

SERVICE-LEARNING AS A MEANS OF BUILDING DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PARTNERSHIPS AND ENHANCING MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Service-learning can contribute to understanding and empowerment of students and others in disaster preparedness partnerships. The pedagogy can assist community partners in identification of problems and resolutions related to social issues exacerbated by disconnectedness in community. Ways service-learning contributes to knowledge sharing and leadership development are examined. Examples from management education are used to identify contextual influences on social capital, social giftedness, and organizational citizenship behavior. Service-learning as a contributing factor to development of empathy and reciprocity is described. Theoretical approaches in the work of Putnam, Coleman, Hearn, Senge, and George et al, are discussed. Recommendations for further research are suggested.

INTRODUCTION

The notion that people are less connected to one another and their communities than they were a generation ago is not new (Cattell, 2004). Disconnectedness becomes even more germane when considering planning for emergencies, such as hurricanes and other potential disasters. During recent years a record number of storms have ravaged or threatened Florida and other areas. Some results of these tragedies have focused attention on organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Other results of the disasters have included unlikely conversations among proactive diverse community partners.

Community partnerships must be considered when preparing contingency plans for disaster management. Social solidarity must also be taken into account when teaching undergraduate students to take their place as leaders and managers in 21st century organizations. Popcorn (1992) coined the term 'cocooning' to define growth in home centered lifestyles delving into the safety of one's home (Cattell 2004, 946). Etzioni (1995) described disengagement among the sources of decline in moral values and shifts in political ideology. With specific regard to management education, Mello (2003) has cautioned that indoctrinating assumptions plague development of content of what management professors teach and the process by which course content is taught. Mello (2003) and others (Trent, 2005; Hamilton, 2005) also observed that criticisms of

modern management education have focused on lack of real world integration into curriculum content. Service-learning can be a valuable tool for building disaster preparedness partnerships. It can assist students in development of management and leadership skills as preparation for engagement in changing organizations.

SERVICE-LEARNING

The four components of service-learning are: (1) Student selects a project in which to perform service, either directly or indirectly in community; (2) Student demonstrates learning by participating in the project; (3) Student reflects upon the service and learning, often by creating a journal, writing a paper, or creating another artifact that links the service to specific theoretical frameworks, and (4) The service-learning experience is evaluated in terms of tangible and intangible outcomes.

Service-learning involves civic engagement; that is to say, it connects students and faculty to community. The promise of civic engagement pertains to ways individuals participate in community for purposes of helping to shape the community's future or to improve current conditions (Adler & Goggin, 2005). De Tocqueville applauded Americans' predisposition toward the development and maintenance of free associations in community. Dewey perceived scholarship as service that, when applied in community, could result in reconstruction of experience, such as the formulation of Newtonian laws of motion. According to Dewey, community-based education had the potential to assist students in recodification of habits, such as gender, racial, or other biases. Service-learning can be seen as a form of civic engagement designed to contribute to ongoing expression and refinement of old ideas (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999, p. 4). It is a pedagogy that can foster (i) understanding and (ii) empowerment.

UNDERSTANDING AND EMPOWERMENT OF STUDENTS

Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski, and Senge (2007) report, *...the executive's job is no longer to merely command and control but to cultivate and coordinate the actions of others at all levels of the organization. Only when leaders come to see themselves as incomplete—as having both strengths and weaknesses—will they be able to make up for their missing skills by relying on others* (p. 1). Disaster preparedness can be a humbling process for management students focused on understanding community partnerships, organizational effectiveness, and themselves as leaders and managers in disaster situations.

(i) Understanding

George, Sims, McLean, and Mayer (2007) state, *Because authentic leaders need to sustain high levels of motivation and keep their lives in balance, it is critical for them to understand what drives them* (p. 5). Service-learning joins

community action or service with efforts to learn from that action (Stanton, Giles, and Cruz, 1999). Thus, it can provide students with opportunities for better understanding specific course material and for understanding themselves in the context of community. At the same time, community partners can gain insight into the next generation and the future workforce. Ostrander (2004) defined the main components of student engagement as student learning, curriculum transformation, community-defined priorities and knowledge-production that vary and change with development of work and changing circumstances. Service-learning affords students occasions to explore solutions to complex problems with community stakeholders. Hence, it allows students to understand situations from multiple perspectives, a skill that is critical to disaster preparedness. Students learn how to collaborate with partners to solve real-life problems. Together, they transform the curriculum to create solutions to problems defined by the priorities of the community. All partners realize they must create knowledge and share resources to achieve success. Jane Kendall, former director of the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) describes a good service-learning program as one that *helps participants see their questions in the larger context of issues of social justice and social policy – rather than in the context of charity* (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999, p. 3). When collaborating with community partners, students find themselves immersed in situations that challenge their notions of social justice and social policy as they discover the meaning of empowerment through development of social capital.

(ii) Empowerment

Service-learning exposes students to opportunities for development of relationships with community partners. These relationships can be empowering to all stakeholders. Cattell (2004) noted that social capital and its access are inequitably distributed across class and other social groups. *Social exclusion involves inadequate participation – social, economic, and political – integration, and power* (Cattell 2004, p. 946). Students and community stakeholders are often empowered by the cooperation essential for success. Reciprocity empowers all stakeholders in disaster preparedness situations. Students fill a community need by performing service; the community need provides an opportunity for the student to apply theories learned in the classroom and tested in leadership. George, Sims, McLean, and Mayer (2007) assert, *[t]he values that form the basis for authentic leadership are derived from your beliefs and convictions, but you will not know what your true values are until they are tested under pressure* (p. 4). Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski, and Senge (2007) avow, *The incomplete leader...knows that leadership exists throughout the organizational hierarchy—wherever expertise, vision, new ideas and commitment are found* (p. 1). All parties have the opportunity to develop social capital as they are empowered through service-learning in community partnership.

SOCIAL CAPITAL, GIFTEDNESS & ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIORS

Social capital is a feature of social organizations and includes networks, norms, social trust, and a shared vision of the goal that facilitates coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. For Putnam, social capital includes, ... *features of social life – networks norms [including reciprocity] and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives* (Cattell 2004, p. 948). Unlike more traditional definitions of capital, such as labor, materials, and financial assets, social capital can be intangible and controversial.

Social capital is found within and between neighborhoods, corporations, governments, communities, churches, and voluntary organizations. *For Coleman (1990), the norms necessary for social capital to operate are embedded in the structures of social relations; stability of the social structure is a pre-requisite for social capital* (Cattell 2004, p. 947)

Social capital can be beneficial for both individuals and organizations. Organizational benefits from the development of social capital include facilitation of the flow of information, enhancement of inter and intra-departmental coordination and cooperation, and improvement of efficiency and effectiveness. Individual benefits include growth as a result of learning from others, realization of interdependence, and feelings of mutual respect as a byproduct of working with others.

Social capital can be defined as the sum of actual and virtual resources that accrue to an individual as a result of a durable network of relationships. Its ramifications can be broad and profound, with practical implications for both beneficial and pathological consequences (Narayan & Cassidy, 2001). Cattell (2004) cautions that research related to development of social capital has obscured its social, economic, and political contexts, yet context may be critical to understanding the development of this essential resource. For example, development of social capital as a result of community disaster preparedness can be quite different than as a result of participation in a corporate management team. Critics of the term social capital express concern for its connection with industrial society and highly individualistic values most often associated with accumulation of capital (Adkins, 2005; Storberg, 2002). Proponents applaud the potential for social capital as a context specific source of more inclusive and integrative neighborhood regeneration (Cattell, 2004). Although social capital is often believed to be a term coined by Putnam, its roots can be traced to sociological and educational theorists including Durkheim, Bourdieu, Marx, Bellamy, and Dewey, to name a few (Farr, 2004).

Hearn (1997), a contemporary sociologist, argues for the necessity of reconceptualizing social capital in words that divorce it from market commodities. Drawing from the work of classical sociologist, Emile Durkheim, Hearn proposes that social relationships are gifts. Durkheim believed life could be divided into two spheres, the sacred and profane. The profane is the domain of everyday life. The

sacred is the part of life that gives one identity; it is a reflection of that which is most important in society. According to Durkheim (Trent, 2005), people's tendency to treat the sacred as profane can be seen in their tendency to apply the standard of What's In It for Me to social obligations that really matter. Many people today, either lacking in sociological imagination and/or immersed in the prevailing culture of relevance, significance, and power, mistakenly view society in a purely profane way and not as sacred. In a community dealing with disaster preparation, response, recovery, or restoration, this could be catastrophic.

Social giftedness is embedded in the conceptualization of sacredness of community (Trent, 2005). Society is a gift that we give to each other. Social giftedness is a condition of seeing relationships as ends in themselves; relationships valued for their own sake have intrinsic worth. Hence, social giftedness goes beyond social capital in that it focuses on relationships developed through interaction rather than assets that can be drawn upon. Social giftedness is based on the assumption that gifts are given without the expectation of reward. Reciprocity is a norm that, when established through social giftedness, serves to reinforce relationships. Unlike social capital, which is meant to produce external, self-motivated rewards for individuals, social giftedness in a society results in the other-concerned, internal qualities of graciousness, generosity, and concern for the common good (Trent, 2005). The reason for this is that the exchange of gifts reaffirms our interdependence with the other, rather than our dependence on ourselves. Awareness of interdependence is inherent to civic engagement in community. It is also essential for development of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs).

Bolino, Turnley, and Bloodgood (2002) assert that individuals are likely to go above and beyond normal job requirements when they are committed to organizations. Intrinsically satisfying tasks and inspirational, supportive leaders are other factors in development of OCBs, which are thought to be critical to organizational functioning. According to Bellah (1991), institutions are patterns of expected action of individuals and groups that are enforced by social sanctions, both positively and negatively (p. 10). Bellah, cautioned that institutions always have a moral element. Hence, students involved in service-learning disaster partnerships may learn to think critically while developing complex problem solving skills that can be used to ameliorate challenges inherent in social change as they learn the importance of OCBs.

Community, as a classroom for applied education, can spark the sharing of ideas that assist in paradigm shifts for all stakeholders. Communication and creativity are often enhanced by the openness, honesty, and respect that occur in community partnerships. Toennies, a classical sociologist, spoke of *gemeinschaft*, a term representing community bound by values, goals, and identity. *Gemeinschaft* contrasts with *gesellschaft*, a large scale society held together by self-interest and contractual necessity (Nisbet, 1974). Service-learners and other community partners engaged in building disaster

preparedness partnerships can gain insight into their interdependence with each other and with issues related to stewardship of the natural environment.

De Tocqueville (1945) warned against the individual potential for growing distrust in institutions and in one another. He cautioned that egoism and self-interest can impede successful implementation of democratic values. Fundamental differences in values can contribute to conflicts in community. More recently, George, Sims, McLean, and Mayer (2007) noted that over the last five years, people have developed a greater distrust of business leaders. Service-learning in the form of building disaster preparedness partnerships teaches all stakeholders the importance of trust, empathy, and reliance on self and one another.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Over the past six years, Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski, and Senge (2007) have developed a model of distributed leadership. The framework for the incomplete leader synthesizes: (1) Sensemaking or making sense of the world around us; (2) Relating or building relationships; (3) Visioning or articulating what the group wants to create together, and; (4) Inventing or helping others create ways to work together. Underlying assumptions related to the incomplete leader are that no leader is perfect and the best ones don't try to be. Rather, they hone their strengths and work with others who have strengths that compliment their weaknesses. The four capabilities of incomplete leaders, listed above, were derived from practice-based programs at the MIT Leadership Center. The capabilities are interdependent, but rarely will a person be equally skilled in all of the four domains (Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski, and Senge 2007).

Skills related to development of the four capabilities listed above can be tested and developed as part of service-learning in disaster preparedness partnerships. Signs of weakness in these capabilities may include the following: (1) Sensemaking as intolerance of others' perspectives, an inability to manage change; (2) Relating as blaming others for project failures, lack of trust for others; (3) Visioning as endless crisis management mode, lack of sense of purpose, lack of passion for work; (4) Inventing as inconsistency between organizational vision and the path to move toward it (Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski, and Senge 2007).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Critics of service-learning express concerns for academic rigor; thus, care in the practice of service-learning must be considered vigilantly. This said, it is important to recognize education as service to community, especially when community partners work together to prepare for, respond to, recover from, or restore the environment after a natural disaster. This is meaningful work accomplished in and for community. George, Sims, McLean, and Mayer (2007) have stated, *The only way to avoid getting caught up in materialism is to*

understand where you find happiness and fulfillment (p. 5). Happiness and fulfillment just might be discovered by students and other stakeholders performing service, leading and learning about themselves and others as leaders and managers in community.

In a study of over 125 leaders, George, Sims, McLean, and Mayer (2007) observed, *No one can be authentic by trying to imitate someone else* (p. 1). In a recent disaster preparedness project, 53 college students participated with community partners. Each student was charged with creating their own method of making meaning of the effort. Some rolled up their shirt sleeves and cleaned up after disasters; still others created teaching materials to increase awareness and to reach a broader audience (Reed, 2007). George, Sims, McLean, and Mayer (2007) advise, *Over and over, you replay the events and personal interactions that are important to your life, attempting to make sense of them to find your place in the world* (p. 2). Students in the disaster preparedness project found ways of preparing for the worst, such as creating a game, *Prep without Panic*, while teaching community stakeholders how to be proactive. Relationships the students formed are illustrations of their course work in action. George, Sims, McLean, and Mayer (2007) describe authentic leaders, *[r]ather than seeing themselves as victims... authentic leaders used these formative experiences to give meaning to their lives. They reframed these events to rise above their challenges and to discover their passion to lead* (p. 2). The management students in the above referenced disaster preparedness project may have been instrumental in empowering others – such as the people involved in playing and refining the *Prep Without Panic* game they created for increasing awareness about disaster preparedness.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this paper it is suggested that service-learning is a pedagogy that can contribute to understanding and empowerment of students and others in disaster preparedness partnerships. Specifically, it is suggested that service-learning can assist students in identification and resolution of problems related to social issues exacerbated by disconnectedness in community. In the first year of the disaster preparedness project referenced throughout the paper 53 management students were involved in disaster preparation with 11 community partners. This provided the students myriad teaching and learning opportunities to share knowledge, learn empathy, develop a sense of reciprocity, and engage in proactive OCBs, such as sensemaking, relating, visioning, and inventing – the capabilities of evolving authentic, if incomplete, leadership. In service-learning situations, students learn to take constructive criticism from sources besides their professor. George, Sims, McLean, and Mayer (2007) aver, *Authentic leaders realize they have to be willing to listen to feedback—especially the kind they don't want to hear* (p. 4). They learned that management and leadership can lead to intrinsic rewards often greater than extrinsic compensation. *Intrinsic motivations are congruent with your values and are more fulfilling than extrinsic motivations*

(George, Sims, McLean, and Mayer 2007, p. 6). Hence, students exposed to real-life ethical dilemmas and given the incentive to resolve them satisfactorily to multiple stakeholders, can become empathetic leaders who understand the ramifications of social capital and social giftedness, as well as the technical skills essential to managing disaster preparation.

Continued research is needed in this area. Some areas for project development are in ongoing refinement of instrumentation related to social capital measurement, also in designing and testing of an instrument pertinent to the four capabilities of the incomplete leadership model. Service-learning can contribute to understanding and empowerment of students and others in disaster preparedness partnerships. At the same time, it can assist in the development of managers and leaders who are increasingly aware of consequences related to action and inaction in the context of community.

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