

5th Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Service-Learning
Fu Jen Catholic University, Taiwan
May 2015

CYCLE 3.0? ACTION RESEARCH & CRITICAL REFLECTION ON SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAMS OF A RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE IN MACAU

Dr. Sancia Wai-San Wan
Stanley Ho East Asia College
University of Macau

Outline

- Background & Challenges
- Methodology: Action Research for Change in Education
- Service-Learning Programs Conducted during 2012-2015
- Research Cycles
- Key Reflection on Cycle 2.0
 - Teachers' and Local Partners' Feedback
 - Balance between Teacher Advice and Student Ownership
 - Strategies of Reflection
- Conclusion and the Way Forward

Background & Challenges

- Education Reform in the Institution
 - ‘4-in-1’ educational model: discipline-specific education, general education, research and internship education, and community and peer education
 - Attempts to weave liberal education and civic engagement into the core educational experiences of students
 - The residential college (RC) system supports the pillar of peer and community education.
- Residential Learning
- Service-Learning
- Challenges and Problem Identification
 - As some service-learning programs are to be incorporated into and implemented via the RC system, which is a less-researched area of educational research, we are not yet certain what the best way is to do so to fully accomplish the goals of both service-learning and residential-learning.

Residential Learning

- Residential college, more than offering accommodation, is regarded as a means to integrate students' in-class and out-of-class experiences by providing a community that fosters greater faculty and peer interaction, increased opportunities for coordinated learning activities, and an academically and socially supportive living environment' (Inkelas & Weisman, 2003, p. 335).
- Positive effects of living-learning programs: e.g. significantly higher levels of involvement in campus activities, interaction with faculty and peers, integration with the institutional environment, and gains in intellectual and personal development
- MU relocated to a new campus which is 20 times larger than the old campus,
- Now has a total of eight RCs in full operation, responsible for “community and peer education”
- Each RC accommodates around 450 undergraduate students, and a very small number of postgraduates serving as resident tutors, from different academic backgrounds and years of study.
- RC1 as the first RC founded in 2010
- Since 2014/15, all freshmen must stay in one of the RCs.
- Envisioning service-learning as an effective pedagogy for helping students cultivate value, skills and knowledge essential to their personal and professional growth, the RCs have incorporated different in-house and off-campus service-learning programs in a decentralized manner based on the individual college's goals.

Service-Learning

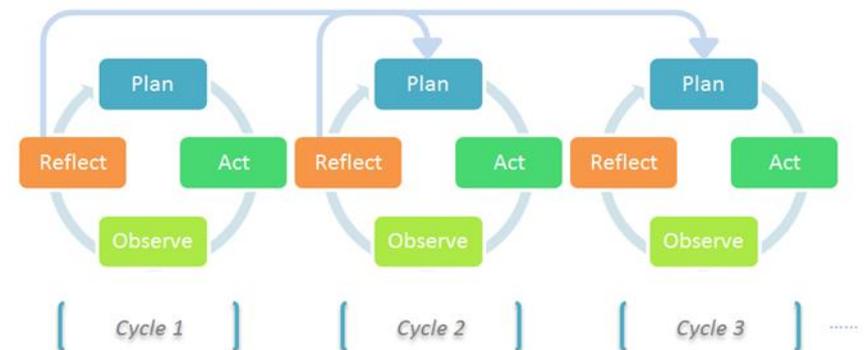
- As a pedagogical approach, service-learning is aimed at carefully monitored educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain skills and knowledge, develop increased self-awareness and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility, and discover meaning in their lives (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Reeves & Hare, 2009).
- Having the control over the whole process of design, execution and evaluation, the RC would be able to take care of its students' personal and social development which is indeed the major objective of this living-learning community.

Methodology: Action Research for Change in Education

- ‘Action research and other forms of practitioner research are about change. Action for change is at the core’ (Noffke, 2008, p. 430).
- Action research is ‘a form of self-reflexive enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out’ (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 162).
- Within the context of higher education action, research has been used to improve different aspects of educational policy and practices, such as teaching practice, student learning, curriculum design and policy development.
- Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 165) describe action research as being about:
 - the improvement of practice;
 - the improvement of the understanding of practice;
 - the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place.

Research Method

- Method of action research: Fundamentally involves a **self-reflective spiral of cycles of planning, action, observing and reflection**
- Data collection:
 - working documents, reports, proposals, email communication, student enrollment records, personal notes,
 - interview records (audio-taped and transcribed),
 - reflection (journal entries, essays and audio-taped discussions),
 - photos, video clips of activities and discussions, etc.
- Analysis:
 - look for **emerging themes** for different steps of the research cycles identified,
 - then pinpoint **major moments** and **self-reflections**



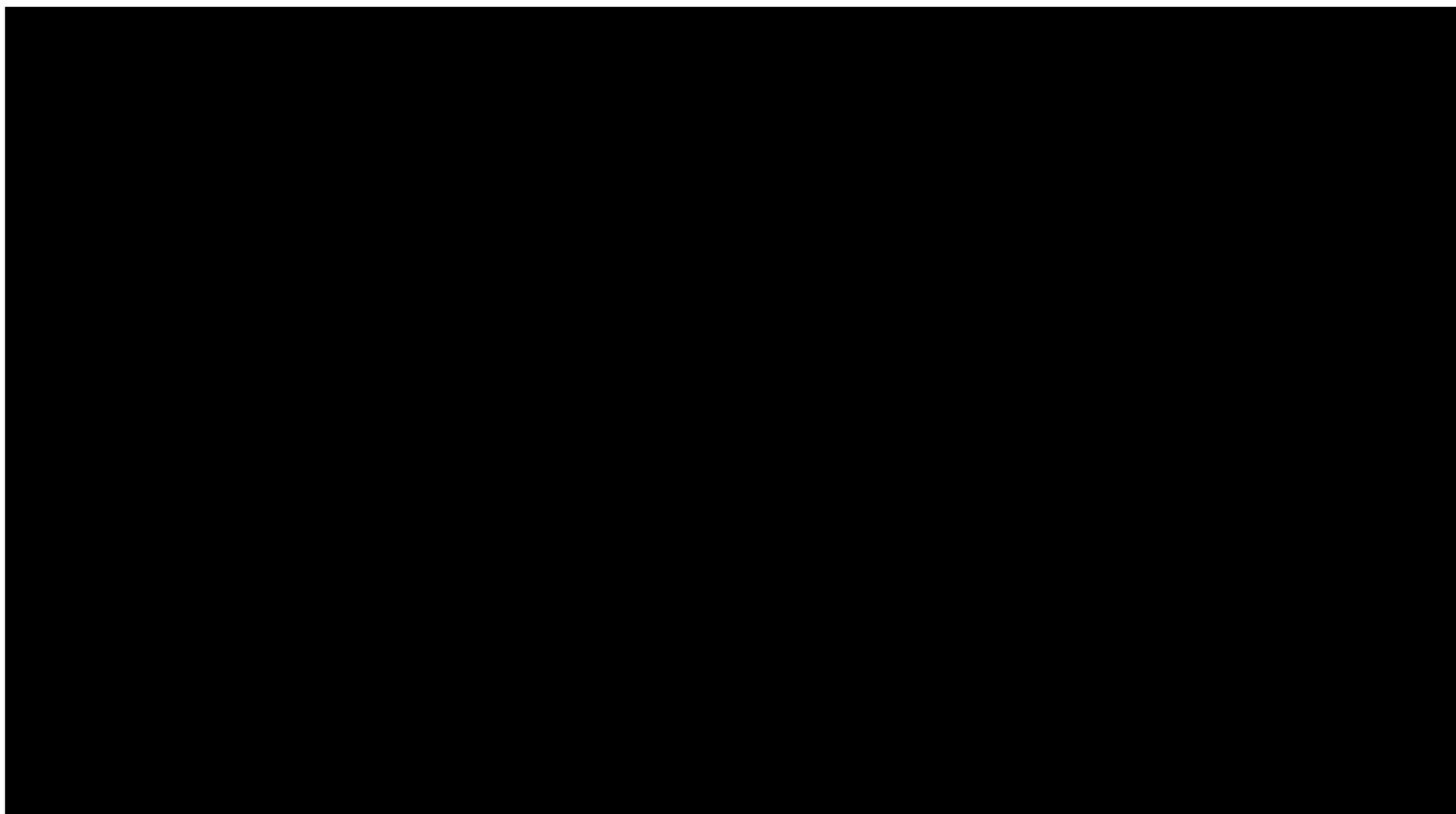
Events and Activities Related to Service-Learning (Co-)Organized and Participated by the Author from 2012 to 2015

Date(s)	Event / Activity	General Contents & Student Outputs
20 December 2012	Visited a student development and resources center of a university in Hong Kong (hereafter 'HU')	<p>Learned the different levels and types of service-learning programs monitored by that center;</p> <p>Got some knowledge about student motivations, student ownership, training and funding sources;</p> <p>Established connections with the management team of that center for future potential collaboration.</p>
14 March 2013	<p>Service Knowledge Exchange Series with HU (1):</p> <p>Led 5 RC1 students to take part and volunteer in HU's service event for school children from less-advantaged social and ethnic backgrounds</p>	<p>Over 20 students enrolled. Short individual interviews were arranged to shortlist representatives.</p> <p>RC1 students, accompanied by HU students, guided young children to tour around the campus of HU and participate in fun activities to have a taste of university life.</p>
13 April 2013	<p>Service Knowledge Exchange Series with HU (2):</p> <p>Invited 5 students from HU for sharing their international service projects and visited, with MU students, a local community service center</p>	<p>Most of the invited HU students were the same as those who received and led us during the March session.</p> <p>Most of the RC1 students who participated in the March session also attended this event. About a total of 20 students from RC1 and other MU units attended the sharing session.</p> <p>Learned the different types of student-initiated service projects, including goals, program design, collaboration with local partners, financial support, outputs, etc.</p>
20-27 May 2013	Organized, with support by a research institute and a local agency, a short service-learning trip to Laos and Thailand	<p>Reflection and outputs:</p> <p>In-service daily journals;</p> <p>Essays after the trip;</p> <p>Short video clips as group project;</p> <p>Presentations to share experience with other RC students.</p>
3-8 June 2013	Participated in a regional service-learning conference held in both Hong Kong and Guangzhou	Attended different keynote and presentation sessions, and joined some pre- and post-conference workshops and visits to local community or charity organizations.
4-9 August 2013	Led 8 RC1 students to take part in a labor education and service-learning trip to Taiwan, hosted by a university in Taichung	<p>Intensive workshops and indoor and outdoor activities designed and run by teachers and students of the host university.</p> <p>Reflection discussions after each activity.</p>

Date(s)	Event / Activity	General Contents & Student Outputs
14 December 2013	Organized and led 12 RC1 students to a day trip to Hong Kong for poverty simulation workshop and volunteer service at an NGO	Reflection discussion at the spot.
29 March 2014	Organized and led 15 RC1 students to pay community visits in Hong Kong	<p>Participated in an interactive simulation workshop by Oxfam; Joined a guided tour to learn about the local history and development of an old urban district; Visited in group and talked in-depth with sub-divided flat residents in that same district; Participated in a 'homeless' photo exhibition-cum-talk, and discussed with homeless people. Reflection and outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group discussions; ▪ Retrospective journals; ▪ Short stories about the sub-divided flat residents whom they visited.
12-14 May 2014	Facilitated a charity bazaar initiated and organized by the student association of RC1	Money raised was donated to the local partner of the Sichuan service-learning trip to build a community library in the earthquake-stricken town.
12-21 June 2014	Organized and led 16 RC1 students to a service-learning trip to Taiwan	<p>Reflection and outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group discussions; ▪ In-service retrospective journals; ▪ Essays after the trip; ▪ Presentations to share experience to other RC students.
12-21 June 2014	Helped with the interviews with students enrolled in, and analyzed the process of the trip to Sichuan	<p>Reflection and outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group discussions; ▪ In-service retrospective journals; ▪ Essays after the trip; ▪ Short stories about the local village and host families to document their lives in the earthquake-stricken mountainous region; ▪ Presentations to share experience to other RC students.

Date(s)	Event / Activity	General Contents & Student Outputs
8 & 26 October 2014	Co-organized with Oxfam and Caritas (Macau) a community walk series	<p>Part 1: Visited and interviewed various vulnerable groups in local communities: single-parent family, homeless people, chronically-ill resident.</p> <p>Part 2: Invited various vulnerable groups in local communities (family, elderly, foreign workers) to the new campus and RC1 to enjoy lunch and fun activities for half day.</p> <p>Reflection and outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group discussions; ▪ Retrospective journals; ▪ Interviewed by local media, and appeared in videos that aim to promote public awareness of local poverty
2-3 November 2014	Organized and led 15 RC1 students to pay community visits in Hong Kong	<p>Participated in an Oxfam interactive workshop on ethnic minorities;</p> <p>Joined a guided tour to learn about the local history and development of an old urban district;</p> <p>Visited sub-divided flat residents in that same district (in smaller groups);</p> <p>Appreciated in a theatre drama starring sight-impaired actors and actresses.</p> <p>Reflection and outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group discussions; ▪ Retrospective journals
23 Feb – 1 Mar 2015	Organized and led 11 RC1 students to a service-learning trip to Taiwan (theme: natural farming, food and the environment)	<p>Reflection and outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group discussions (pre-, in-, and post-service reflection); ▪ Essays after the trip
30 April 2015	Facilitated a charity bazaar initiated and organized by the student association of RC1	Money raised would be donated for local school or community development in Yunnan and Sichuan to which RC1 students would be going for service-learning trips.
20-30 May 2015	Helped with the interviews with students enrolled in, and analyzed the process of the trip to Yunnan (15 RC1 students; primarily involve voluntary teaching in primary and secondary schools in Jingqu)	<p>Reflection and outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group discussions; ▪ In-service retrospective journals; ▪ Essays after the trip; ▪ Presentations to share experience to other RC students.
4-13 June	<p>Co-organized and led 15 RC1 students to do service-learning in Sichuan (voluntary teaching in primary and secondary schools; farm work; interactive activities for local villagers)</p> <p>Helped with the interviews with students enrolled in, and analyzed the process of the trip</p>	<p>Reflection and outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group discussions; ▪ In-service retrospective journals; ▪ Essays after the trip; ▪ Presentations to share experience to other RC students.

Community Walk 澳門社區深度遊, October 2014



Sichuan Service-Learning Trip, June 2014



Key Reflection on Previous Cycles

- Teachers' and Local Partners' Feedback
- Balance between Teacher Advice and Student Ownership
- Strategies of Reflection

Conclusion and the Way Forward

- Key aspects of improvement, e.g.
 - giving timely and useful feedback to students,
 - enhancing students' sense of ownership in service activities,
 - designing and practicing diverse and innovative reflection activities,
 - offering more opportunities for students to realize the importance of and practice deep reflection
 - better communication and closer collaboration with local partners,
 - involving students at an earlier stage of planning to empower them to feel the worthiness of their service to the community,
 - the need of longer-term service-learning programs to allow students' continued commitment and development
- New academic year 2015/16:
 - Conduct **pre- and post-survey research on students' civic attitudes and skills** to evaluate service-learning programs
 - Increase **regularity of local service-learning** programs
 - Look for opportunities to conduct overseas service-learning trips to places **beyond Greater China**