The Process of Organizing and Implementing Curricular Service Learning in American Higher Education and Its Enlightenment on China

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Abstract

Service learning in American universities is divided into curricular service learning and extracurricular service learning. The corresponding process of organizing and implementing service learning in American universities is also divided into curricular service learning and extracurricular service learning. Take Michigan State University as the case, the six steps of investigation, preparation, engagement, reflection and connection, evaluation, demonstration or celebration are interpreted in detail. I focus on the process of organizing and implementing curricular service learning in detail. Clarifying the process of organizing and implementing curricular service learning in American higher education has certain reference significance for the transformation and development of some local colleges and universities in China.

Key words: American universities; Curricular service learning; The process of organizing and implementing

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INTRODUCTION

Document No.7 [2015] guidance on guiding some local ordinary undergraduate universities to transform into application-oriented universities pointed out that in order to implement the decision and deployment of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on guiding some local undergraduate universities to transform into application-oriented universities, it is necessary to promote the transformation and development of universities. In document No. 4 [2019] issued by the State Council, notice on printing and distributing the implementation plan of national vocational education reform clearly stated that "a large number" of ordinary undergraduate colleges and universities would be converted into application-oriented ones in 2022. Why and how to make the transition to application-oriented? Clarifying the process of organizing and implementing service learning in American higher education has certain reference significance for the transformation and development of some local colleges and universities in China.

Service learning is a new philosophy and teaching method that emerged in the United States in the second half of the 20th century. It has received positive response from the world's higher education sector, and has become an integral part of many higher education curricular programs in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan, and other countries and regions. Among them, the most perfect and the most influential one is the United States.

It is well known that different types of institutions in the United States have different missions and traditions and may adopt different approaches to service learning. A large number of community colleges are closely connected to their own communities and see themselves as part of the community, not just in the community. Their mission is based on service to the community, and since they are primarily engaged in teaching, service learning is

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often seen as a way for students to enhance course content through their work in the community.

Land-grant missions and other large public research universities provide teaching, research, social services and technical support to local communities and global communities. More land-grant universities and other research universities seek to build service learning on a broader context of community participation. While the mission of the land-grant universities is more conducive to service learning, the challenge for the large research universities is that their main work on widely funded research. As a result, teachers may be reluctant to create and run service-learning courses that are not related to their research priorities.

Liberal arts colleges offer liberal education as an educational philosophy that prepares students to deal with complex, changing, and diverse issues. Liberal education provides students with a wide range of scientific, cultural, and social knowledge, as well as in-depth study of a particular field. Rather than emphasizing applied research or professional training, liberal arts colleges teach students social responsibility while developing deep transferable intellectual and practical skills. Such as communication, problem solving and creativity. Many liberal arts colleges support service learning and other high-impact educational practices that enable students to meet the expected results of liberal education.

These differences can be further understood from the definition of "service" in different organization types (Table 1).

Table 1
Definition of "service" by different organization types (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999)

University type	main educational purpose	Definition of Service
Liberal arts colleges	Civil education in a democratic society	practice of values
	The formation of personality and morality	Public life of citizens
Research University	expand human knowledge base	apply knowledge to solve social problems
Vocational colleges	teach practical and specific skills	train professionals to perform social responsibilities
		Provide clinical training
Community colleges	provide higher education opportunities for non-traditional higher education recipients	Access to employment

Although different colleges and universities in the United States have different definitions of service, when service and learning are connected into service learning, the difference between colleges and universities is not obvious. Therefore, I use American higher education as a general term rather than a specific type of colleges and universities.

Considering the polysemy and inclusiveness of the concept of service learning, I defines service learning as: service learning is a philosophy and teaching method that attaches equal importance to the relationship between service and learning, combines students' learning with community service, promotes teachers, students and community partners to participate in the construction of knowledge through planned community service activities and structured reflection process While constantly meeting the needs of the community, we should cultivate students' sense of social responsibility and promote their all-round development. The meaning of community here can be school, community and society, even country or global. At the same time, considering that the concept of service learning includes curricular service learning and extracurricular service learning, the full text uses service learning instead of service-learning.

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There are some differences in the design of service learning courses in different universities. Michigan state university is taken as an example. In 2014, the university won the presidential medal of excellence for community service in higher education, and was successfully listed as a university highly involved in community service learning by the Carnegie foundation's "selective community participation score". The university also developed a service learning guide for all teachers in the university, so it has certain representativeness.

Service -Learning in Michigan State University are defined as follows: Service Learning is a kind of teaching method to connect the academic courses and college resources (college resources including students, teachers and staff knowledge and professional skills, politics, the construction and land, etc.) by addressing the challenges facing the community and community partners. This approach focuses on critical and reflective thinking to develop students' academic skills, civic engagement and commitment to the community. MSU's definition of service learning can be shown in figure 1 below, which consists of three parts: Community Engagement, Academic Study and Reflection.
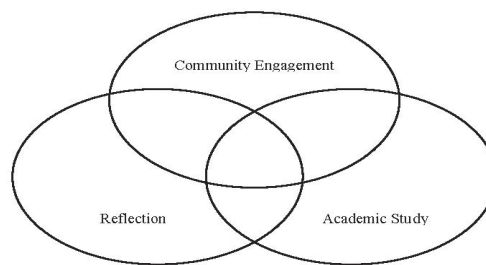

Figure 1
Definition of service learning at Michigan State University[1]

[1] [EB/OL]http://www.servicelearning.msu.edu/upload/Service-Learning-Toolkit.pdf, 1;5.

The implementation of service learning at MSU consists of six steps: investigation, preparation, engagement, reflection and connection, evaluation, demonstration and celebration. The six steps are called the iPERCED model, and the name comes from the first letter of the six steps. These six steps combine with Taylor's learning loop to form the service learning loop (figure 2).

(a) Investigation: Investigation is the process of identifying community needs, identifying potential community partnerships and determining whether or how community participation is appropriate for the objectives of the curriculum and community.

(b) Preparation: identify expectations, responsibilities and action steps to prepare teachers, community partners and students to participate in service learning.

(c) Engagement: meaningful community Engagement is a valuable way to demonstrate the needs of the community.

(d) Reflection and Connection: provide students with structured reflection opportunities to build connections between community participation and the goals and objectives of the curriculum.

(e) Evaluation: method for determining the results of community participation experience and students' learning results.

(f) Demonstration/ Celebration: strategies to share the results of community participation and Celebration of achievements with community partners and other participants.

The theoretical basis of the iPERCED model is Taylor's learning circle theory. Figure 2 shows the four stages of adult learning and the service learning circle formed by the iPERCED model. These four stages overlap with the iPERCED model in classification and are highly compatible.

Taylor's four stages of adult learning theory:

Disorientation: occur when learners are confronted with unfamiliar and usually not expected experiences or changes, challenged and critically thinking about their own beliefs and values. Learners respond to challenges with confusion, anxiety and tension. The learner leaves this stage to address the core problem that is causing the discomfort.

Exploration: this happens after the learner is able to identify the source of the confusion. Next, the learner acquires new information and ideas to address the challenge of confirmation.

Reorientation: the synthesis of information acquired during the exploration phase. By processing and reflecting on this information, the learner builds new understanding.

Equilibrium occurs when the learner experiences the comfort of gaining knowledge. Learners can apply knowledge to new situations and share their findings with others.
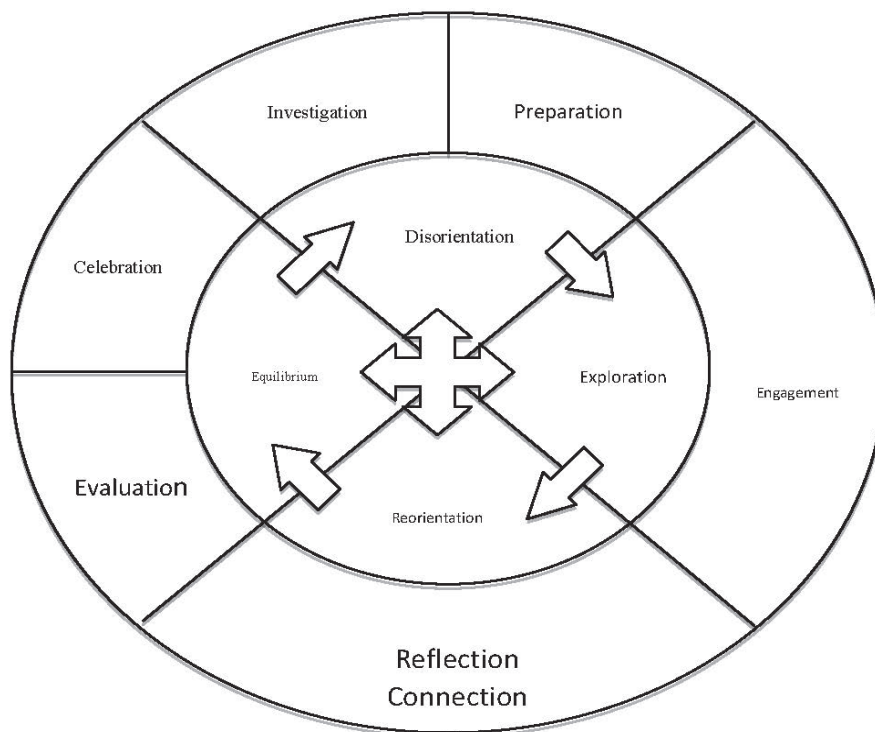

Figure 2
Service learning circle[2]

[2] [EB/OL]http://www.servicelearning.msu.edu/upload/Service-Learning-Toolkit.pdf, 1;5.

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The Investigation Specifically Includes Designing Service Learning Courses and Developing Community Partnerships

i. Design Service Learning Courses

Designing a service learning course may include adjusting an existing course, incorporating a service learning concept, or creating a new service learning course. At the same time, some subjects may have more service-learning programs to choose from. Service-learning practices cover all subjects and can be found in every MSU college.

Service learning curricular design starts with matching learning goals and objectives with community engagement. In the absence of such a match, it is not service learning, but simply adding volunteering to the curriculum.

Service learning is particularly effective in courses that attempt to apply knowledge and concepts in new situations; Analyze, question and rethink previous knowledge or beliefs; Examine causality; Understanding the impact of power and rights on individuals and societies; Comprehensive analysis to solve complex problems with multiple solutions; Training students' reasonable judgment ability; Working with others; Effective communication with others. (Jacoby, 2015)

ii. Develop Community Partnerships

Community partnership involves all participants, including teachers, students and the community, it is necessary for a high quality service learning experience, and this phase also involves developing the principles of community partnership. Campus and community partners recognize and value education from the curriculum and community environment. Community partners play the role of co-educators, and they play an important role in students' learning experience.

A community partner is an organization that students serve as part of a service learning program. Community partners help shape meaningful community engagement that meets community needs. These organizations take on the role of co-educating students, promoting students' learning experiences in a community environment, and encouraging connections between classroom and community learning. To support students and the projects they participate in, community partners arrange on-site supervisors to work with students during the semester while serving their organizations. Community partners know that effective community partnerships involve the full cooperation of students, community partners, and teachers as co-educators, co-learners, and co-knowledge producers.

The Preparation Stage Includes the Preparation of Meaningful Participation by Community Partners, the Preparation of Meaningful Participation by Students, the Design of Curriculum for Service Learning and Logistical and Security Considerations.

(a) Prepare community partners for meaningful engagement: sustaining community partnerships takes time, energy and commitment. While this process starts with ensuring that community organizations are prepared for meaningful student participation, cultivating and sustaining long-term partnerships run throughout the iPERCED model. Finally, it is important for teachers to know that successful community partnerships require attention to the motivations of community partners, the benefits they bring to them, and the challenges they face in supporting service learning students through the collaborative process.

(b) Prepare students for meaningful participation: preparing students for meaningful community participation is necessary for a successful service learning experience. Before entering the community environment, students are required to take part in two Orientation activities to ensure high-quality practice. One is service learning orientation and the other is community partner site orientation. The training of service learning includes the introduction of service learning, the practice of community participation in the university and the introduction of expected results. Community partnership orientation activities include discussions of service organizations and communities, evaluation policies and procedures, and expectations for projects and learning.

(c) Design curriculum for service learning: in order to effectively communicate with students about the expected effects and requirements of service learning, it is necessary to design a curriculum for service learning.

(d) Logistics and security considerations: service learning to deal with a lot of logistic problems. This may include obtaining approval for teaching service learning courses, finding supporting service promises or programs, tools and materials, identifying students and training for specific work, responsibility and risk management, safety and security, transportation, and appropriate behavior in community venues. It is important to resolve these logistical issues with your community partners beforehand, and where appropriate, you can seek help from the service learning center, the dean's office, the public safety department, or a campus legal officer.

Participation Includes the Type, Duration and Intensity of Participation, and the Monitoring of Progress

i. The Type of Participation

Community participation in service learning must be meaningful, emphasizing that meaningful means that students' community participation should be conducted in a way that is valuable to the community and meets the real needs of specific communities. Meaningful participation improves students' learning and meets the objectives of the course. When communicating with community members, keep in mind the types of community participation. Direct service is generally considered the only type of community participation. However, there are actually four main types of participation: direct participation, indirect participation, advocacy, and community based research.

Direct involvement: the student is in direct contact

with the person being served, usually through face-to-face communication. Because of this direct communication, students often see obvious changes that result from their community involvement. For example, feeding homeless people, mentoring young people, or visiting elderly people in their apartments.

Indirect involvement: students are usually behind the scenes, with no opportunity to interact directly with the people being served. These activities may include building organizational capacity by enhancing the organization's capacity to serve the public more effectively. For example, help with fundraising activities, volunteer recruitment activities, creating brochures, and promoting social media and website operations for nonprofits.

Advocacy: educate students and raise public concerns. For example: voter registration campaigns, distribution of educational materials on campus about sexual assault on college campuses, support for a town hall bill, or social media campaigns on community issues in the community.

Community-based research: students discover, collect, report, and disseminate information on issues of public interest. Unlike specialized academic research, these activities must be conducted in collaboration with community organizations. For example: testing the water quality of a local river, gathering local information based on the required statements in grant applications, creating assessment tools for nonprofits, and so on. A key element of participation is that students must do research on community issues or work with the community in the expectation that the final product will be promoted in the community.

ii. Duration and Intensity

Duration and intensity are important when designing service learning experiences. Duration refers to the length of time of students'participation (e.g., one day, two months, or one semester). Intensity of service learning refers to the depth of community engagement experience (e.g., two hours of weekly meetings during the semester). Both are important, and community partners need to make specific arrangements based on this. The schedule of community partners may conflict with the college calendar.

iii. Monitoring Progress

Once students are involved in community activities, teachers need to monitor their progress and keep in touch with community partners. These include the following strategies:

Provide students with a timetable and benchmarks required on a specific date. These should be included in the syllabus of the service learning course.

If appropriate, use a time log to monitor how much time students spend in the community.

Encourage students and teachers to share the biggest challenges facing their community engagement experiences.

Monitor the reflection carefully to see how the students did and what they learned, if possible challenging their assumptions, beliefs and experiences at the same time.

Provide time and space to discuss community engagement experiences in the classroom.

iv. Reflection Includes Elements of Reflection and Reflective Design

Reflection is an essential component of service learning, which promotes the connection between community engagement experiences and course content. For this reason, reflection is the hyphen between service-learning. (Speck, 2001) The reflective process is also a process that helps students understand their experiences and develop various skills, including critical reflection, communication skills, leadership and civic responsibility, multicultural understanding, etc.

a). The elements of reflection

Effective reflection should include the following aspects: clear definition of learning goals and objectives; the learning goals and objectives of structured community participation programs; Consider the frequent and timely reflection on student development throughout the semester. In general, reflections should include the following "6Cs" features:

Contextualized: reflection should consider the characteristics of students, courses and community participation.

Connected: teachers are required to provide continuous feedback to promote reflection and help students connect to their community participation activities and course materials.

Coaching: reflection involves combining key issues, opinions, and examples to meet students' learning needs.

Challenging: teachers should challenge and support students to help them expand their horizons, acquire skills and improve their learning.

Communication: continuous Communication with all stakeholders involved.

Continuous: the reflective activity should be integrated into the whole process of the community participation experience.

Table 2
Mapping service learning reflection (Eyler, 2002)

	Activities Before Service	Activities During Service	Activities After Service
Reflection alone	Letter to myself Objective Statement	Structured journals	Reflective Essay
Reflection with Classmates	hopes and fears Giant Likert scale	Service-learning theater Mixed team discussion	Team presentation Collage or mural Video
Reflection with Community Partners	Planning with community Asset mapping	Lessons learned, debriefing	Presentation to community group

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Reflection includes reflection before service, reflection in service process and reflection after service. Throughout the whole process of service learning. Table 2 is a service learning reflection map designed by Janet Eyler.

b). Reflective design

The common structural reflection model schema of curriculum service learning (figure 3) mainly includes the following three stages. Stage 1: objective identification and description of experience. Stage 2: examine and analyze experiences by scope. It mainly includes academic study or academic promotion, personal growth and civic participation or social responsibility. Stage 3: clarify or indicate learning results.
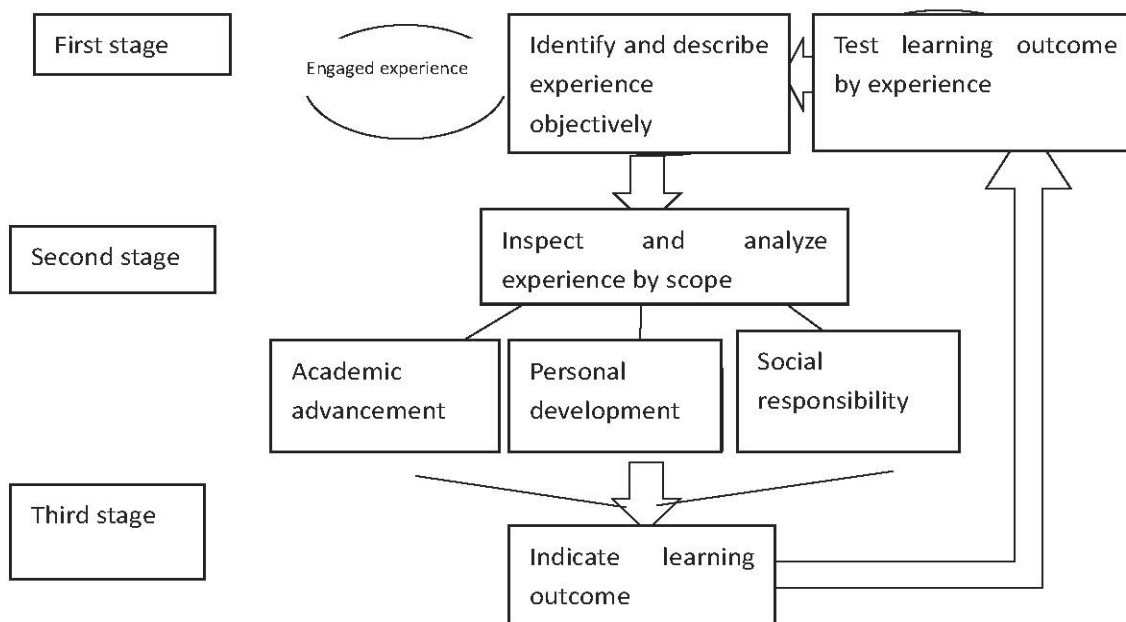

Figure 3
Schema of service learning structural reflection model (Zlotkowisk, et al, 2005)

v. Evaluation

Collecting and analyzing information about service learning outcomes can help identify and adapt curriculum to enhance the experience of teachers, students, and community partners; improve teachers' understanding of why certain results occur; it shows that service learning is an effective way to achieve learning objectives.

Determining the effectiveness of a service-learning program can be measured in a number of ways, often individually, depending on the goal of the program, the goals of community partners, and other factors. Teachers and community partners should discuss the role of community partners in the assessment. Assessment is generally divided into formative assessment and summative assessment. Formative assessment is conducted before and during the service learning experience and is used to measure processes, improve outcomes, and address emerging challenges. The summative assessment measured results at the end of the service-learning experience. The purpose of this type of assessment is to indicate impact and effect.

vi. Demonstration /Celebration

Displaying and celebrating strategies that involve sharing the results of community engagement and celebrating achievements with community partners, students and other participants. Generally speaking, teachers display and celebrate at the end of the service learning experience. Community partners may also be interested in participating in this phase.

Demonstrate and celebrate equal treatment of reflective and evaluative in nature: reflective because it provides an opportunity to summarize experiences, share what has been learned, report on achievements, and further consolidate community participation and classroom experience. Evaluative because you get feedback from both students and community partners.

a). Demonstration

Demonstrate the process and results of focused service learning. Teachers should consider how students present their learning in class and to community partners. For example: create a portfolio, complete a project or presentation, develop a poster, create slides and video images, write or distribute a press release, create infographics and share your story with the media, and so on.

b). Celebration

Celebration involves recognizing the achievements and contributions of students and community partners.

Community partners, teachers and students should be invited to the celebration. Regardless of the outcome, some community engagement professionals believe that celebrations should be held because any time people take the time and effort to improve their community is worthy of recognition. Celebrations include the awarding of certificates, the distribution of thank-you notes and small gifts (especially to community partners), an informal gathering to serve food on the last day of class, and encouraging students to bring exhibitions that represent their community.

CONCLUSIVE SUMMARY

Service learning in American higher education has always been regarded as one of the important factors for the reform of traditional higher education in the United States. From the current development trend, it has also achieved the purpose of reforming American higher education to some extent. The teaching, scientific research and social service in Chinese universities are distinct, and there is no good idea or concrete method to integrate the three functions of universities. The concept of service learning of American universities integrates the three functions of universities. Meanwhile, service learning makes the social service functions of universities operable and easy to evaluate. However, China has not explored enough in terms of evaluation criteria, contents, system and institutions of social service functions of universities.

Clarifying the process of organizing and implementing service learning in American higher education has certain reference significance for the transformation and development of some local colleges and universities in China.

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