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ACADEME: INTERNSHIP: THE DELICATE BALANCE

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There appears to be a battle that heretofore has been a brushfire incursion, but what may now have the possibility of becoming something more involved. This is the raging debate between "traditional" scholars and those now committed to off-campus or experiential learning. Historically, there has always been disagreement over what constituted learning or how to evaluate what was learned.[1] Now the area of disparagement appears to be over the legitimacy of off-campus experiences as learning and, secondly, how to evaluate these experiences as academic enterprises. As always seems to be the case in debates such as these, both sides tend to overstate their case. The traditionalists hold fast to the tenets of on-campus learning stating that the off-campus projects are too often visceral in nature, guided by good hearts rather than strong minds. I believe there are several points to be made for both sides, and each could learn from the other if lines of communication could be opened up. What I have in mind is describing the academic department I am with and illustrating the manner in which both on-campus and off-campus learning experiences are interfaced.

The Human Services Program at The University of Tennessee at Knoxville is the marriage of a liberal arts education with all that its tradition embodies and an internship program which is at the heart of social work education. It is our contention that students should be well versed in the traditional academic disciplines such as English, history and math along with sociology and psychology, but they should also have some skills. Especially those types of skills which best could be described as interpersonal. The program is one in which it might truly be stated is student and client oriented.

The historical reason for the development of such a program could well be in student movements and their demands for relevance in education. Initially, these were the types of students who came into the program. Those who were politically likened tended to comprise the initial wave of students. From this initial group grew a much more varied bunch that now compasses those students interested in off-campus, experiential learning.

Several problems now begin to emerge. First was the desired balance between "academic" and internship learning, mentioned at the outset of this paper. It may be that an artificial dichotomy has been forced between these two, but the dilemma still remains. What do you do with the student who does well in the class, but cannot relate with

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[1] Hull, et. als.

clients in the field? Or the more trying situation where the
student does well in the field, but has no "academic" prowess. Of
course, every now and then a student comes along who shines in both
areas. But the questions still remain. Some being more pertinent
for the university graders, proficiency in academics, etc.; and some
of more concern to training institutions. We seem to be able to
evaluate the academic side of this monster, though not without
problems, but the evaluation of internship learning has proved not to
be so easy.

What I would like to show is that if we come to grips with both
of these issues, both will gain rather than one gaining at the expense
of the other. I will address myself mainly to the problem of experi-
ential learning and will attempt to show in a secondary manner how
studies in on-campus learning can be made. Simply stated, gains made
in service learning should carry over into on-campus learning.

The first question that must be dealt with is what might best be
termed operationalization. How do we take a concept and find an indi-
cator which approximates it as closely as possible? In terms of
service learning there are four indicators which can be developed.
1) The student; 2) the organization, no matter how loosely defined, he
works with; 3) the client; and 4) the instructor or supervisor. Input
from each of these four levels should give a close approximation to
what the concept of off-campus, service, or experiential learning is.
Just how each of these have been utilized within the Human Services
internship will be discussed later in this paper. But first, I would
like to continue with some rhetoric that surrounds the subject.

It appears that no matter what area one is involved in, the
issues of measurement and evaluation have become central. The social
sciences have been dominated by positivism since their inception, and
certainly the rise and continual popularity of behavior modification
is ample evidence of this dominance of measurement techniques and sta-
tistical significance. Only apologetically have qualitative or
participant observation studies been made, and they have been of a
theory verifying rather than a theory generating nature. In the area
of social welfare services, the hue and cry is now one of management
by objective. That is, those agencies which do the most efficient job
will get funded or refunded.

This may be nothing more than paper work. One need only consider
bookkeeping practices as they relate to the crime rate to envision
where efficiency will show up. Another example is the setting of the
poverty level. By merely lowering the poverty line a few hundred
dollars, millions of poor people are no longer poor. The essential
point is that evaluation of success either in education, crime fight-
ing, or poverty is not so amenable to measurement. They might even be
"ameasurable" if such a word exists.

What concerns me even more is that this attempt to measure and
evaluate may become the tail that wags the dog.

In social welfare services the ethics may become even more than now the referral of hard-core, difficult clients. If only those agencies which clear cases as successes are rewarded by funding, then certainly they will hesitate to deal with difficult cases because of the high failure risk involved. Those most in need of service will be passed on to other agencies to begin the cycle of waiting once again. A clear case of what Miller (1970:38-45) terms "creaming the poor." Thus, I fear great repercussions spilling over into this debate regarding evaluation, regardless of the area of endeavor. Having spoken briefly to the point in social welfare, let us see if there are parallels which might carry over into this debate of on-campus versus off-campus education, leaving alone education in general, which is another can of worms.

Why off-campus learning to begin with?--to increase enrollments, meet student demands, meet faculty demands! To understand the present debate, it might help to understand where the impetus for off-campus learning emerged from. Though in varied forms the internship has been ever-present in teacher training and social work education. There are other ways in which the internship or service learning concept has been used, however, and they were a result of the following factors: 1) to cope with unusual student backgrounds and competences; 2) to utilize atypical learning resources; and 3) to utilize energies which otherwise might be lost. Hopefully this will alleviate the dilemma which is so omnipresent in the helping professions of graduating per- sons who are facile with words but insensitive to people (Keeton, 1972:145). This is not to say, however, that we should go overboard on the one side and totally neglect the other. Both are extremely important.

The three rationales presented for describing the off-campus learning situation are well illustrated in the following quote from a student journal:

> Back in October, I was briefed on the idea of starting a
> halfway house here in Knoxville. Dr. Kronick, the director
> of Human Services, told me he was conferring with many
> prominent citizens of the area and would have a mass meeting
> with them as soon as there was a substantial amount of
> research done. That was where I came in. Jan Guffie and I
> were assigned to research anything and everything we could
> find on any type of halfway house; existent or non-existent
> ones and to look into problems that other halfway houses
> have run into, so that our house could learn from their
> mistakes.
>
> I went to work right away ransacking the library's resources
> going from abstract to abstract and back again . . . . After
> finding out the names of many existing halfway houses, I
> wrote to them in hopes of some worthwhile information. But,
> realizing that it would probably take them weeks if not
> months to reply, I decided there must be a quicker way. I

contacted Senator Howard Baker's office to see if they would
let me use their WATS line for this most worthwhile cause,
and they agreed . . . but only for three phone calls which I
could make the following Tuesday morning. In the meantime,
I had found a very useful book by Raush and Raush, The Half-
way House Movement, which greatly influenced my decisions
on whom I was going to call. I had decided to call Fountain
House in New York, Woodley House in Washington, D.C., and
the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in
Washington.

Before that Tuesday arrived, we (the researchers which had
now extended to five plus Clark Luster, the director of
Riverbend School at Eastern State Psychiatric Hospital, and
Dr. Kronick and a few graduate students) had a meeting. It
was at that meeting that I found out that the Knoxville half-
way house would be for kids from Eastern State. I was
greatly upset because my research implied that the house
should not deal with anyone under age by law. When dealing
with juveniles one has to deal with the problems of school
and supervision, etc. I thought that this would limit the
whole idea of a halfway house which is to try to get the
client out of his dependent role and into an independent one
that society demands. In dealing with juveniles one has to
assume responsibility for the child by law of the State and
therefore one has to make decisions for him such as making
him go to school. No one has to make decisions for the
eighteen year old; he can choose if he wants to work, go to
school, or do nothing. (Candace Broudy, 1972: Unpublished
manuscript)

This elucidates so clearly what Keeton (1972:147) states when he
says "one of the key opportunities that off-campus learning opens up
is the opportunity to give students genuine exposure to conflicting
outlooks, opposing philosophies, different styles of life and differ-
ent priorities for human effect."

In an effort to evaluate this residential treatment center as
providing an experiential learning experience, the four criteria pre-
sented earlier will be utilized. 1) From the student, based on
self-report, how did he feel about the experience as a learning situa-
tion and, secondly, how well did the clients assigned to him do? That
is client performance measured by recidivism, job or school atten-
dance, and social adjustment within the community. 2) From the
organization--how well did the student carry out his duties as com-
pared to full-time employees of the center? How close did he come to
meeting their expectations? (Hopefully the student will speak up and
act when he feels policies and procedures of the organization are not
to the most benefit for all. 3) From the client--a statement from
the client evaluating the work of the student intern along with the
behavioral component presented under #1. And 4) from the supervisor
and instructor. Feedback from the supervisor here will overlap some-
what with #2, but communication with the university based instructor

will be an added component. This interaction between teacher and practitioner is probably the greatest learning that goes on and should include the student-intern whenever possible. I might add that this probably is not an intended aspect of off-campus learning, but certainly one that is most needed. It might even be stated that such an interchange could be described as a theory-generating enterprise.

Certainly these four criterion are not without fault, but in an era which may become known as the age of accountability, they appear to be the best approximations available for such a difficult task. If the movement toward off-campus learning can force us out into the unknown where something genuinely novel can be discovered and where the study of a problem requires the invention of a new approach to its solutions, we will at the same time be forced to invent improved ways of identifying and appraising learning wherever it occurs, on-campus or off-campus (Keeton, 1972:147). And this will surely be the greatest gain to all--faculty, students, and community.

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