Linking Students with Community: Designing a Public Management Course using Project-Based Learning and Service Learning

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Introduction

- This study explores the impact of creating a computer literacy program for senior citizens through developing Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Service Learning (SL) opportunities in a public management (PM) course.
- The findings of this study will shed light on understanding how these implementations influence students' learning and how students' PBL/SL participation in the program could increase community engagement of students as well as seniors.

Background

- PBL is a set of learning experiences and tasks that guide students in inquiry toward answering a central question, solving a problem or meeting a challenge.
- SL is a teaching and learning methodology that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.
- Public management major students will be able to learn the importance of 'serving the public' and to be a civic-minded public manager via PBL/SL.
- Public sector projects are rarely carried out and written up by one individual. Most are handled by task forces and other teams. Therefore, public management major students should be exposed to group project to learn the difficulties and rewards of working together with various kinds of people.
- The essential elements of PBL/SL are critical thinking, collaboration, and communication.

- The importance of project in a PM course

(Conventional) Research **Project**
Project Based-Learning
Service Learning **Project**

- The project can be the linkage between teaching and learning/ theory and real world problems/ universities and communities.
- Advantages of PBL/SL : It facilitates training in technical, personal, and contextual competences; real world problems in the field of public management are dealt with; and collaborative learning is facilitated through the integration of teaching and research.

Development of PBL/SL for PM

- Seniors and Information Technology

◊ A launching presentation of a new website was held for the members of a communication committee in a downtown church which has a long history in Fort Wayne. Participants were excited to have the new website, a cutting-edge information technology (IT), called 'Web 2.0.' For the first time, the church has an interactive tool for communication. They want to use this new IT not only for a church's announcement tool among members, but also to promote the public life of the community. The average age of participants is over 70 years old. Their desires to use new IT, *de facto*, are higher than younger generations. Also they have more experience, time, and concerns about community issues. Most of them want to contribute to their communities. However, the participants have low confidence to use this new technology. What should we do?

◊ In March 2010, the Federal Communications Commission's National Broadband Plan specially requested additional funding from Congress to invest in digital literacy training programs for older Americans. One idea proposed for the plan was to support a 'National Digital Literacy Corps' that trains volunteers to teach digital skills to those least connected in their communities-including pairing young tech-savvy digital natives with seniors

- Five stages for developing PBL/SL in a PM course

Stage 1: Specify course objectives
Clarify academic and scholarly, professional development, and PBL/SL objectives

Stage 2: Structure of the class
Reflection journals, facilitated group works and management, create a driving question, process to write final products (written, presentation, media & tech, constructed and planning products)

Stage 3: Present student outcomes to the community
Beyond classmates and instructor, students present their work to people in their community

Stage 4: Assess the course
Peer critique, fishbowl prep, cooperative creation of assessment rubric

Stage 5: Feedback
Reflecting on feedback and revision

- To strengthen the capacity of seniors to receive and use information and to promote their community engagement, PM students' participation in PBL/SL was crucial (mutual benefits between students and communities).
- The student participants have opportunities to enrich their learning experience, learn civic responsibility and strengthen their community engagement.

Conclusion

- Developing collaborative relationships between universities and communities through PBL/SL courses is a strategy that can enrich the learning environment and orient both faculty and students toward the pursuit of civic-minded public management and citizenship.
- Both PBL and SL together in the design and development of a public management course will be meaningful and significant to enhance PM major students' learning.

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