

Community Partners' Perceptions of the Challenges to Service-Learning in Egypt

Neivin M. Shalabi, Ph.D.

Lecturer, Delta University for Science and Technology, Egypt

The 14 Annual Engagement Scholarship Consortium Conference

October 8-9, 2013

Overview



- Acknowledgements
- Operational Definitions
- Research Problem & Significance
- Research Goals
- Literature Review
- Theoretical Framework
- Method
- Findings
- Implications
- Dialogue

Acknowledgements

- My dissertation committee members at the University of Denver: Professors Nick Cutforth, Kathy Green, and Frank Tuitt
- Senior scholars: Professors Hiram Fitzgerald, Dwight Giles, Barbara Holland, and Barbara Moely
- The individuals who participated in my dissertation
- Engagement Scholarship Consortium Conference Leadership

Operational Definitions

- **Academic service-learning** is an experiential pedagogy that intentionally connects course content with community service so that each improves the other for the benefit of all involved participants. Reflection, reciprocity, democracy, and respect are fundamental concepts in ideal service-learning courses.
- **Community:** Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) → staff and clients

Research Problem

- There exist some studies that pay critical attention to the motivations, benefits, and outcomes of service-learning from community partners' perspectives (Bridsall, 2005; Bushouse, 2005; Jones, 2003)
- The empirical research documenting community partners' perspectives is relatively new and scant (Miron & Moely, 2006; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009)

Significance of the Research Problem

- ❑ The failure to understand community perspective may create misunderstanding between the academy and the community (Sandy & Holland, 2006)
- ❑ Community input is key in assessing the true value and impact of service-learning on the community (Bridsall, 2005)
- ❑ Assessment can be a strategy for improvement and can provide information for future program planning and enhancement (Gelmon, 2000)

Goal

- To study the perspectives of local community-based organizations of the challenges to service-learning partnerships with XUX foreign university in Egypt

Literature Review

- Challenges pertaining to the academic calendar and students' lack of interest and/or lack of preparedness (Sandy & Holland, 2006; Vernon & Ward, 1999; Worrall, 2007)
- Challenges pertaining to cultural differences between the university and the academy (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999; Holland, 2002; Walshok, 1999)

Enos and Morton's (2003) theory for transactional-transformative university community partnerships:

Transactional	Transformative
Short-term	Long-term
Project-based	Issue-based
Work within existing systems	Establish new systems
Keep separate identities	Generate a collective identity
Accept institutional goals	Examine and challenge institutional goals

Setting

XUX Foreign University in Egypt	Year of 2010
Undergraduate students	4,760
Graduate students	1,224
Percentage of female students	53.0%
Percentage of male students	46.9%
Percentage of Egyptian students	90.3%
Percentage of students from other countries	9.7%
Number of student-run clubs and organizations	51
Number of faculty	383
Faculty to student ratio	01:11.5
Percentage of Egyptian faculty	58%
Percentage of faculty from other countries	42%

Sample Characteristics: n= 5

Pseudonym	Gender	Organization	Mission
Ali	Male	A	Community development through arts
Samia	Female	T	Community development through education
Muhammad	Male	C	Traditional skills revival
Kareem	Male	M	Wide range of charity and development activities
Nabila	Female	A	Community development through arts

Research Design: Concurrent Transformative/Embedded

Timing	Weighting	Mixing	Theorizing
Concurrent	Equal	Integrating	Explicit
Sequential Qualitative first	Qualitative	Connecting	
Sequential Quantitative first	Quantitative	Embedding	
			Implicit

Creswell (2009)

Findings: Overview

- Cultural-related issues
- Differences between the university and the community
- Student-related issues
- Limited capacity of community-based organizations

Cultural-related issues

- Unfamiliarity with the concept of service-learning.

I remember to have planned trip to Shalateen [a far away city from Cairo in southern Egypt]. . . . and everything was set. There was no money, but they [students] organized. And then, last minute, they all cancelled because they were afraid because their parents didn't allow them to the wild Eastern desert. (Muhammad)

Cultural-related issues

- Bureaucracy prior to the Revolution of 25th January, 2011

There are bad things happening like the bureaucracy in Egypt, but it is not a puzzling question. Egypt has such red tape, bureaucracy, and routine. Progress in Egypt is so difficult. Very undemocratic society, very rigid rules, extremely void of any logic. . . . It is an obstacle, for sure, yes, of course. We could have grown double the size if there was not such bureaucracy in Egypt. (Kareem)

Cultural-related issues

- lack of democracy prior to the Revolution of 25th January, 2011

It's very difficult if not impossible to establish a student club with the name R in any Egyptian university. Because of security police, the past, they were not allowed. They would not do this. They would not accept students to belong to an NGO outside of the university: security reasons. The students [do] not belong to anybody. They consider this a danger to the state that students have some leadership from outside of the university or they belong to some association. Freedom of association, this was something alien to the Egyptian society before the 25th of January.
(Kareem)

Differences between the university and the community

- Theoretical vs. practical approaches
- “They work on a very academic level and I work on a very community-based level”
(Muhammad)

Differences between the university and the community

- Academic calendar vs. ongoing service

“I think this is difficult because they [students] would usually have a semester and then credits and they leave, they finish, and they move to another semester”
(Samia)

Differences between the university and the community

□ Trust issues

The difficulty will be getting to know your partners, [pause] and their agendas. For example, if you are a community and these people are coming from the XUX, some people have [pause] perceptions of the foreigners as spies and things like that(Ali)

Student-related issues

□ Lack of interest

“Maybe five or six are interested and the rest are waiting for the bus to come, excused themselves to go, talking on the phone, you know?”
(Muhammud)

Student-related issues

- Inadequate preparation

“incapability of some of the students to deal with the kids” (Ali)

Community-related issues

□ Limited capacity

Sometimes there is a lot of mess because plenty of people working at the same time. So, they are not coming one by one. They come together in the same time. So, sometimes it's good, sometimes, you cannot control it easy. It depends on the time and the staff available and things like that. So, sometimes you don't have the capacity to receive all of them. It's not a great a challenge. (Ali)

Implications

- Context matters
 - Political conditions
 - Cultural perceptions
 - Socialization process

Limitations

- Research site: a single university
- Sample size: relatively small
- Missing voices partnering organizations' clients

Thank You

□ Dialogue:

Ideas & Comments & Questions

Please contact me via e-mail at

neivinshalabi@gmail.com

References

- Birdsall, J. T. (2005). Community voice: Community partners reflect on service-learning [Electronic version]. *Journal for Civic Commitment*, 5, 1-13. Retrieved January 7, 2008 from, <http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/other/engagement/Journal/index5.jsp>
- Bringle, R. G., Games, R., & Malloy, R. E. A. (1999). *Colleges and universities as citizens*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bushouse, B. (2005). Community nonprofit organizations and service-learning: Resource constraints to building partnerships with universities. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 12(1), 32-40.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Enos, S., & Morton, K. (2003). Developing a theory and practice of campus-community partnerships. In B. Jacoby & Associates (Eds.), *Building partnerships for service-learning* (pp. 20-41). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Gelmon, S. B. (2003). Assessment as a means of building service-learning partnerships. In B. Jacoby & Associates (Eds.), *Building partnerships for service-learning* (pp. 42-64). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Holland, B. (2002, April 17). Every perspective counts: Understanding the true meaning of reciprocity in partnerships. Keynote address to the Western Regional Campus Compact Conference. Portland, OR.
- Holland, B. (2005). Institutional differences in pursuing the public good. In A. J. Kezar, T. C. Chambers, & J. C. Burkhardt (Eds.), *Higher education for the public good: Emerging voices from a national movement* (pp. 235-259). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

References (Cont.)

- Jones, S. (2003). Principles and profiles of exemplary partnerships with community agencies. In B. Jacoby & Associates. (Eds.), *Building partnerships for service-learning* (pp. 151-173). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miron, D., & Moely, B. (2006). Community agency voice and benefit in service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 12(2), 27-37.
- Sandy, M., & Holland, B. A. (2006). Different worlds and common ground: Community partner perspectives on campus-community partnerships. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 13(1), 30-43.
- Stoecker, R., & Tryon, E., & Hilgendorf, A. [Eds.]. (2009). *The unheard voices: Community organizations and service learning*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Vernon, A., & Ward, K. (1999). Campus and university partnerships: Assessing impacts and strengthening connections. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 6, 30-37.
- Walshok, L, M. (1999). Strategies for building the infrastructure that supports the engaged campus. In R. Bringle, R. Games, & E. Malloy (Eds.), *Colleges and universities as citizens* (pp. 74-95). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Worrall, L. (2007). Asking the community: A case study of community partner perspectives. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 17(1), 5-17.