CREATING LIFELONG LEARNING THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Challenges continue for higher education to improve learning outcomes and better prepare graduates for successful careers. Service-learning, an instructional method that integrates theoretical learning with real life experimentation and community service, offers the positive impacts of its pedagogy in enhancing students' learning and personal growth. This study measures critical aspects of learning in multiple marketing courses using the same applied project. Data are compared to the same courses during prior semesters and for the study semester from three perspectives – the students, the instructor, the businessperson. Analysis includes comparing higher and lower performing students based on examination scores, project grades, and between examinations and projects. The results from each of the three perspectives were that the service-learning project and course learning were successful. Furthermore, the findings have implications to and demonstrate the critical importance of first learning knowledge (textbook) then its applications (project), the integration of not only the content and its application but also across different courses, and the role of team teaching in creating lifelong learning.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education in general has been for decades and continues to be challenged by employers and more recently within the academy (Menand, 2010). More specifically, business education needs more creativity and imagination. Eric Liu, a leader in the Washington-based organization Creativity Matters, says that a student needs to be "a flexible, adaptive, lifelong learner who can think creatively and solve problems and frame problems creatively. That's what everybody's looking for" (Blankinship, 2007, p. 19A). He believes that "students need to be taught to use their imaginations to solve problems, to connect the dots, …. and project-based and experiential learning should replace some book work and tests" (Blankinship, 2007, p. 19A). However, knowledge ("book work and tests") must preclude most, if not all skill development ("solve problems and frame problems creatively"). For example,

> There is no doubt that having students memorize lists of dry facts is not enriching. It is also true (though less often appreciated) that trying to teach students skills such as analysis or synthesis in the absence of factual knowledge is impossible. Research from cognitive science has shown that the sorts of skills that teachers want from students – such as the ability to analyze and to think critically – *require* extensive factual knowledge. …. Factual knowledge must precede skill. (Willingham, 2009, p. 19)

An instructional method "to connect the dots" is service-learning. Research studies have found positive results in learning outcomes, e.g., knowledge enhancement, by using service-learning projects for business (Walsh, 2002), education (Dudderar and Stover, 2003), medical (Elam et al., 2003), and other (Mastrangelo and Tischio, 2005) courses. Such projects enhance students' knowledge and improve skills

(Eyler and Giles, 1999). Furthermore, service-learning not only improves students' knowledge and skills but also their personal development. These projects provide each student with a sense of community and self awareness, which too empowers them in search for and maintaining a successful career (Elam et al., 2003).

Based on surveys and other techniques, organizations, e.g., National Association of Colleges and Employers, publications, e.g., *Wall Street Journal*, and universities, e.g., Lynn University College of Business and Management, have found consistently that skills, e.g., communication, teamwork, critical thinking, interpersonal, and qualities, e.g., honesty, integrity, work ethic, adaptability, are important characteristics for hiring college graduates. Furthermore, regional, e.g., Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), and professional school, e.g., The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business – International (AACSB), accrediting organizations require meeting appropriate, mission driven learning outcomes and assurances of learning. The purpose of this study is to address these aspects and to assess the service-learning outcomes. This study includes a review of the services-learning literature, the methodology, data analysis results, the discussion of the findings, limitations of and future opportunities from this research, and the conclusion.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Service-learning is an instructional method that integrates theoretical learning with real life experimentation and community service. Literature supports the positive impacts of service-learning pedagogy in enhancing students' learning and personal growth (Holland, 2001; Walsh, 2002; Dudderar and Stover, 2003; Elam et al., 2003; Mastrangelo and Tischio, 2005; Sternberger, Ford and Hale, 2005; Soslau and Yost, 2007; Steinke and Fitch, 2007). In a service learning course explicit classroom learning objectives are supplemented by an outside of classroom experiential service project and a reflection assignment for students to bridge theory and application (Dudderar and Stover, 2003; Elam et al., 2003; Sternberger, Ford and Hale, 2005). This integration of education, experiment, and service not only enhances students' learning, but also provides each student with a sense of achievement, satisfaction and effectiveness as a community member, in addition to fulfilling degree requirements (Holland, 2001; Dudderar and Stover, 2003; Mastrangelo and Tischio, 2005; Steinke and Fitch, 2007). The continuity of classroom learning to the real world opens up a broader perspective to the students with insights, awareness, involvement and positive change in attitude, behavior, self-esteem and personal growth, which all constitute a solid foundation for future career success (Eyler and Giles, 1999; Elam et al., 2003; Sternberger, Ford and Hale, 2005).

Faculty's roles in a service-learning course include teaching, project planning, coordination and collaboration with community, and assessment of the learning outcomes of the service-learning course including the assessment of effectiveness of the service project for the community (Holland, 2001). The continued faculty-community partnership could also lead to the improvement of the course and the quality of the project and the course outcomes (Eyler and Giles, 1999; Holland, 2001; Mastrangelo and Tischio, 2005).

Literature on the assessment of service-learning curricular includes both quantitative and qualitative methods. Dudderar and Stover (2003) use qualitative methods of assessing students' journals to evaluate the impact of service-learning pedagogy incorporated into a sequence of courses in the St. Mary's College of Maryland teacher education curriculum. The college students of the education department participated in the Reading Tutuoring Project at local elementary schools, tutored and mentored at risk middle school students, worked in GED program, provided the elementary school students with environmental education, taught after-school enrichment classes and organized and planned special events for local school children. The college students were asked to write about the teaching strategy and educational

vocabulary of the elementary schools and kept reflective journals on their own teaching, mentoring and interaction with the elementary school students.

Dudderar and Stover (2003) indicate that the college students' writing assignments and journals showed an in-depth understanding of the educational contents of the courses resulting from real life experience of reading, tutoring and mentoring at local elementary schools. The college students also demonstrated developing skills such as problem-solving, time management, teamwork, tolerance and reflective abilities. On the personal level, they developed a sense of appreciation for teachers and self, motivation, involvement, discovery and enjoyment of serving and being able to serve.

Mastrangelo and Tischio (2005) describe how a year-long service learning project integrated to first year writing-intensive courses offered at different University of Albany, SUNY departments and in three different disciplinary areas (biology, sociology and philosophy). The first year writing course students have the opportunity to experiment the classroom theoretical learning through participation in a yearlong pen pal project at local elementary schools. The college students' out of classroom activities included writing individual letters to elementary school students, research on nutrition, achievements and socio-economic status of the elementary school students and the educational policy of the elementary schools, in addition to mentoring and connecting with the elementary school students. The authors, who were also the course instructors, report the positive impact of the pen pal project on SUNY students' learning and personal development. The outcomes assessment of the pen pal project was based on assessment of SUNY students' final course reflections and research papers. Mastrangelo and Tischio (2005) state how college students developed the ability to connect their academic knowledge of teaching to the actual reading and assessment of the elementary school students' writings. They state how the college students experienced the impact and contribution of their own work and feedbacks on the elementary school students' writing. Mastrangelo and Tischio especially emphasize how SUNY students developed sense of caring, connection, sensitivity and effectiveness during the two semesters of the pen pal project. As they have stated, the project "enables the students to combine inquiry and action and engage in critical disciplinary learning" (Mastrangelo and Tischio, 2005, p. 35-36).

Furthermore, Soslau and Yost (2007) describe an experiential study with two fifth grade groups of 33 students taught by the same partner teachers. The teachers treated the control group with a traditional method of teaching while the experiential class had a service project in addition to the traditional curriculum. The students in the experiential group researched the various community news about diseases suffered by different community groups. Students in the experimental group experimented life as wheel chair users and developed empathy for wheel chair users, kept reflective journals, oral and visual presentations, had debates on the topic and wrote reports on the experiment. Hands on projects and real life experiments to enhance students learning and personal growth supplemented the regular curriculum of the class. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to assess and compare the learning and developmental outcomes of the two classes. The teachers evaluated the reflective journals, benchmark test scores, attendance records and suspension cases.

A baseline comparison showed that the experiential group improved both their mathematics and reading scores by a significantly greater amount than the control group during nine months of the experiment. In addition, the assessment of reflective journals showed that the experimental class connected the classroom educational contents to the real world experiment topic better than the control group. Furthermore, the data indicated that the attendance rate for the experimental group was 1.79% higher than for the control group during the nine months of the class. Finally, the experimental group had six suspension incidents less than the control group during nine months of the experiment. Both higher attendance and lower suspension of the class with service-learning component indicated higher involvement and motivation of students engaged in service-learning projects. Soslau and Yost (2007) study supports the proposition that service-learning as an instructional method enhances students learning, motivation and engagement.

Walsh (2002) explains how a SUNY College at Oneonta undergraduate student Marketing Club has successfully conducted a number of major marketing research projects and consulting services for the community private and public organizations. Walsh points out that the service-learning nature of the club has provided the students with the hands on application of the textbook theories. Most of their Marketing Club projects have been presented to the community organizations as written projects resulted in enhancing students' learning objectives. Students have also acquired valuable skills such as collaborative and creative processes, consulting, teamwork and communication, in addition to personal growth and self-esteem and motivation development. The Marketing Club and students have received international awards at the America Marketing Association Conferences, a fund-raising award, two awards for outstanding special (research) projects, and seven Chapter Performance Awards for the quality of their papers. They also have won recognition as the American Marketing Association's Outstanding Chapter in the Eastern Region for two years. Walsh states the practical experience, success and recognitions have empowered the students in their future career placements and job market competition.

Elam et al. (2003) have used multiple methods and instruments to measure the learning and motivational outcomes of an experiential service-learning elective course in the University of Kentucky College of Medicine. The elective service-learning course integrated to a behavioral science course. The students developed the service component of the elective course with an asset need assessment project. The authors point to the importance of community service as an integral part of medical practice and medical curricula. Elam et al. describe that the community need based experience elective course linked to a pre-existing course with psychological, socioeconomic and legal aspects of health and disease contents at University of Kentucky College of Medicine. The pre-existing course was a two-year preclinical required course, but the service-learning course was a two credit elective, pass-fail course.

The authors have assessed the learning and motivational outcomes of the service-learning course during the two year project period. Faculty assessment, community agency evaluation, students' surveys, reflection questionnaires and course evaluation are used for assessment of the outcome of the service-learning course. Faculty evaluation based on rating criteria of "excellent, good, fair, needs improvement" did not report a consistent trend of students' improvement in the levels of enthusiasm, group interaction and connection of experiment with theoretical learning of the pre-existing course. However, as the authors state, this could be a result from the lack of faculty interaction with the students related to their experiment during the elective experiential course. Nevertheless, the community agency's evaluation indicated a trend of improvement in students' communication, organization and inter-personal skills, and dependability and enthusiasm during the two-year period.

Students' course evaluation of the experimental service-learning elective was higher than other courses. The anonymous course evaluation contained eight core items such as active learning, integration of experiment with theoretical learning, expectations and overall quality. Students' evaluations of all eight items for the service-learning elective were higher than other courses. However, the differences were only statistically significant for four items. The course evaluation also had an open-ended question asking students about the impacts of the elective course on their attitudes, skills and knowledge. The authors state that "the vast majority" of students responded positively to the question. Students' responses reflected improvement in skills such as teamwork, communication, interpersonal, and leadership. In addition, as reflected by the students, the service experiment broadened their community awareness, involvement and commitments.

Steinke and Fitch (2007) in "Assessing Service-Learning" point to the importance of service-learning integration to higher education curricular and discuss different tools to assess the outcomes of service-learning pedagogy. They refer to lack of focus on the student's skill development in higher education curricular and believe that integration of service learning to colleges and university curricular can

contribute to filling this gap. Sternberger, Ford and Hale (2005) refer to service learning as a powerful teaching method promoting students' learning and personal transformation. They discuss the reciprocity of service learning relationship between students and community agency. They describe how in the process of a service project students, teacher and community agency change. The importance of the reflective piece (e.g. the service learning project) and connecting the experience to theoretical learning enhance students' knowledge and comprehension of the learning material. Sternberger, Ford and Hale refer to literature that supports the proposition that service learning enhances "the personal and cognitive development of undergraduate students" (2005, p. 77). Students also practice decision making, communication, critical thinking, interpersonal and leadership skills and personal development such as personal efficacy and social responsibility. All result in promotion of students' awareness of "the world around them" and of their own personal abilities.

In this study, integration of a common service-learning project into four marketing courses will be presented. In the previous semesters, these marketing courses included an experimental project but in a much smaller scale. The scope of the project was a major component in terms of time spent and for evaluation criteria of each course. This paper examines the impact of the service-learning project on student's learning outcomes. Student's knowledge, skills and personal developments will be assessed. In addition, student's demographics, personal characteristics and experiences in relation to the outcomes of the service-learning project will be tested. The research will examine three questions. First, does increasing the quality, scope and extent of service learning project enhance the learning outcome of a course? Second, does service-learning method of teaching result in student's personal development? Third, do student's demographics, characteristics and experiences affect their learning and development in a service-learning course?

THE SERVICE-LEARNING STUDY

The service-learning project was completed during the Fall 2009 semester at Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida. Lynn University (LU) is an independent, coeducational, residential institution with 2,410 (2,032 undergraduate and 378 graduate) students from 44 states and 81 nations. LU has a 16:1 student to faculty ratio and offers baccalaureate, master and doctoral degrees. The University has six colleges of which the College of Business and Management is the largest (Lynn University, 2009).

The Lynn University and its College of Business and Management have a mission to being "innovative, international, and individualized," offering "applied learning" experiences and "providing timely career-based skills and knowledge" (Lynn University, 2008, p. 17). A design of four marketing courses was completed during the Summer and implemented for the Fall 2009 semester by the second author and the courses' instructor. Since 2000, the College of Business and Management (CBM) has had a relationship with SCORE, a partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration, to provide "real world" learning opportunities for CBM students. During the Fall semester, the third author, a highly successful businessman in manufacturing who is a Counselor for SCORE provided the business project for and worked with 53 traditional undergraduate students.

Courses, the Project and Course Designs

Four Marketing courses (Marketing Communications, Global Marketing, Marketing Research, Business Marketing Management) at Lynn University College of Business and Management were structured exactly the same with the exception of the type of marketing project. Class sessions met either Tuesday and Thursday days or Tuesday evenings. Examinations were 30% of the course grade, course project 30%, and other assignments 40%. Furthermore, the courses allocated time of approximately 60% classroom meetings and 40% field research and project development. In an attempt for accelerating the "norming" process, teams began to work together early in the semester by answering instructor-developed

chapter discussion questions. All teams were required to submit written answers to assure keeping up and knowing the reading assignments, hence a take-home quiz. To further this early team assignment, one team would present and lead the classroom chapter discussion to engage the students in the learning process (rather than a "talking head" instructor) and to enhance presentation skills. The instructor would generally make points not, or not clearly included in the presentation and ask further questions as to applying ("bridging") the chapter to the course project. The textbook was covered and two examinations were completed for each course just after mid-term of the semester.

The remaining semester time was solely for the service-learning project. The courses had a common applied course project, Build Me a Railroad that was based on the cruise ship industry business model. The "good weather" (late Spring, Summer, early Fall) route was from Boston to Washington. The student teams were to complete respective marketing course projects for this route and identify a "bad weather" (late Fall, Winter, early Spring) route. While the courses had the same project concept, they had very different project assignments. For the marketing communications course, three teams selected a target audience, e.g., young adults, and completed an integrated marketing communications plan for both routes. Three global marketing teams identified different countries, e.g., England, and developed an international marketing plan to attract international travelers. For the marketing research course, three teams chose a target market, e.g., senior citizens, and developed a research proposal and did a market research study. Finally, two business marketing teams selected a target market, e.g., cruise ship industry as partners, and developed a business marketing plan. Teams had from three to seven members, depending on the number of students in the course.

Each course had instructor-developed guidelines that were detailed but yet flexible enough to be adaptive and innovative to complete their service-learning project. During the field research and project development period, there were no class sessions. However, the teams used the classroom for meetings and the instructor was available for assistance. In addition, required business/project meetings were held with the businessperson and the instructor in an auditorium on Tuesdays from 12:30 to 1:20PM for the four courses (11 teams). These meetings were to report (project status) and for informational (ask questions) purposes. At Lynn, there are no classes scheduled during this time on Tuesdays, and students were on campus for classes on these days. For the last week of the semester, each team made an oral presentation using PowerPoints and submitted a written plan to the instructor and businessman. At the time of written submission, each team individually rated or evaluated (based on a total of 100%) all team members as to their contribution to the project with no two members having the same rating (percentage). The projects were evaluated (graded) and returned to students during the scheduled Final Week class session. This provided an opportunity for students to ask questions and/or make comments and for timely feedback.

The three authors have worked together during three-week January Terms entrepreneurial course (New Product Development). The second author has used marketing service learning projects for over 12 years that usually allowed only one or two weeks out of classroom time to complete the project, an attempt to complete during the semester as topics being covered in the textbook reading assignments. In two prior semesters, the businessman/SCORE Counselor has worked with the instructor and students in which the student teams developed a marketing communications plans for his clients. However, the difference for this semester (and this study) is the acceleration of knowledge (textbook) which permits more time for knowledge application, skills enhancement and personal development (project) (Blankinship, 2007; Willingham, 2009).

Methodology

A total of 53 students of which nine were in more than one course (six in two courses, three in three courses), or 41 different participating students in the service projects. The nine students were instructor-

assigned to the teams as well as seven other students who have had the instructor (and a service learning project experience) in a prior course (different semester). This strategy provided commonality, communications, and hopefully project activities across courses, e.g., broader and better understanding, hence a more successful learning experience. The prior experienced students enable teams to function more quickly ("norming") by knowing the instructor and the "drill" (project process). The sample is more representative of the College of Business and Management than Lynn University. For the four courses, 39.6% were female while the CBM has 36.3% and LU 47.5%. There were 35.8% international students not being U.S. citizens, e.g., no U.S. or dual citizenships, in the courses but the CBM has 26.3% and LU 16.5%.

To evaluate the success for this different teaching-learning strategy and its increase of learning outcomes, three perspectives have been used – the students, the instructor, the businessman – with qualitative and quantitative methods. At the beginning of the third week, all students participated in a 23 question survey (self-report) that included two parts. The first part was general information, e.g., major, credit hours earned, completion of the internship course, work experience, number of Lynn University sponsored clubs, organizations, athletic and other teams being a member, live on or off campus. The second part was course information, e.g., number of course projects completed, number of course projects with a non-instructor professional, learn more with only exams, exams and a project, and only a project. The second part also included two open-ended perceptual questions – greatest advantage of service learning project and greatest concern about the service-learning project. At the end of the semester (last week), students were given a seven question survey. This was specific questions from the first survey (in future tense) and restated (in past tense) to determine students' (self-report) learning experience. In addition, during the last week of the semester each student had for credit/points a course reflection assignment. This included identifying five areas of the course that they felt were the most important - three specific content areas and two specific skills areas. For each, they were to address (1) what was the most important specific (content or skill) area in this course? why? (2) how will you continue to use this specific (content or skill) area during the remaining time in school? (to remember the content or skill areas), and (3) how will this be of benefit to you during your professional career (after graduation)? (to recognize life-long learning areas).

The instructor evaluated the course assignments, e.g., chapter answers and oral presentations, project written and oral presentations, examinations, all of which used consistent methods with prior semesters to avoid grade/evaluation bias. The businessman evaluated by observation for the project, e.g., questions asked, identifying and solving the problems, the logical and practicality of the plans, and as compared to prior semesters' written and oral presentations of the course projects. Additional data was used for this study, e.g., students' grade point average, students' grades in a prior marketing course with the instructor (if applicable), prior semester averages for the same courses.

Findings

Since 2005, the instructor has taught three of the four courses at Lynn University using service-learning projects but had taught the fourth course (Global Marketing) prior to 2005. In comparison between the semester in this study and prior ones during this period, students earned higher course grades. See Table 1. There was a 40.4% increase in above average grades (A and B). Specifically, course grade of A increased 26.5%. Furthermore, below average course grades (Ds and Fs) decreased 74.0%. In prior semesters, 5.7% of the students failed the course but during the current semester no student failed. Based on course grades there was much better improvement in learning with greater service-learning emphasis.

To examine the students' grades and determine differences and similarities for courses' examinations and project scores, a comparison between high and low grades using t-tests was completed. The results are

Table 1 : Comparative Course Grades for Marketing Communications, Marketing Research, Business
       Marketing

Course Grade	Prior Semesters	Current Semester	Difference	Course Grade	Prior Semesters	Current Semester	Difference
A, A-	11.3%	37.8%		D+, D	15.1%	5.4%	
B+, B, B-	38.7%	32.4%		F	5.7%	0.0%	
Total	50.0%	70.2%	+40.4%	Total	20.8%	5.4%	-74.0%

This table compares three courses' semester grades between Fall 2005 to Spring 2009 and Fall 2009. The results show substantial grade improvement for extended time for researching and developing a service-learning project.

shown in Table 2 (Panel A for examinations and Panel B for projects). Only significant differences (p < 0.001, p < 0.01, p < 0.05) and similarities (p > 0.70) are presented. One comparison criteria is the differences between the two panels. While high examination scores are above average (grades of A or B), the project scores are only the highest (grade of A). This was done to establish more discriminating, critical criteria for the analysis of the project findings, the purpose of this study. For examinations (Panel A), there were 10 factors that were significant – five different and five similar. However, for the project (Panel B) there were 14 factors – nine different and five similar.

To further analyze the results reported in Table 2, a comparison of common factors between the examinations and projects are revealing. First, female students (with a coding scheme of 2) performed significantly better (p < 0.05) on both the exams and the project. Second, students who were peer-evaluated the highest for the project (1 for highest to 3 for the lowest) did significantly better (p < 0.01) on both the exams and the project. Third and as expected, students with higher grade point averages (1 for A to 11 for F) had significantly better grades on the exams (p < 0.001) and the project (p < 0.05). Fourth, students who looked forward to another service learning project (1 for strongly agree to 5 for strongly disagree) had similar views (p > 0.70) based on high and low exam and project grades.

To critically examine the results, the focus should be on the students' opinion of the course learning experience – with both examinations and a service-learning project. The post-test included five statements using a 5-point Likert-type scale with a coding scheme ranging from 1 for strongly agree to 5 for strongly disagree. Table 3 shows the results. For the purpose of analysis, the results by response percentage are grouped as (1) strongly agree or somewhat agree (favorable), (2) neither agree nor disagree (neutral) and (3) somewhat disagree or strongly disagree (unfavorable). The results were extremely favorable (strongly agree or somewhat agree) with a response range of 62.2% to 94.3%. In comparison, the unfavorable (somewhat disagree and strongly disagree) was minimal with a range of 1.9% to 17.0%. However, there was some opinions as to being neutral (neither agree nor disagree) with a response range of 3.8% to 34.0%. Overall, the mean scores for the five statements were that almost 8 out of 10 students (77.3%) had a favorable course experience and almost 2 (17.0%) had a neutral experience while only less than 1 out of 10 students (5.7%) had an unfavorable course experience.

For further analysis, these five statements were developed for students to report the course experiences that are associated with learning outcomes and include (1) knowledge, (2) skills development, (3) personal development and (4) knowledge and skills. Of the five statements, two are associated to skills – one general and the other specific to the team. The other three learning outcome areas have one statement each. These are shown at the end of each statement in Table 3. Knowledge gained clearing had the highest favorable rating (94.3%). However, skills showed strength for the outcomes with 88.7% favorable. More specifically, team skills statement however was much less favorable (66.0%). The remaining students were evenly split (17.0%) between neutral and unfavorable. This could have influenced (negatively) the general skills statement, as both are skills related. Furthermore, three out of four students (75.4%) recognized the benefit of personal development and indicated a reasonable high

Table 2 : High-Low Grade Comparisons for Course Examinations and the Service Learning Project

Panel A: Course Examinations

Variable	Above Average (Grade of A or B) n = 19	Below Average (Grade of D or F) n = 13	Mean Differences
Pre-test, Self-report			
Gender	1.68	1.31	0.37***
Prior Service Learning Project Experience with Business	2.21	2.23	0.02****
Expect to Develop New/Better Skills with Service Learning Project	1.21	1.23	0.02****
Look Forward to Work in a Team	1.68	1.69	0.01****
Do Better on Exams Only	2.95	4.00	1.05***
Do Better on Service Learning Projects Only	3.16	2.31	0.85***
Post-test, Self-report			
Look Forward to Another Service Learning Project	1.84	1.92	0.08****
Did Better with Having Exams and Service Learning Project	2.21	2.15	0.06****
Performance Ranking in Team	1.63	2.23	0.60**
From University or Instructor Records			
Grade Point Average	2.74	5.08	2.34*

Panel B: Course Projects

Variable	High Grade (Grade of A) n = 24	Below Average (Grade of D or F) n = 13	Mean Differences
Pre-test, Self-report			
Gender	1.54	1.15	0.39***
Credit Hours Earned	3.42	3.38	0.04****
Prior Service Learning Project Experience	3.67	3.77	0.10****
Expect to Develop New/Better Skills with Service Learning Project	1.25	1.00	0.25***
Do Better on Exams Only	3.67	3.62	0.05****
Do Better on Exams and Service Learning Projects	2.25	3.15	0.90***
Post-test, Self-report			
Developed New/Better Skills from the Service Learning Project	1.42	2.15	0.73***
Look Forward to Another Service Learning Project	1.88	1.85	0.03****
Look Forward to Another Team Service Learning Project	2.46	1.69	0.77***
Performance Ranking in Team	1.75	2.46	0.71**
From University or Instructor Records			
Number of Common Marketing Courses	1.50	1.00	0.50**
Examination Scores	5.46	7.77	2.31***
Missed Class Sessions	2.08	2.23	0.15****
Grade Point Average	3.46	4.62	1.16***

*This table presents the t-test results for high and low performing students on course examinations and the course project. * (< 0.001), ** (< 0.01), and *** (< 0.05) indicate significance differences while **** (> 0.70) shows similarities.*

level of motivation with looking forward to another service project in the future. Of all students, 62.2% felt favorable towards the knowledge and skills with course examinations and service learning project and 34.0% were neutral while only 3.8% were unfavorable.

A critical aspect of the service-learning project was the businessman. He was very pro-active in engagement with student teams not only providing project information but also in support to a successful completion and positive learning experience. For example, he (1) attended more than 35% of the semester's class sessions for each of the four courses; (2) gave details of the project; (3) guided teams to seek information from specific sources; (4) provided anticipated responses to project interviews and to probe for more information; and (5) was in the classroom for the oral presentations (last week of the semester, prior to Final Week) and at the time the graded projects were returned (last class session during Final Week) to provide feedback and reflection. Moreover, when the businessman was not in the classroom, he was only an email away for the project teams.

The businessman (third author) has worked with and observed service-learning projects for three semesters, this study's semester and the immediate prior two semesters for a Marketing Communications course. During this time, the level of emphasis on the project and out-of-class participation has increased.

Paradoxically, the students have responded by being more engaged in classroom discussions. Between the first observed semester and the second one, more importance was placed on the out-of-class project by placing greater weight on it towards their final grade. Again, between the second semester and this study's semester this weight was increased further in terms of weight of course grade and time allocated for the service-learning project. This approach provided the opportunity to drive home the importance of combining the knowledge acquired through textbook reading and lecture with the practical application. In the prior two semesters, the student teams in general waited until the end of the semester to put significant effort into the project.

Table 3 : Students' Post-Test Results: Summary of Agree, Neither and Disagree

Questions	Strongly/Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat, Strongly Disagree
I learned more about Marketing in this course than a Marketing course without a service (applied) learning project. (Knowledge)	94.3%	3.8%	1.9%
I developed better or new skills in this course than a Marketing course without a service (applied) learning project. (Skills)	88.7%	9.4%	1.9%
I look forward to doing another service (applied) learning course project in the future. (Personal Development)	75.4%	20.8%	3.8%
I look forward to working in a team in the future. (Skills)	66.0%	17.0%	17.0%
I did better in this course that had both examinations and a service (applied) learning course project than without such as project. (Knowledge and Skills)	62.2%	34.0%	3.8%
Mean Score for the 5 Post-Test Questions	77.3%	17.0%	5.7%

This table presents the results of the students' post-test. The responses were measured by a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 for strongly agree to 5 for strongly disagree). For the purpose of analysis, the results by response percentage are grouped as (1) strongly agree or somewhat agree (favorable), (2) neither agree nor disagree (neutral) and (3) somewhat disagree or strongly disagree (unfavorable).

However, during this study's semester students were required to meet as a team and with other teams and the businessman and instructor with weekly "business meetings" during the project time. This provided opportunities to share information, to seek more details and guidance, to gain better direction and to be challenged (due diligence) as to their service-learning project. From the businessperson's perspective, this current semester's (Fall 2009) projects were much more improved and were more acceptable to the business. With the rise of incentive (increased course points) and allowing more time (40% of the semester) for the service-learning project, the students recognized the need to address the project earlier, and related the course knowledge more directly and with greater success than the two prior semesters.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to determine the value (benefits) of service learning projects and to assess its learning outcomes. This research is designed to achieve this purpose by having three perspectives – the students, instructor, businessperson. All three sources show very positive results for this teaching pedagogy. Concerns prior to the semester became clear, and positive throughout the semester.

While the instructor has used service-learning projects for over 12 years, he expected the project research and its development being drafted during the classroom (textbook) period of the semester. Only one to two weeks at the end of the semester were allocated (with no class sessions) to complete the written and oral presentations. Hence, knowledge, e.g., the textbook assignments, was being learned in sequence with its application (the course service-learning project), which is contrary to some views (e.g., Willingham, 2009). Furthermore, the textbook exams were weighted more than the service-learning course project, e.g., 40% versus 20%.

Therefore, one concern was the concentration, acceleration of the text assignments over the first 60% of the semester and the chance of negative impact on the project. However, this was not a factor. Students

responded positively, and no noticeable change appeared in the exam scores, a (high) probability of students spending more time studying, time associating the textbook to the project (learning reinforcement), and/or the cue to students of equal weight (higher incentive) between the exams and project, e.g., 30% each. In fact, the results support the theory that knowledge (textbook) precedes skill development (project) (Willingham, 2009). Students who had the highest scores on the project (grade of A) did significantly better on exams (p < 0.05) than students who had below average project scores (grades of D and F). See Table 2, Panel B. Moreover, students' post-test survey reveals that knowledge (94.3%), knowledge and skills (62.2%) and personal development (75.4%) were rated favorable (Eyler and Giles, 1999; Elam et al., 2003; Sternberger, Ford and Hale, 2005). See Table 3.

A second concern was another area of learning – skills. As faculty have businesspeople to the classroom, see them at the Career Centers, being contacted for an employment inquiry for a student, or on a consulting project for a business, the issue of team skills is often a topic of discussion. This is currently a major job requirement for many career positions, and many expect it to increase in the future. On the other hand, students have a dislike for team assignments that may be a result of several reasons, e.g., a generational or cultural "thing," prior education and training, a bad experience with "slackers." In anticipation of these and other reasons, the instructor implemented a requirement using an evaluation form in which each team would individually rate (each member) all team members (including themselves). A covenant for the rating was that no two members could have the same rating. This avoids the "halo" of the rating while rewarding those with high team contributions at the expense of the "slacker" team members. Moreover, this provided students with a decision making human resource experience (skill development), e.g., evaluating and rating personnel. While 66% of the students were favorable in their rating of looking "forward to working in a team in the future" (Dudderar and Stover, 2003), 17% (9 students) were unfavorable. To investigate this further with a cross-tabulation (this statement and team ranking), the results revealed that six of the nine were rated first (coding of 1) by their team members. Therefore, there remains a challenge to prepare students with team skills, and in this research, two-third were the highest performers as rated by their peers.

An interesting finding from this study was that the students with high project scores (grade of A) who were in multiple courses did significantly better (p < 0.01) than those who had below average scores (grades of D and F). Furthermore, all students (n = 13) who were below average on the project were in only one course. See Table 2, Panel B. This supports a current trend, effort for integration, cross-course, cross-discipline teaching-learning strategies (Dudderar and Stover, 2003; Elam et al., 2003; Sternberger, Ford and Hale, 2005). As well, with the often presence of the businessman (overall 35% for the semester and 100% for the project) and the instructor in the four classrooms, team teaching the project could have positively influenced the multiple courses and high course service learning grades relationship (Eyler and Giles, 1999; Holland, 2001; Mastrangelo and Tischio, 2005).

In summary, the three research questions were answered and the findings indicate positive results. First, does increasing the quality, scope and extent of service learning project enhance the learning outcome of a course? Table 1 shows that with greater emphasis on service-learning learning outcomes increase, and from the students' and businessperson's perspectives. Second, does service-learning method of teaching result in student's personal development? Table 3 presents students' favorable responses in a post-test (75.4%) for their personal development improvement, and by the instructor and businessperson's observations. Third, do student's demographics, characteristics and experiences affect their learning and development in a service-learning course? Certain demographics, e.g., gender (females), characteristics, e.g., prior learning (grade point average) and current learning (examination grades), and experiences, e.g., enrolled in multiple marketing courses with a service-learning project (two or three), did significantly better (p < 0.05) in their service-learning projects.

CONCLUSIONS

The study has indications of being valid. Generally, the sample is representative of the College of Business and Management in terms of gender and international students. The students' grade point average is significant and directly related to the course examinations ($p < 0.001$) and the service learning projects ($p < 0.05$). However, there are limitations to the study. The sample was from one university (Lynn University), one academic unit (College of Business and Management), one specialization (Marketing), and the same instructor (the second author) and businessperson (the third author). The sample also included a much higher proportion of international students than the typical university. Furthermore, the courses were upper division undergraduate (300 and 400 level), and only one underclass student (a sophomore) participated in the study. Lastly, while the instructor used consistent methods with prior semesters to avoid grade/evaluation bias, the vast majority of students were not in the prior semester courses. Therefore, in comparing the results from prior semesters to this study would not account for particular student (sample) characteristics, e.g., grade point average, motivation, commitment.

This study found the service-learning project and teaching pedagogy being successful from three perspectives – the students, the instructor, the businessperson (Sternberger, Ford and Hale, 2005). For example, above average course grades (A and B) increased 40.4% in comparison to prior semesters and used as a baseline point while the below average grades (D and F) decreased 74.0% with no student failing in any of the four courses (Elam, et al., 2003; Soslau and Yost, 2007). See Table 1. Nevertheless, there are future research opportunities that can further explain these results or further extend this study. First, a qualitative study to gain a better understanding of the issues, problems and dynamics of functionally and dysfunctional student team service-learning project assignments would improve learning outcomes and students' preparation for a successful career. Second, a similar quantitative study between business school disciplines or across academic units would provide a better understanding of service-learning value. Third, a study including several, or several types of universities could confirm, or not the results from this study. Fourth, a study of graduate students, e.g., MBA, MS, might find additional understanding of service-learning. Fifth, a longitudinal study over students' undergraduate studies would document improvement, or not in service-learning outcomes.

With greater public and particularly employer expectations of and the increased competition in higher education, universities look to new, or at least different curriculum and teaching pedagogy to increase learning outcomes and to better prepare students for successful careers (Blankinship, 2007). One strategy is to bring the "real world" to the classroom," e.g., businesspeople, *and* to take the classroom to the "real world," e.g., students identifying critical issues, field research and solving business opportunities and problems. Service-learning is a tool to achieve this (Walsh, 2002).

However, this study was successful for several reasons. First, it takes a commitment to applied learning, e.g., Lynn University and its College of Business and Management missions. Second, the success is related to the support from the university administration, e.g., Academic Affairs, academic units, to be innovative and to take reasonable risks. Third, it is critical to have a businessperson to be both committed and supportive to the service-learning experience.

Fourth, students must "buy in" to the new experience by the instructor "selling" the value, e.g., short-term course grade, long-term career benefits, of the service-learning approach. Fifth, knowledge is a critical first step to a successful project while the challenge to the instructor is to demonstrate the "bridge" between the textbook and the following project. Sixth, it is essential to keep students engaged throughout the semester with the integration of course content and its application that creates a logical and seamless flow of learning from the first class session to the last one.

The importance of service-learning is creating lifelong learning. While knowledge precedes skills (Willingham, 2009), the enhancement of knowledge, skills, and personal development are the benefits and key aspects to being competitive in the job market and to successful careers, e.g., learning by doing, the abilities to apply knowledge. Service-learning provides this experience and the students' personal and professional development.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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