INTRODUCTION TO OCCASIONAL PAPER FOR 40TH CONFERENCE NSIEE

Good Evening! My name is John Duley and I was supposed to be a part of the panel of past presidents and researchers discussing “Past Reflections in Preparation for the Future.” I was deeply honored by the invitation—especially since I have not been active professionally in the movement for twenty years and am surprised that anyone would think that I have anything to contribute. I am not able to be with you tonight because I will conducting the rehearsal and wedding ceremony for my grand daughter later this week. I am sorry to miss this opportunity to interact with you and my colleagues about this important topic. But, at the suggestion of Rob Shumer, Mary King and Dwight Giles, I have written my reflections in a paper which I believe you already have.

Twenty years ago I gave the keynote address celebrating our first 20 years. In it I described the history of experimental education and NSIEE's role in it. I emphasized, and made a strong case for the movement characteristics of the Society and pleaded for us to stay as a movement and not become an institution. I did this because I know what happens when movements become institutions: they begin to focus on survival, doing what others will pay for, instead of their mission. The only response I remember was the criticism from the “important people” who were our guest, Morris Keeton, CEO of CAEL and President Joel Reid, of Alverno College. Their complaint was that I was not willing to take advantage of our new found acceptance in academia. No one seemed to notice that I was also questioning the adequacy of David Kolb’s learning theory. So, it should come as no surprise that in this paper I am challenging the validity of his learning theory for our work.

Let me read you the conclusion to my paper to whet your appetite and then you can read it and see what you think.

“The point of this paper is that we are not simply dealing with concrete experiences from a limited, flat cognitive perspective. This perspective leads only to new data which we turn into abstract concepts and then go actively looking for new concrete experiences. No! We are dealing with “Discovery” learning which is life transforming—it changes peoples' lives. It doesn’t just add new data to our data base. If you do not believe this, learn it from some of the newly “engaged” scholars whose lives have been transformed by the use of the principles Bob Sigmon recommends. Read the book, Coming to Critical Engagement, edited by Frank Fear, which describes in detail the life transforming experiences he and his three faculty colleagues had while they were doing what Experiential Learning is all about”.

We need to reclaim our heritage! Have a great conference. Thanks for the invitation.

PS: I neglected to mention that at the NSIEE national conference in 1980 in San Francisco, I threw away the requested closing keynote address on “The Future of NSIEE” and instead used the occasion to present my own learning theory using the fantasy, Flat Land, a Fantasy of Two Dimensions, authored under the pseudonym A. Square as a launching pad (This book was actually written by a scientist in the late 1800s designed to help people realize that reality is probably not limited to our three dimensional world, but is multi-dimensional.) My theory, which included the affective domain, looked like a basketball instead of a flat circle. Since my address was the last item on the conference agenda nobody hung around to comment on it. But I later got some good comments from Bob Sigmon and Tim Stanton. If you want to see a copy, I reproduced it, along with the comments, as a pseudo-occasional paper for the pioneers' conference in Wingspread. A copy of it is in the NSIEE archives Mary King is developing and in the Service Learning archives at Michigan State University.
OCCASIONAL PAPER

Occasion: 40th Anniversary of the Founding of NSEE

REFLECTIONS ON THE PAST IN PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE

John S. Duley

In 1967, The time of our birth as a movement, Marshall McLuhan wrote *The Medium is the Massage*. (1) He was not only a sage but a prophet. What he wrote then is as true today as the day he wrote it. He wrote, “The young today live mythically and in depth. But (in the classroom) they encounter instruction in (which knowledge is) organized by means of classified information—subjects are unrelated, they are visually conceived in terms of a blueprint.... The student finds no means of involvement for himself and cannot discover how the educational scheme relates to his mythic world of electronically processed data and experience that his clear and direct responses report....

Many of our institutions suppress all the natural direct experience of youth, who respond with untaught delight on their Ipods to the poetry and the beauty of the new technological environment, the environment of popular culture. It could be their door to all past achievement as an active (and not necessarily benign) force.

It is a matter of greatest importance that our educational institutions realize that we now have civil war among these environments created by media other than the printed word. The classroom is now in a vital struggle for survival with the immensely persuasive ‘outside’ world created by new informational media. *Education must shift from instruction, from imposing of stencils, to discovery—to probing and exploration and to the recognition of the language of forms.*” (Emphasis mine.)

**Experiential Education is learning by discovery. This is our legacy and our privileged position in education!**

*This is the challenge we face: to be faithful to our legacy and our privileged position in education. For this challenge we have two gifts: One from Bob Sigmon in his “Principles for Service,” and the other from Lee Shulman in his paper, “Making a Difference; A Table of Learning” in which he introduces us to the “Pedagogies of Engagement.” First to the gift of Bob Sigmon.*

Bob Sigmon contributed his gift to us early in the history of our movement. His deep sensitivity to the nature of the learning that ought to take place on the part of all participants in any Service/Learning-Civic Engagement activity led him to describe principles which have become a central part of the developing Scholarship of Engagement Movement (see Frank Fear, ed., *Coming to Critical Engagement* 2006, University Press of America, Inc. Lanham, MD). This is a parallel movement to our
own, and we need to be fully engaged with it. Its participants have come to the understanding that they and we, if we wish to be effective, cannot seek to do our service for others but with them, in dialogue and vulnerability. Those we seek to serve are not meant to be recipients of our services but invite us to join them as partners, to learn from them and with them in seeking to meet the needs that they and their organizations have identified. The purpose of Bob's principles is to help us understand and serve in this way.

**Sigmon's Principles for Service.** In his instructive article, Robert Sigmon (1979, pp. 56-64)) proposes three fundamental principles of service-learning projects. Elemental to these principles is Sigmon’s position that learning grows from the service task(s), and that mutuality is an important dimension of learning. He instructs the reader about the importance of having an understanding of Robert Greenleaf’s (*Servant Leader*) concept of service as it informs Sigmon’s way of thinking about service: Serve in a way that care is taken to ensure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served. Additionally, Sigmon’s thinking is rooted in the belief that all persons are of unique worth, have gifts for sharing with others, have the right to understand and act on their own situations, and are dependent on each other for survival, e.g., the more able and the less able being able to serve each other. (p.62)

Sigmon differentiates between acquirers and recipients of services, acquirers being actively involved in the request for and control of service, self-analysis of the situation, and the selection of type of service and service provider. (p.59). Recipients is an inappropriate word. It is too passive, implying a situation in which the persons are not involved in any way in determining what services will be provided, when, or by whom. Importantly, he notes that acquirers of services could also be those who provide services; those who oversee, manage, direct, or otherwise ensure that service is mobilized and brought to fruition; and, those who provide resources, e.g., policy makers. Such distinctions inform the foundations of these fundamental principles and, in turn, should determine how service-learning should be conducted and taught in academic institutions (7).

**Principle One:** Those being served control the services(s) provided.
Does the service being provided make any sense to those expected to benefit from the services delivered?
Who is being served by this activity?
How are those to be served involved in stating the issue and carrying out the project?
Who are the individuals who fill the roles in any service delivery activity? How do they relate to each other?

**Principle Two:** Those being served become better able to serve and be served by their own actions.

Do those served grow as persons?
Will they be better able to serve themselves and others because of it?
Do they become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?
What is the effect on the least privileged in society?
Will they benefit? Will they not be further deprived?

**Principle Three:** Those who serve also are learners and have significant control over what is expected to be learned.

All the active partners in a service-learning experience are learners: those being served, the student, faculty, campus program coordinator, the community supervisor, those being served, policy makers, tech staff.

Who in a given instance:
Initiates the tasks?
Defines the tasks?
Approves the methods used in the tasks?
Monitors the task activities?
Determines when the task is completed satisfactorily?
Benefits from the task being done?
Decides that a server doing a task should be withdrawn from the work?
Is the server responsible to in the community?
Owns the final product when the service is completed.

Now back to the challenge: "How to break through the educational lock-step system in which students learn to become professional students seeking credentials and not learning; psyching out what the professor wants from them in order to be granted an A or a 4.0 grade?" For McLuhan professionalism is environmental. Amateurism is anti-environmental. Student professionalism merges the individual into patterns of the institutional academic environment. Amateurism seeks the development of the total awareness of the individual and the critical awareness of the groundrules of society. The amateur can afford to lose. The professional student can not. The professional tends to classify and specialize, to accept uncritically the groundrules of the environment. The groundrules provided by the mass response of his student colleagues, the academic system, and reinforced by some parents serve as a pervasive environment of which he or she is contentedly unaware. To become an amateur student is to become critically aware of the groundrules of the educational environment, live with them but not be controlled by them, and find the freedom to assume responsibility for one's own engaged learning.

For an answer to our challenge, I turn our attention to a more contemporary writer, Lee Shulman, in his article, "Making a Difference: A Table of Learning."(2) He provides us with a valuable taxonomy for experiential learning to become a process of discovery. Shulman's discussion of this taxonomy begins with references to the work of Russ Edgerton, a former Education Officer of the Pew Charitable Trust, when he wrote a paper which has propelled, according to Shulman, many of the most interesting initiatives in higher education today. In this paper Dr. Edgerton coined the phrase "pedagogies of engagement" by which he meant "approaches that have within them the capacity to engage students actively with learning in new ways." Dr. Edgerton was writing about service/learning, but also about an array of approaches, from problem-based and project-based learning to varieties of collaborative work, and field based instruction. Edgerton used the rubric "pedagogies of engagement" to describe them all. In engagement the student taps into an interest, concern, idea, or social need which arouses his or her curiosity and leads to ownership. That is, it becomes his or her concern, need, interest, idea or recognized social need that he or she wants to do something about and not something the professor has imposed through a syllabus.

In Lee Shulman's taxonomy the point is that for effective learning to take place the student must be engaged. We need to learn how to work with students so their learning grows out of who they are and what they value. The taxonomy Dr. Shulman provides looks something like David Kolb's(3) but I think it is significantly different.
In his learning model David Kolb used the flat, sterile language of objectivity, in keeping with the academic context: Concrete Experience, Observation and Reflection, Abstract Conceptualization, Active Exploration, and thereby excluded the affective domain. Shulman incorporates the affective domain of learning by using words freighted with affective nuances:

**Engagement:** not just exposure to concrete experience, but *involvement* of a personal nature that involves the whole person in a way that may challenge one's values, which leads to,

**Understanding:** not just the acquiring of more data or information to be processed into abstract concepts, but something much broader—the student needs to do what she can to understand the context in which she is going to serve. She needs to go on the organization's website and learn what its purpose and mission is, to visit the agency, if possible, before showing up to serve, meet some of the people, and seek to understand their socio-economic situation. The faculty member needs to help her understand the context in which she will be serving.

**Action:** involves a mutuality of collaboration based on the student's *understanding* of the needs of the agency and its participants following Bob Sigmon's principles of service.

**Reflection:** the kind of deep reflections that are called “soul searching”—what does this say about my life? About who I am? What I value? My world view? Which leads to

**Judgment:** our values and the direction in which we want our lives to go, what is important to us, and to what we want to commit ourselves and moves us to

**Commitment:** an act of the whole person, the giving of one's life to activities consistent with one's life experience.

An example of a service/learning experience that was an embodiment of Shulman's taxonomy is the 1965-68 Michigan State University and Rust College Student Tutorial Education Project (STEP), in Holly Springs, Mississippi. In 2007, 40 years after the project, a reunion was held of the MSU student and faculty volunteers. During that conference twelve of the students were interviewed about the impact of this experience on their lives and careers. Kay Snyder who participated in the the project in 1965, is a professor of Sociology and Women's Studies at Indiana State University in Indiana, Pennsylvania. The following excerpt from her interview indicates the extent of engagement she and the other students had coming into the project.

"I was a participant in the 1965 STEP. I was very involved in the organizing and the fund raising that occurred before we went the first year. I was the social science coordinator that first year. There was a core group of students who knew director John Duley and the faculty members who were setting up the program. They involved us from the very early stages of the planning, so when I think how it was that this program had
such an impact on my life, it was because we were working along side of faculty who were committed to civil rights and for whom this was a very serious operation. You have to realize that the first year wasn’t just fund raising; it was figuring out what we were going to teach, how we were going to teach it, how we were going to organize these students. None of us had done this before; none of us had been teachers. So it was working with faculty and being listened to that made us realize that we could do all of those things.”

The interviews also indicated that the learning process for these students followed Lee Shulman’s taxonomy: engagement, understanding, action, reflection, judgment and commitment. All ended up serving the common good—five as change agents, five as people who made the quality of life better for those they related with, and two who served the common good through their profession.(4)

In the early days of the Service/Learning Movement we provided for this process of engagement (without consciously knowing that was what we were doing) through requiring students to find and secure their own field placements using CAHED (Creative Alternatives in Higher Education), a comprehensive resource of volunteer opportunities, national and international, provided by the Campus Ministry at Michigan State University. (Today this would not be needed, since we have Google.) Once we approved their selection and they secured the placement, they participated in a preparation seminar which included being individually dropped off in small towns of 500 to 5,000 people and told to learn as much about that community as they could in six hours. When we picked them up for a debriefing they could not tell us what they had learned or how because they had a story to tell—about their survival. At the seminar meeting the next week we listed, on a flip chart, all of the methods they used to learn about their village. Then we gave them a list of the techniques used by sociologist and anthropologists in such studies. This process helped them realize they could take charge of their own education.

We also introduced them to the work of Harrison and Hopkins(5) on the skills needed for successful Peace Corps performance and the work of George Kemp on “Skills Necessary for Superior Performance in the World of Work”(6), which are not skills learned in the classroom. We instructed them to practice some of these skills during their placements, and provided them with a mechanism for reporting their use of them, indicating that these would become the basis of a final paper on what they learned through this experience. Through this and other processes they became “engaged”—the field study became theirs and not ours.

CONCLUSION:

The point of this paper is that we are not simply dealing with concrete experiences from a limited, flat, cognitive perspective. Such a perspective leads only to new data which we turn into abstract concepts and then go actively looking for new concrete experiences. No! We are dealing with “Discovery” learning which is life transforming. It doesn’t just add new data to our data base. If you do not believe this, learn it from some of the newly “engaged” scholars whose lives have been transformed by the use of the principles Bob Sigmon recommends. Read the book, Coming to Critical Engagement, edited by Frank Fear, which describes in detail the life-transforming experiences he and his three faculty colleagues had while they were doing what Experiential Learning is all about.

We need to reclaim our heritage!
References:


