Chapter 20
Service–Learning as a Pedagogical Approach for Net Generation Learners: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT
This chapter focuses on service-learning as a pedagogical approach for Net Generation learners, and presents a case study from a private technological institution in the United States as an example. The chapter covers details of the assignment as a case study, specific considerations in the assignment’s design for Net Generation learners, ways in which the assignment followed principles of service-learning assignments, and how service-learning principles correspond with Net Generation learner characteristics. The case study focuses on an assignment for a speech class in which university students developed and delivered presentations on science topics to two audiences: children in an afterschool program and an online audience of teachers and adults. Issues and problems that arose are discussed followed by suggestions and recommendations for this service-learning project.

INTRODUCTION
This chapter explores service-learning as an effective pedagogical approach for teaching Net Generation learners, using a specific assignment as a case study. The assignment was for a speech course, which was a required general education class. The pedagogical method of service-learning has been incorporated in several sections of the speech class for four years. Data gathered during that period comparing service-learning with other pedagogies indicated students in the service-learning sections showed larger gains in
the areas of content development, delivery, organization, team work, and personal skills (Blomstrom & Tam, 2010; Blomstrom & Tam, 2009). The assignment presented as a case study was a modification that added an online presentation as part of an ongoing service-learning project. The assignment was designed to address the problem of how to more effectively engage students while providing an effective learning experience. This paper suggests service-learning can be a solution to the problem of how to effectively engage Net Generation learners and examines characteristics of Net Generation learners, principles of effective service-learning practice, and how service-learning pedagogy corresponds with Net Generation learner characteristics.

BACKGROUND

The assignment was created for a speech course at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU) on the Prescott, AZ campus, located in the southwestern United States. The course was required of students majoring in engineering, aviation, space physics, and global security and intelligence studies. Speech was usually taken during the first year of study. The course had a defined structure, because the university has two residential campuses and a large worldwide campus and the course was offered through all three campuses. All instructors used a common syllabus, which stated the student learning objectives, and all students developed and delivered informative speeches, persuasive speeches, and team presentations. Instructors created specific assignments in their sections to meet the course objectives. The assignment for this chapter was designed to meet the objectives for the team presentation.

Many students taking the class were Net Generation learners, and the literature suggests those learners do not respond well in traditional classrooms (Howe & Strauss, 2000). In an effort to better address the students service-learning was selected as the pedagogical approach. Through service-learning students realize many benefits including helping them understand course material better, enjoying learning, liking service, receiving a professional development benefit, and gaining skills, experience, and confidence in their abilities and skills (Isaacson & Saperstein, 2005.) Communication is a practical discipline that can contribute to society through service (Applegate & Morreale, 1999), and the method has increased in popularity in the field of communication (Oster-Aaland, Sellnow, Nelson, & Pearson, 2004). Service-learning has also increased in popularity in engineering studies (Campus Compact, 2008). The engineering industry has a desire for well-rounded individuals equipped to work in a global context (Oakes, 2004). Engineering students who engage in service-learning develop an understanding of the social context and issues related to the problems they are solving, critical thinking skills, ethical standards, communication skills, an understanding of teamwork, and curiosity (Lima & Oakes, 2006).

Service-learning applications vary depending on the content area and the project; however, there are commonalities. Campus Compact (2011) defines service-learning this way: “Service-learning incorporates community work into the curriculum, giving students real-world learning experiences that enhance their academic learning while providing a tangible benefit for the community” (paragraph 1). Learn and Serve America (2011) adds that service-learning, “provides structured time for students to reflect on their service experiences and demonstrate knowledge or skills they have gained” (paragraph 1). Service-learning pedagogy is suited to how people learn (APA Learner-Centered Psychological Principles, 2008). The American Psychological Association (APA) described fourteen psychological principles pertaining to the learner and the learning process. Service-learning aligns particularly well with several of the principles in that it is goal-directed, involves strategic thinking and social influences, and can
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