Action Learning & Feedback in Community Service Learning Courses

What do we know, when do we know it, how do we act on it?

Ernie Joaquin, Associate Professor & Brittany Hodge, MPA Candidate

School of Public Affairs & Civic Engagement
San Francisco State University

Presented at the American Society for Public Administration Conference,
Atlanta, GA, March 19, 2017
Contact info: ejoaquin@sfsu.edu
The story of a pilot MPA service learning class drove our desire to sketch a Service Learning Navigation Framework.

- High uncertainty
- Low controllability
- Bounded rationality

3 Major Parties to Service Learning:
- Faculty
- Students
- Community Partner Organizations
Service Learning Navigation Framework

Faculty-Students-Community Partner Organizations

High uncertainty

Course design:
What assumptions were made?

Low controllability

Course execution:
What actually occurred?

Bounded rationality

Beyond the semester:
What connections were made?

THEORY of service learning

PRACTICE

LEARNING
Theory, training, and commitment

Service Learning Navigation Framework

Faculty-Students-Community Partner Organizations

High uncertainty

Baseline evaluation

Design

Theory of civic engagement

Pedagogy & Andragogy
The **messiness** of learning

Service Learning Navigation Framework

Faculty-Students-Community Partner Organizations

**Execution**

Paradoxes of planning, control, learning, adaptation

Learning outputs

- Low controllability

Mid-sem Evaluation

1. Near vs long-term view
2. Reality vs. a case study
3. Long-term benefit of CSL
4. Variety vs capacity of partners
5. Academic grade vs. learning
6. CSL experience
7. Employed student
8. Expectations of impact
Beyond Time, values, & the effect of time

Service Learning Navigation Framework

Faculty-Students-Community Partner Organizations

Bounded rationality

Summative Evaluation

Beyond

Time, values, individual & institutional constraints

Learning outcomes
Harvesting feedback & adapting on the go

Service Learning Navigation Framework

Faculty-Students-Community Partner Organizations

Designing feedback loops and harvesting the feedback
Connecting Theory, Practice, & Learning

Service Learning Navigation Framework

Faculty-Students-Community Partner Organizations

Feedback loops

Baseline evaluation

Mid-sem Evaluation

Summative Evaluation

Design

Theory of civic engagement

Pedagogy & Andragogy

Execution

Paradoxes of planning, control, learning, adaptation

Learning outputs

Beyond

Time, values, individual & institutional constraints

Learning outcomes

Service Learning Navigation Framework

Faculty-Students-Community Partner Organizations

Connecting Theory, Practice, & Learning
Question: How do we navigate service learning in the future?

High uncertainty

Course design

Low controllability

Course execution

Bounded rationality

Beyond the semester
Anticipate where pressures to adapt could arise from, at each period, from each of the 3 perspectives.

**Navigation matrix**

- **Foreseeability**
  - Low
  - High

- **Controllability**
  - Low
  - High

*For example: Project scope change*
But, messy can be good!

“The well-intentioned infrastructure that often informs civic learning can actually limit the development of students’ higher order civic leadership desires, motivation skills, and dispositions.”

“...highly structured, controlled approaches to civic education...can sterilize the messiness involved in civic work, at best, and can perpetuate a range of stereotypes associated with civic work, at worst.”
“Removing the “messiness” from civic work can be efficient and affirming from an administrative perspective. “

“Such protection, direction, and order undermine the type of learning necessary to maneuver and manage politically connected spaces….because they lack the contextual ability to navigate the political contestation associated with marginalization.”

Source: Kim, Franco, Reznick, (2016). Civic attitudes development among undergraduate students at American research universities: An examination by student gender, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic status
Questions for the Audience

What surprises do you think occur in service learning environments and how can we navigate them?

How does this mode of action and civic learning align with the realities of the workplace and democratic space?