and concrete experiences. Chickering (1977) indicated that learning must be tested in action in order for learners to realize its potential and gain its fullness. The progressive possibilities of gaining valuable real life experiences are inherent in service learning activities.

Service Learning and Collaboration

Klemm (1994, pp. 3-4) cited Johnson, Johnson, Stanne, and Garibaldi (1990) who described five basic elements true to collaborative learning which are integral parts of service learning. These five basic elements were: (a) a positive interdependence as students need to be linked to others who would ensure success, (b) a promotion of interaction with each other to learn, (c) an individual accountability for the group's work, (d) the social skills developed when placing people together as a team, and (e) the group evaluation process that will occur in a collaborative environment.

Introducing interacting partners into an educational system creates more realistic social contexts, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the learning at hand. Such an environment enhances the student's interests and provides a more natural learning habitat.

Collaborative learning includes a wide perspective of educational aspects which involves activities, goals, and processes. Klemm (1994, p. 2) believed that lifelong learning can be

enhanced as people collaboratively engage in learning activities. He stated that "Collaborative learning occurs when small groups of students help each other to learn."

Service Learning and Problem Solving

The inevitable occurrence of problem solving situations throughout service learning environments typifies a purely progressive educational approach to learning. Students are able to grasp concepts through the service learning experience by solving realistic problems and therefore gaining further understanding.

Stern, Stone, Hopkins, McMillion, and Crain (1994) indicated that what students learn in experience-based learning opportunities extends far beyond the understanding of a particular field of emphasis. They stated that a much more far-reaching benefit will be developed in students' competence, confidence, and potential in problem solving when in the context of an experiential atmosphere.

The Study

The challenge for this study, then, involved developing a clear understanding of the problems, politics, and possibilities of successfully implementing progressive service learning as an effective alternative learning methodology for community colleges.

The Project

This paper was based upon a qualitative case study which focused upon potential learning capabilities of community college students over an eight week period of time. The learning application incorporated progressive service learning techniques focusing on a real life problem. The learning environment did not assume traditional classroom aspects but focused upon a realistic environment. The architectural task, which was used as the impetus for the research study, was an actual architectural project developed to meet real needs and give service to a community. The instructor was a participant observer during the study and worked side by side with each of the student participants in the development of the project.

The research took place during the summer of 1996 from June through August. The student participants in this study consisted of architecture and construction students representing Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City, a two-year associate degree granting institution with a similar community college mission.

The ultimate possibility of this study was the opportunity for the students to perform a significant service to the community while at the same time gaining invaluable knowledge in the field of architecture. The project community did not have the economic resources to pursue adequate funding for architectural historic preservation and planning. Most of the previous efforts were facilitated primarily by private funding. The current city government did not have the means to hire professional consultation to study issues on historic preservation, continuity, and future development for the community. When the researcher approached the city officials about the possibility of doing the study, they were excited by OSU-OKC's offer to meet their

needs by this service learning project. The mayor stated that "It would be indeed a pleasure to work with OSU-OKC."

The students were to prepare an in-depth architectural study area and make recommendations on what the project city might do to enhance its historic downtown business area.

The Students

The names used for the students in this paper are fictitious. The names used will be: Brad, Jeff, Stan, Judy, Ann, Bill, Jim, and Don.

The group was culturally diverse. Of the eight student participants, one was African American, two had significant Native American heritage, one was a native of Brazil, and the other four were white Americans. However, there seemed to be no racially implied differences or references during the project. In fact, there was never mention of any racially related discourse that the researcher ever witnessed and no references of any kind in the student journals.

The group of students consisted of two females and six males. There were no recognizable gender differences noticed by the researcher as to how they associated and interacted with each other. The work environment was non-gender specific, and the students treated each other equally, gender not being an issue. The students were more interested in the personal strengths of each individual.

The group as a whole had a large range in age differences. Brad, Jeff, and Stan were all in their early twenties. Jeff and Stan, especially, seemed to be more immature and were often more interested in their social lives than the project. However, Brad, who was also in this age category, was very involved in the project. Judy was in her late-thirties and already a grandmother. Family concerns affected her attendance, but she was devoted to the project. Ann, who emerged as one of the leaders of the group, was in her early thirties. Bill, in his late-twenties, was involved in his job and other responsibilities and did not participate as intensively in the project. Jim was in his mid-forties. He had been involved in construction for more than 20 years and was very dedicated to the project. Don, who was in his mid-thirties, possessed little experience but displayed an intense desire to learn and contribute.

The Environment

In April 1996 the group of student participants met to decide how to approach the upcoming project. They all agreed that the best possible environment would involve relocating and setting up an office in the project community. The project city provided about 800 square feet of space in one of the historic buildings downtown for the student architectural group to use as a home base and also encouraged cooperation of local businesses. Arrangements were formalized with the city to begin the project on June 10, 1996.

The project community had a population base of about 25,000 residents. The city wanted to preserve and enhance its rich historical background.

Data Collection

The major source of data collection for the study was a project video recorded by a non-participant student observer. The student observer also kept a daily journal of her observations and perspectives which was used as another piece of data relevant to the study. The researcher acted as a total participant observer and maintained a personal journal of his observations and field notes. The student participants were required to keep their own daily observation journals. Their journals were collected and reviewed periodically and then permanently collected by the researcher at the end of the project to be used later in data interpretation.

One on one formal personal interviews were conducted by the researcher twice during the study, during the first week and also during the last week. These interviews were videotaped for later data interpretation. During the formal interview process the researcher asked predetermined questions on topics specific to the research.

At least every week, and sometimes more, focus group sessions were held to discuss the project and listen to the participants' observations and concerns. Focus groups were held in a relaxed atmosphere and evolved into sessions where students became comfortable enough with each other to discuss their new understandings and concerns. The timing for these sessions was never pre-set or established but were instigated dependant upon the need for discussion. Most of the time the researcher or one of the students would just say, "Let's get together. We need to talk." The focus group sessions were documented on video tape for future referencing and data collection.

During focus group discussions, the researcher was able to introduce issues from personal observations, personal interviews, and/or review of student journals. The focus group meetings provided discussion, brainstorming, understanding, and problem solving opportunities.

Many of the purer forms of data were acquired while the students were in their relaxed work environment and engaged in common conversation. The researcher was an integral part of that environment and considered as "one of the guys." Careful attention was paid to video this aspect of the project and capture all potentially important comments in the researcher's field notes.

This study relied upon triangulation to validate the data as it was collected. Denzin (1978) indicated that there are several effective methods for triangulation. This study used a convergence of these multiple data sources for triangulation.

Data Analysis

The massive amounts of video tape, including focus group discussions, formal and other interviews, and related activities were reviewed thoroughly and the important aspects were put into text form. The text portions gathered from the video segments were separated and categorized. A system of color coding and number associations were used to categorize the data. The researcher's, student observer's, and students' journals were photocopied, cut, and coded according to the same classification system. The major classifications for data review included progressive education, service learning, learning outside of the classroom, experiential learning,

active learning, lifelong learning, collaborative learning, and problem solving plus other subcategories derived from an extensive review of literature into the problems identified for this study.

Findings

Through the process of the progressive service learning project, a deeper understanding of the problems, politics, and possibilities for learning were obtained. The following sections describe those implications as they pertain to learning.

Service Learning: A Progressive Education Opportunity

This student project gave the city a professionally prepared list of recommendations on what it might do to enhance, preserve, and further develop the historic business community. These recommendations were gratefully accepted by the city government officials at a formal presentation on September 17, 1996 at a historic museum where a scale model built by the students to illustrate the recommendations was on display. The model had been on display for about six weeks in order for citizens and public officials to have the opportunity to preview the written recommendations which were displayed with the model. The model was housed in one of the preserved historic rooms on the second floor of an old library, now a museum. When the model was finished, it was eight feet wide and spanned a length of twenty feet. The model incorporated about five blocks of the old downtown district. At the finish of the presentation, the Mayor read to the student group City Resolution # 96-26 which honored OSU-OKC's efforts. The model was formally presented as a visual gift to the city that could be used to plan for their future development.

The significance of what the proposal meant to the project city was not fully realized by the students until this moment. Many of the students after the presentation had tears in their eyes. Brad stated that "This has been the greatest education experience of my life." Don wrote in his final entry of his personal journal. "I am grateful to have been able to participate in such a noble and interesting course." Jim in his final journal entry stated:

I would like to take this opportunity to express the gratitude for this experience that I have had in working on this project. I have thoroughly enjoyed myself and I think the knowledge that I have gained, the experience that I have gained, and the service I have given will be beneficial to me in the future, not only in business, but mostly in a personal sense of remembrance and delightfulness. I will truly miss seeing everyone every day or so. I seem to be at a loss for words so I will just say thank you. We truly did make history!

Off-Campus Realistic Environment

The service learning opportunity established a realistic working environment, simulating an architectural office which created a sense of real meaning for the project. Niemann (1996) indicated that traditional schools cover many of the important basics but play a relatively small role in the overall learning experience. Ann, in one of the first focus group sessions said, "Even though the commute is difficult, it is more important that we are here in order to experience the

project." Ann also stated that she "was excited about being here (at the project). It is such a good thing to be able to just go out the door and be at the project. Whenever I want to look at a building, take a picture, or get a measurement, I am already right here at the site." Don, in his daily journal, wrote this about the first day:

The first day of the (project) experience we gathered with the instructor and students and we shared a little about our backgrounds and I seen a room with great potential and dreams and I realized there's a lot I needed to learn and I welcome the challenge. It's a new world for me, as I listen attentively, my mind began to open up and learn from the other students.

Brad, in one of his journal entries, wrote the following about the beginning of the project; "We moved into our place. Very excited ... our accommodations are outstanding."

The researcher's journal entry written during this time also observed a change in attitudes as the students adapted from a traditional setting to the project location.

It is interesting to observe the excitement among the students as we set up our space here (at the project). Everyone seems to have a positive attitude and works together trying to get all of our furniture and equipment organized. There is a sense of anxiousness, excitement, and enthusiasm to get going on the project; this is different from the start of any traditional course that I have been involved with in the past. Sure, students for the most part, seem excited about starting a new class, but the feeling here is different. I think it is because this is real and has the potential of benefiting real people, including ourselves. There is something to being out of a classroom and into a community, involved in service learning, and engaging in true realistic learning activities.

Problem Solving: Part of the Service Learning Process

Challenges naturally presented in real life learning environments can provide an opportunity for the implementation of problem-solving techniques. In one of the first preliminary group focus sessions the question was brought up about what exactly should be included in the final presentation. A problem had arisen, and there emerged a need to solve it in order for the group to continue toward their goal. Further discussion suggested that the presentation should reflect the wants and needs of the community. The question was then raised about how to assess what the needs of the community might be and identify the valued concerns for the historical downtown business area. Judy was very interested in this aspect and suggested that a survey needed to be taken. She said, "In order for us to really get a good understanding of how this town clicks, how it thinks, and what it thinks is important, we need a survey. Then we can go on with our design." Brad, from the video footage, indicated, "It (the survey instrument) would be really important and our major tool for getting feedback from the community." Jim stated, "We really need two different surveys because we need to find out exactly what the business people affected by our proposal think and also what the general population of (the city) thinks." The question was raised on how to create a survey that would render the information necessary. Brad stated, "There must be a way to philosophically create a survey that would address our questions, but just how do you do it?" The researcher at that time conducted an impromptu mini-workshop on how to develop a survey instrument. From these suggestions, the students proceeded to develop two

different surveys, one for community members in general and another for the downtown business community. Brad was asked by the rest of the students to act as a facilitator for developing the two survey instruments. During the ensuing discussions, Judy stated that the group "had done a substantial amount of research to point out the historical values of the community."

Research was another component of the initial stages of the project that everyone had decided was particularly important. The student participants had spent a lot of time at the library, in the museums, and conducting interviews with the community members to find out any information that might be applicable to the project proposal. Judy said that the fact that "the National Historical Society had registered more than one hundred structures in (the city) indicated a certain amount of value for historical preservation of the architecture." The historical aspects of the community became a major value for the development of the survey.

Municipal officers had implied a hope for an increase in tourism to the city. Tourism and the possibilities of increased community revenues were also identified as a focus for the surveys. The surveys were developed, refined, scrutinized, and reformatted by the students until a satisfactory rendition evolved. Assignments directed by the students were then assumed, and the two surveys were administered. The students decided to divide up and went out either individually or as groups of two. Some of the students went from door to door in the downtown business area and asked the business community questions specified on the survey. The other group addressed the citizens of the community and asked them questions as they entered the grocery and Wal-Mart stores. This entire process was conceived, developed, and administered by the student participants as they became aware of the needs. By solving this problem, they were able to continue with an identified direction in the service learning project.

Don wrote in a journal entry the following about his interpretation of the experience of developing and implementing the survey:

We had a meeting and got questions together for the survey ... We went into the businesses and started short interviews with business owners. We went to about fifteen businesses. The response was really good. Listening to the people of (the city) you could see the interest the people had in this project and how some people had the same ideas in progress on how to improve the town and to bring back its history.

This example represents one of many opportunities that the students had which expanded their understanding of solving problems. Progressive service learning experiences naturally provide the learners with ample opportunities to grow by solving problems.

Service Learning through Experience

Aristotle said, "For all things we have to learn, before we can do them, we learn by doing them" (Denise, Harris, & Thomas, 1989, p. 3).

This progressive service learning project illustrated this principle as it became a real life lesson in architectural proportion as the students decided upon the actual area of the historic downtown district which would be incorporated into a scaled model.

From the western most part of the area which included the old Santa Fe Train Station to the eastern most part which took in the site of the old Bath House, long since torn down, represented a significant change in physical elevation. The students decided that in order for the model to be a true representation it would need to reflect these actual elevation grade changes. Surveying equipment was then brought out from the OSU-OKC campus. Students became involved in the experience of surveying to establish actual elevation grades in order to build the scale model. Comments by the students during this process were "I am glad to have this experience," "This is a great opportunity," and "Teach me more on how the survey topography plays a part of a project like this."

During the time spent in shooting elevations of the downtown area, there were continual questions asked about the significance of what was taking place and how it related to our project. Students asked if this process was typical of any similar project in architecture?

All of the students were given the opportunity to assist in all of the operations of shooting elevations. They all took turns in taking the survey notes including setting up where the shots were to be taken, running the rod, and taking the shots through the instrument.

The students all speculated what the difference in elevation would be from the lowest point to the highest in our survey. The estimates were anywhere from 13 to 20 feet of elevation difference. The researcher stated that he thought that it would be closer to 50 feet of elevation difference. The other students sort of laughed and said that they would be very surprised if it was that much. Brad said, "It doesn't look like it is that much rise in elevation." Jim followed and said, "I have been involved in construction for a long time, and I'll eat my hat if it's more than 20 feet." When the survey was completed they all went back to the office to calculate the closure and verify the differences in elevation for the area shot. After the group was shown how to calculate the elevation differences, it was determined that the closure was valid within three-hundredths of a foot. The researcher indicated that traditional acceptance of an elevation shoot is considered valid if within five-hundredths of a foot. The greatest difference in elevation of the area of concentration was then determined at +/- 46.00'. All of the involved students were surprised but readily accepted the survey results.

Jim stated, "This experience was one that connected many of the things I have seen in the construction business but had not yet understood." Stan said, "It was exciting to see how it all works and how they get information on the lay of the land." Brad indicated to the others that "This information can now be adapted to our model, and it will now be a true representation of the actual grades of our project. We can build the model to reflect this." Brad stated in his journal; "Shot elevations of downtown (city). Learned how to survey landscapes. Outstanding!"

Many other similar opportunities to learn through actual experiences occurred during the course of the study, some less significant some more, nonetheless, all were felt to be important. Chickering (1977, p. 18) said that, "When ideas are used as hypotheses and tested in action, their significance and the attention given to them are greater than when they are simply memorized or left as unexamined abstractions." The significant forces of the learning being accomplished in these service learning situations were a result of "hypotheses ... tested in action."

Service Learning Through Awareness

Freire (1971, p. 58) stated that true knowledge can result only from experientially based learning which permits the learner to make their way through the unknown, thus learning by becoming aware and identifying the need for further knowledge. He stated,

The teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the banking concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is men themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, men cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. (p. 58)

Service learning projects often provide greater opportunities for this kind of growth through awareness. One example of an evolution of understanding and knowledge through awareness during this project occurred when the students were discovering the most efficient and best way to construct the bases for the model. It was decided that on the first and second of five bases, the second representing the greatest difference of elevation change, that layers of 1/4 inch foam core board could be used and staggered back by layers to represent the elevation differences. Since the scale factor on the model was $1/8" = 1'-0"$, each layer of foam core would represent two feet of elevation difference in real life. Then to smooth out the stepping effect of layers of foam core board, applications of wall joint compound were used. By the time the second board was finished and moved out to a storage room, it was considerably heavy. Also, the students had noticed that a great deal of foam core board, which was expensive, had to be used to create the base. The students realized that the project budget was not going to allow for the purchase of additional foam core board. The students discovered that the bases were also very time consuming to create using this layering system. On the third base, Brad and Ann went about engineering a better alternative to build the remaining bases. They did this by constructing tapered supports, representing elevation differences, and laying two layers of foam core board on top of the tapered supports. This method proved to be much faster and far more conservative in the use of the expensive foam core board.

Another example of awareness learning occurred as the students were devising a routine in order to construct the miniature building replicas to be placed on the model. Many of the students had no previous experience with architectural model building; those who did were limited in their experience. As the students progressed with the building of the individual scaled replicas, they realized that their current method was not effective or efficient in time or materials. By using trial and error, the students experienced, conversed, pondered, and re-experienced to create a very expeditious and professional method of constructing the scaled model building replicas. The students used colored mat board for the facades on all of the buildings and then used various colored pencils to draw many of the decorative aspects onto the facades. In the beginning the students had been cutting every detail into the facades. However, they learned

through awareness and developed a scheme that was more time and material efficient and also looked very professional.

Service Learning Expands Through Collaboration

Stern, Stone, Hopkins, McMillion, and Crain (1994) stated that group and team activities in learning prepare students socially as well as academically. This study demonstrated that in a service learning environment teamwork can create constructive unity toward a collective goal. Brad emphasized the importance of collaboration and proper communication. He stated, "We should each meet for a minute with our group every week because we are all working in different areas. It is easy to miss something or leave something out, and since our time is so limited we cannot afford to make any mistakes."

Because every participant had unique qualities and experience to give to the service learning project along with their individual goals of achievement, everyone involved gained appreciation for each other and sought out the expertise and strengths from other participants. They emerged into a true collaborative format for operation. Every participant seemed to create a niche for themselves as to the areas in which they could competently give to the project. This created a cohesive group of important single entities working toward a common goal. The group was unique in its chemistry because of the diverse components. Many of the problems solved, experiences gained, and understanding acquired came from a collaborative effort.

Global Learning

Often when learners are engaged in real life learning activities similar to this project, they are able to visualize a broader perspective of career pursuits. The students learned about a wide variety of related architectural topics and could see the correlation between the topics. For an example, on a typical day on the project, any student could be seen gathering physical dimensions, inputting information into the CAD system, assessing design criteria, consulting with other students, building on the model, visiting with news media personnel, conducting research, meeting with city officials, administering a values survey, and participating in other learning activities. A common void in the traditional method of learning is the understanding of the connections between subjects taught in classes. Brad, in a personal interview stated that: "You could never get this kind of education from a class. I have been able to be involved in so many things during this project that it would be impossible to learn it on campus. I hope that I can have other opportunities like this."

Don, who was a new student to architecture wrote, in one of his journal entries, these thoughts reflecting upon one day's involvement on the project.

Jim, Brad, and me started to gather the measurements. We started down by the old Santa Fe train station. As we began to measure around the train station you begin to see the potential of this building. Then we worked our way to Oklahoma Avenue, measuring buildings, sidewalks, alleys, and driveways. We stop about 11:30 a.m. and charted the measurements and as I look at the model coming together, I could see the importance of the measurements. After lunch I was watching Judy work on the CAD system to draw the Santa Fe railroad building. It's so amazing

how technology has come. I continued drafting and drawing the Master Plan view with Jim. With the time we spent on the measurements I am learning how crucial surveying is. And to see the surveying measurements to the actual model is an amazing experience!

This project provided the students with the rich potential to gain knowledge that was global, that was a complete connected experience, differing from the knowledge obtained through a series of dependent traditional courses.

Identified Problems in the Study

Geographical distance barriers. One of the problems associated with the study was a physical issue. The project location was approximately twenty-five minutes driving time away from campus. Some of the students had problems commuting. The commute seemed to be awkward for students who had to travel up to forty minutes each way in order to attend. Ann indicated that "The commute was difficult but not impossible." Jim stated that "the commute was a little much, having to travel 25 miles each way."

It is possible that the physical distance could have deterred other students from participating. Some students may not have had the means of transportation to get to the site every day and, therefore, were not able to participate. Judy stated in a personal videotaped interview that "If Ann wasn't able to pick me up every day, I would not be able to come. I just don't have a car or the means to get here." In the researcher's personal journal an entry stated,

Several students contacted me who expressed a desire to participate in the project experience. They told me that they just did not have the transportation means to get to the project and back every day. I said that we could probably arrange a car pooling possibility for them. They left unsure that they would be able to participate.

Time and financial commitments. Another problem associated with the project was the time commitment necessary for the students and the lack of flexibility in the schedule. Students who participated on the project had to dedicate a good portion of time in its behalf because the class was held from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday with some students working on Friday and Saturday as well. Students had to sacrifice other work-related opportunities in order for them to effectively participate. Judy was a single mother whose teenage daughter had two children also living with her. She was constantly distracted from the project because of domestic problems. Three of the students had children at home and needed to make babysitting arrangements. The students were responsible for the cost of transportation, food while at the project, babysitting, some supplies, and other related costs.

Non-traditional students. These situations are similar to many problems associated with the non-traditional student. Non-traditional students, who often juggle school, a job, and a family have difficulty finding the resources to do projects out of the normal routine of traditional schooling. This seemed to be the case for this project also. Judy wrote in her first entry to her journal; "Missed entire first week due to having to go to court." In the researcher's personal journal, it was stated that "Stan and Bill have work related responsibilities and cannot participate as much as they would like to." Jim, in a journal entry, simply stated, "I wasn't able to be at the

project today because of work." Students' journals were often splattered with similar related comments.

Assessment dilemma. The issue of equitable assessment was a problem and concern. It was difficult to imagine using any traditional concept of assessment or measurement value to assess each of the student participants in order to give a fair grade analysis. The students addressed the assessment issue themselves. After grappling with the dilemma for several days, they agreed that the system for assessment should be shared by them and the instructor. This process required, however, almost entirely subjective evaluation from both the students as well as the instructor.

Another factor or problem associated with the assessment of this project and other similar projects would be the grade accountability necessary for an accredited institution of higher education. The grades assessed were evaluated from subjective analysis of the students and the instructor based upon perceived dedication and commitment to the project. One question arises, can subjective peer, employer, and instructor evaluations be fairly measured for accredited colleges and universities?

Gamson (1995) indicated that people involved in service learning are paying close attention on how faculty can evaluate learning from experiential activities and integrate them into the curriculum.

Politics Associated to the Study

Cooperative learning opportunity. The cooperative opportunity that OSU-OKC had during the study with the project city officials produced several positive political repercussions. Because OSU-OKC, a learning institution, had basically set up an on-site campus, it provided an opportunity to teach CAD applications to several of the city engineering staff. CAD systems had been moved to the project community to do the architectural study and arrangements were made for instruction in CAD applications utilizing the available systems. The city officials had invested in CAD applications nearly a year previous to this point and had not received any prior training. The City Planner stated:

We have had the software and CAD hardware for more than a year now and none of us have been able to learn how to use it. We have hired consultants to do various tasks that would aid our progress in city planning associated with CAD, but we could not access it. The opportunity that we now have to gain this training will be a significant boost for our department in utilizing the technical tools at our fingertips. This is a great step toward the future planning of (our city).

OSU-OKC was able to provide the needed training to the city officials while the project was in progress. The project helped establish positive community relations and provide business and industry training which are two important aspects of the community college mission.

Bureaucratic institutional politics. The time constraints instituted politically by a bureaucratic organization of higher education contributed several negative aspects to the project's potential. The fact that this project, which was deemed an OSU-OKC course for credit and was scheduled during a regular summer semester period, put limits on the study. It was important for

the students to struggle and grow and engage in problem solving through progression in learning as they gained awareness together, but the constraints of completing the project on time according to traditional education standards was an issue that could not be changed or altered.

Ideally, progressive education projects would have no real time constraints. However, architecture as a profession deals with deadlines and time commitments. Thus, as it is in real life, the ideal is not always possible.

Political struggles against the traditional model. Another negative aspect of the study related to the political nature of institutions of higher education that are unable to break from the traditional mold. The researcher in this study was also a full-time faculty member of OSU-OKC. It was difficult for him to be off-campus and somewhat neglect the various responsibilities that would normally be a part of the day to day life of an administrator or professor in a traditional institution of higher education.

Conclusions

Boyer (1994) indicated that higher education needs to reconsider its mission to be that of educating students for life as responsible citizens. Gregson (1995) stated that "To contribute to democracy, rather than hinder it, (educators) need to employ a pedagogy that is both concrete and transformative." This study illustrates a progressive service learning project where students gained concrete/transformative experiences that would direct them toward becoming better prepared members of society.

The positive effects of this service learning opportunity were substantial. The project city government officials were pleased with the recommendations and the students were exposed to the benefits of service learning. The resolution given to the OSU-OKC architectural group by the project city (1996) stated:

The (project city) officially thanks (OSU-OKC administration) upon promoting a good working relationship with the (project city) and their efforts and contribution to the historic district located within the (project city), and all of the students who participated in the research and completion of the project.

The literature stated that service learning is an educational process that is directed toward two purposes. The first purpose is to effectively expose students to learning activities directly related to a subject matter, and the second is to involve them in making positive contributions to individuals, communities, or institutions (Kinsley, 1994). Judy stated in her personal journal that:

One woman asked me while I was taking a survey how much we were being [paid] by the city to do this project. When I told her we were doing it only for our own experience and as a service to the city she wouldn't believe me! I assured her that it was the truth and she was so nice. She gave me an ice cream cone for free and said good luck and God bless!

Progressive Service Learning and the Community College

The students in this study struggled to gain further understanding of how to reach the final goal. The unknown prompted the students into further research and study which developed into greater knowledge and understanding. This became a spiraling sequence of progressive learning. This progressive learning methodology is not fully utilized in the traditional community college setting; however, it can be effectively implemented as this study indicated.

Typically, community colleges today are not structurally organized to accept the flexible learning methodologies incorporated in progressive service learning principles. Bureaucracies cannot adapt quickly enough and are not free enough to expand their learning realms to incorporate progressive methods of learning. In order for community colleges to effectively adopt the progressive service learning principles as practiced in this study, a radical departure from the traditional formal studies denounced by Dewey (Lauderdale, 1981) would be necessary. The departure would include getting away from a structured curriculum including pre-established courses and standard class meeting times. These changes would affect drastically the current way community colleges operate, their methods of teaching, the way that they are governed, the way that faculty are evaluated, the way institutions are accredited, and how society perceives them--which could be a good thing. As with all change, the most difficult step is the first one. This study represents one way to start.

Service Learning Outside of the Classroom

In this study students gained real life experience working for an actual client, the project city, in a realistic business environment on a true job site. It would almost be an impossibility to bring a real client situation into a traditional classroom setting. When students are placed into a realistic environment, they are then able to experience the complexity of the multiple facets of the field of study. The inherent incentives or motivations for success, in a realistic situation, were evident in this study. The project city became the employer who required commitment. The knowledge gained and new skills acquired along with the praise of the employer for the service provided became the paycheck.

Gaining Experiences and Awareness Through Service Learning and Problem Solving

Service learning projects provide a natural environment to learn by experience. This experience is one that many students do not completely grasp until they are actually out of school in a practicing environment where they are often unprepared by only the "book" knowledge they have received. They would then need to go back and waste productive time on the job to try and draw or learn correlations between the theory and the actual practice of their education. As a result of their experiences, dealing with problems and the ramifications, the student participants were able to increase their potential and grow more competent and confident.

Recommendations for Practice

The major recommendation for practice generated from this study is that community colleges combine and adapt the progressive concepts of service learning as a mainstream and viable option to education. The community college mission as it has evolved over the past 100

years embraces the concept of serving the community base and addressing the career education needs of its constituents. By adopting the learning principles exemplified in this study, the community college would better fulfill these areas of its mission. This would include designing group service activities which involve students pursuing similar educational goals and are integrated into the needs of community organizations and business; re-evaluating traditional methods of assessment; and maintaining an autonomous environment for learning so that each student can be a direct participator in their individual educational pursuits.

The learning aspects of service learning concepts are well documented and substantiated, but the motivational factors behind service learning need also to be identified. Students have increased motivation to learn when they see the knowledge attached to real life application. The natural benefit of being motivated to learn brings personal growth, a higher standard of knowledge, and personal gratification. Another point of this study indicates that students do indeed receive personal gratification when giving service to others. Service learning is a great motivator for students to do well because the outcome becomes more important to them. It is a recommendation of this study to utilize service learning not only as a provider of meaningful learning opportunities but also as a motivator for students to reach for their potential.

Closing

This study revealed that progressive service learning concepts can be ideally utilized in a community college environment. These learning methods lend themselves most specifically to technical career options in community colleges and are in line with the emphasis in the community college mission statement which focuses on career preparation and community involvement. These learning methods are ideal because the traditional method does not consider the global aspects of learning; the traditional method is mostly theoretical in nature, is not realistic in application, and does not connect the various aspects of the field of study. OJT or on the job training and apprenticeships are realistic and global but fail to allow the time element for students to make mistakes and then to solve problems, collaborate effectively, receive additional instruction, explore other possibilities, and receive the motivation of giving service to the community. If organized correctly, progressive service learning can provide a more effective learning background for students involved in career education studies and better preparation for on the job training experiences.

The effects of this study are evident; progressive service learning is a superior learning method and should be added to, combined with, or replace traditional methods. The battle to be fought in order to realize the benefits of this tool is to have information similar to this study brought to the attention of all educators and students especially those who are in positions to make decisions, i.e., community college presidents, national community college organizations, and national vocational organizations who direct the future of community college and higher education.

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