Quality Components of Service-Learning

Service-learning has great potential to enhance outcomes for students and the communities they serve. However, these outcomes are contingent upon high quality delivery of service-learning. If not done well, service-learning can have negative impacts on both students and communities, including reinforcing simplistic understandings of social problems, ignoring community assets, and diverting resources away from community partner organizations in order to meet the needs of students (Eby, 1998).

iPERCED Model

Implementing high quality service-learning requires several key components. The iPERCED model offers a structure for service-learning that encourages thoughtful planning and execution.Outlined below are the iPERCED components.

- **Investigation**: Process of identifying community needs, exploring potential community partnerships, and determining if/how community engagement fits into course learning goals and objectives.
- **Preparation**: Action steps to identify expectations, responsibilities, and to prepare faculty, community partners, and students for service-learning.
- **Engagement**: Meaningful engagement in service with the community in a way that is of value, as indicated by community partner needs.
- **Reflection & Connection**: Structured opportunities for students to think critically and make connections between their engagement in the community and the service-learning course.
- **Evaluation**: Methods to determine the outcomes of the community engagement experience and students' learning.
- **Demonstration/Celebration**: Strategies to share the results of community engagement as well as celebrating accomplishments with community partner and other constituents.

Adapted from Commuter Affairs and Community Service, 1999.

Theoretical Framework

The iPERCED model has theoretical foundations in Taylor’s learning cycle (1987), which presents a four phase model of adult learning. The four phases are detailed below, and Figure 1 portrays the overlapping categories from Taylor’s learning cycle with the iPERCED model.

- **Disorientation** occurs when the learner encounters an unfamiliar and often unanticipated experience or change and is challenged to think critically about one’s beliefs or values. The learner responds to the challenge with confusion, anxiety and tension. The learner leaves this phase once able to name the central issue causing discomfort.

- **Exploration** happens after the learner is able to name the disorienting source. Next, the learner gathers new information and ideas to resolve the identified challenge.

- **Reorientation** involves the synthesis of information obtained in the exploration phase. In processing and reflecting upon this information, the learner creates new understandings.

- **Equilibrium** transpires when the learner experiences a sense of comfort with the knowledge gained. The learner is able to apply their knowledge to new situations and shares their discoveries with others.
Further reading on high quality practices in service-learning can be found at the links below.


**REFERENCES**


Service-Learning Course Development Planning Tool

Using quality components of service-learning as a planning guide, this tool is intended to help faculty think through the many aspects involved in developing a service-learning course.

Course Title:

College and Department:

Course Semester and Year:

Investigation:
Why are you interested in using service-learning in this class?

What course learning goals/objectives do you wish to deepen or broaden by adding service-learning?

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Are there social issues or populations with whom you would like students to engage?

What are some community needs that might be impacted by service-learning students?

What organizations match well with the course learning goals/objectives?
What logistical considerations need to be made?

- Scheduling
- Transportation
- Risk management
- Safety considerations

**Preparation:**
What adjustments to the course need to be made (e.g. classroom discussions, assignments, readings) to reinforce connections to community engagement activities?

How will community partners be prepared to engage service-learning students?

What pre-service requirements does the community partner have (e.g. background check, health screenings, etc.)?

How will students be prepared for community engagement (e.g. pre-flection, on-campus orientation, community orientation, etc.)?

**Engagement:**
Who is the community partner for the service-learning class?
What will the community engagement component entail?

What will be the format of community engagement?

- Optional or required?
- Students serve in groups or individually?
- Duration of experience

How will the community engagement experience be selected (e.g. faculty identifies community partner in advance, students choose from a list of vetted organizations, students identify their own project, etc.)?

How will you monitor student progress?

How will you make sure community engagement activities are connected to a need identified in the community?

**Reflection & Connection:**
What activities will you employ to help students reflect?

How frequently will reflection occur?
Will these activities take place in the classroom, in the community setting, and/or on students’ own time?

How can you involve the community partner in helping students reflect?

How will these strategies make connections between the community engagement and academic components of the course?

**Evaluation:**

How will you know when service-learning has been successful?

- Student outcomes (e.g. academic knowledge, personal growth, professional development, leadership, citizenship skills, etc.)
- Community partner outcomes
- Faculty outcomes

Of these outcomes, what areas would you like to evaluate?

What are some indicators that measure success in these areas?

What role will the community partner play in evaluating outcomes?
Demonstration & Celebration:
How will students demonstrate their learning to the class, instructor, and community partner?

How will you celebrate accomplishments with students and the community partner?

Other Notes:

Adapted from the following resources:
“Service Learning Course Development Worksheet” by L. Gallagher et al., n.d., University of Colorado Denver Faculty Guide to Service Learning: Information and Resources for Creating and Implementing Service Learning Courses.