

Citizenship Education Through Service Learning: From Charity to Social Justice

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In Hong Kong classrooms, “chalk and talk” is the most common teaching approach. Experiential learning, like service learning, is traditionally considered as some kind of extracurricular activities and as charity to the unprivileged. It is seldom linked to learning and public policy. With the introduction of the curriculum reform document Learning to Learn (Curriculum Development Council, 2001), service learning was recommended as a strategy for civic education. Nevertheless the focus is still on service or charity.

As a pilot study, this article explores, by case study of a voluntary service team of a secondary school, how a community service activity was transformed into a social advocacy campaign. The service started with a focus on cleaning a beach near the electric power station in Lung Kwu Tan in Tuen Mun, but ended up with a signature campaign in the school against the government policy of building an incinerator in the community. From the study, evidence has been found that service learning with a focus on social justice could have positive impact on the personal, interpersonal, and active citizenship development of students. In addition, some elements for effective practice of service learning were also identified.

The last decade has witnessed a remarkable increase in interest and activities in civic and citizenship education in different parts of the world. Reviews have been conducted in the former Soviet Union, the newly emerging democratic states of Eastern Europe, and the established Western democracies. Concern about the lack of active engagement of their young citizens led to reviews in England (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998), Scotland (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2001), Denmark (Danish Ministry of Education, 1999),

and the United States (Center for Civic Education, 1994; National Commission on Civic Renewal, 1998). The Council of Europe has also conducted a major study of democratic citizenship in the late 1990s. In addition, international research projects, such as the IEA Civics Study on student achievement, have also been completed (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001; Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999). All these studies found civics and citizenship education unevenly and poorly presented in schools, and advocated more rigorous programs in education for democratic citizenship, including teacher training and school-based engagement (Naval, Print, & Veldhuis, 2002). There were also many international activities aiming at enhancing civics and citizenship education, such as the CIVITAS Pan American in 1996, CIVITAS African in 1997, Civitas@Kuala Lumpur in 1998, and Civitas International Conference@Palmero in 1999. These activities reflect the widespread interest and concern over civic education.

Civic education has always been highly valued by the educational community in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong education authority published the *Guidelines on Civic Education in Schools* in 1985 and 1996 respectively (Curriculum Development Committee, 1985; Curriculum Development Council, 1996). A lot of literature has been devoted to the discussion about the documents (Lee, 1996; Leung, Chai, & Ng, 2000; Morris, 1997). In the 1996 *Guidelines*, it was recommended that civic education should be implemented by permeation approach, subject-specific approach, or integrated approach. However, due to various difficulties in, for example, timetabling and training of teachers, chalk and talk still remains the most common teaching approach (Print, 1999; Watkins & Biggs, 2001). In 2001, the Hong Kong Curriculum Development Council issued the curriculum reform document *Learning to Learn*, which recommended the use of life-wide learning to implement civic education. Teachers are encouraged to bring their students to the communities so that students could learn from their direct experiences with the communities. In a broad sense, this approach is similar to “service learning” which is a form of experiential learning commonly used in moral and civic education (Boss, 1999). Before the publication of *Learning to Learn*, “service” has been traditionally considered as some kind of extracurricular activities and as charity or voluntary work to the unprivileged. It is seldom associated with learning. Though *Learning to Learn* recommended a better integration between service and subject learning, the use of service learning to enhance students’ awareness at the policy and political level is lacking. Indeed, the absence of policy and political consideration in service learning is also well documented in the literature (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Wade, 2000b).

As a pilot attempt, this article explores, by case study of a voluntary service team of a secondary school, how a community service activity was transformed into a social advocacy campaign and what were the educational impacts on the participants in the service. The service started with a focus on cleaning a beach near an electric power station in Lung Kwu Tan in Tuen Mun but ended up with a signature campaign in the school against the government policy of building of an incinerator in the community.

The research questions were as follows:

1. What were the educational impacts on the students?
2. How was the project transformed from a beach-cleaning project to a signature campaign against the building of an incinerator? What had the teacher and the NGOs (Hong Kong Christian Institute and Green Peace) done to facilitate the transformation?
3. What were some potential elements for good practice of service learning identified?

Literature Review of Service Learning

In the past decade, there has been a great revival of interest in service learning and a large body of literature and research has been devoted to it (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mooney & Edwards, 2001). The root of service learning could be traced back to the eminent scholar John Dewey (1916/1966), who argued that the participatory disposition needed by citizens in a democratic society is best learned through practice in school and the community. There are many different understandings of service learning and a wide variety of activities are included under its umbrella (Boyle-Baise, 2001; Kendall, 1990; Mooney & Edwards, 2001).

Research contends that service learning in general has positive impacts on the cognitive, affective, and behavioral development of students (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mayhew, 2001). Here are some examples of the impacts: motivation to learn, academic results, higher-order thinking, self-esteem, social development, interest in volunteering and engagement in community organization, understanding of the issues, action skills, and commitment to social justice, democratic values and ideals (Browne & Freeman, 2000; Nemerow, 1996; Salemi, 2002; Wade, 2000b; Waldstein & Reiher, 2001). Nonetheless, the literature also reveals that there could be service without learning. A good integration of service and school curriculum, and the structured reflection of the integration are necessary for effective learning (Clark, Croddy, Hayes, & Philips, 1997; Eyler, 2002; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997;

Kim, Parks, & Beckerman, 1996; Kinsley, 1997; Wade, 2000a, 2000b; Waldstein & Reiher, 2001).

Research also indicates that many social educators tend to avoid the political aspect of service learning, and prefer to define it as including a host of seemingly nonpolitical acts, such as work with community organizations, charitable and church-related activities, volunteer work with agencies, and representations to organizations and youth groups (Clark, 1989; Ferguson, 1991; Parker & Jarolimek, 1984; Rutter & Newmann, 1989). However, some scholars argue strongly against the apolitical nature and advocate the idea of going beyond charity to service learning as social advocacy for social justice (Barber & Battistoni, 1993; Catlin, 2002; Clark et al., 1997; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Robinson, 2000; Wade, 2000a, 2000b; Woods, 2001). Both Woods (2001) and Wade (2000a) were discontented that there is so much service learning which has little to do with public citizenship and the democratic process, and which accepts the reality without questioning the root problem of the issue. Both Clark et al. (1997) and Wade (2000a) urged that service for charity programs should be changed to social advocacy/justice programs by incorporating research questions on the root causes of the community issue and the options that students could take to address the problems. They argued that service is not only about meeting someone's immediate need but also about working toward the ideal of a just society. Some scholars even contended that only those service learning with a political dimension could have great potential in gaining all benefits (Mooney & Edwards, 2001; Robinson, 2000). Eyler and Giles (1999) called the change of service learning from charity to social justice as "perspective transformation" and in-depth reflection is needed for the transformation to take place.

Wade (2000b) defined reflection as "a means for reliving or recapturing our experience in order to make sense of it, to learn from it" (p. 20) and argued that reflection should be built in the whole process of service. There are two major types of reflection, written reflection and discussion reflection (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Written reflection may include writing a journal or keeping a scrapbook. In putting their thoughts into words, students can think more clearly and record their thoughts permanently. Discussion reflection is more complicated and demanding but more effective. Many scholars pointed out that the essential and necessary condition for successful discussion reflection is a classroom climate based on mutual respect, caring, and openness to divergent ideas (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998; Hahn, 1998; Wade, 2000b; Wahl, Perez, Deegan, Sanchez, & Applegate, 2000). In conducting in-depth discussion reflection, research reveals that because of the demanding

nature of discussion reflection, perspective transformation is difficult. Discussions tend to get stuck at the level of sharing feelings and experiences (Eyler & Giles, 1999). In order to overcome this problem, students should be encouraged to go beyond sharing feelings and experiences, and to explore, think, and discuss (1) why the problems or needs exist; (2) the root causes of problems; (3) the existing mechanisms dealing with the issues; and (4) other options for their participation in helping to solve the problems (Clark et al., 1997; Kim et al., 1996; Wade, 2000a).

Theoretical Framework

In this study, service learning is defined as “a type of experiential education in which students participate in service in the community and reflect on their involvement in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content and of the discipline and its relationship to social needs and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility” (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997, p. 153). Based on the work of Eyler and Giles (1999), seven themes with slight modification were adopted as the framework to guide the study. They were “personal and interpersonal development,” “engagement and curiosity,” “understanding and applying knowledge,” “critical thinking,” “perspective transformation,” “citizenship,” and “elements of good practice of service learning.” The first six themes address the first research question stated above and will be discussed in the section “Educational Impacts on the Students.” The themes “engagement and curiosity” and “perspective transformation” address the second research question and will be discussed in the section “Transformation of the Nature of the Project.” The theme “elements of good practice of service learning” addresses the third research question and will be discussed in the section with the same title. The literature of the seven themes will be discussed together briefly in the section “Findings and Discussion.”

The Design of the Study

Background of the School, Project and Participants

This study adopted purposive sampling, which is commonly used in case studies. In purposive sampling, researchers hand-pick cases to be included in the sample for their typicality, so as to illustrate features and processes in which they are interested (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Silverman, 2000). In this study, the sample school was selected purposively because a traditional service program of charity was transformed into service learning for advocacy of social justice. This is a very special instance.

The school is a Christian, co-educational secondary school in Tuen Mun which has a history of about 30 years. The average banding of the students is about 2 (a total of 3 bandings with band 1 being the best). Miss N taught mainly Liberal Studies and Religious Studies, and had been teaching there for three years. She was in charge of the “voluntary service” team. In the first semester of 2002, the team initiated a “Cleaning the beach of Lung Kwu Tan in Tuen Mun” project. About 16 Form 4 students were involved. The aim of the project was clearly stated in the project title.

Data Collection

Miss N was interviewed once individually. Three student participants of the project were also interviewed once together with Miss N in a focus group voluntarily. The three students were Ada (female), Bob (male) and Calvin (male), both of which were pseudonyms.

A semi-structured interview was conducted to Miss N. The interview was guided by the following questions:

1. Describe briefly the process of development. How did the project develop from a beach-cleaning campaign to a signature campaign against the building of an incinerator?
2. Who initiated this transformation, the teacher, the students or the NGOs? Why? What had the parties involved done?
3. Was the project integrated with academic subjects by design? If yes, what and how? If not, why?
4. What and how did the students learn from the project, both academically and non-academically?
5. Was reflection used to consolidate their learning?

The focus group interview with the three students was guided by the following questions:

1. Describe briefly why and how you were involved in the project?
2. From your point of view, how and why was the project transformed from a beach-cleaning campaign to a signature campaign against building an incinerator?
3. What and how have you learned/gained from the project? Have you learned anything related to your academic subjects?
4. Was the service integrated with academic subjects?
5. How do you compare this type of learning from classroom learning? Why?

With the consent of Miss N and the focus group member, both of the interviews were taped and transcribed immediately. For the sake of accuracy, the transcripts were then sent back to the participants for confirmation. Some of the questions were asked in the two interviews for triangulation purpose.

Data Analysis

The transcripts of the interviews was analyzed and coded according to the seven major themes in the theoretical framework separately. After coding, the scripts were reorganized according to the codes. Sometimes, the same script might appear under different codes as the script could have several meanings and implications. Then the scripts of Miss N, Ada, Bob, and Calvin with the same code were tabled alongside each other for comparison and triangulation.

Findings and Discussion

Educational Impacts on the Students

Educational impacts refer to impacts on the students' "personal and interpersonal development," "engagement and curiosity," "understanding and applying knowledge," "critical thinking," "perspective transformation," and "citizenship."

Personal and Interpersonal Development

Briefly speaking, personal and interpersonal development refers to the impact on students' self-esteem, personal competence, self-efficacy, perseverance, relationship with the teacher and the community, and so on.

It was revealed from both the interviews with Miss N and the focus group that service learning had significant impact on the self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy of the students. Calvin said:

Before joining this project, I was quite shy and dared not speak out but I am different now after this project. (Script for the focus group interview of the students [S1], p. 7)

The students' self-evaluation on self-esteem and self-efficacy was confirmed by the observation of Miss N, who agreed that their self-esteem had been raised and empowered. The students presented their project confidently and successfully in a self-organized school assembly after the project was complete. In the school assembly, they presented what they had experienced, what they had learned about the chemistry of dioxin, and the pollution which could be

resulted from the building of a new incinerator (Script for the interview of Miss N [S2], p. 8). In addition, they have also learned to work with perseverance in conditions with uncertainty:

We did not know what would happen next. We started with difficulty but we kept on, one step after the other. We discussed what we should do next and finally ended up with the signature campaign. (S1, p. 9, Bob)

Their perseverance was also confirmed that they formed an independent group of volunteer named JPER (Justice and Peace Maker) outside school after this project (S2, p. 8).

They also developed a strong affection, a strong sense of connection with the community and communal responsibility. As Ada said:

The dust of pollution would not only pollute and affect the people in Lung Kwu Tan, it would spread even to Tin Shui Wai. We have many classmates there. We have to do something. (S1, p. 6)

Bob supplemented Ada, arguing that they had a concern for the welfare of all Tuen Mun people, not only the people in Lung Kwu Tan (S1, p. 6). Similarly, Miss N observed that they had developed a sense of empathy, concern, and support for the marginalized, oppressed residents in Lung Kwu Tan against the people in power (S2, p. 4).

From the finding, the impact on the students' personal and interpersonal development was quite significant. However, a few issues are worthy of further study. First, were these participants already so self-confident and socially engaged that they chose to join this project? As there was no control group for comparison in this case, this requires investigation. Second, the inclination toward "the marginalized" or "the oppressed" has been criticized as biased and subjective both by scholars (Eyler & Giles, 1999) and some colleagues of Miss N (S1, p. 4). Should similar projects be kept as "neutral and objective" as possible? Is keeping "neutral and objective" opposite to perspective transformation? These also need examination.

Engagement and Curiosity

Research indicates that the students are much more engaged in service learning as compared to classroom lessons because there is a combination of interest and emotional ties with the rich experiential context. Emotionally, the students

are motivated by passion to know, to explore, to care for, and to participate in worthwhile activities to make something happen. Cognitively, the students are motivated when they perceive their knowledge has “become tool for action rather than words to memorize” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 92). This helps them put theory into practice.

In the debriefing session, Miss N commented that the process was very interactive. The students kept on asking why the beach and the water were so dark and they could not come up with a satisfactory answer. At the end, they were hanged up by the unresolved question (S2, pp. 2, 3). Both Calvin and Ada commented that they started to look for solution out of curiosity (S1, p. 2). At this early stage, their engagement was compelled by their curiosity to explore the issue and to find out the solutions. At the later stage of the project, after they had done their research, they were moved to put up a signature campaign out of the care and concern for the community, and a sense of social responsibility (S1, p. 6, Ada).

Service learning could be very touching. As in this case, the students were emotionally aroused and engaged with “the oppressed.” However, involving too much affection has always been criticized as a barrier to critical thinking in civic education (Callan, 1994; Roebben, 1995). The warning that “a serious question could be how we can integrate emotions into morality and moral education without falling into the trap of crude emotivism” (Roebben, 1995, p. 187) should be seriously addressed in future research on service learning.

Understanding and Applying Knowledge

Research results on the impact of academic grades are mixed. Nevertheless, the participants felt that they learned more from service learning though their learning may not necessarily be reflected in traditional academic assessments. For example, now they can have deeper understanding of social issues and better application of knowledge, such as having more elaborate analysis of issues, identifying more alternative causes and solutions, and presenting better interconnections between causes and solutions. Literature has also revealed that service learning well integrated with academic subjects could have more significant impact (Eyler, 2002; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997).

With the help of the teacher and people from the NGOs, the students started to search from various sources for the meanings of their experience in the service. This would help them to have a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the issues. Calvin commented that this project had moved them from looking at the surface of issues to understanding deeply (S1, p. 7). Viewing an issue from different perspectives also broadened their horizons.

In the community, there are split opinions. We have identified two major groups of concern people [managerial people of the power station and the village people living in Lung Kwu Tan] for interviews and comparison. We have to look at both sides. (S1, p. 4, Bob)

In the interview with the village representatives in Lung Kwu Tan, the students were told that the dark beach and water was just a phenomenon that can be seen easily. There were also thermal pollution and sound pollution. Moreover, the aquatic life has reduced a lot (S1, p. 3, Bob). On the contrary, the representatives from the power plant told them that the plant worked on a “zero pollution” strategy but the students challenged them at the spot (S2, p. 4). The village representatives also told them that an incinerator would be built near Lung Kwu Tan in the future. This triggered off their concern. Hence, they became very engaged and initiated to find information from the Internet, libraries and environmental NGOs, aiming to explore further the possible pollution that could be caused by an incinerator and the chemicals transmitted from it (S1, p. 8, Bob).

Concerning the linkage with academic subjects, Bob pointed out that he had learned a lot of chemicals of pollution, especially dioxin, which was well beyond the formal syllabus (S1, p. 9). Ada pointed out that she found linkage between the project and the subjects Human Geography as well as Economic and Public Affairs (S1, p. 12). Calvin summed up by arguing that the project touched upon several subjects but the required knowledge in doing the project might not be included in the current syllabuses of the subjects (S1, p. 12).

Indeed, service learning could have much impact on the tradition of organizing knowledge in different academic subjects and grades. From the study, the service learning touched upon several subjects at various levels and motivated the students to learn by themselves. What exact impact could service learning have on the reorganization and tailoring of the curriculum, which could contribute to better learning? How can service learning be better linked with the academic curriculum for the sake of better learning? All these are significant issues worthy of further exploration.

Critical Thinking

Though the study of Eyster and Giles (1999) did not show a confirmative result on the impact on critical thinking skills as revealed by their critical thinking skills score, students did encounter situations that challenged their critical thinking in the process (e.g., facing ill-structured real-life issues, managing multiple and conflicting views on issues, and taking a position — no matter

how tentative — on the issue). They are challenged to use their critical thinking competence to address issues. For example, in the present service learning, Calvin said:

In the visit to the power station, the people said the electric power plant worked on a “zero pollution” strategy. But on the other hand, the village people from Lung Kwu Tan told us a completely different story that fish and shrimps died in large number. Perhaps they have different interests. We were interested in finding out why this was so. (S1, p. 4)

Similarly both Ada and Bob pointed out that the views of these two groups of people were exactly opposite to each other. Although they were more sympathetic to the village people, they did not believe entirely on either side. Ada supplemented:

Well for many issues, it is hard to have a completely confirmed answer. (S1, p. 10)

It seems that although they were on the side of the village people, it did not prevent them from developing the sense of “skepticism” — an essential attribute of a critical thinker. When they were pressed for why they put forward the signature campaign to support the village people while they were not completely certain about who is right or wrong, Bob replied:

We take side as we were thinking about the public good, not only the village people. At the end, we are fighting against the dioxin produced by all these pollution sources. It will ruin all people in Tuen Mun, not only the village people. (S1, p. 10)

The students demonstrated certain attributes and competence of a critical thinker. They could recognize that there were conflicting views on social issues due to different interests. They were able to make a tentative decision while keeping a sense of “skepticism.”

Though the process of transformation was very challenging and empowering cognitively, it was very demanding psychologically. This is especially true for teenagers like the students, who had to make all these hard decisions based on conflicting evidences but remain skeptical at the same time. Given this very demanding process, what are the potential negative psychological effects on the students? How can they manage these psychological

demands? What can the school do to address these potential problems? All these require further research.

Perspective Transformation

The ultimate goal of service learning is social change, or at least educating students to be agents of social change (Lempert, 1996, cited from Eyler & Giles, 1999). Through service learning, the students learned to move over toward a more systematic consideration of social problems and a greater emphasis on political action. They were encouraged to question and overturn their fundamental assumptions about society. Their views about social problems could change from individual-focused to system-focused, and their focus of action from individual to collective and political.

In this project, the students acquired a broadened understanding of the nature of service in general and that of this project in particular, including the understanding of the root causes of the problem and the action needed for its resolution. Calvin commented:

We think the target of service is not necessarily an individual. If we can do something to make the environment better, it is already a service. (S1, p. 3)

Similarly, Miss N pointed out that instead of doing many services, she preferred doing something more in-depth (S2, p. 9). The study also revealed a perspective transformation of the nature of the present project from a beach-cleaning service to the concern over public policy.

As we worked bit by bit, we discovered that there were several sources of pollution concentrated in Lung Kwu Tan, including a power station, landfills, and cement manufacturing factory and an incinerator in the future. Why does the government plan to build all these sources of pollution together in one place? (S1, p. 6, Calvin)

Similarly, Miss N commented:

The students found that even for a seemingly simple activity, they could ask very deep questions, which involves government policy. Moreover they found that they could fight for their citizenship right. (S2, p. 7)

In addressing this policy issue, the students started to use political action, which they had never used before. They initiated the signature campaign to protest against the government policy (S1, pp. 6 & 7, Bob, Ada).

Citizenship

Many scholars argue that service learning must go beyond charity to active, committed citizenship (Barber & Battistoni, 1993; Catlin, 2002; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Lempert, 1996). Eyler and Giles (1999) suggested to study the five elements of active participatory citizenship — namely values (I ought to do), knowledge (I know what I ought to do and why), skills (I know how to do), efficacy (I can do and it makes a difference), and commitment (I must and will do) — in service learning.

In the study, the service was clearly transformed from charity to social justice. The students manifested various values, knowledge, skills, efficacy, and commitment of an active, participatory citizen. After their investigation, they developed a strong sense of connectedness to the community (S1, p. 6, Ada). They decided to commit themselves to help the oppressed. As Ada said:

We have decided to stand on the side of the people. They have demonstrated and protested but were totally ignored. (S1, p. 5)

In addition, they believed that they ought to do something not just for the village people, but also for the Tuen Mun community, for the public good.

We take side as we were thinking about the public good, not only the village people. At the end, we are fighting against the dioxin produced by all these pollution sources. It will ruin all people in Tuen Mun, not only the village people. (S1, p. 10, Bob)

Their skills, knowledge and efficacy were also manifested in their planning and organization of the project, in the sharing session in school assembly, and also in the signature campaign. In sum, all of them have demonstrated various traits and competence of active, participatory citizens.

Transformation of the Nature of the Project

As noted from the previous discussion, there was a perspective transformation of the project nature from “service: cleaning the beach” to “social justice: a signature campaign against a government policy.” The action taken was also transformed from a service one to a collective political one.

Basically, the students’ engagement and curiosity were the major factor that brought about the transformation. In the project, while they were picking up rubbish in Lung Kwu Tan, they were surprised and puzzled to find that the

beach and the water were very dark and few people came to the beach. At the same time, they found that there was a power station nearby. In the debriefing session, they started to ask why the beach was so dirty and whether there was any relationship between the darkness and the power station. With the help of the teacher and the people from the NGOs, they started to search for the meanings of their observation and experience from various sources. At this stage, the students' transformation was brought about mainly by curiosity when they were engaged in the process. As they proceeded, the transformation was intensified because of their deep concern for the betterment of the people in the community.

In order to facilitate perspective transformation, Eyster and Giles (1999) recommended (1) "disorienting dilemmas" which raises questions about fundamental assumptions, (2) transforming the disorienting dilemmas into new understanding, and (3) challenging them to do things they are not used to do. In the interviews with the village people and the people from the power station, which were facilitated by Miss N, the students were provided with chance to face "disorienting dilemmas" caused by the conflicting views put forward by the two groups of people. Moreover, they were encouraged to seek for a more comprehensive understanding of the pollution issue by the NGO staff. Both groups were helpful in providing students with more information, views and challenges that encouraged them to look at the issue from various perspectives (S2, p. 10). Searching from the Internet and libraries also provided them with information and resources in formulating their new understanding of the issue. At last, they were supported and encouraged by Miss N to take action — running a signature campaign that they had never tried before.

In the transformation process, the openness and trust of Miss N and the flexibility given to the students were very important. In the exploration process, both the teacher and the students were involved in shaping the direction of the project. The students initiated some directions and Miss N was open to follow their opinions for further exploration, though she was not sure to where this would lead (S2, p. 6). The resourcefulness of the two NGOs was also crucial in helping the students formulate their new understanding. In sum, Miss N was acting as a facilitator and supporter, while the NGOs were acting as resources providers and expert advisors.

In this case, the transformation of perspective was clearly manifested, as the issue provided very explicit conflicting views based on different interests, which forced the students to think from different perspectives. Moreover, the environmental NGO, being very expert at this issue, alerted the students to various conflicting views. Nevertheless, in other services like selling flags for

voluntary agencies, the conflicts may not be so explicit. How can students be altered to the hidden conflicts related to social welfare policy from their experience of selling flags? What can teachers do to bring about the perspective transformation? Moreover, exposing students to oppression and injustice due to system and policy problems could be accused of indoctrinating the students (Burbules & Berk, 1999). Is this accusation a fair one? What can teachers do to achieve the task but minimize the accusation of indoctrinating? All these are issues for further study.

Elements of Good Practice of Service Learning

Six elements were proposed by Eyer & Giles (1999). They were the “placement quality,” “application,” “reflection: writing,” “reflection: discussion,” “diversity,” and “community voice.” “Placement quality” refers to whether the placement could “provide productive situation for students as well as genuine resources useful to the community” (p. 169). “Application” refers to “the degree to which students can link what they are doing in the classroom to what they are experiencing in the community and vice versa” (p. 170). That means students can consider their service experience in the light of the academic curriculum (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997). “Reflection” refers to the quality of opportunity “to step back and be thoughtful about experience, to monitor ones’ own reactions and thinking processes” (p. 171). Some features of effective reflection were linking experience to learning objectives, suitable guidance, regularity, allowing for feedback, and clarification of values (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997). “Diversity” refers to “the opportunity for the students to work with people from diverse background in the service” (p. 177). “Community voice” refers to “whether what they met needs identified by members of the community” (p. 178).

Though service learning is very common and there is plenty of literature about this topic, the idea is very new to Hong Kong. It first appeared in the curriculum reform document *Learning to Learn* in 2001. Unfortunately without sufficient governmental support, its implementation is poor. However, some elements of good practice, such as “placement quality,” “application,” and “reflection by discussion,” were still identified in this study. As for the other proposed elements, either they were irrelevant to the present study or no data was available.

The service learning in this study did not have a good placement quality, as it was just a “one shot” service of cleaning the beach. The application was weak too. There was no attempt to link the academic study with the service learning at the planning stage. It was only in the debriefing sessions and in the

focus group interview that the students somehow realized they could link their service experience with what they had learned in some of the academic subjects. Nevertheless, both the students and Miss N agreed that a better linking between subjects and service learning in the planning stage would be beneficial to students' learning. Calvin argued that linking academic subjects with service learning could make the lessons more interesting and encourage students to discuss and work as a team (S1, pp. 12, 13). Bob supplemented that they felt the ownership of the learning in the process (S1, p. 13).

As for reflection, though there was no systematic planning, there were serious discussion in the debriefing sessions. In the discussion, Miss N led the students to reflect and explore why there were such a phenomenon, why the village people could not get what they were protesting for, and what the concern of the government was. She commented that she wanted to move the students to care for the issue at the policy level. She emphasized that she shared her views with the students but would not "hard sell" (S2, p. 7). This attitude of sharing but not imposing is important for a facilitator.

In addition, some important elements related to the quality of the teachers were also identified. As the coordinator of the voluntary service team of the school, Miss N had a strong inclination toward raising the level of policy awareness of social issues.

In my understanding, voluntary job is to do some service for the old people or the children and then finished. I want to do something different because it does not address the root problems. I want to change from service-oriented to more policy and social development-oriented. (S2, p. 2)

In addition to Miss N's concern for public policy, her flexibility, openness, and trust in students were also very important. The active involvement of NGOs was another important factor identified. Since both factors have been discussed in the section "Transformation of the Nature of the Project," it will not be repeated here.

Conclusion

It should be noted that this study was a small-scale exploratory case study with limited data collected. Moreover, purposive sampling was adopted, which implied that the voluntary participants might represent a biased sample. Hence, this study did not intend to make generalization, and any conclusion and inferences drawn must be taken tentatively. Nevertheless, some insightful and significant findings were identified.

The idea of service learning for civic education is very new in Hong Kong and little experience of implementation is available. As compared to well-developed projects, the service learning in this study was not well prepared and planned, and had only a very short duration. There was no well integration with academic subjects and no systematic preparation for reflection. Nevertheless, evidences of various aspects of learning, including “personal and interpersonal development,” “engagement and curiosity,” “understanding and applying knowledge,” “critical thinking,” “perspective transformation,” and “citizenship” were identified. Several potential elements for good practice were also noted. They were good linkages with academic subjects and well-planned reflection, though both were missing in the present project. Teachers’ high level of policy awareness of social issues, open and flexible personality, and trust in students were also seen.

It is worth noting that even a very short service learning with weak integration with subjects could have a significant impact on learning and development of citizenship. Whether a longer period of service with better linkage with subjects and well-organized reflection could bring about stronger impact is an issue worthy of immediate and extensive research as this could shed light on a promising strategy for civic education. The teacher qualities identified are particularly useful in giving suggestions on teacher education for service learning.

The role of NGOs in the program is very important too. It can cast light on the development of working partnership with schools. There are various NGOs with foci on different social policies and they are keen to share their missions and experiences with schools. Establishing partnership with them is good to the development of civic education through service learning, especially with the focus on social justice. However, the firm missions of various NGOs may lead to the issue of indoctrination. Exploration of ways by which NGOs could contribute without indoctrinating is an issue worthy of further and urgent research.

The affirmation of civic education through service learning in the *Learning to Learn* document is an appropriate recommendation. Nevertheless, the service should go beyond charity to social justice for the development of citizenship. Better integration between academic subjects and service should also be emphasized. With a quality integration of academic subjects with services and well-planned, in-depth reflection, more significant impacts can be expected. A promising strategy for civic education for social justice is waiting ahead for us.

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