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

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Overview

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☐ The individuals who participated in my dissertation

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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
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transactional</th>
<th>Transformative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>Long-term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project-based</td>
<td>Issue-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work within existing systems</td>
<td>Establish new systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep separate identities</td>
<td>Generate a collective identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept institutional goals</td>
<td>Examine and challenge institutional goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>XUX Foreign University in Egypt</th>
<th>Year of 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate students</td>
<td>4,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate students</td>
<td>1,224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of female students</td>
<td>53.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of male students</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Egyptian students</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of students from other countries</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of student-run clubs and organizations</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of faculty</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty to student ratio</td>
<td>01:11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Egyptian faculty</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of faculty from other countries</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samia</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammad</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kareem</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nabila</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Research Design: Concurrent Transformative/Embedded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Mixing</th>
<th>Theorizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concurrent</strong></td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Integrating</td>
<td>Explicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Qualitative</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Connecting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>first</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sequential Quantitative</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Embedding</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
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<tr>
<td>first</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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)
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)
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


- 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.


