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Employing Typologies of Learning for a Holistic Evaluation of Service-Learning Students

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Service-learning as a teaching strategy is popular in the Philippines because it serves the instruction, research, and extension or community engagement functions of higher education institutions. But it is also controversial because it is too demanding to students in terms of time and effort given their other school activities and requirements. It is, therefore, unfair for students if they are not fairly or realistically evaluated commensurate to the resources they put into the service of the community and the corresponding learning they generated if no deliberate plan and systematic procedure are followed by teachers. The community engagement model of Butin (2007) that is linked to the typologies of learning goals which include technical, cultural, political and anti-foundational is relevant for this purpose. This paper recommends that these learning goals constitute what the teachers should consider for giving grades to students and the weight for each type to the total grade shall depend upon the nature of the courses or subjects where service-learning is employed. Holistic evaluation of service-learning students considers all types of learning they experience in community service which are not only evident in their activity reports but are made visible in the reflection sessions. The ten principles of service-learning by Howard (1993) are also excellent guides for appropriately, fairly and holistically evaluating service-learning students.

Keywords: community engagement, typologies of learning, holistic evaluation, service-learning students, reflection session

INTRODUCTION

Service-learning is getting popular in the Philippines because it satisfies the instruction, research, and extension or community engagement functions expected of higher education institutions (Cernol-McCann, 2013). In fact, these functions can be undertaken by one or a group of teachers through service-learning although there are personal and institutional issues that discouraged many to go into this pedagogy (Witmer, Silverman, & Gashen 2009). But this type of experiential learning is too demanding in terms of time and resources of students who are already pre-occupied with several course requirements. One can only imagine how to manage limited time to satisfactorily comply with what their teachers expect them to submit within a determined period if majority or all their enrolled subjects in a particular semester employ service-learning as a teaching strategy. Service-learning as a strategy is undeniably stressful due to the various tensions that make this teaching strategy somehow counter-productive to quality education (Shannon 2007). This is just one of the ethical issues that makes service-learning controversial despite the pedagogical benefits it offers (Howard, 1993; Martin, 2001; Gaster, 2011).

Moreover, the service-learning practice of requiring students to serve a particular community or group of people as one of the parameters in grading them becomes questionable when the course did not originally require service-learning when it was designed. This requirement, which is a major component of a direct service-learning, not virtual, as in an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tutorial, is to enhance classroom instruction even if community engagement is not inherent or natural to the course. However, not only might some students dislike the practice because they perceive that it is inappropriate to their courses and that it is a wasteful investment, but also because such practice can expose them to dangers due to security and safety problems when travelling to and from the community (Shannon, 2007). Also, there are some perceived bad health effects because of too much exposure of students to the natural elements. The induced burden and protection issues become critical concerns that need to be addressed.

Given the foregoing issues around service-learning, one of the questions being asked, which has ethical undertones, is whether or not the amount and quality of "learning" is worth the time and effort of students (Gaster 2011). Therefore, there is the urgency now to examine the worth of service-learning to students, but this requires a tool for clarifying the domains and relevance of

what the students had expressed or demonstrated with regard to what and how much they had learned. The ethical consideration in evaluating the learning of students in service-learning has to be seriously examined in order to appreciate how the students are or should be justly given grades corresponding to the kind of expected learning outcomes laid before them by their teachers at the official start of classes (Howard, 1993). This is where I found the four modes of community engagement developed by Dan Butin (2007) useful, and I will show later how these can become tools in categorizing and distinguishing the dominant type of learning that students have experienced and in determining their level or extent of learning.

LOOKING AT SERVICE-LEARNING GOALS AS BASIS FOR EVALUATION

Aside from the experience I had with my own service-learning students in Social Theory, Research Statistics, Environmental Anthropology, and Anthropology of Tourism, the data I refer to and analyze here also come from the past and recently published experiences of students from various disciplines. I will highlight the fact that the varied experiences that come out of service-learning engagement of students provide them more than technical learning. This is usually expected by teachers in courses that are more into psychomotor skills development, particularly in natural or health sciences where service-learning is adopted primarily for skills enhancement. The case is different with teachers in the social sciences who are interested in other learning domains that students experience in their direct engagement with the community.

I argue that the typologies of learning outcomes in service-learning based on the original concept of Butin (2007) can offer more systematic and broader ways of evaluating the performance of students that will ethically justify the investment they have in serving and learning with the community. The evaluation of students' learning has to be anchored on the goal of community engagement whether the service they will extend can enrich their knowledge and skills in a particular field, make them more sensitive and appreciative of human differences, propel their desire to assist in the pursuit of certain agenda that promote human well-being, and excite their ability to examine and critically question some taken for granted assumptions about certain phenomenon in life.

Thus, in this paper I will review service-learning practices of selected teachers of Silliman University in terms of evaluating the learning of students in their engagement with the community through the services they have extended given their skills and available resources. In so doing the ethical issues that are satisfactorily addressed or that are not highlighted, and corresponding implications on the protection of the welfare and interest of students and the community is opened up for more examination. This will also open up a broader treatment of service-learning not only as a strategy to promote certain skills among students but to develop them as whole persons who acquire high self-worth because they have realized that their achievement is not only measured by what this has brought them but what they have shared and how this has contributed to the well-being and empowerment of others.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MODELS AND TYPOLOGIES OF LEARNING

Butin (2007) introduced the four models of community engagement with the aim that the diversity of goals associated with community engagement can be appreciated, cognizant of the fact that there are several ways by which these goals can be achieved depending on the creativity of teachers and the commitment of their students. I employed service-learning in my classes when this was first introduced in Silliman University in 2001 after my training in 1999 with the International Partnership in Service-Learning (IPSL) and I never fully realized the different dimensions and levels of learning that students wrote in their journals and reported at the end of their community engagement (Oracion 2002). What the students learned were lumped under skills and knowledge "gained from community service" that are expected of them. For example, they had applied reportedly what they learned in school and found it was not difficult working with community residents contrary to what they originally thought. More meaningful analysis could have been made if it was done with the community engagement model of Butin (2007) which was not yet published at the time.

The first typology of this model is *technical* which is primarily concerned with pedagogical effectiveness and emphasis on content that the students have to learn through servicing the community. Service-learning is considered as a better tool for teaching students certain skills. The second typology is *cultural,* emphasizing the meanings of service in terms of

promoting cultural sensitivity and competency as well as civic responsibility. This goes beyond the learning of technical skills which are of primary importance to service learners—because cultural skills are learned in the process of serving and relating with different people in the community. The focus of empowering communities that have been marginalized for a period of time is associated with the third model which is labeled *political* because this model promotes social and political activism. The fourth model is described as *anti-foundational* because the service-learning engagement of students open up new learning that drives them to question a priori truth that they learn from classroom instruction.

The article of Cernol-McCann (2013) demonstrated how teachers may design service-learning objectives based on the four community engagement models of Butin (2007). Her focus was for students to understand the phenomenon of poverty, as an example, in order to inspire them to get involved in addressing this issue. She demonstrated that students can learn all the goals associated with the four models in one service-learning engagement. There is only the need for teachers to carefully bring these out during the reflection session as part of the evaluation of the performance of students. Examining and comparing the discussion of poverty in the classroom from what they read in books and journals with what they observe in the community exemplifies technical learning. Empathizing with the poor households that have less access to social services is a form of cultural learning, which may lead to political learning when students propose ways to narrow down economic disparities. Meanwhile, questioning personal assumptions or stereotypes of poor households and communities after service-learning activities is a form of anti-foundational learning.

EXPECTED AND RANKED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Ten faculty members of Silliman University were interviewed about the learning outcomes that they expected from their students in the service-learning activities. They were first asked to identify the service activities of students which were then categorized into three general types to better appreciate the learning outcomes expected (Oracion & Ligutom 2013). The first reported activity was *research* (e.g., socioeconomic survey, social and natural monitoring, and needs assessment of a particular organization or community). Then, the data obtained were given to partner organizations

or local government units. The second activity was *capability-building* which came in the form of seminars, trainings, and lectures pertaining to the promotion of good health and quality environment; the third were *needs-specific services* such as tutorials, health care, and laboratory testing. The first two services had benefits intended for the entire community and the third was directly enjoyed by individuals or small groups in the host community (Oracion 2002).

I labeled the learning outcomes corresponding to the goals of the services extended by the students, as designed by the teachers according to the typologies of community engagement of Butin (2007). The teachers were asked to rank, from one (highest) to four (least), the type of learning or the combination of types they expected from their students from their service-learning activities. The data showed that *technical learning* ranked first (with an average rating of 1.55) as it was foremost in the category that teachers really wanted their students to gain from the courses or degree programs they were enrolled in. This was particularly noted by teachers in health sciences. They employed service-learning primarily as a tool to enhance classroom instruction and to provide students the venue and opportunity to practice and validate what they learned theoretically from real people and conditions outside of the university. For example, the teachers expected students to learn how to interview local people, to collect specimens for laboratory analysis, to provide lectures for mothers about health, to tutor children, and so on.

Cultural learning ranked second (with an average rating of 2.00), which expectedly followed technical learning, particularly as reported by teachers in the social sciences or service-oriented courses such as sociology, anthropology, and social work. This type of learning happens naturally when students interact with the residents of host communities or members of certain organizations. However, cultural learning was much more recognized and appreciated by social science students because they had the theories and concepts to explain certain cultural phenomenon which may not be explicit to natural science students. The social science students were taught the differences in the folkways between rural and urban people, the ways to approach the community without appearing aggressive, and so on, as they go by the principle that working with local community requires the establishment of rapport.

The third in rank was *political learning* (with an average rating of 2.73) and must be associated with the capability-building services extended by

students that require them to be persuasive in promoting certain practices for good health and quality environment. The teachers of nursing and public administration students, for example, were not only interested in enhancing students' ability to communicate certain best practices to community residents which they need in real life or work situation. However, such ability does not end with the act of communicating; it is also measured by how effective the students were in convincing a target population, as evident in these people's attitude and behavioral change. Such ability is, however, difficult to measure if done after each service-learning engagement of certain groups of students because such changes take time to manifest. The impact of certain advocacies needs to be considered with the accumulated results of the service-learning program of the university over a period of time.

Finally, fourth in rank was *anti-foundational learning* (with an average rating of 2.86), which was considered the as least important among the expectations of teachers because their primary focus was on skills development or enrichment from community engagement. In fact, three out of the ten teachers interviewed did not mind about this type of learning. There were five who rated this type of learning third and fourth, while two rated it first and second. However, four of those who reported to have observed anti-foundational learning did not consider this type of learning as part of the parameters for grading students— that is, it was, for them, an added value. Although such learning may not be part of the grades, the classroom learning the students had that contradicted the reality in the community had inspired them to modify their ways of dealing with or serving the community. For example, a teacher of physical therapy noted that students had encountered various modalities of treating health problems that were not taught in school. As a result, the students learned to modify their techniques. The same was reported by psychology students who discovered more effective methods of tutoring children. These methods were contrary to the principles and theories from books and repeatedly discussed inside the classroom.

BASES OF MEASURING LEARNING OUTCOMES

The next issue in evaluating the performance of students in service-learning is how to measure how the extent of learning after a given period which may cover the whole or half of the semester. It may also simultaneously cover the whole course or a particular topic or unit reflected in the course syllabus. The

same group of teachers mentioned earlier was asked about their strategies and indicators as bases for evaluating the performance of students that were specific to their service-learning engagement. A comparison of strategies and indicators presented according to the number of teachers (n= 10) who reported them shows projects as foremost followed by reflection paper and reflection discussion. Behavior change and examinations were least used.

Table 1. Number of Teachers Reported Certain Strategies
and Indicators for Evaluating Learning of Students
per Learning Outcome (Multiple responses)

Strategies and	Learning Outcomes			
Indicators	Technical	Cultural	Political	Anti-foundational
Activity reports	10	10	8	8
Reflection paper	9	10	7	8
Reflection Discussion	8	9	7	8
Behavior change	6	7	5	5
Examinations	4	4	4	2

The activity reports that the teachers required from students included photo and narrative documentation, types of activities conducted, journals of field experiences, and project output presentation to the community. These did not only manifest the types of learning of students but also served as tangible indicators of the students' community engagement in terms of the types and extent of services and activities they had undertaken. These outcomes are also expected in evidence-based education that is being promoted at Silliman University as a measure of students' knowledge and skills in relation to the lessons covered and discussed in class. The integration or employment of service-learning as a teaching strategy is not incidental but planned as reflected in the course outline or syllabus prior to the start of the class, and corresponding expected learning output is disseminated to the students.

The requirement of a reflection paper and participation in the reflection session are unique features of service-learning because it is in the students' reflection of their experiences during community engagement that they can find more meaning and insights beyond technical learning. However, reflection sessions should not simply be a free-flowing sharing and discussion

of experiences; it is supposed to be guided by questions prepared by the teachers so that the students can focus on choosing what to share from among their experiences. Thus, in the conduct of reflection session with my students after every community engagement, I formulated questions guided by the four learning outcomes of Butin (2007).

In my case, I asked my students to share the knowledge and skills they experienced that were relevant to the course; the ways of perceiving and relating with other people that made them more considerate and compassionate; and the activities that they had or they wanted to do to influence others and that contributed to the well-being of the majority. I also asked theoretical or practical questions that bothered the students and that they wanted to be resolved or clarified with the class after community engagement. I grade my students according to the quality of their ideas and extent of participation in the reflection session, not according to what I expected them to answer which fit my own ideas and biases. No objective answers were expected in service-learning reflection but only sensible answers that demonstrated the seriousness and open-mindedness of students in their community engagement.

Meanwhile, behavioral change is one learning outcome that is really difficult to measure in the absence of certain criteria and objective indicators. Nevertheless, how the teachers concerned evaluate behavior change is implied in the results of the interview (as shown in Table 1). Behavioral change can be found across the four learning outcomes such as changes in skills, in relating with other people, in being empathic or sympathetic to the depressed conditions of host community, and in expressing counter-ideas during classroom discussion after the service-learning engagement of students (Oracion, 2002; Oracion, 2010). I observed that my students who were timid or not participative in class discussion became very eager to share their experiences after they had the opportunity to serve and learn from the community. However, only seven out of the 10 teachers interviewed earlier who cut across disciplines admitted to including behavior change as one parameter for giving grades to students (Oracion & Ligutom 2013). Therefore, the inclusion of change in behavior for grading cannot be associated with certainty with specific disciplines; it is relative to the preference of the teachers concerned.

The extent that service-learning performance has determined the final grades of students is discernible in the percentages these comprised in the total grade. On the average, the service-learning outputs of students is only

38% of their total grade for certain subjects, further suggesting that the community engagement of students do not eat up the whole course but only focus or relate to a particular topic and is done during a particular period in the whole semester. In my case, the service-learning engagement of my students usually takes place after I have given mid-term examination. This is the time that the students are already theoretically equipped with knowledge and skills that they can use in community service. I also integrate service-learning as a teaching strategy only in major subjects offered in upper academic levels because fewer students are enrolled in these classes. Service-learning grade is 50% of the final grade.

Meanwhile, the ten teachers were asked how the four learning outcomes were distributed in the total final service-learning grades of students, and the results show the following distribution: technical (11.92%), cultural (9.87%), political (8.33%), and anti-foundational (8.10%). The foregoing percentage distribution of the grades given by teachers is consistent with the ranking of the learning outcomes shown earlier which reveals the fact that technical learning is of primary importance to teachers which the students have to acquire in order to pass a course or to graduate from a degree program. The same observation is noted in the article of Werder and Strand (2011) where learning skills are of paramount importance because the effectiveness in a certain profession or work is measured by demonstrated skills. Examination is at the bottom of the list, suggesting that this is not popular among all teachers interviewed.

The use of service-learning as a teaching strategy by these teachers shows real cognizance of the principle of reciprocity wherein the services extended by students are not an end in and of themselves but are also for their academic advantage in terms of improved knowledge and skills gained. Community service as altruism in the spirit of volunteerism is another type of community engagement which the students may go into after service-learning (Oracion 2010).

HOLISTIC AND ADEQUATE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

The evaluation of the performance of students in their service-learning activities must be holistic as well as adequate to include all the learning experiences they have expressed and demonstrated corresponding to the efforts that they exerted during community engagement. This is not

only methodologically important in evaluating service-learning students, but it is also ethically sound because holistic evaluation ensures that the students are well-informed of what are expected of them and how they will be given grades. However, in the absence of a standard to evaluate the service-learning outcomes of students, I tried to derive some lessons from teachers of various disciplines who had employed this pedagogy in different modalities and conditions. The typologies of community engagement of Butin (2007) provided the framework for assessing how the teachers evaluate learning outcomes given the diversity of their disciplinal background.

Putting together the various pieces of information from service-learning teachers, I found a trend towards holistic and adequate evaluation of the performance of service-learning students of Silliman University. Even if not all the necessary aspects of evaluation were found in each of the teachers interviewed, each aspect had actually contributed to this attempt to create a template in evaluating service-learning performance relative to other parameters being employed by these teachers. The service-learning outcomes expected or observed by teachers fit well with the goals of community engagement as well as the hierarchy of importance when they constituted the final grade of students for activities related to service-learning.

PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATING SERVICE-LEARNERS

Let me reiterate here the ten principles of good practice in service-learning pedagogy that Howard (1993) introduced for the purpose of design and implementation. I found this relevant as guide in developing a system of evaluating the performance of service-learning students. I will discuss and illustrate in the succeeding sections these principles corresponding to the experiences of service-learning teachers of Silliman University.

Academic credit is for learning not community service. The grade given to students is a measure of the quality of their learning and not the type and impact of the services students extended to the community. It would be unfair for students to be graded based on how the services they have extended have changed or improved the conditions of a host community given their limited resources and time for the engagement.

Instead, the impact of the service-learning program on the community should be the target of evaluation while what the students learned in serving a community according to the typologies of learning should be the bases of students' individual grades. The percentage of the service-learning grade out of the total grade of the student should vary according to the nature and duration of community engagement as designed by the teacher. It may be about 25% or 50% of service-learning activities cover one-fourth or half of the semester, respectively, as suggested in Table 2.

Academic rigor is a priority more than community service. Technical learning has to be given more weight in giving grades because this is foremost in service-learning goals. This is already evident in the practice among teachers of Silliman University. Unless stated otherwise in a particular course (i.e., that the other learning outcomes are likewise important such as cultural, political and anti-foundational), the extended services of students should promote the knowledge and skills required by the course they are enrolled and should not shortchange the students. Table 2 shows the suggested weights of the typologies of learning between more social and more technical subjects or courses with service-learning integration. The weight distribution should not be rigid but should be relative to the nature and expected learning outcomes of a course. What is important is that the areas or domains to be graded are made known to the students.

Learning goals are clarified prior to community service. The learning goals, indicators and weight of particular indicator for giving grades have to be made known to students at the start of the semester. The tangible learning outcomes (with their suggested weights) may include narrative report and photos of service-learning activities and journal of experiences while the intangible learning outcomes consist of the quality of students' participation in the reflection sessions. The suggested weights will vary relative to how "social" or "technical" the subject or course is. Meanwhile, this principle may allow students to negotiate with the teacher in case they are physically or psychologically handicapped in engaging community service. Alternative learning activities may be provided to them, leading to the realization of the same learning goals. Otherwise, the students who are uncomfortable with community engagement can enroll in other courses that do not employ the service-learning approach.

Table 2. Suggested Weights of Selected Parameters
for Grading for Two Types of Courses

Parameters	More Social (%)	More Technical (%)
Sources of Learning of Students	100	100
Classroom learning	50	75
Community learning	50	25
Composition of Community Learning Grade	100	100
Technical	50	65
Cultural	25	20
Political	15	10
Anti-foundational	10	5
Weight of Learning Outcomes as Evidences for Grading	100	100
Narrative report of service-learning activities	40	60
Quality of participation in reflection sessions	40	30
Journal of service-learning experiences	20	10

Community service placement follows selection criteria. The identified host community must have learning opportunities consistent with the services students have to offer as well as with the expected learning outcomes. This is particularly important in courses that require mastery of psychomotor skills such as those in the natural and health sciences. The students need to serve host agencies that provide them with the venue where they can apply and enhance the knowledge and skills they learned in school. Any social science teacher can also link with local government units or organizations that have certain needs wherein they can customize their service-learning activities.

Mechanism for bringing out community learning is available. The mechanism for critical reflection on and analysis of community service based on learning goals is one of the necessary bases for giving grades. It is not enough that the students submit written reports or documentaries

as evidence of their service-learning activities. Although these projects may project what they learned from community engagement, there is a significant difference when these are verbally articulated in order that the typologies of learning can be brought out and given corresponding grades. The diversity of learning indicators can provide wider opportunity for students to get better grades.

Students need assistance in determining community learning. The students have to be taught the necessary skills and be guided to glean and learn from community service if written and oral reflections are to be part of their grades. Students should not be brought or sent to the community without being given an orientation on the principles of service-learning in order for them to become fully aware of what they have to do when they come into contact with their host community or agency. Part of the orientation is how to keep journals of their field experience and what to bring out during the reflection sessions. There are many things that students can cover but having a focus is very necessary.

Classroom and community learning roles have to be consistent. The students generally assume learning-follower role inside the classroom, but in the community they assume a learning-leader role when they are left to do what are expected of them. They have to be prepared by the teacher for the latter role while still in school in order for them to be effective in generating more community learning. This principle implies that students are expected to demonstrate relative independence in learning but within the sphere or domain of the learning goals of the course. This forms a basis for grading the students. Therefore, classroom and community learning is one area of behavior change that can be evaluated.

Teacher instructional role needs reorientation. Consistent with the changing learning role of students due to service-learning, the teachers likewise need to rethink and modify how their function changes from being information disseminators to learning facilitators. This role reorientation of teachers transforms their perspective of evaluating students from looking at what the students learned to looking at how they learned. This is related to the changing learning role of students from being followers to being leaders. How teachers give grades is presumed to be influenced by the type of role they assume.

Community learning outcomes are unpredictable and heterogeneous. There is variability in the community service placement of students or

the forms of service they extend. This results in the unpredictability and heterogeneity of learning every student encounters. Such variability must be provided space in the evaluation of students. Additional indicators or parameters have to be considered to cover learning experiences that are not technical yet relevant in the molding of culturally competent, sensibly persuasive, and critically-oriented students or future graduates. These characteristics cannot just be overlooked but instead should be given corresponding grades even if they are not equal to technical learning.

Community responsibility orientation has to be maximized. It is going to be ironic if service-learning students are allowed to do individual projects as products of their community engagement given that this pedagogy is employed as a tool to promote civic responsibility. The problem with group project is the possibility of social loafing or the dependency of some members on the efforts of one or some members of the group. These students become free loaders of the good marks given by the teacher. This potential problem, however, can be addressed if the teacher warns the class of this possibility and promotes individual responsibility over collective learning outcomes. Individual projects may also be allowed, but these have to be consolidated later as a collective project to encourage not only individual accountability but also cooperation. This is one area for grading behavior change.

CONCLUSION

I have argued and demonstrated in this paper that how the service-learning students should be graded must not be haphazard but rather deliberate in order to give justice to the efforts and resources spent by students in community engagement. Butin's (2007) community engagement model that corresponds to the typologies of learning goals has proven useful as bases for the evaluation of the type and extent of the learning experiences of students. The data show that technical learning is the primary service-learning goal of selected faculty of Silliman University. This is followed by cultural, political, and anti-foundational learning that conforms to the hierarchy of learning goals (Butin, 2007).

There are tangible and intangible learning outcomes that are required of students as indicated in course outlines or syllabi in order to objectively evaluate their performance. The weight of service-learning grade or community learning in relation to classroom learning may

vary depending on the primary learning goal of a particular subject or course. Classroom learning may constitute higher percentage of the final grade of students in "more technical" subjects or courses as compared to those "more social". Technical learning and narrative reports may also be given greater weight in the former than in the latter which is more interested in both technical and cultural learning derived during reflection sessions. But whatever the distributions would be, the most important consideration is that the parameters and process of evaluating service-learning students are made clear at the start of classes.

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