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CULTURE, SOCIO-ECONOMICS, AND PEDAGOGY: RESEARCHING THE DIVIDE

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 2001 the International Partnership for Service-Learning, an organization that serves as an advocate for service-learning across the world and also operates its own programs in colleges and universities in fourteen countries,¹ received a grant from the Ford Foundation to strengthen its own operations and also to carry out an extensive study of the effectiveness of its programs. As a long-term board member and former chair of the board of the Partnership, I was asked to assume responsibility for the coordination of the research effort, and in the fall of 2001, after consultation with many people within and beyond the Partnership itself, I prepared a research plan that was subsequently adopted by the Partnership board and is now being implemented.

I should stress at the outset that, while we were eager to obtain an objective assessment of our programs and to contribute to the research effort in service-learning, our primary interest was, and remains, the improvement of the Partnership's activities and those of others engaged in service-learning: our research is therefore targeted, outcomes-oriented, and designed to yield usable information.

The Partnership's work, by involving both the service-learning experience and the international and intercultural experience, cuts across two major areas of research: study abroad (particularly the impact of study abroad on students) and service-learning (particularly the educational value of linking community service and the curriculum – for the students, for

¹ England, Czech Republic, Ecuador, France, India, Israel, Jamaica, Mexico, Philippines, Russia, Scotland, South Africa, Thailand, USA. The program in Thailand will open in 2003-2004 and the program in South Africa is still in the planning stage. There are two programs in Ecuador. The current master's program operates in Mexico, Jamaica, and England, and a second master's program is planned.

the process of learning, and for the institutions in which the learning takes place). Partnership programs, by their nature cross cultural divides between one nation or culture and another, socio-economic divides between the advantaged and the disadvantaged, and also pedagogical divides between conventional pedagogy and the pedagogy of action and reflection.²

Over its twenty-year history, the Partnership has been influential both as an advocate and as an agent of change. Many of those now actively involved in service-learning in this country and abroad were inspired to make that commitment through the work of the Partnership and the example of some of its early leaders, such as Alec Dickson, the founder of Voluntary Service Overseas in Britain and a strong supporter of the Partnership's work,³ and Howard Berry, our first President. Indeed, the influence of the Partnership has been out of all proportion to its relatively modest organizational structure and programmatic activity. The Partnership is not intended as a mere service for institutions of higher education, but as a transforming agent, shaping students' lives, determining the priorities of institutions, reforming educational practice, and building better communities.⁴

My early discussions in 2001 with board members, sending institutions in the US, directors of our programs overseas, and various others, identified three areas where our activities have been particularly influential and that warranted further research.⁵ They also defined two additional needs related to the research effort.

The three areas identified for further attention were: (1) the effects of our programs on students, (2) the role of the Partnership as an agent of institutional change, and (3) the impact of our programs on social service agencies and the clients and communities they

² On navigating these divides, see Linda A. Chisholm, *Charting a Hero's Journey* (New York: International Partnership for Service-Learning, 2000).

³ See, for example, Alec Dickson, *A Chance to Serve* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1976).

⁴ For a statement on the goals of the Partnership and its pedagogy, see the Partnership's website, www.ipsl.org. See also Howard Berry, "Service learning in international and intercultural settings," in Jane Kendall and Associates, ed. *Combining Service and Learning* vol. 1 (New York: National Society for Internships and Experiential Education, 1990), 311-314. On the mechanics of setting up international service-learning programs, see Linda Chisholm, "Partnerships for international service-learning," in Barbara Jacoby and Associates, ed. *Building Partnerships for Service-Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 259-288; Florence E. McCarthy, "Service learning and the construction of networks and curriculum," in Kano Yamamoto, ed. *Service Learning in Asia: Creating Networks and Curricula in Higher Education* (Tokyo: International Christian University, 2002), 23-37. On the nature of international service-learning, see Humphrey Tonkin, "Study, service, and the self transformed," in Martin Tillman, ed. *Study Abroad: A 21st Century Perspective, Volume II – The Changing Landscape* (Stamford, Connecticut: American Institute for Foreign Study, 2001), and Humphrey Tonkin, "Service learning: Making education more meaningful," *International Educator*, 8 (1999), 1: 35-37.

⁵ On research on service-learning's effects in general, see the comprehensive annotated bibliography, Janet S. Eyler, Dwight E. Giles, Jr., Christine M. Stenson, and Charlene J. Gray, *At a Glance: What We Know About the Effects of Service-Learning on College Students, Faculty, Institutions and Communities, 1993-2000*, at <http://www.compact.org/resource/aag.pdf>. See also A. Driscoll, B. Holland, S. Gerlmon & S. Kerrigan, "An assessment model for service-learning: Comprehensive case studies of impact on faculty, students, community, and institutions," *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 3 (1996): 66-71, and several of the essays in Shelley H. Billig & Andrew Furco, eds. *Service-Learning Through a Multidisciplinary Lens* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing, 2002).

serve. We adopted three working hypotheses as we designed our research in these three areas.

Students

First, the effect of our programs on students. Our programs appear to have had a major impact on the educational and moral development of young people from the United States and elsewhere who have passed through these programs. The Partnership's pedagogies of engagement seem to have caused students to learn to look at other cultures with new eyes, to examine their own culture and assumptions with a newly critical regard, and to appreciate the importance of cooperation and of service to others. The processes associated with service-learning, in other words, seem to have led to a degree of engagement with another culture that goes beyond what we normally associate with the nonetheless transformative experience of study abroad. The pedagogy of action/reflection, the direct interaction with another culture through the service component of the program, and the architecture of Partnership programs with its stress on the use of in-country personnel and its emphasis on self-reliance – these seem to be the distinguishing features of the Partnership experience. We have extensive written materials – questionnaires, journals and the like – from students that testify to these transformations, but we are interested in examining the relationship between such testimony and the actual lifetime experience, behavior and life choices of our alumni – and the extent to which such experience and behavior can be linked with the Partnership's programs.

Institutions

Second, the influence of the Partnership on institutions. The Partnership's involvement in, and advocacy of, service-learning programs in various parts of the world and its encouragement of institutional participation appears to have had a transforming effect on the programs and priorities of numbers of institutions of higher education. We can point to several examples of institutions that, serving as hosts of the Partnership when we first got started in the 1980s, are now requiring community service or service-learning of all their students.⁶ We do not know how influential the Partnership and its ideas were in that process, nor do we know with any clarity what factors impeded or advanced the shift toward service-learning: this is what we wish to investigate.⁷

Agencies and communities

⁶ On service-learning around the world, see Howard A. Berry and Linda A. Chisholm, *Service-Learning in Higher Education Around the World: An Initial Look* (New York: International Partnership for Service-Learning, 1999); Kano Yamamoto, ed. *Service Learning in Asia: Creating Networks and Curricula in Higher Education* (Tokyo: International Christian University, 2002); John Annette, "Service learning in an international context," *Frontiers*, Winter 2002: 83-93.

⁷ On the institutionalization of service-learning, see, for example, Robert G. Bringle & J.A.Hatcher, "Institutionalization of service-learning in higher education," *Journal of Higher Education*, 71(1997), 3: 273-290; K.Ward, "Service-learning and student volunteerism: Reflections on institutional commitment," *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 3 (1996): 55-65.

Third, the influence of the Partnership on agencies and communities. By virtue of their ongoing support for social service organizations, Partnership programs appear to have helped transform communities in many parts of the world. A close relationship has grown up between the programs and the agencies to which they send students. Since Partnership pedagogies emphasize long-term human commitment to community service, and since they are process-oriented rather than specifically outcomes-oriented, assessing the influence of the Partnership will be particularly difficult: we cannot point to so many houses built, or so many wells dug, because the Partnership focuses on people and on the process of service rather than on material outcomes. However, this third area of research is particularly important: service-learning is so often conceived as something that is “good for” students, in that it builds a sense of citizenship and altruism, that we give little or no attention to what actually happens to the people at whom the service is directed.⁸ Is our objective better education, better communities, or both?

Qualitative vs. quantitative research

Even with the substantial Ford Foundation grant, our resources were too limited to carry out a fully comprehensive, quantitative study – though one of our objectives is to encourage further work following the start that we are now making, and we are beginning to recruit interest from researchers in need of good research materials and clearly-defined and limited subject groups. Indeed, there are entire areas (for example language learning) that are not part of the present study. So our research will not be wholly comprehensive, and may in some instances be qualitative and anecdotal rather than quantitative and comparative, but it should be based on solid evidence and verifiable data.

2. DEMOGRAPHICS AND EVALUATION

Demographics of Partnership students

I mentioned at the beginning that, in addition to our emphasis on student impact, institutional impact, and agency impact, there were two additional needs that we identified.

One of these was a preliminary study of the demographics of the students who pass through the Partnership’s undergraduate programs, using the data already available to us. We prepared this report in the fall of 2001. We described the goals of the study as follows: “To assemble a demographic profile of past and present students in the program, with information on their sending institutions, their majors, and any other evidence that can be obtained from existing records. In addition, new data-gathering instruments will be put in place to provide additional longitudinal data in future years...”

⁸ “Are we and our students exploiting the community for learning purposes as we engage in service-learning endeavors,” asks Barbara L. Rich, of the University of Southern Maine, in a paper, “Ethical issues and questions for service-learning practitioners and researchers,” given at the Second Annual Conference on Service-Learning Research, Nashville, October 2002. On the problem of assessing the community impact of service-learning, see Nadinne I. Cruz & Dwight E. Giles, Jr., “Where’s the community in service-learning research?” *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, Special Issue, Fall 2000: 28-34.

The Partnership operates, or has operated, undergraduate programs at fifteen locations in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Europe, and at two locations in the United States.⁹ Our study showed that over the past fifteen years, some 2000 students have participated in these programs, almost all of them from the United States, with the largest numbers going to Ecuador, England, France, Jamaica, and Mexico. About half of these students are in their third year of college. They come from all parts of the United States and several foreign countries.

Female students account for 80.08% of the total – a higher proportion than in study-abroad programs generally and a particularly high proportion for destinations outside Europe.¹⁰ Their racial profile appears to match that of study-abroad students in general, and they come from a wide range of religious backgrounds. They are getting younger: the average age of undergraduates participating in Partnership programs has fallen from 21.83 in the early 1990s to 20.69 today. Language, area, and cultural studies constitutes the most popular group of majors, but there are significant numbers of majors in psychology and the cognitive sciences, and in biology and life sciences.

Most Partnership students come from small institutions. Although research universities account for 54.8% of undergraduates from the United States studying abroad, only 35.63% of Partnership students come from such institutions. Most (61.69%) Partnership students come from small colleges and other largely undergraduate institutions (nationally, these account for only 40.8% of undergraduates studying abroad). The average Partnership student, then, is female, approaching her 21st birthday, and perhaps studying in Latin America. She probably comes from a liberal-arts college and is in her third year of study.

This preliminary demographic study made no attempt to explain these numbers. We can speculate that smaller colleges are unable to offer programs of the kind or quality that the Partnership offers and therefore their students gravitate to the Partnership, that women are attracted to Partnership programs because they are based on providing practical help to communities and many of them require a knowledge of a foreign language, and that students in the undergraduate programs are getting younger because the Partnership now offers a separate master's degree. The Demographic Survey is now posted on the Partnership website (www.ipsl.org) and available in hard copy.¹¹ Still to be considered is the possibility

⁹ In addition to the programs already mentioned, the Partnership formerly operated a program at Cuttington College, Liberia, which had to be discontinued because of civil war. It also launched and soon closed an Appalachian program in the United States.

¹⁰ For statistics on US study abroad, see the annual Institute of International Education publication *Open Doors*. NAFSA, through its Section on US Students Abroad (SECUSSA), has recently launched the SECUSSA Data Collection Initiative to make the Open Doors survey more comprehensive: the Open Doors survey is based on numbers gathered from colleges and universities and covers those students given credit by their home institutions for academic work outside the United States. Many students, however, may enroll with a third-party provider and may not show up in home institution statistics. Kathleen Sideli (Indiana University) chairs the Data Collection Working Group, which is currently conducting a survey of study abroad providers as a part of the SECUSSA effort.

¹¹ Humphrey Tonkin, *The International Partnership for Service-Learning: A Review of the Demographics of the Undergraduate Programs* (New York: International Partnership for Service-Learning, 2002).

of requiring of the students a pre-departure questionnaire, to be co-coordinated with a revised exit questionnaire that students are required to complete in order for credit to be issued.

Program evaluation

At the other end of the spectrum, a need was identified for better ways of monitoring quality in Partnership programs themselves – in such a way that the evaluation of programs might also generate data to be used to assess the effectiveness of the Partnership’s programs over time. So we made the development of better criteria for evaluating the success of individual in-country programs a high priority of our efforts. Such evaluation, we decided, must be a collective undertaking, in which the directors and faculty in individual programs are fully engaged, both in the assessment of their own in-country programs and in an ongoing professional dialogue with their peers in other programs, aimed at strengthening consensus in the Partnership and fully exploiting new developments in the field.

Out of a review of other organizations’ efforts at assessing study abroad programs,¹² and through discussion with Partnership staff and directors, there has emerged a set of Evaluation Criteria for Partnership Programs based on the following Framing Principle: “Regular monitoring and evaluation of all phases of the Partnership’s activities are essential to ensure quality education, effective service to the community, and adequate support services for students away from home.” The Evaluation Criteria attempt to address two questions: (1) “What can students, parents and sending institutions expect of Partnership programs?” and (2) “What do we as Partnership professionals regard as good practices, and what do we aspire to achieve through our programs?” The criteria, which are now being field-tested, address such issues as the quality of predeparture programs, the arrival process, quality of instruction, service placements, learning, staffing, and on-site resources. They will be used for self-assessment in advance of regularly scheduled visits by evaluation teams to each of our sites. We expect that when they are complete they will be posted on the Partnership website.

3. STUDENTS, INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES

The student study

But the major thrust of our effort has been on the three studies of students, institutions, and agencies. The student study is being conducted by a team of four experts: Margaret D. Pusch (Intercultural Communication Institute), Diego Quiroga (Universidad San Francisco

¹² The MAP (Model Assessment Practice), developed by the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES), is perhaps the most extensive such instrument. The IES is now conducting further research using the MAP as a basis. Well established programs, such as those at Butler University or those operated by the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), have regular program review built into their procedures, using a combination of site visits and written criteria for evaluation. The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools publishes a *Manual for Study Abroad Evaluations*. However, no standard instrument, available to, and designed by, all organizations exists for study abroad programs, though there is considerable interest among program administrators in producing one.

de Quito), Michael Siegel (Policy Center on the First Year of College), and John Whiteley (University of California Irvine). The student study is based primarily on a series of focus groups conducted with seventeen Partnership alumni assembled in New York City in early April. Obviously it will not establish whether the Partnership's programs have a profound effect on its students: the seventeen alumni were selected primarily because they are particularly articulate about their experience and they cannot be described as typical. However, we are interested in the relationship between what might be described as the typical Partnership narrative and the actual behavior of students, and in the shape of the experience among those whom it has influenced significantly.

Our research plan states the goals of this study as follows: "To carry out research and data-gathering on past and present students, their opinions, their career patterns, their experiences, through contact not only with the students themselves, but also with parents, home institution faculty members, advisors, program directors, and others. This study will focus particularly on student goals and attitudes." The study will clearly draw on the literature on outcomes from both service-learning¹³ and study abroad.¹⁴ The findings of our team of experts, supplemented by a series of telephone interviews with parents and, we hope, other groups, will be assembled into a final report, edited by Mike Siegel and me, that will be ready, we hope, at the end of the year.

The institutional study

The study of institutions will focus probably on three institutions in different parts of the world. Our original research plan enumerated the following questions as particularly worthy of attention: "Who have been the principal agents of change? How have the stated priorities and missions of the institutions changed? What impact have the philosophy and practices of

¹³ On assessment of the impact of service-learning on students, see A. Driscoll and others, *Assessing the Impact of Service Learning*, 2nd ed. (Portland, Oregon: Center for Academic Excellence, Portland State University, 1998); Janet Eyster and Dwight Giles, *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999); Eyster, Giles, Stenson & Gray, *op. cit.* A contribution by Michael Siegel to the present conference session deals with "The Intersection of Service-Learning and the First Year of College," and indicates that students who engage in service-learning programs or volunteer activities self-report a higher level of success in adaptation to college than those who do not. See also Edward Zlotkowski, ed., *Service-Learning and the First-Year Experience: Preparing Students for Personal Success and Civic Responsibility* (Columbia, SC: National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience, 2002) and particularly Lori J. Vogelgesang, Elaine K. Ikeda, Shannon K. Gilmartin, and Jennifer R. Keup, "Service-Learning and the First-Year Experience: Outcomes Related to Learning and Persistence," Zlotkowski 2002: 15-26. On experiential elements in the overseas experience, see Lynne Montrose, "International Study and Experiential Learning: The Academic Context," *Frontiers*, Winter 2002: 1-15.

¹⁴ On assessment of the impact of study abroad on students, see the annotated bibliographies by Barbara Burn, Jerry Carlson, et al., *Research on U.S. Students Abroad to 1987: A Bibliography with Abstracts*, and Maureen Chao, *Research on U.S. Students Study Abroad: An Update 1988-2000*, both at www.usc.edu/dept/education/index2.html. See also Jerry S. Carlson, Barbara B. Burn, et al. *Study Abroad: The Experience of American Undergraduates* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1990); Joan Gillespie, Larry A. Braskamp & David C. Braskamp, "Evaluation and Study Abroad: Developing Assessment Criteria and Practices to Promote Excellence," *Frontiers*, Fall 1999: 101-127. Several research programs for the assessment of student outcomes of study abroad are currently underway, including a consortial effort led by Georgetown University (Michael J. Vande Berg), the IES program mentioned above, and a study by CIEE (the Council on International Educational Exchange).

service-learning had on faculty, staff, students, service agencies? To what extent has the Partnership's involvement been the determining factor, or one in a number of factors, influencing changes in policy and practice?" The plan goes on to state that "The study will draw on any research or data within the institutions themselves, might be linked to funding for follow-up projects, and might include recommendations on institutional integration of service learning. Most, or all, of the institutions involved will be in countries outside the United States. One of the purposes of the study will be to explore the applicability of their experiences to U.S. institutions."

The institutional study began a few weeks ago. At their recent meeting, each of the program directors interviewed one another on the history and organization of their programs and their interrelationship with their host institutions. They were supplied in advance with a list of suggested questions, but they were not obliged to limit themselves to these questions. The interviews were observed and summarized by rapporteurs. The task will now fall to me to analyze the reports and make a recommendation on which three institutions should be selected for more detailed study. Such study will include a site visit by an expert or team of experts, and probably ongoing discussions with each of the three following the visits. We expect a final report, informed by our knowledge of institutional change, to be completed early in the new year, if not before.

The agency study

The study of agencies is being conducted by Dr. Susan Deeley, of the Department of Social Policy & Social Work at the University of Glasgow, Scotland. Our plan described the goal of this study as follows: "To carry out a study of social service organizations that have worked with the Partnership and its receiving institutions over a number of years, including the development of profiles of these organizations and of the Partnership's impact (a) on the agencies themselves and (b) on the transformation of the communities they serve. The study will also examine the importance of the university/agency connection."

In February and March Dr. Deeley carried out a small-scale qualitative study in Glasgow, working with seven agencies that regularly host service-learning students – two schools for primary-aged children with a range of special needs, an after-school children's resource club in a deprived area of the city, a day center for disabled adults, a day center for the infirm and frail elderly, a drug crisis center, and a museum of social work. Some 23 interviews were conducted with staff-members and service-users. Dr. Deeley examined the needs of service-users and the way service-learning students addressed those needs, the question of time (service-learners free up the time of staff members; service-learners can devote their available time completely to service-users without the distractions or constraints common to staff members; service-learners spending protracted time at an agency can create bonds with service-users); the question of cultural differences (American English versus British English; humor; self-confidence; religious differences); motivation (a commitment to service, but also an occasionally distracting interest in seeing a new country); age; gender; reciprocity (learning and teaching goes in both directions); skills (American students have expertise that is not commonly found among British students), and social interaction.

In April, Dr. Deeley conducted a similar round of interviews with service agencies and service-users in Kingston, Jamaica, assisted by staff from the Partnership program at the

University of Technology, Jamaica. She is now analyzing her Jamaican findings and comparing them with the preliminary work she carried out in Glasgow. Her report, including not only her findings but also recommendations for the future, will be ready in the course of the summer, at which stage we will decide whether to move on to a third site or to further supplementary work, or to regard this part of the study as complete.

Audiences

The entire project will be completed early in the year 2004, though we expect that it will begin a continuing process of research on the Partnership experience – a process that has in fact already begun.¹⁵ In publishing and disseminating the results of our activities, we will seek to reach a number of audiences, among them:

- The Partnership itself. To strengthen its programs and to make its case, the Partnership needs to know more about itself. Such knowledge will benefit program directors, others associated with programs in the field, and the staff in New York.
- Sending personnel, including study abroad advisors, and faculty members.
- Students, who will have a better sense of the Partnership's programs and a better understanding of service-learning.
- Agencies and others interested in involving students in community service.
- Educational planners, particularly those involved in curricular planning, and those eager to evaluate the strengths of experiential learning and pedagogies of engagement.
- Educational researchers.
- Educational reformers, particularly those in the service-learning community.
- Advocates of service-learning in the United States and abroad.
- NGO leaders and others involved in international development.

¹⁵ See, for example, Kathia Monard's recent University of Pittsburgh dissertation *Nurturing Senses of Care, Justice and Reciprocity through International Service-Learning*, on the Partnership's Ecuador program.

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