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New York Campus Compact



New York Campus Compact
95 Brown Road
Box 1006
Ithaca, NY 14850



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The New York Campus Compact Occasional Papers are publications designed to advance an understanding of and appreciation for collegiate civic engagement in its many forms.

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Editor's Note: In February, Humphrey Tonkin, University Professor of the Humanities and President Emeritus of the University of Hartford, presented a paper summarizing and critiquing trends in global service-learning at the 2009 Institute on Global Service Learning at Cornell University. The Institute was sponsored by the Cornell Public Service Center and New York Campus Compact. With his permission, Dr. Tonkin's paper is featured in this edition of the *New York Campus Compact Occasional Papers*.

Policy and Purpose in Global Service-Learning: A Retrospective

2009 Institute on Global Service Learning, Cornell University, 12-13 February 2009

By *Humphrey Tonkin*
*University Professor of the Humanities and
President Emeritus*

The practice of global, or international, service-learning is increasingly widespread and increasingly investigated and understood. In this paper I want to highlight some of the broader aspects of the subject that we are apt to forget as we focus on program design and execution. As a jumping-off point, let me suggest that there are three ways in which we can think about service-learning in general, and global service-learning in particular. Note my inclusion of a hyphen in the term service-learning, in part to emphasize the fact that it constitutes an indivisible whole, in which either half of the term is educationally incomplete without the other, in part to stress the importance of reciprocity. The term is often used loosely (and without the hyphen) to denote anything that has to do with community service in an educational institution - a creeping redefinition that we have all encountered and, I hope, continue to deplore.

We can think of service-learning, then, as an educational activity first and foremost, or as a public-service activity, or as a manpower-mobilization activity. The three lead in quite different directions.

Service-learning as an educational activity

As an educational activity, service-learning provides students with an opportunity to test theory against practice, and put into effect many of the elements of a liberal education that have been articulated in a century or more of theorizing about the nature of such education in the United States. Service-learning in general has been hailed as a pedagogy that applies Deweyan principles by stressing learning through reflection on experience. Its origins lie, at least in part, in the experiential education movement, and in the idea that education is learner-centered rather than hierarchical and the role of the teacher is above all that of facilitator. Dewey (1916) saw much of education as essentially anti-democratic, and he and such theorists

as Jean Piaget and Paulo Freire sought to break out of hierarchized learning by engaging the student in direct practical experience. Freire (1970), in his idea of the “pedagogy of the oppressed,” stressed what he called dialogics – the communicative process of learning in which action and reflection are embodied in the give and take of language. For thinkers such as these the practical aspect of education seemed essential, and the idea that one could confine learning simply to the classroom was unthinkable (for more recent statements, see Orrill 1997).

The experiential education movement came to the fore in the ferment of the late 1960s and early 1970s (see Kolb 1984, and, more broadly, Stanton, Giles & Cruz 1999). This was a period in which traditional ideas of liberal education were also tested and modified. Although a greater conservatism set in as the 1970s proceeded, some changes were permanent, above all the realization that colleges and universities were not isolated enclaves divorced from their communities and from world affairs. In our own time, thanks to the pioneering work of Ernest Boyer and his attempts to redefine the institutional role of the professor, a new concept, the scholarship of engagement, has emerged (in the work of Dan Butin, for example), which challenges received ideas of liberal education and, perhaps more significantly, the ways in which it is delivered (Boyer 1990). The latter – the delivery system – may be an even greater challenge to the higher education establishment than the challenge to received ideas; though we might like to think otherwise, American higher education (like most other higher education systems) is shaped as much by modes of delivery as it is by ideas.

Traditional American ideas of liberal education may seem a far cry from such radical democratization as Dewey or Freire imagined, but in two respects the philosophy of American liberal education (a phenomenon, by the way, largely confined both in practice and in concept to the United States) contains within it ideas that are potentially quite accommodating to global service-learning. Liberal education has always been concerned with the development of the complete person – particularly the

complete person without regard to frontiers; knowledge is a universal phenomenon and the educated individual can be found anywhere in the world. Robert Maynard Hutchins, one of the great theorists and practitioners of liberal education, wrote of a “learning society” that might encompass the entire world community (Hutchins 1970:134). Hence a global perspective on knowledge is not only not contrary to the theory of liberal education (though traditionally it has sometimes been deemed as contrary to its practice – particularly by those who see our civilization as deriving exclusively from those of Greece and Rome), but it is actually reinforcing of one of the principal goals of liberal learning – knowledge of the world. Second, while there is a long history of resistance to such developments, over the years American liberal learning has become quite accepting of the learning of basic foreign language (we can dress it up as reading Racine or Cervantes, but basic language knowledge is regarded as a legitimate credit-bearing activity, even by educational conservatives, and the learning of non-European languages is now accepted as legitimate). It has also become accepting of credit-bearing lab experience (Rudolph 1977:287). In short, the notion that you cannot give credit for practical experience was defeated long ago; the only issue is what kind of practical experience can be regarded as legitimate. The undergraduate curriculum in America, and particularly its traditional setting the American college, has always in some measure extended beyond the requirements of the classroom to envision the education of the complete individual (Rudolph 1977: 234-235). The global part of global service-learning has currency within most theories of liberal education because knowledge of the world is fundamental to a complete education (Nussbaum 1997, esp. 50-84), and travel in search of knowledge, while it took longer to become institutionalized in the American college, has always been accepted as a highly desirable affair.

With the stirring of interest in the early 1970s in the internationalization of higher education, and as the movement towards internationalization grew, it was built at least in part on the

desire to open up new opportunities to undergraduates by redeploying institutional expertise to increase the international content in courses and programs. The Council on Learning, the American Forum for Global Education, and the President’s Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, along with other organizations, took up the challenge. While many of the more radical ideas to come out of this period withered in the cold wind of 1980s conservatism, the opening up of American colleges and universities to the larger world endured and became permanent, if incomplete (Tonkin & Edwards 1981; Groennings & Wiley 1990; Mestenhauer & Ellingboe 1998; O’Meara, Mehlinger & Newman 2001).

Traditionally the international element in American collegiate education had been fulfilled above all through study abroad – initially an effort by smaller colleges to expose their students to the larger world (Hoffa 2007) – but as of the 1970s more generally accepted as a desirable part of the education of all full-time undergraduates. As with science labs and foreign languages, study abroad has found its niche in American undergraduate education in part because of the muddled thinking of both its opponents (who at a certain point ran out of arguments against it) and its proponents (who have never quite acknowledged that studying in a foreign country is different from studying at home) – to the extent that most efforts to find equivalency between academic experiences abroad and academic experiences at home are inexact to the point of futility unless you simply ship American professors along with the students to do the same things abroad that they might do at home. Many of the global service-learning activities that we operate under the aegis of American colleges and universities are essentially extensions of study abroad. Some of them constitute long-term, generally semester-long, experiences that occupy all or part of the time of participating students. The programs of the International Partnership for Service-Learning are examples of full-time, semester-long international service-learning experiences. Some are semester-long service-learning courses offered side-by-side with other academic courses.

Service-learning as a public-service activity

As a public-service activity, service-learning has found a growing place in the college curriculum. While such sentiments have not been without resistance from an elitist minority of the professoriate that sees the very isolation of academia as an asset, most higher education leaders acknowledge some degree of obligation to give back to the society on which they depend, and many regard higher education itself as existing above all to serve a number of social functions that require its engagement with the larger society. It is here, above all, that Ernest Boyer’s idea of the “scholarship of engagement” has found its place. As Boyer puts it, “The scholarship of engagement means connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers and to our cities...” (1990).

The growth of higher education in the United States in the 1960s, and particularly the huge expansion of public higher education, confirmed this principle. Such developments as the founding of Campus Compact in 1985 (the logical conclusion of a process of increasing engagement over the previous twenty years) underlined the sense of obligation to serve the less fortunate. Public higher education in the United States, and particularly the Land Grant system, has in its history a century and a half of practical engagement. Ezra Cornell was a pioneer in the idea of the practical university. The more recent currency of notions of civic engagement and global citizenship (Boyte & Hollander 1999; Nussbaum 1997) has increased this sense of the engagement of higher education institutions, not only as a domestic obligation, but increasingly as an international activity – both because higher education is itself an increasingly globalized enterprise, and also because of a growing awareness that the world of today and tomorrow is a world in which national boundaries will mean very little. Thus the commitment of some of the larger urban universities to, at the very least, a sensitivity to their residential neighbors, has blossomed into a range of institutional arrangements and academic programs bringing professors and students into contact with the

communities in, at the very least, an attempt at reciprocity. Other institutions have developed a commitment to serving urban populations by sending students to live and work in the cities. Still others, particularly church-related institutions, see this mission as global in scope. Increasingly, all of these outreach efforts are developing international and global components. One cannot, however, assert that they are changing the programmatic architecture of most institutions in any very significant way; in some cases they have become shelters for radical pedagogies, or perhaps places in which such pedagogies can be practiced in isolation from the mainstream.

One of the ways in which this international engagement manifests itself is in short-term service-learning experiences abroad, often packed into a winter term or a summer, and often involving group projects run by a home-institution faculty member. Such experiences, valuable as they may be in themselves, are fundamentally different in nature from process-oriented long-term service-learning experiences in which students are immersed in the work of service agencies and often working independently of other American students, at least in their service placements. This distinction between process-based service-learning and project-based service-learning is crucially important. The success of the latter can be measured in terms of the success of the project (Did the local population in question get its school, or its well, or the promised immunizations?), whereas the success of the former is much more difficult to measure (Tonkin & Quiroga 2004; on measurement see Bringle, Phillips & Hudson 2004). While these short-term projects are often products of faculty engagement of the best kind, their purely educational value may sometimes be subordinated too easily to their reportability back home, and their integration into the curriculum may be relatively neglected.

What the two models – the project-based model and the process-based model – tell us, of course, is that global service-learning may have quite different goals and origins, the one rooted in the education of the individual and in long-term cultural adaptation, the other

rooted in the carrying out of useful service in a credit-bearing context.

In an earlier discussion (Bringle and Tonkin 2004) we noted the following design variables:

- the precise relationship between agency and classroom and the role of reflection in this relationship;
- the nature of the agency work (the difference between project-based service-learning and process-based service-learning, for example);
- the degree of embeddedness (in some service-learning programs students may work with their peers, whereas in others they may work exclusively or almost exclusively with in-country co-workers);
- the intensity of the service (e.g. the number of hours per week, or the level of responsibility put on the student);
- the duration of the service (short-term versus semester-long or year-long experiences);
- the nature of the population served; and
- the setting (urban environment, rural environment, industrialized country, developing country, etc.).

Different designs produce different outcomes, and are accordingly related to differing program goals, student goals, and pedagogical goals. Thus, when a program is in the planning stages, it is crucially important to align program design with expected outcomes (including learning outcomes and service outcomes) and, as the program moves forward, to employ formative methods of assessment to be sure that programs are meeting their objectives. Learning outcomes may be narrowly focused on disciplinary achievement, or may include cross-cultural competence, or more general notions of global citizenship.



Service-learning and community development

A third feature of the service-learning movement worldwide, even if it is less apparent in this country with its highly decentralized policy-making and its sense of individualism, is the use of service-learning as a way of engaging young people in community development so that as they acquire practical skills these skills can be applied to the community (Perry & Thomson 2004). Many countries require of all students, or of some, that they devote part of their time and energy to various forms of community service, and these activities are often linked back into the curricula of their institutions. The origins of such activities are complicated – in youth work camps in Yugoslavia after World War II, in efforts at nation-building in Ghana in the years following independence, and in countless similar developments in many different settings, some of them actually antedating World War II. These early efforts at youth mobilization were often conceived of as essentially independent of the educational mission of the country's educational institutions, but the connections have grown closer as new models have developed in recent years and as higher education planning and youth mobilization have developed connections (Berry & Chisholm 1999; Metz and others 2008). When in the 1950s Alec Dickson and Sinclair Goodlad developed their concept of study service (Dickson 1976, Synergist 1977), spurred by UNESCO's well-founded awareness that the key to decolonization was education, they dreamed of a seamless connection between higher education institutions in developed countries, on the one hand, and youth service in developing countries on the other – in which the service would inform the education and the education the service.

Dickson had spent the war years working in Africa, where, as a British army officer, he was given the task of shoring up support for the side of the allies among the British colonies in Africa. At the time there was fear that the war would expand into Africa, either by moving further south from the area north of the Sahara or as a result of a Japanese incursion into the

continent. Dickson, like many other idealistic young men of the time, was struck by the social cohesion of many of the communities that he visited, and sensed that western education, while bringing obvious and undeniable advantages with it, was actually undermining that cohesion by reducing the spirit of self-help that he found to be alive in subsistence communities, replacing it with an individualistic spirit of self-promotion among the educated. The African experience led Dickson to a lifetime's search for reciprocity – for ways of combining collective responsibility with individual advancement, for using education to promote community improvement. Arguably, the history of Africa from Dickson's day to our own bears his observation out: we have replaced one way of life with another, not by melding the best of both but by obliterating community to replace it with competition.

Alec Dickson founded Voluntary Service Overseas as a first step towards a vision of reciprocity (Adams 1968, Bird 1998), but the British higher education system, rooted firmly in an elitist view, was hardly ready for such a linkage. When the United States Peace Corps was founded a few years later, in part on the model of VSO, the educational component was ignored, despite the dreams of the founders of the School for International Training in Putney, Vermont, which did much of the preparation of the early Peace Corps volunteers. The Federal program University Year for Action, founded in 1971 and later converted into the VISTA program, was designed to link for-credit work in the community with undergraduate study, but the linkage was tenuous and largely unsustainable.

Whether it is possible today to revive this approach to international service-learning, overcoming the atmosphere of paternalism that it might seem to suggest, and finding ways of integrating it into the higher education systems of the various countries it touches, is anyone's guess. But I would posit that the high idealism that it implies is eminently suited to the aspirations of young people today and might offer a new way of conceiving the global responsibility of all nations to our collective destiny. Help-

ing others, problematic as that concept may be, tends to make the helpers aware of the need for policy changes and attitudinal changes: they become change agents. If there is one thing apparent in this time of global crisis, it is that young people yearn to do more than they are doing for the collective good in many contexts, and, if rebuffed in their efforts, turn away from universalism towards fragmentation.

Three approaches to service-learning: A critique

The three approaches to service-learning start from different premises, each one incomplete. The educational approach begins with the primacy of the student who is engaged in learning; the first goal is to benefit the student. Ethical imperatives require that the student engage in activities that, at the very least, do no harm to the larger community; but questions about the practical value of the service tend to take second place to goals linked to the practical and curricular value of the education to the student doing the service-learning (Chapdelaine, Ruiz, Warchal & Wells 2005; Langseth 2000). Of late, critics of conventional study abroad, in which there is no service component, have raised questions about the ethical acceptability of giving nothing back to the host community. Indeed, too much of study abroad seems posited on the assumption that the rest of the world exists to serve as a classroom for exceptionalist Americans. In today's connected world, Americans can venture abroad without ever leaving the comfort zone of their own Americanness, and the international experience may serve only to confirm their sense of superiority and to build on the neo-imperialism that accompanies it (Ogden 2008). The uninformed view that international experience is an unalloyed good may be one that we, as advocates of the international experience, will sometimes buy into out of political expediency, but it is corrosive; only certain kinds of experience, in certain settings, and with certain students, may be regarded as a success in inculcating positive values (see, for example, Bachner 1994; Lambert 1994). It is our task to define those kinds of experience, to identify those settings, and to work at prepar-

ing our students for the openness of mind that is a necessary accompaniment of international experience. Thus, the maintenance of quality is extremely important (including academic, curricular quality), as is the realization that not every international experience fulfills the same goals, and as is internal advocacy within institutions. Those who argue that the only way to move service-learning into the higher-education mainstream is to emphasize its academic quality may be right in the sense that advocacy in the higher-education context has to use arguments derived from higher education and not from some notion of putting the world to rights (Woolf 2008). But the pedagogy itself, and the expectations that we can rightly put on service-learning programs, goes beyond the imperatives of higher-education politics to include other imperatives as well.

My use of the term "experience" here merits a moment's attention. Faced with the sheer difficulty of pulling students away from the regular curriculum into foreign study, many institutions, especially some of the bigger elite institutions, are aiming not at having all students study abroad (a goal of some smaller institutions, Kalamazoo College being the most notable traditional example), but at having all students acquire some kind of international experience. Again, definition is all. As service-learning professionals and researchers, we may ask to what extent the design of such experiences, perhaps without a formal educational component, is our concern.

One thing we can certainly note: to an ever-increasing degree a student's international experience is neither an isolated event in his or her life nor the only such experience that he or she will have. Time spent abroad is increasingly just one stage in preparation for a lifetime of international experiences. The situation is a little like foreign language learning: more important than the particular language that a student learns is the fact that he or she may be embarked on a lifetime of language acquisition, so that learning how to learn may be more important than the particular knowledge required in a given instance.

Given these changed realities, it is perhaps time also to change the master narratives of study abroad (and hence of global service-learning). One of these narratives, that of the Frontier, has been particularly interestingly explored by Walter Grünzweig (Grünzweig & Rinehart 2002), who points out that the literature of study abroad (and even its principal scholarly periodical) uses the metaphor of new frontiers; study abroad constitutes a journey into the unknown, a conquering of frontiers, perhaps even an expansion of civilization into places hitherto unreached. It is all too easy to link the myth of the frontier with notions of conquest, of intellectual colonization, of telling the savages how to lead their lives – when in fact what is needed is humility. So much of American pedagogy, I might add, stresses the provision of answers, emphasizes problem-solving, when what is needed as we deal with other cultures is the ability to ask questions, not to provide answers, the ability to listen, not the ability to preach. So much of American education stresses breaking with the past, finding one's own individualism – when understanding cultural difference is dependent on understanding the past and discovering an awareness of the group.

A second metaphor or narrative relates to study abroad (and especially global service-learning) as a life-changing experience (Kiely 2004). Often, such study or service really is life-changing, causing people to rethink their career goals, revise their political views, and change the way they relate to others. But the constant repetition of the myth leads to distorted expectations; students feel under a certain obligation to testify to a kind of born-again revelation. If study abroad is becoming more commonplace, and if the world is intruding on our lives to a greater and greater extent, it is perhaps time to abandon, or at least revise, this myth of rebirth, recognizing that it is a kind of romantic fallacy – and not a requirement of return. Or perhaps we need to consider the potential of the transformation of others through time spent abroad rather than the transformation of the self.

If study abroad professionals are concerned about reciprocity, reciprocity is surely central to service-learning. Given the educational origins of so many service-learning programs, the question of the impact of these programs on the populations that they serve is still given too little attention; indeed it is often neglected altogether. Community development through community partnerships is neither easy to organize nor easy to sustain. Nor is it easy to develop an ongoing relationship with a service agency that is itself engaged in useful work (however we define that) and whose needs may differ quite sharply from the service or expertise that we are able to provide. Only the very largest and internationally most involved institutions can really provide the level of community involvement necessary for ongoing service-learning in a reciprocal setting. This realization in itself suggests that global service-learning of this sustained kind is best carried on by institutions or organizations that serve student populations in many colleges, rather than by individual institutions that have neither the resources nor the expertise to maintain the ongoing links with service organizations that are required. Organizations with sustained links abroad, such as SIT and the International Partnership for Service-Learning, come to mind. The latter played a crucial role in the 1980s in establishing the long-term international service-learning experience and continues to play an important advocacy role.

Regardless, no global service-learning program should be conceived and implemented without concern about reciprocity. Programs that come into being to serve a student population may end up neglecting the client population that the students are working for. Fundamentally, the process serves, or should serve, two groups: the service-learners themselves and the population with which, to a greater or lesser degree, they interact. Behind the learners stretch the vast perspectives of educational theory and practice, institutional structures, and the like; behind the population served stretches the equally vast panorama of public policy, concepts of service, and social structures.



In contrast to the educational approach, the second approach – that of public service – is focused less on the individual student than on the responsibility of the institution. Civic engagement is conceived as an institutional responsibility and students and professors are mobilized to fulfill that responsibility. I would argue that many short-term project-based programs are of this kind: a professor with connections sees a way of performing public service and engaging his or her students in the process in a way that will enhance their education. Sometimes the connection with the student's education may be somewhat attenuated, and often the professor, preoccupied with the project, may be less sensitive to the cross-cultural aspects of the program than is desirable. Thus the primary shortcoming of such programs is maximizing the educational impact of the program and the long-term shift in student attitudes that might accompany it.

The third approach – that of engaging young people in community development – is the least advanced in this country, and could form an important element in a national or state-wide youth policy should the country, or any of the states be willing to think in those terms. Youth unemployment, coupled with pressures on educational institutions (such as higher levels of general unemployment) that may occur in the months and years ahead, may force us to consider such options. They have a long history in other countries. Under any circumstances, service-learning programs of this kind in other countries (Mexico? The Philippines?) could provide fertile ground for the establishment of service-learning opportunities for American students.

Some questions

As we look back over fifty or more years of experience in the development of international and global service-learning, and as we consider the road ahead, there are some fundamental questions that we might ask ourselves.

1. American bias. International service-learning mediates between a largely western, often American, view of education and its purposes (a view tied to accreditation, notions of academic quality, and the award of credit), and an often non-western cultural view, in which epistemological assumptions may be quite different, and ideas about the nature of service, or the purpose of the alleviation of poverty, or even of poverty and education themselves, may differ from ours. The literature of international development and capacity-building addresses this complex issue quite frequently. The concept of service means different things in different cultures (Chisholm 2004). So does the concept of learning (Berry & Chisholm 1999; Chisholm & Berry 2002). Analysis, planning and execution on the basis of received, and essentially American, categories of thinking raises major policy questions in a globalized world. How do we overcome this persistent ideological bias?

2. International perspectives. How, then, can service, learning, and service-learning be defined and redefined from multiple (non-US) perspectives? What has the American experience in study abroad and in international engagement brought to these interrelated issues? What has the experience of other countries contributed? How does international service-learning contribute to the “internationalization” of higher education? Can we distinguish between international service-learning as a programmatic practice and international or global service-learning as a particular philosophical approach to teaching and learning?

3. Reciprocity. International and global service-learning is so heavily focused on benefiting the student that we may neglect other considerations. Given that the principal gatekeepers in the development of global service-learning opportunities are faculty committees, what mechanisms can we put in place to assure

that such issues as reciprocity and the long-term efficacy of our programs on the populations they serve are given due consideration?

4. Universality. Service-learning programs are expensive to run, hard to integrate into conventional curricula, and require great pedagogical expertise. How can we generalize the experience to larger numbers of students without losing the essential elements in effective service-learning programs? Or should we recognize that global service-learning will always be an activity involving very limited numbers? Are we ready to embrace international service-learning in today's academy? If so, what arguments do we use to bring it about?

5. Global mechanisms. Could we conceive of some fully internationalized mechanism that might provide opportunities to students in many countries to engage in service-learning – particularly service-learning in which they work together – given the numerous curricular and other obstacles to such cooperation? And is the required element of idealism still present in higher education and elsewhere to transcend narrow national concerns and perspectives and move us into a global approach to service-learning?

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