

Community college service learning pedagogy

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Noting the community college mandate for promoting civic engagement, the author addresses the issue of developing civically engaged community college classrooms in the midst of a decline in civic engagement nationwide. The paper proposes service learning pedagogy as a method for synthesizing classroom based academic knowledge and community based experiential knowledge by connecting the campus to the community within the context of specific curriculum. The paper includes suggestions for implementing service learning in various academic disciplines, specific instructional methods grounded in service learning pedagogy and a detailed discussion concerning the role of the faculty in promoting civic engagement.

Introduction

The mission statements of many community colleges throughout the United States specify the advancement of both civic engagement and student learning as primary goals (Leigh & Gill, 2007). Further, civic engagement—the ability to be responsible for oneself and to engage fully in the welfare of the group—is an asset in any society, but in a democratic society, civic engagement is a requirement for citizenship (Morgan & Streb, 2001). The clear implication is that without people being involved in collaborative relationships with each other and the environment in democratic ways citizenship is undermined.

A significant focus on civic engagement and democratic collaboration highlights the fact that democ-

racy is a dynamic *lived reality*, not a passive abstract academic exercise. As a lived reality, civic engagement, democratic principles, and shared values function as a frame of reference for making decisions on a daily basis about citizens' personal, professional, and economic lives. Consequently, such an understanding of civic engagement presents significant challenges for an education system determined to meet its stated goals of academic rigor and student learning while also promoting a firm grounding in the lived reality that is democratic citizenship—all within the confines of the classroom.

The following discussion attempts to show how college classroom teaching practices grounded in *service learning pedagogy* may meet the challenges of preparing people for their role as learned, civically engaged democratic citizens by maximizing the classroom experience as a resource for developing an ethic of civic engagement.

Voter participation and voluntary associations

Preliminary data from The American Presidency Project (2008) indicates that approximately 55% of voting-age Americans went to the polls in the 2008 presidential election. This was in stark contrast to voter turnout over previous decades. For example, in 1960 62.8

percent of voting-age Americans voted in the race between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon. In 1996, following decades of fewer and fewer Americans going to the polls, 48.9 percent of voting-age Americans voted in the race among Bill Clinton, Bob Dole and Ross Perot representing the second lowest turnout in the twentieth century (Wicker, 1999).

Recently, the election of President Obama, the first person of color elected to the nation's highest office, is clearly an historic event. However, observers do not yet fully understand the significance of the surge in voter turnout during the 2008 presidential election for civic engagement overall. Does the surge represent a rededication by the American people to civic life at all levels of society? Was it an act of desperation after eight years of war and unprecedented economic deficits? Or was it a function of innovative uses of technology during the campaign? While understanding the causes of the surge in voter turnout in the 2008 presidential election requires further investigation that is beyond the scope of this paper, some facts are within its scope.

For example, although voting is the most common act of civic engagement, it is, nevertheless, only one manifestation of civic engagement and democratic collaboration. Indeed, a sizable body

of scholarship has documented a decline in civic engagement overall, along with a general distrust in government and politics (Skocpl & Fiorine 1999; Putman, 2000; Wolf 1998; King, 1997). For example, Skocpol and Fiorine (1999) cite a number of polls that show Americans' trust in the federal government to "do what is right" has dropped from three-quarters of those polled in the early 1960s to less than one-third at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Moreover, American civil society may also be breaking down at the local level. For example, there has been a significant decline in participation in many kinds of voluntary shared undertakings such as unions, political parties and civic associations (Putnam, 2000). Further, Putnam reports that between 1973-74 and 1993-94 the percentage of Americans completely uninvolved in any of the civic activities tested for rose nearly 33%. Putnam also found that over the same timeframe participation in public meetings among those who had some college education fell from 34% to 18%. The finding is particularly disturbing since it has long been thought that educational attainment was a reliable predictor of civic engagement: the more education people have, the more likely, it seemed, they will participate in civic affairs (Verba, Scholozman and Brady, 1995).

Conceivably, a drop-off in civic engagement through voluntary associations at the grass roots level may prove the most problematic for American civil society. Significantly, Dewey (1938) credits such associations for developing basic democratic skills and values, such as the critically important idea of acting for the common good, at the grass roots level. Dewey also credits such voluntary associations for developing other democratic skills, such as running meetings, letter writing, public speaking and clarifying positions on contemporary issues.

Diversity is another critically important aspect of civic engagement and collaboration through voluntary associations. Dewey (1938) notes local voluntary associations often serve as places where recent immigrants first encounter diversity under democratic conditions. However, with the breakdown of voluntary associations outside educational institutions, schools, which are fundamentally characterized by a vast diversity, often serve as recent immigrants' first experience with diversity in a democratic context. Projections show that diversity is characteristic at all levels of education and will continue to increase (Leigh & Gill, 2007; Brown-Glaude, 2004; Bain, 2004). Clearly, this fact underscores the importance of develop-

ing civically engaged community college classrooms.

Putman (1993) articulates yet another vital significance of engagement and collaboration through local voluntary associations for immigrants and, indeed, all members of a diverse population. Putman asserts that voluntary associations function as networks where citizens develop "social capital," that is, ways in which social contacts and mutual cultural norms may promote economic competence, encourage better education, provide jobs and establish family support systems.

Some writers, such as Dionne (1998) and Schudson (1996), note the rise in volunteerism in some non-political areas of civic life and, therefore, attribute the overall downward turn in civic engagement to society simply "reinventing" itself. On the other hand, many writers interpret the fact that millions of Americans are withdrawing from involvement in community affairs and politics as indications that contemporary society is moving into a way of social life dangerously and increasingly characterized by separateness and isolation—or in Putnam's (2000) words, people are increasingly "bowling alone."

How college-level educators can effectively develop academically sound, civically engaged stu-

dents while, at the same time, the social structures outside the classroom that have been so vital to the development of citizens skilled in the art of democratic collaboration are breaking down is, indeed, a cogent question.

A starting point for examination is the complexity which results from dual goals of student learning and civic engagement interacting in the classroom. The spontaneous nature of such complexity can influence the overall learning process within democratic environments where civic engagement and democratic collaboration is not the exception but the rule. How can college professors maximize the classroom experience for developing a learned democratic citizenry? Finding answers to the question from applicable pedagogical constructs such as *service learning pedagogy* that have demonstrated the ability to facilitate learning and knowledge is, clearly, the impellent task of these educators.

Moreover, 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.

Civically engaged classrooms through service learning

Clearly, promoting civic engagement within the confines of the classroom implies an obvious need to connect the classroom to civic life outside the classroom. Specifically, in order to be consistent with the collaborative character of democratic citizenship, the pedagogical approach to student learning and civic engagement needs to connect academic learning, that is, classroom learning, with the wider civic environment, namely, the community.

However, the collaborative connection between academic course content and community based experiential learning brings into focus several important pedagogical challenges. For example, how do students extract meaning from community experiences? How can

students employ learning developed in the community to inform their academic, classroom based learning? How do students apply their classroom based learning to community needs?

An especially important aspect of education that these challenges highlight is that most students, as well as most professors, have been educated according to traditional assumptions about education that do not recognize collaboration as a valid pedagogical tool. In traditional education, which Freire (1970) refers to as the "banking system" of education, knowledge is assumed to be the possession of the expert, the professor. Thus, the journey to knowledge in a banking classroom consists of the professor pouring, or depositing, knowledge into the heads of students. In the banking system, therefore, knowledge and pedagogical processes are transmissive, consisting of

Table 1: Major constructs and their definitions

Civic engagement—Commonly understood to function on two levels: the first posits civic engagement as based on the participation of individual citizens in the associations of civil and political society; the second is based on normative orientations sustained, above all, by institutions and institutional leaders (Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999).

Collaboration—Cooperation among people focused on issues, tasks or goals characterized by bipartisanship, synergy and pooling of resources.

Diversity—Refers to and describes the relationships among ethnicity, race, class, culture, gender, sexual orientation and language of a particular population.

Service learning pedagogy—A credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996)

giving and receiving. Employing a pedagogy characterized by collaborative relationships, such as service learning pedagogy, signals an epistemological shift from pedagogy as transmissive to pedagogy as collaborative. The shift links the classroom to the wider community outside the classroom and, consequently, to a wider dialogue aimed at promoting democratic principles and values.

Service learning pedagogy differs from other models of experiential learning and civic engagement in terms of primary focus and intended purpose (Furco, 1996). For example, the primary focus of volunteer programs is the service being provided, and the intended beneficiary is the recipient of the service. Similarly, the primary focus of internship programs is to provide hands-on experience to students with the intended purpose of augmenting their understanding of a particular area of study.

In contrast, service learning programs strive to provide a more balanced and reciprocal approach to education and civic engagement in terms of primary focus and intended purpose. Specifically, the primary focus of service learning pedagogy is both the service provided and the learning that stems from the service. The intended beneficiaries of service learning pedagogy are both the providers

and recipients of the service (Furco, 1996).

For example, education students in a children's literature course might apply the theories and skills learned in the course to assist children in an after school program at a public housing complex. While the service learning is clearly intended to provide needed services to children, it is also intended to help the education students understand more fully the theories and skills learned in the classroom. As a result, service learning offers a paradigm of civic engagement that benefits both the students who provide the instruction and the children who receive the instruction.

While the benefits and emphasis of service learning are not static and will, therefore, vary in degree along a continuum between provider and recipient as the process unfolds, this balanced and reciprocal approach, nevertheless, aligns service learning pedagogy with the collaborative nature of civic engagement and democratic citizenship. The education students referred to above will illustrate points made throughout this paper. Table 2 provides suggestions for implementing service learning in other disciplines.

Table 2. Suggestions for implementing service learning in various disciplines (Gottlieb & Robinson, 2006)

Related courses	Service activities that address community needs	Reflection component	Activities that promote civic engagement skills
Computer science, information technology, business, sociology, psychology, gerontology	Teach senior citizens or low income families computer literacy skills	Produce an online journal including samples of computer work done by seniors or families, reflecting on why clients want to be computer literate	Research the digital divide and how this gap will effect poverty rates in the future; presents results to local housing officials
Urban planning, architecture, art, child development, carpentry, welding, engineering	Design and build community playgrounds	Develop an e-portfolio that documents the design/building processes and critique designs aspects	Present e-portfolio to school boards and other relevant officials to encourage more playground development
Corrections, criminal justice, juvenile justice, social sciences, education, physical education, math	Form individual study and sports partnerships with juveniles in local correctional facilities	Develop e-portfolio or photo essays of juveniles playing sports and doing homework	Lobby school districts and correction officials to make similar programs district-wide
Nursing, paramedics, allied health, anatomy, physiology, microbiology	Provide first aid services to campus health centers	Reflective essays or journals; class presentations	Research how many college students do not have health insurance or receive adequate healthcare and the importance of regular health screenings; advertise this information, along with information about AIDS, breast cancer, etc. through campus newspaper, TV or radio station, etc.

Key features of service learning-pedagogy

Curriculum based

Service learning experiences are credit bearing; therefore, service-learning pedagogy is curriculum based (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). While some writers such as Jacoby (1996), include both co-curricular and curricular experiences in their understanding of service learning and while, as noted above, service learning is not static, most see service learning as a curriculum based approach to civic engagement.

A critically important aspect of curriculum based service learning concerns *the role of the faculty*. Stanton (1990) points out that prior to 1990 the focus of most community engagement programs fell within the jurisdiction of student affairs. Educational institutions rarely acknowledged the importance of the faculty role in supporting student community engagement initiatives, or the importance of faculty functioning as role models through their own civic engagement activities. Stanton (1990) asserts that if course-based community engagement is to become a major asset in promoting civic engagement—and since student learning is a fundamental objective of service learning programs—the faculty role in the process must be recognized.

Accordingly, since the primary

responsibility for designing and implementing curriculum based service learning programs shift the focus of service learning from student to faculty affairs. The shift requires faculty to be responsible not only for academic course content but also for assuming a leadership role in directing service-learning programs across the curriculum as well as throughout the institution as a whole. Indeed, Zlotkowski (1995) maintains that virtually all service learning programs striving for major institutional and community impact actively promote faculty participation and the development of a credible curricular base.

Community identified needs

Service learning pedagogy requires that community needs met by service projects be identified by the community—not the campus (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). That requirement is a significant way in which service learning differs from other community engagement paradigms. Importantly, it illustrates the central role that reciprocity plays in service learning's assumptions about collaborative educational relationships.

For example, Zlotkowski (1995) points out that the reciprocity aspect of service learning puts an end to the campus' long-standing

practice of using the community to serve its own needs, while also preventing the campus from assuming a position of superiority due to its expertise, skills and resources. Moreover, the community identifying the needs to be met by service learning projects acknowledges the validity of the community's own expertise and skills gained through living with an issue or condition for extended periods. Community identified needs not only infuses the campus/community relationship with another powerful resource, but recognition of the community's expertise levels the playing field in order to establish a truly reciprocal and collaborative relationship.

One of the challenges for faculty concerns the role of community partners on the college campus. How do professors create a curriculum and an overall classroom environment that recognizes, as well as enables, community partners to play an equal role in the educational process? That is, since service learning is curriculum based and since the faculty are primarily responsible for the curriculum, how can professors design the curriculum in a way that brings the community partners into a collaborative relationship where they are not simply a resource for learning but an active member in the learning process?

Multilayered reflection

Another key feature of service learning pedagogy proposes reflection on at least three levels: developing a more expansive understanding of course content, of the particular discipline in question, and of civic responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). Indeed, educators have long used reflection as a complement to experience in order to construct knowledge and facilitate learning. However, that multilayered approach distinguishes service learning reflection from other types of reflection projects (Zlotkowski 1995).

For example, the education students in the children's literature course referred to earlier might be asked to connect the theories learned in the classroom to their experience in the after school program (course content), while also processing their personal reactions to the need for such programs in the first place (the discipline of after-school studies), and their understanding of the circumstances underlying the need for public housing overall (civic responsibility). Clearly, the multilayered approach is another example of how the processes of service learning directly enhance opportunities for student learning and civic engagement.

A faculty perspective of service learning

Duffy and Jones (1995) point out that service learning pedagogy is generally built on core values of reciprocity and collaboration among administrators, faculty, staff, students and community partners. However, service learning in the classroom is, clearly, faculty driven. While the classroom instructor could not possibly employ service learning without the talents of the entire service learning team, nevertheless, the individual professor tailors service learning according to specific course content and goals and implements pedagogy in the classroom. Significantly, the classroom serves as the venue where the collaborative connection between course based academic learning and community based experiential learning can be synthesized for new knowledge and meaning.

Identifying an appropriate community partner

Before attempting to synthesize academic and experiential learning, the faculty must first align the classroom with a compatible community partner. In order to identify an appropriate community partner, faculty must keep in mind two basic components of service learning pedagogy: service

activities that address community needs and activities that foster civic engagement skills.

Service activities that address community needs

As noted previously, the community partner, not the academy, identifies the community needs met by service projects. Therefore, since the community identified needs will influence the projects students carryout, it would be prudent for faculty to keep in mind two particular issues when choosing a specific community partner: is the community site suited to meet the pedagogical goals of the course, and how might the course goals intersect with the goals of the community partner?

For example, exploring age-related developmental sequences in children's reading ability, differences in learning style and various management strategies were primary goals of the education students' children's literature course mentioned earlier. Likewise, primary goals of the community site partnered with the literature course included assisting children of mixed ages with homework, tutoring, and building literacy skills. Therefore, the goals of the community partner and academic course, clearly, complement each other.

Activities that foster civic engagement skills

In order to embrace service learning's fundamental premise of civic engagement, another primary goal of the children's literature course was to promote a broader sense of civic responsibility. Since the after school program was located at a public housing complex, the site afforded the students the opportunity to meet their goal of civic engagement by providing opportunities to explore the underlying forces that make public housing necessary.

Tools for synthesizing academic and experiential knowledge

After identifying an appropriate community site, faculty can proceed with their efforts to synthesize academic and experiential knowledge and promote civic engagement. Accordingly, faculty has two important tools for facilitating such a synthesis: reflection and classroom discussion.

Reflection

As noted earlier, reflection has long been used by educators as a complement to experience in order to facilitate learning and knowledge. Indeed, Dewey (1938) maintains that experience without reflection is not necessarily educative. He asserts that experience becomes edu-

cative only when critical reflection in relation to experience leads to new meaning that enables people to take informed action.

Bringle and Hatcher (2000) define reflection as the intentional consideration of an experience in light of specific course content and learning objectives. That is, regardless of the particular model of reflection that the professor chooses, whether it be one of the many journaling techniques such as the critical incident journal described by Stanton (1990), directed readings, class presentation or performance based, reflection functions as a bridge connecting course content and experience. Given the basic function of reflection, it is, therefore, critically important for faculty to design reflection tools that enable students to make explicit connections between the service learning experience and course content.

For example, a critical incident reflection paper was assigned to students in the children's literature course as part of their service learning project. The reflection assignment required the students to identify a specific incident they encountered at the community site—such as helping a child learn to read or gaining a child's trust—and then explore the incident using, in part, the following prompts:

- Identify specific course work and

readings that are relevant to the experience.

- Identify principles, theories, and skills covered in course work that relate to the experience.
- How is the experience consistent with your academic knowledge?
- How does the experience contradict or challenge your academic knowledge?
- How does your academic knowledge help you develop hypotheses about the experience?

The prompts help students identify specific knowledge gained in the classroom that is relevant to the experience encountered at the community site thus linking specific academic knowledge to specific experiential knowledge. Further, by requiring the students to use their academic knowledge to form hypotheses about the experience, the prompts move them to synthesize academic and experiential knowledge, thus generating new knowledge and understanding.

Additionally, the reflection assignment promoted the development of a broader sense of civic engagement by requiring the education students to explore the community site as a whole within the context of a specific focusing question: *Why does this organization exist?*

That is, as important as community service is for developing civically engaged classrooms, it is

equally important for students to ask themselves challenging questions about systemic issues that affect community organizations in which they serve. The focusing question noted above required the education students to explore the social, economic and political conditions that create problems for the individuals and families served by community organizations, which are in this case, both the after school program and public housing overall.

Classroom discussion

As a second important tool for faculty, discussion is a well-established instructional method with adult students and is consistent with the collaborative character of both service learning pedagogy and civic engagement (Brophy, 1989).

The ability to participate in open democratic discussion is a vital skill germane to collaborative relationships and civic engagement, as well as a ready way to extend reflection in the classroom. In fact, while Dewey (1938) maintains that experience without reflection is not necessarily educative, he further asserts that communication, particularly face-to-face communication, is fundamental to creating educative experiences.

Additionally, Dewey (1938) sees communication with others

as an important element for promoting social and moral development as well as intellectual growth. He maintains that the values, attitudes and responses of others that manifest within communication experiences are an essential motivator for people to evaluate and adapt their own opinions and attitudes. Therefore, a classroom characterized by open democratic discussion provides a vital condition for developing new ideas and values. Clearly, classroom discussion can add significant strength to the bridge built by reflection between classroom based academic knowledge and community based experiential knowledge.

Setting the stage for collaborative classroom discussion

The significant value of classroom discussion for developing educative experiences and skills vital to civic engagement noted above does not mean that discussion is commonplace in college classrooms. Indeed, while many traditional classrooms, such as those of the banking system, affirm the value of dialogue for learning, actual discussion is rare. Studies show that classroom dialogue characterized as "discussion" by educators tends to be recitations where the professor functions as the expert and owner of knowledge and poses questions while

students respond by reciting information they have already gained (Alverman, O'Brien, & Dillon, 1990; Tharp & Gillimore, 1988). Rarely are these recitations actual discussions where professors and students collaborate to problem-solve, construct new meaning or to clarify concepts and values.

Consequently, faculty must address at least two elements of classroom discussion if there is to be discussion consistent with the collaborative character of service learning pedagogy and civic engagement: student voice and the nuances of leading a collaborative discussion.

Student voice

The student voices, their personal narratives, within the context of service learning pedagogy, manifest in the classroom as experience in relation to the stated goals of the course. For example, the voice of the education students surfaces in the service learning classroom when they relate their experience at the after school program to the academic content of their children's literature course and explore their understandings of the relationship through group discussion. While some writers, such as Diana Fuss (1989), remain skeptical about the value of personal experience in classroom discussion, many other theorists, such as Freire (1970), Hooks (1994) and

Giroux (1992), acknowledge personal experience as an important pedagogical tool.

Student voice, in the form of personal narrative, underscores the value of experiential knowledge for classroom discussion and civic engagement overall. For example, Hooks (1994) asserts that personal experience empowers students with a legitimate knowledge base on which they can build, and certainly, reflect. Enabling students to voice their personal experiences as legitimate resources for classroom discussion empowers students. Acknowledging the legitimacy of their personal experience affords them ownership of the new knowledge synthesized in the classroom. Through the processes of service learning pedagogy, the value of personal experience is recognized as a resource for synthesizing information and developing civic engagement skills. The wealth of different experiences present in diverse college classrooms can now be voiced as legitimate sources of knowledge.

Further, when students employ their own voice in classroom discussion they are functioning as agents for generating discourse—a vital skill for democratic collaboration and civic engagement (Hooks, 1989). They are presenting knowledge recognized as legitimate for consideration and challenge by the group. Such knowledge can

either be validated or rejected, the point being that the student is functioning as the primary agent generating the discussion.

When students come to voice, when they move from silence to speech and assert their voice in public discourse, they function as agents in the construction of their own knowledge and identity. Consequently, it is incumbent upon the professor to address the issue of student voice not only for the synthesis of knowledge, but also for empowering students to participate in the processes of agency and, indeed, civic engagement (Hooks, 1994).

The nuances of leading a collaborative classroom discussion

Standard teaching practices for classroom discussion require the professor to present information, make connections to scholarship and provide a relevant context for discussion (Brophy, 1989). However, leading a discussion grounded in service learning pedagogy, where democratic collaboration is a primary goal, requires the professor to go beyond standard teaching practices and adjust techniques so that the strengths of service learning pedagogy may maximize the classroom experience as a resource for learning and developing skills germane to civic engagement. For example:

Respectfully keeping students focused

The possibility certainly exists for students to digress and wander-off on seemingly irrelevant tangents when relating their personal experiences during class discussions. However, the professor must keep in mind that, within the context of service learning pedagogy and student voice, personal experience is acknowledged as a legitimate source of knowledge. At the same time, class discussions are not free-for-alls where anything goes. Discussions must stay within the parameters of course goals, service learning pedagogy and class timeframes.

Therefore, a nuance of leading a collaborative discussion informed by personal experience requires professors to find ways to respectfully keep students focused. For example, focusing questions such as, "that's an important point; how do you see it relating to the subject-matter?" or "what in the subject-matter reminds you of that experience?" redirect the student's narrative to the subject-matter while also respecting the student's narrative as a legitimate resource.

Such focusing questions do not in any way appear to inhibit a student's initiative. Respectfully keeping students focused and encouraging student initiative underscore the fact that the professor

needs to lead the discussion so students feel secure in voicing their experiences while also knowing that ideas suggested by their narratives will be explored, or challenged, by the group (Hooks, 1994).

Inclusive listening skills

The ability to hear various points of view is a vital skill for developing a broader sense of civic responsibility overall and democratic collaboration in particular. However, since many students have been schooled through the banking system of education, they have learned that only the professor has something valuable to say. Many have difficulty taking seriously what other students, or even themselves, have to say in the classroom. Even if a student's comment is acknowledged by the professor, it is often the professor's acknowledgement that students listen to, not the voice of their peer (Hooks, 1994). Therefore, another nuance of leading a collaborative discussion requires the professor to consistently reinforce the value of—and most importantly, demonstrate—inclusive listening skills.

The professor's voice

The professor's voice in a banking classroom provides the impetus for discussion. However, in a service learning classroom, where collaboration is a primary goal, the impetus for discussion comes

from each classroom participant. Though the professor provides standard resources for discussion, the service learning pedagogical mandate for collaboration requires him to go beyond standard resources and nuance the discussion by stimulating and then following the students in their narratives.

Multiple ways of knowing

Ambiguity pervades diverse college classrooms as there are many different perspectives and cultural backgrounds present; many different ways of knowing and learning; and, consequently, many different possible useful answers. Yet, recognition of the legitimacy of experiential knowledge, and, therefore, the multiple perspectives through which experience is interpreted, does not mean that a classroom which values multiple perspectives slips into individualistic relativism where there are no consequences to anything—everything is relative, therefore, nothing really means anything. Classroom processes and the knowledge participants construct must still meet the standards of democratic principle and function within the parameters of service-learning peda-

gogy. Nevertheless, diversity of perspective and the primary goals of promoting collaboration and civic engagement require the professor to nuance teaching practices in ways that acknowledge and, indeed, encourage, multiple ways of knowing and learning.

Discussion

That civic engagement in the United States is in decline is clear. Aside from the surge in voter turnout in the 2008 presidential election, which is yet to be interpreted in relation to civic engagement overall, a decline manifests at most levels of civic life. However, it is particularly problematic at the local level where the voluntary organizations that have traditionally promoted the development of skills vital to democratic citizenship for a vast number of people are fading away.

The effort to promote civically engaged classrooms needs to be grounded in pedagogical constructs proven to facilitate learning and knowledge. Further, the classroom must be linked to the wider civic environment and the faculty must play a leading role in the entire effort to develop civically engaged classrooms.

The epistemological shift from pedagogy as transmissive to pedagogy as collaborative signaled by service learning pedagogy links

the campus to the community within the context of specific curricula. Further, service learning promotes a truly collaborative, reciprocal relationship between the campus and community through a balanced approach to community service and recognition of the community's own expertise.

In order to promote the synthesis of academic and experiential knowledge, faculty must choose a community partner whose goals are compatible with the goals of the particular course. Faculty must also design multileveled reflection projects that promote an enhanced understanding of course content and a broader sense of civic responsibility.

Further, faculty must nuance the classroom in order to promote collaborative classroom discussions. For example, faculty must empower students to come to voice in order to synthesize academic and experiential knowledge as well as to become agents in the process of generating dialogue. Faculty must promote inclusive listening skills and respectfully keep students focused on subject-matter so their narratives remain within the parameters of democratic principle, course goals and service learning pedagogy while, at the same time, acknowledging their narratives as legitimate resources for learning the course subject-matter.

Conclusion

However, while a solid foundation of proven pedagogical frameworks, as well as appropriately nuanced teaching practices, is necessary for developing civically engaged classrooms, there may also need to be an ethic of action infused into the entire educational enterprise. Talking about acting for the common good is not enough; people must actually act for the common good. There needs to be an ethic of doing, of acting on, of pushing forward that permeates the entire effort of promoting civic engagement.

In the classroom, an ethic of action must emerge in several ways. For example, the professor cannot simply talk about inclusive listening skills, the professor must actually listen to students and find ways to make it explicit that he/she engages every individual student voice. 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. The professor cannot just talk about an expanded sense of civic responsibility, the professor must demonstrate an active dedication to civic life at all levels of society.

The difficulty to implement all of these elements of classroom

teaching should not be underestimated. It is no easy task to collaborate and engage in open democratic discussion with every single person in the room, not to mention enabling students to work with each other.

The reality of large numbers of students in the room makes it probable there will be at least one person the professor does not like or clashes with in some way, or, indeed, students may not like or

clash with, whether peers or the professor. Nevertheless, getting along and, importantly, moving forward in spite of conflict is part of the democratic process. The professor must actually do these things, and, in fact, do them in concrete, systematic and consistent ways because such professional teaching practices are a deliberate and intentional part of the overall classroom endeavor.

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