Service Learning: Common Roots and Ties in Asia and America

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Service-Learning: Actually An Old Idea

- Some believe the idea for service-learning started with Bob Sigmon and Bill Ramsey in the 1960s ....this is origin of modern US effort
- However, many philosophers and historical individuals have discussed the elements of service-learning long ago.
One of the key Chinese philosophers was Confucius (551-479 B.C.) who lived a little before Sigmon and Ramsey.

Confucius had several virtues that were the foundation for a person living a meaningful life.

These ideas form the basis for Confucianism in China and other countries and form an understanding of what it means to be a purposeful human being.

These principles form the basis for many philosophies about how to live and grow in society.
Confucius: 5 Virtues

- **Ren (仁):** Empathy and benevolence, kindness and politeness are a way of interacting with others. This is an obligation of altruism and humaneness toward others.

- **Li (禮):** involves acting respect fully, with a level of humility.

- **Yi (義):** is based on the idea of reciprocity; may simply mean what is ethically best to do in a certain context.

- **Xin (信):** means to act in ways that are not hurtful to others; be mindful of how you interact with others, both in mind and action.

- **Xiao:** involved with relationships with others and moral obligations that people have to one another; elders are to be respected and cared for; children shown loving care and nurturing.

- **Zhi (智):** referred to knowledge. Learning and knowledge were an integral part of growing in life and learning to be a responsible member of society.
Buddhism

Three Jewels:

- the Buddha: enlightenment
- the Dharma (the teachings): the understanding of tensions in life and movement toward Nirvana...a perfect state of being
- the Sangha (the community): the place where people interact and share their wisdom

A life process of doing, reflecting, seeking to attain enlightenment by understanding the conditions/sufferings in life and moving to a place of understanding and humane treatment of the world and all its people; attainment of peace and tranquility
Wang Shouren

- Wang Shouren (1472-1529) who was famous for “shingaku” and had similar philosophy to Confucius; proposed “walk the talk” (knowledge and action are one)

- “Learning” in old China was separated into “Xue” (study) and “Xi” (exercise)
Japanese Influences

- Dewey visited Japan in 1919 when he was invited by Nitobe Inazo.
- Nitobe had studied in the US (at Johns Hopkins, where Dewey did his doctorate) and became a Quaker and worked to spread notions of education and working toward world peace and human rights.
- Dewey made 8 presentations at Tokyo Imperial University. At this time, two American students who were in Japan, and who had studied about education in China, asked Dewey to visit China.
- Dewey fell in love with China and stayed there for 2 years.
John Dewey Comes to China

- John Dewey was one of the main philosophers in the US who developed "pragmatism"; learning by doing, connecting learning to real life.
- Dewey developed programs in the US, laboratory school at the University of Chicago; promoted experiential learning, to learn about democracy and social issues (1895 to 1930s).
- Dewey went to China in 1919 and stayed for 2 years at the request of Hu Shi and Chiang Monlin (his students).
- Gave almost 200 lectures in China, worked with Chinese students to promote "pragmatic" education.
- Called the "Second Confucius"
Modern Movements:
Tao Xingzhi: life is education

- Studied at the University of Illinois and Teacher’s College
- Contemporary of John Dewey
- 1923: organized the Mass Education Movement, 5 million students, 100,000 volunteer teachers: develop programs in rural China (partly result of Dewey efforts)
- Xingzhi – means action-knowledge; action/praxis produces knowledge
- Helped expand experiential learning programs in China
Y. C. James Yen: Civilian Education

- Studied at Princeton (M.A.) and Yale, and with Doctor Hons from Syracuse and other 2 colleges;
- 1922: built 200 schools and recruited 2500 students/400 teachers (including Mao); 1923 established “China civilian education promotion association”;
- “Scholars must become farmer’s apprentice”; promoted rural construction movement; learn to connect with average people
3 Contemporary Efforts: China Youth League

- Started in 1920: Chinese Socialist Youth League (中國共産主義青年團); several name changes; renamed China Youth League in 1957
- Organized around 31 provinces; local members and Central Committee connections
- Goal is to promote patriotism, youth employment, and volunteerism
- China Youth University for Political Sciences is connected to Youth League – one of leading research universities on issues of children and youth
- Houses China Youth & Children Research Center, central organization for research in all of China (established 1991)
Service Learning in Japan

- 1900s..to 1930s: T. Makiguchi – history and personal experience developing educational programs that focused on student centered classes that promoted personal growth and happiness
- Developed early idea of community studies, connecting education with real life
- Worked in poor areas of Tokyo; developed System of Value-Creating Pedagogy. Beginning of Soka Kyoiku Gakkai...Soka Gakkai
- In many ways, similar to Dewey, Nitobe, Tao Xingzhi --- the use of project based learning, community connected pedagogy that led to improvement of quality of life and feeling of contribution to social justice
Current Service Learning in Asia

- Development of Service Learning Asia Network: started in Japan...spread across Asia; now housed at Lingnan University in Hong Kong

- SLAN: colleges in 8 countries developing programs, joint efforts
Service-Learning

- Does provide service – but service is determined through dialogue with community and is connected to real community needs
- Has a hyphen (-): Assumes service is connected to learning for both groups (servants and those receiving service); reciprocal relationship
- Effective service requires acquiring knowledge from community members and using knowledge from academic perspective
  (scholars apprentice with farmers)
- Involves continuous action and reflection
Service-learning is both a philosophy and a pedagogy
- The reason we do service is to achieve social justice and provide opportunity for those often left out of opportunities to be successful in society
- Teaching and learning are an active process that requires doing and reflecting
- Service is a means to teaching academic content and concepts
- Involves continuous assessment from all perspectives
- Becoming a citizen requires service-learning
Some current developments in China

- Several universities are developing efforts: Beijing Normal University, China Youth University for Political Sciences, University of International Business and Economics (UIBAS)....

- Beijing Normal U: Civic Service Education...program with 7 elementary schools

- UIBAS: Youth League Branch in charge of one quarter to one third of all the curriculum.

- China Youth University for Political Sciences: Starting several programs, originating from School of Social Work, creating efforts in both Social Work and several different departments
Service Learning In US

- Long history of service....basis for early American society was to help one another; society was based on volunteerism and community spirit. 18th and 19th centuries found people working collectively to build society.

- 1860s: Morrill Act – public universities support assistance to rural communities

- Henry James (philosopher): The Moral Equivalent of War (1910): require national service to meet the needs of communities
More US History

- **Progressive Education/John Dewey** (1930s): focused on student-centered education, connected to community work to address real societal issues.

- **George Counts**: *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order* – was purpose of schooling to include addressing social justice issues?

- **1970s**: Experience-Based Career Education: national movement to connect secondary schools with community around issues related to career development; many programs included community improvement and service.
More History/Involvement of Higher Education

- 1980s: National Society for Internships and Experiential Education (focused on role of experiential learning in colleges and schools)
- Campus Compact (1985): university presidents commit their institutions to civic engagement – connect academic learning with community issues; now more than 1100 colleges/universities are members) – developed university courses, teacher education programs
- International Center for Service Learning and Teacher Education (now a Duke University): group of teacher educators who worked together to promote service learning and literature on teacher ed
- Financial Support: Foundations (Kellogg, Kaufmann, State Farm) provide funds for program development
More US Development

- **National Effort:** *Corporation for National and Community Service* – supported service-learning and national service (AmeriCorps) 1990s to 2012 supports service learning programs
- **Partnership for Service-Learning:** spread across schools in most states
- **Development of national organizations:** *International Association for Research on Service Learning and Community Engagement (IARSLCE)*
- **Focus on many programs involving service and civic education** (YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, Youth Service America.....)
Asia and US: Some Common Threads

- Have long histories of service and community connections: From Confucius/Buddhism to Tao Xinghui, to the Progressive Movement/John Dewey, to Makiguchi, and to national initiatives the promoted volunteerism and social justice.

- Have long history of Americans and Asians working together and influencing each other to promote experiential learning addressing social justice (Dewey was connected to Asia; Asia was connected to Dewey and American universities/faculty that believed in the role of connecting experience with learning: “Scholars apprenticing with farmers.”)

- Both have a tradition of connecting education and service with issues of solving problems of social injustice and helping those who are in need; gaining enlightenment about society and self through action and reflection.
We need to acknowledge our rich history of collaboration between Asia and America.

Need to support the current collaborative efforts of US service-learning pioneers in working with Asia (Dwight Giles in Hong Kong; Tim Stanton in Singapore and Hong Kong; Rob Shumer in Singapore, China, and Japan...for example)

Need to realize that we are all dependent on one another to increase and improve the promotion and delivery of service-learning in Asia, the US, and the world.