How Narrative Practice informs Service Learning with Love and Justice

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Aims of the Article

This article aims to explore and advocate how narrative practice could enrich the operation of service learning. As a result, the educator and the learner could experience love and justice, and re-enact them in daily with strong sense of diversity and respect to others contextually.
What Service Learning should be?

“Apart from being awareness of the other, service learning emphasizes the infinite value of the other. Service learning urges the learner to recognize that all people, no matter how insignificant they may seem to be in worldly terms, are a source of potential learning and insight for all who meet them. Their individual stories may tell of dire need, painful loss and unending struggle to survive…”

“...Service learning sees all difference as cause for celebration, inclusivity as means of creating a better, freer and fairer world”

(Peacock, D. “Developing Human Values”)
How does narration related to learning?

For narrative practitioners (therapists, educators, artists...), stories consists of events, linked in sequence, across time and according to a plot.

- As humans, we are interpreting beings. We all have daily experiences of events that we seek to make thing meaningful.
- The stories we have about our lives are created through linking certain events together in a particular sequence across a time period, and finding a way of explaining. This meaning forms the plot of the story.
- The story consists of values, knowledge, language, relationship and action.
Cycle of Service Learning with Narrative Practice

- Experiencing
- Dialogue
- Conceptualization

Externalizing
Re-membering
Deconstruction
Definitional Ceremonies
Basic components of Narrative Practice

- Externalizing conversation
- Re-membering Conversation
- Definitional Ceremonies
- Deconstructing Conversation

Narrative practice
Be aware of the risk that we are developing more of an international mono-culture.

The expression of diversity should be facilitated.

The effect of looking for “truths” and fixed “structures”: the development of norms that people’s lives “should” look like in order to be “healthy”.

Identities are created in relationship with others, with institutions and with broader relations of power.

Always consider how stories of our lives shape our lives and how therapy might enable the rich description of preferred stories of identity.

Keeping questioning on “objectivity”, “expertise” and “professional practices of interpretation” in the process of counseling.

Take seriously how therapy conversation will shape the identity of both the person and the counselor.

Developing accountability practices to check out the effects of therapy conversations on the person who consult with us.

Thought behind Narrative Practice: Post-structuralism & Social Constructionism (White, 1998; Thomas, 2002)
Questioning skills of Narrative Practice: Scaffolding

- What “Scaffolding Questioning is…
  - Use of sets of questioning categories to recognize “zone of proximal development” (潛在發展區) so as to find out the “possible to know” from the “known and familiar”
  - The following is an example of the basic “scaffolding map” as a guide for conversation in the process of …
    - “Externalization” (外置問題)
    - “Re-membering” (重員對話)
    - “Definitional Ceremony” / “Outsider Witnesses” (釋義慶典對話/事外見證者)
"Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals."

(Mind in Society, p.57)
POTENTIAL LEVEL

ACTUAL LEVEL

Instruction: by adult or more capable peers

ZPD
Contribution of Vygotsky’s Social Constructive view:

• Encourage collaborative learning: utilizing social process

• Be more sensitive of use of language in our context, i.e. awareness of ‘discourse’ embedded in service learning is important.

• Teaching should begin at the upper limit of the ZPD.

• Use scaffolding (鷹架學習) to promote self-initiated learning.

• Use skilled peers as teachers preferred.

• Monitor and encourage use of private speech, i.e. the conversation in service learning could be reflective learning.
“Scaffolding Map” in “Externalizing conversation”

Examples: “what is your experience of discrimination in daily life?”, “How do you describe the consequential effects of this kind of discrimination?”
Re-membering Conversation

“Scaffolding Map” in “Re-membering conversation”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible to know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High-level distancing task: abstraction of learnings &amp; realizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-high-level distancing task: reflections on chain of association, learnings, &amp; realizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium-level distancing task: unique outcome taken into chain of association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-level distancing task: characterizing the unique outcome</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples:
“Is there figure/person as anti-discrimination in your life? How did this figure/person achieve this?”
Deconstructing Conversation

Narrative practitioners are interested in discovering, acknowledging, questioning and ‘taking apart’ (deconstructing) the beliefs, ideas and practices of the broader culture in which a person lives that are serving to assist the social phenomenon in contrast with love and justice.

The beliefs and ideas that are assisting the social phenomenon in contrast with love and justice are often regarded as ‘taken for granted’ as ‘truths’, or as ‘common-place understandings’. For examples, justification on patriarchy, the main role of female as subordinate to male and the elderly as the one being cared.....
Deconstructing Conversation

Basic questioning approaches of deconstructing questions:

✓ What are the background assumptions that enable this social event to make sense?
✓ What unnamed background assumptions make this social event work?
✓ What are the ideas that might explain how people are speaking and acting?
✓ What are some of the taken-for-granted ways of living and being that are assisting the “life” of the social event?
Definitional Ceremonies

“Scaffolding Map” in “Definitional Ceremony”

**Transport**: review, reflection, preparation and action

**Resonance**: embodied, not abstract interest on daily life among the person and outsiders

**Imagery**: metaphor(s) expressing dream, hope, aims or commitment of the person

**Expression**: language, emotion state, special interest

- Very high-level distancing task: plans for action
- High-level distancing task: abstraction of learnings & realizations
- Medium-high-level distancing task: reflections on chain of association, learnings, & realizations
- Medium-level distancing task: unique outcome taken into chain of association
- Low-level distancing task: characterizing the unique outcome

Examples: “what important words could be spoken together to ascend awareness of justice for the children in poverty?”, “How to gather people with diverse background to act against sexual harassment?”
Some reminders on applying narrative practice...

....reclaiming these sorts of terms in the interpretation of what we are doing—love, passion....respect, commitment, and so on....but because these terms are emblematic of certain popular discourse; because they are associated with discursive fields that are constituted of alternative rules about what counts as legitimate knowledge, about who is authorized to speak of these knowledge, about how these knowledge might be expressed....

And these discursive fields are also constituted of different technologies for the expression of, or for the performance of, these knowledges—different techniques of the self, and different practices of relationships.

White, Michael (1948- 2008)
*One of the advocator of Narrative Practice
...So what I am saying is that terms of description like love and passion are emblematic of discourses that can provide a point of entry to alternative modes of life, to specific ways of being and thinking; which will have different real effects on the shape of the therapeutic interaction, different real effects on the lives of the people who consult us, and different real effects on our lives as well.

White, Michael (1948- 2008)
References (partially)


