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Opportunity for All: Linking Service-Learning and Business Education

Edward Zlotkowski

ABSTRACT. A major criticism of contemporary business education centers on its failure to help business students achieve sufficient educational breath, particularly with regard to the external environment of business. The service-learning movement offers business faculty an excellent opportunity to address this deficiency. By developing curricular projects linked to community needs, faculty can further their students' technical skills while helping them simultaneously develop greater inter-personal, inter-cultural, and ethical sensitivity.

Educational reform for the 21st century

> We believe that because of the increasingly complex environment in which business operates, business schools must give more consideration to whether they have an appropriate balance between an internal and an external focus. . . . We were somewhat surprised that this did not seem to be as salient an issue as we thought it should be. Part of the reason may be that it is more of a subtle and diffuse issue than some other curriculum issues, but that does not mean that it is any less important. In our opinion, failure to address it in a more head-on fashion now will likely generate more pressure to do so in the not too distant future. (Porter and McKibbin, 1988, p. 85)

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Thus Lyman Porter and Lawrence McKibbin register their sense of the growing need for business schools to deal more effectively and directly with the "external legal/social/political environment" of business. Nor is this the only place where the two authors address this issue. In their concluding set of recommendations, they point out that "senior executives in the business world" registered concern that "business school students tend to be rather more narrowly educated than they ought to be":

> From this perspective, business schools seem to be turning out focused analysts, albeit highly sophisticated ones, adept at measuring and calculating the probabilities of certain outcomes, but, at the same time, graduates who often are unwittingly insensitive to the impacts of these outcomes on factors other than the "bottom line". This is a view with which we ourselves strongly concur. (Porter and McKibbin, 1988, p. 316)

To counter this trend, Porter and McKibbin suggest that "[business]/management school faculties, in their responsibilities for the undergraduate education",

> ought also to concern themselves with the education of the whole student. They should proactively engage their colleagues across the campus to help ensure that business students come away from 4 years of acculturation in the university with exposure to a wider range of issues and ideas than is true of the typical business school graduate today. (Porter and McKibbin, 1988, p. 316)

The same recommendation is made for students in MBA programs insofar as these students have not already had "this kind of

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exposure to breath in their baccalaureate degree programs" (Porter and McKibbin, 1988, p. 317).

The Porter-McKibbin report is not, of course, the only statement of its kind calling for greater breath in contemporary business education.[1] What makes it especially noteworthy is its comprehensiveness and provenance, having been both sponsored and published by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). Still, the report's dispassionate call for greater educational engagement with our "increasingly complex environment" can, from many perspectives, be seen as but one more indication of a general paradigm shift in the direction of institutional – especially academic – social awareness and accountability.[2]

At the 1992 annual conference of the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), Carol Cartwright, then chair-elect of the AAHE board, skillfully summarized much of what that conference had learned about "restoring the public trust" in higher education (1992). She pointed out that non-academics invited to participate in the conference had confirmed what many academics already suspected; namely, that public trust of and public support for higher education have seriously eroded, that higher education desperately needs to face a growing "reality gap" – a gap between *the needs* of external society and the academy's *own* "internal *priorities*".

But eroding public trust is only one of several problems fed by this "reality gap". As the contemporary writer Wendell Berry has pointed out, the fact that "Community is a concept, like humanity or peace, that virtually no one has taken the trouble to quarrel with," has not precluded another fact; namely, that:

> neither our economy, nor our government, nor our educational system runs on the assumption that community has a value – a value, that is, that *counts* in any practical or powerful way. (Berry, 1987, p. 179)

Indeed, Berry's concern with our endangered appreciation of community – that socio-economic unit whose members depend directly upon each other for support and who together comprise a single self-sustaining whole – finds ample support in the work of many contemporary sociologists. For example, in *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, Robert Bellah and his colleagues remark upon the proliferation of a very different kind of social unit – the "lifestyle enclave":

> Whereas a community attempts to be an inclusive whole, celebrating the interdependence of public and private life and of the different callings of all, lifestyle is fundamentally segmental and celebrates the narcissism of similarity. (Bellah *et al.*, 1986, p. 73)

In short, one can not unreasonably conclude that the kind of insularity that has come to characterize not just educational institutions but even individual departments and disciplines may well be preparing students less to overcome than to perpetuate the social and professional fragmentation from which we suffer.

It is at least partially in response to this growing loss of community and higher education's role in abetting it that the "service-learning" movement has developed. Encouraged both by organizations specific to higher education – such as Campus Compact[3] – and by governmental programs – such as the new Corporation for National Service – the service-learning movement has, in the last few years, gained considerable momentum. Defined most simply, "service-learning" can be understood as "a specialized form of internship where students work in settings established primarily to meet some social and community need" (Wutzdorff, 1993, p. 33). However, what distinguishes service-learning from internships in the usual sense is not only the work setting – where "meeting some social and community need" is prioritized – but also the utilization of pedagogical strategies that promote reflection – both on the social dimensions of that need and on the learning process itself.[4] Thus, in describing service-learning programs, Jane Kendall, editor of what is probably the single most important service-learning reference work, *Combining Service and Learning: A Resource Book for Community and Public Service*, has offered the following, more specific definition:

> Service-learning programs emphasize the accomplishment of tasks which meet human needs in combination with conscious educational growth. . . . They combine needed tasks in the community with intentional learning goals and with conscious reflection and critical analysis. (Kendall, 1990, p. 20)

What such programs aim at is the development of skilled, socially aware, life-long learners.[5]

Up until now, the connection between the service-learning movement and business education has been minimal. As the examples cited in this essay as well as the following essays indicate, there have been several promising starts.[6] And yet, given the compelling external/social *need for* and internal/educational *logic of* this connection, much more could be done. Indeed, the opportunities the service-learning movement offers business education are not dissimilar – or unrelated – to the opportunities offered it by the end of the Cold War. As Jesse Jackson pointed out in his 1993 address at the AACSB's 1993 annual meeting:

> To rebuild Russia, [the federal government is] going to put money at the grassroots level and fund programs which train students, business people, scientists and officials in ways of the free market. Something ghetto, barrio, reservation America has never had. (Jackson, 1993, p. 4)

In other words, the logic that recognizes a successful free market system in Eastern Europe as something "in our national security and economic interest" must recognize the same truths here at home – especially in the context of an American workforce in which women and racial "minorities" are rapidly becoming primary players. Furthermore, if the opening up of Eastern Europe can be said to give "American business schools a unique opportunity to redeem themselves" from charges of "narrowness" and "irrelevance" (Schmotter, 1992, p. A44), so the emergence of the service-learning movement – with its emphasis on action wedded to reflection – offers business programs, perhaps even more than liberal arts colleges, an unparalleled opportunity to develop and implement a broader vision right here in the United States.

An experience-oriented pedagogy

One point on which almost all contemporary critics of business education agree is that, for a variety of reasons, it is imperative that business students learn to deal more effectively with change and ambiguity. As Doyle Williams, past president of the American Accounting Association, notes, whereas the traditional approach to accounting education stressed "calculating one right answer", the new focus must recognize the importance of "solving unstructured problems", of "dealing with 'messy' or incomplete data" (Williams, 1993, p. 78); whereas, in the past, procedural rules and passive absorption of knowledge defined the pedagogical culture, that culture must now be characterized by the "learning process [itself] – learning to learn" (Williams, 1993, p. 81). And if, indeed, the new approach must prioritize teaching students not what but *how* to learn, then that approach "should be designed to help them . . . become productive and thoughtful citizens through gaining a broad understanding of social, political and economic forces" (Williams, 1993, p. 80).

In identifying some of the specific ways in which business professors can achieve these goals, Williams and other critics frequently mention the importance of "case presentations", "role plays", "project teams", and other pedagogical strategies that simulate the practice of the real world (Williams, 1993, p. 80). Without a doubt, such in-class activities represent important resources. However, by their very nature, such strategies can only approximate the "culture" and complexity of non-academic situations. It is, perhaps, for this very reason that Ernest Lynton, one of the most perceptive and thoughtful researchers in the entire area of educational reform, supplements his endorsement of in-class exercises with an equally strong endorsement of direct practical experience:

> The education of future practitioners must help them to recognize the many different factors which affect a given situation, to discover what the real problems "out there" are, to identify available options and trade-offs involved in each, to recognize the limits of what can be accomplished, and finally to make choices and compromises. Such

skills, all components of effective critical thinking, cannot be acquired in an abstract fashion. Content and process cannot be separated. . . . Practical experience, design activities and case studies constitute probably the best way for future practitioners to master the way of approaching and dealing with complex situations. (Lynton, 1993, pp. 18–19)

Lynton has chosen his words carefully. What future practitioners need to master is not only how to "deal" with complex situations but also how to "approach" them. They must learn to find and frame what needs to be done, not just choose between options in an already delimited field. In other words, effective problem solving ultimately depends upon effective problem identification. For this reason alone, the value of direct, unsimulated experience can not be overlooked. Indeed, it must be regarded as first among equals, as the ground in which the educational process is conceptually and operationally anchored.

It is not the purpose of this essay to discuss the fine points of experiential educational theory. Nonetheless, it is central to the topic at hand – the relationship between business education and service-learning – to appreciate what is at issue here. For what critics like Lynton and Donald Schon understand by the pedagogical potential of practical experience goes far beyond any essentially illustrative value. As Lynton explicitly states:

Currently, clinical periods and internships, if they are used at all, are often placed at the end of the professional major because such practical experiences are viewed as an illustration of previously learned theory. The "new epistemology" described by Schon recognizes that actual practice is much more complex, and consists of repeated iteration between a real situation and applicable but inadequate theory. Hence practical experience (or its simulation) should begin early in the curriculum and be used as a primary learning experience from which generalizations are drawn inductively not only in the practicum itself, but also through concurrent and subsequent classroom work. (Lynton, 1993, p. 19)

Thus experience is called upon to play a primary role throughout the learning process and at all levels of expertise. For a student effectively to master "problem identification" as well as "problem solving", the "messiness" of experience should be part of his/her education from the very start. But where is such experience to be found?

The answer to this question brings us back directly to the potential benefits of linking business education and service-learning. For if it is true, as Jackson has suggested, that America's own economically underdeveloped communities deserve at least the same amount of attention and concern that has been given to developing communities abroad, and if, at the same time, the education of today's business students is best served by increasing their opportunity for hands-on learning, what we have is a classic case of symbiotic needs. Indeed, given the kinds of competencies needed by business students and the kinds of assistance needed by many community-based organizations, business-oriented service-learning would seem to represent a textbook example of the way in which "serving" and "learning", action and reflection, can be combined for the benefit of all involved. Whether a student is enrolled in a course in entrepreneurship, business policy, marketing research, end-user software, accounting information systems, or personal financial management, he/she will discover no dearth of community-based opportunities to "learn by doing".[7]

Developing "soft" skills

In summarizing their findings on "current criticisms of business school curricula", Porter and McKibbin introduce a caveat that re-surfaces throughout their study:

Thus, an examination of a large sample of critical articles and comments would seem to point to more concern with what is left out of the curriculum or not given sufficient attention as compared with what is given too much emphasis. However, some of the critics who point to various sins of "omission" do not go on to give much consideration to how adding topics and subjects will affect the total length of the curriculum. The critical issue of how to fit an ever-expanding list

of seemingly important subject matter areas into a curriculum program of finite length seldom gets addressed head on. (Porter and McKibbin, 1988, p. 64)

And yet, this problem is not as intractable as might at first appear. Indeed, Porter and McKibbin implicitly put their fingers on a solution when they come to discuss strategies to improve students' "behavioral skills".

> One straightforward approach would be to examine course offerings to determine if there are opportunities in the classroom situation to focus on such skills to a greater extent than is now the case. . . . A second potential major avenue of attack could be through *out-of-class activities related to the educational program*, especially if they can be connected to classroom situations where these real world experiences can be examined with the assistance of an instructor (and other students) such that guided and focused learning takes place. [emphasis added] (Porter and McKibbin, 1988, pp. 324–325)

In other words, instead of remaining trapped in a zero-sum game in which one concern must be dropped if a new one is to be introduced, business educators can begin to address the problem of developing broader social skills through the concept of "value-added" activities. And here we return – from still another direction – to the enormous educational potential of service-learning.

For if, in the previous section, we saw how community-based projects can provide business students with a variety of technical opportunities, it is also true that they can, at the same time, facilitate development of a variety of "soft" skills – without the addition of any new, independent curricular unit.[8] Effective teamwork, cross-functional flexibility, interpersonal and communication skills (with people possessing many different levels of technical sophistication), and multicultural sensitivity are just a few of the more important non-technical skills community-based projects can naturally foster. Of these, the last deserves special attention.

No one concerned with business and/or business education can be unaware of the growing significance of cultural and demographic factors in the conduct of business. Porter and McKibbin call the increasing number of working women "the biggest single change that will affect [the American labor force] in the two decades to come" (Porter and McKibbin, 1988, p. 36). Mark McLaughlin, writing in *New England Business*, emphasizes the necessity of not just "accepting" but actually "valuing" a diverse workforce: "The successful executive of the 21st century will be the one who not only can acknowledge the ethnic diversity of the workforce as a fact of life, but also can recognize it as a potential advantage over more homogeneous competitors in foreign marketplaces" (McLaughlin, 1989, p. 43). Indeed, McLaughlin, citing Worth Loomis, president of the Hartford Graduate Center and former president of Dexter Corp., makes it perfectly clear that what is at stake here is nothing less than a "bottom line" issue:

> You're not going to do this [adapt to a diverse workforce] because it's the law or because it's the morally right thing to do or for any of a number of reasons. You're doing it because corporations that don't know how to keep and promote and motivate people from minority backgrounds and women are just not going to have a competitive edge. (McLaughlin, 1989, p. 44)

But how can learning to function effectively within a diverse workforce become for business students a formative part of their education unless they themselves have personally experienced a culture in which such diversity prevails? Surely the predominantly white, middle class, male-oriented culture of most business schools cannot provide a wealth of opportunities for such an experience – even if those institutions themselves are making a sincere effort to open their doors to a more diverse faculty and student population. However, in the culture of many community-based organizations, cultural diversity is the norm, rather than the exception. Here, traditional students will have no difficulty finding Black, Latino, and female authority figures with whom they must work and from whom they can learn.[9] For many traditional students, the opportunity to work in a truly diverse environment, to risk stepping outside their psychological comfort

zones, may represent the single best chance they have to learn to appreciate – and value – cultural differences.[10]

Business ethics

Up until this point, the thrust of our discussion has been essentially practical and realistic. This was not unintentional. The potential value of linking business education and service-learning can indeed be described in terms of "bottom line" benefits. Whether one focuses on the latter's ability to provide opportunities for hands-on technical experience or its inherent usefulness as a vehicle for such "soft skills" as personal communications and multi-cultural sensitivity, one can link effective service-learning programs directly to an enhanced ability to increase profits and productivity.

But service-learning, at its roots, is not only concerned with more effective academic learning and greater socio-cultural competence, it is also concerned with ethical concepts such as justice, responsibility, and reciprocity. In other words, one of its fundamental strengths lies in its ability to link "doing well" with "doing good" – and it does so in a way that can appeal to people whose values are positioned across the entire political spectrum – from a progressive demand for equal opportunity and social justice to a conservative concern with individual responsibility and local control. Where a Jesse Jackson speaks of a right to access (Jackson, 1993, p. 3), a William F. Buckley, Jr. speaks of earned privileges (Buckley, 1990, p. 138). However, both speak a language of moral obligation and active citizenship that lends itself directly to the kind of education service-learning promotes.[11]

One of the main reasons service-learning can exercise such wide appeal is that the two educational variables it brings together are as non-dogmatic as they are powerful. Neither activities that alleviate a social need or contribute to the common good nor reflection focused on the dimensions and implications of one's community involvement presupposes a specific ideological content. Nor is a specific content needed to turn that combination of action and reflection into a multi-dimensional learning experience.[12] In this way, service-learning programs have the potential for contributing profoundly to the development of an ethical awareness. As Buckley says with regard to his "National Service Franchise" proposal:

> The last thing one would wish a national service program to promulgate is a regimented society, but it is not regimentation to attempt consciously to universalize a continuing concern for one's fellow men. . . . (Buckley, 1990, p. 152)

And he goes on to talk about the importance of nurturing "an ongoing civic disposition", of fostering a "sense of solidarity with one's fellow citizens . . . [that] will survive the initial term of service" (Buckley, 1990, p. 153).

But if Buckley and others are guardedly optimistic about the formative power of community-based experiences, there is far less optimism about the short- or long-term effect of traditional ethics courses. As Ronald and Serbrena Sims point out in an article entitled "Increasing Applied Business Ethics Courses in Business School Curricula," considerable skepticism exists as to whether "a course on ethics [can] accomplish anything of real importance" (Sims and Sims, 1991, p. 214). Given the fact that learning to "reason more carefully about ethical problems" and "acquiring proper moral values and achieving the strength of character to put these values into practice" are hardly the same thing (Sims and Sims, 1991, p. 214), this is not surprising. Indeed, over the last few decades, a number of studies have tended to confirm the significance of this distinction.[13]

But if there exists some not unjustified skepticism as to the ability of ethics courses in and of themselves to promote ethical behavior, this should not be read as a denial of their overall value. Though their isolated effect may be limited, they can still play a vital role in a larger strategy that seeks to engage the imagination as well as the reason. Since

> [i]n most instances, undergraduate students enter the business school as sophomores and juniors with practically no exposure to moral or ethical issues in business and society in general . . . business

> schools must keep squarely in mind the educational situation and background of the undergraduate student and should include in the undergraduate curriculum a variety of experiences which assist in the student's moral development. (Sims and Sims, 1991, p. 215)

As almost anyone who has utilized service-learning assignments and projects can attest, few educational experiences impact students as powerfully as face to face engagements with disadvantaged populations. Here is one student's response to his first assignment at a soup kitchen:

> I've seen homeless people before and not cared for them. Sometimes I would even laugh at them because I thought it was funny how they looked. But something did happen to me once I left the soup kitchen. I can't explain it though. All I know is that on my way back to the subway I saw a homeless person sitting there with a cup held out for change. He had been in the soup kitchen. Without even thinking of what I was doing I reached in my pocket and gave him my change. Not once in my life have I ever done something like that before.[14]

Regardless of one's evaluation of the student's charitable gesture, there can be no doubt that his work among the homeless had resulted in what he himself recognized as a breakthrough personal experience. And if critics like the Simses are correct in postulating that the "general purpose of the teaching of ethics ought to be that of stimulating the moral imagination" (Sims and Sims, 1991, p. 215), then it is hard to see how business schools can even hope to spur the development of an ethical dimension in their students without recourse to experiences such as that described above. For whether one's area of concern is hiring and promotion practices, insider trading, or environmental responsibility, the "bottom line" issue is to get students to take seriously something other than the traditional bottom line – in an educational environment where the latter must, perforce, play a defining role.[15]

Hence, the importance of providing students with more than ethical theory as a counterweight to the sometimes overwhelming logic of the market place. Unless business students are given *in the course of their regular assignments* an opportunity to internalize not just arguments but also faces and places, personal stories, and encounters that elicit "a sense of moral obligation and personal responsibility" (Sims and Sims, 1991, p. 215), it is unlikely that they will bring to the rarified air of corporate America an ethical impulse capable of asserting itself.

> Widely admired, successful professionals frequently claim that the formative experiences that made a critical difference in their lives were on the margins of ordinary education and between the conventional niches. Those formative experiences function as rites of passage, transformative and affectively powerful. They are monuments people recall years later to justify their leadership and invention. . . . (Krieger, 1990, p. 6)

Indeed, there are still other cards one can play in facilitating such "formative experiences". Given the practical bent of most business students, introducing values-related topics through community-based projects, especially when those projects are seen as technically appropriate, makes good tactical sense. The fact that those topics are seen as rooted in and naturally allied to other disciplinary considerations saves them from being regarded as a formal, artificial afterthought.[16]

However, one can even further increase the effectiveness and appeal of such assignments by inviting local business professionals to serve as project partners or project leaders where appropriate. Nor is such an arrangement as difficult to implement as it might seem. Either through a school's alumni office or through professional assistance organizations such as the Retired Executive Corps, one can access professionals in every business area who are willing to model the connection between technical expertise and a sense of civic and ethical responsibility.[17] Indeed, according to Washington DC's Independent Sector, a consortium of charitable organizations, "the business sector is the fastest growing provider of volunteers" (Atkins, 1993, p. 37). When one thinks of an integrated approach to business education, it is hard to imagine a more effective combination than business students

working with business professionals on technically relevant community-based projects!

Obstacles and constraints

If, then, service-learning has so much to offer business education, the question naturally arises: why has this link been made so infrequently up till now? Although no hard data is available, several probable explanations suggest themselves.

Perhaps the most important of these is that much of the momentum behind the service-learning movement so far has been provided by academics – and concepts – tied to the social sciences and the liberal arts. Philosophy, sociology, political science, and expository writing have provided many of the movement's leaders and have helped service-learning become associated with programs defined in terms of civic education, democratic renewal, peace and justice studies, social action research, and philanthropy. While none of these concepts is in and of itself incompatible with business education, they are also not characteristic of it. Indeed, they seem to confirm rather than bridge the cultural gap that divides business and non-business disciplines at many institutions.[18]

What further complicates this picture is the fact that, regardless of disciplinary focus, the terminology of the service-learning movement has been anything but clear and consistent. For many faculty on both sides of the cultural divide, the distinction between "service-learning" and "community service" remains blurry – with the "institutional responsibilities" overtones of the word "service" adding yet another layer of confusion.[19] And if one does finally succeed in clearing up all of the above, one not infrequently encounters the claim that what is here referred to as "service-learning" merely represents practica and non-profit internships under another name. Such a claim, by minimizing the importance of a social as well as a technical reflective component and the difference between consulting and collaborating, undercuts the genuine value non-profit internships do have in providing a platform on which to build a multi-dimensional service-learning program.

Other factors that have impeded the growth of service-learning in the business disciplines include: fear of introducing topics in which the instructor has no educational background or "technical" expertise, uncertainty as to how one can effectively monitor and evaluate community-based assignments, a sense of the difficulty – or even the irrelevance – of working with non-profits, and a strict commitment to the priority of traditional research. Without wishing to minimize the real issues that lie behind these concerns, what nonetheless strikes one most forcefully about many of them is the divergence of opinion they point to between business practitioners and at least some business school personnel. Indeed, with regard to what is perhaps the fundamental issue dealt with in this essay – the desirability of increasing the range of business students' educational experiences – Porter and McKibbin report that the enthusiasm is rather one-sided:

> On the basis of our interviews with senior managers in a variety of corporations and professional organizations, we believe that any move by business schools toward broadening the academic experience of their students beyond the technical and functional will find enthusiastic endorsement by many employers. We are less sanguine about our colleagues in academia – there are many hurdles: inertia, suspicion of motives, departmental prerogatives ("turf"), and the opposition of some faculty members who may themselves have been somewhat narrowly educated. (Porter and McKibbin, 1988, p. 317)

Or, to take another issue central to service-learning – the educational value of working with nonprofits – it is again members of the business community who have most clearly insisted on the developmental potential of such work. Writing for the front page of the *Wall Street Journal*, Howard Isenberg, general manager of CCL Custom Manufacturing, suggests that "[t]hree to five years of volunteer work can provide management experience most corporations couldn't provide over 20 years, if it came at all". And why this should be so, Isenberg (1993) explains in terms of precisely those same symbiotic needs we discussed in section II.

> Nonprofits today need people with real insights into budgeting and cash flow, people who understand how to utilize information systems and create human resources programs. . . .
>
> On the other side of the alliance, corporations have promising young managers who don't get a chance to practice those skills because they are not yet high enough on the management hier-archy. Nonprofit organizations provide corporate volunteers a chance to put their skills to work immediately.[20]

But while practitioners from a variety of sectors continue to make clear their preference for a pedagogy closer to practice, faculty accusations "that the change proponents are 'research bashing' are not uncommon. Some faculty dismiss the whole effort as misguided" (Wyer, 1993, p. 16). In business departments no less than in liberal arts departments, a habit of academic insularity makes it difficult to take advantage of even exceptional educational opportunities that require reshaping traditional thinking.

Models

"Difficult" – but not "impossible". In the last few years, the number of programs moving to link business education with community awareness, community needs, and community-based learning has grown slowly but steadily. To be sure, not all of these initiatives can, strictly speaking, be labelled "service-learning". Wharton's undergraduate leadership program requires all students to take a half semester course focusing on teamwork and operating through community-based projects. Both oral and written opportunities for reflection are provided, but the course carries no academic credit. At the University of St Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota, all undergraduate business majors are required to take Business 200, a tuition-free community-service course, but, again, the course carries no credit.

On the graduate level, the University of Michigan's Global Citizenship program enables most incoming MBAs to participate in a two-day community-based initiative facilitated both by faculty and by local business executives.[21] Indeed, several schools are moving in the direction of a community-based experience as a mandatory part of their MBA orientation program. In 1992, Louis Corsini, Dean of Boston College's Carroll School of Management, announced that:

> Beginning with a two-day orientation next month, Boston College MBA students throughout their course of study will be exposed to various perspectives on the issue of social responsibility. There will be an ongoing symposium, in which political and corporate leaders present social issues and case studies, and MBA students will take a required capstone course on corporate social responsibility. (7)

Still other important initiatives are described in detail in the essays that follow this one.[22] But again, what is absent from most initiatives launched thus far is the element of academic credit that fully defines – and legitimizes – the community connection. For, as Jane Kendall has pointed out, "the curriculum is the primary expression of the institution's view of what needs to be learned". Hence, if any educational goal, however much touted, is not actually built into the curriculum, "it will not be part of the way the faculty teaches and the institution approaches education" (Kendall, 1990, p. 29). For this reason, it is especially important to recognize and build upon those curricular models that are available, even when they exist in relative isolation, supported by one instructor's vision and efforts.

At Bentley College, such individual curricular efforts have now succeeded in creating a college-wide program. By carefully tapping into faculty members' own disciplinary interests, and providing them with ample logistical support, the Bentley Service-Learning Project has been able to sponsor community-based course units in 15 of the college's 16 departments – including all seven of its undergraduate business departments. To date, over 50 full time Bentley faculty members have participated in the program.[23]

How can one account for such success? The explanation is complex, drawing as it must upon the institution's history,[24] administration support, and individual commitment. Ironically, however, what may have been decisive is nothing other

than sound organizational design: the program attempted to embody some of the very management principles the institution taught. Taking Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline* (1990) as its conceptual starting point, the program's leaders deliberately attempted to build a "learning organization" – a structure and a culture within which the needs and the creativity of all stakeholders were constantly recognized and leveraged. What this amounted to in practice was the "enshrinement" of three operating principles: inclusiveness, entrepreneurship, and flexibility.[25]

"Inclusiveness" meant, among other things, that all potential stakeholders were included in our initial efforts to inventory needs and resources. Every college department, academic and non-academic, as well as representative community agencies, was not just invited but encouraged to contribute ideas to the new undertaking. One lasting benefit of this strategy was that it has allowed us continually to form new collaborations and working groups as need arises. Thus the burden of mounting any major initiative is shared and made more manageable.[26]

Perhaps even more important has been "entrepreneurship". For the logic of the program has never favored centralized control. Indeed, rather than asking faculty how they can support service-learning, the more appropriate question has always been how service-learning can support them – can strengthen, deepen, enhance pedagogical outcomes they have identified as desirable. Hence, from the very start, there could be no question as to the program's academic legitimacy since it was consciously founded to serve those interests. Indeed, it has seemed to us that such a prioritizing of faculty interests is the only way to ensure the program's long-term health. Unless we are able to tap into those sources of energy and creativity that spring from a faculty member's professional commitments, we cannot count on his/her best efforts.[27]

Finally, there is "flexibility". What this entails is, first of all, an emphasis on voluntary participation – and the creation of those circumstances that will promote such participation. Thus, for example, faculty members are encouraged to consider a variety of structural options in designing service-learning course components – from "mini" projects that establish an almost casual community connection in an otherwise standard class to optional service "tracks" where students choose to pursue community-based work in lieu of more traditional assignments. Other manifestations of flexibility include a range of strategies for supporting a project's reflective component and careful attention to the degree of personal involvement a faculty member's professional priorities in any given semester will allow.

Initiatives such as Bentley's and those of the other institutions represented here and elsewhere in this volume represent an important and promising start – an acknowledgement both of business education's responsibility to frame its students' development in a broader social context *and* of the educational potential of community-based projects for business students. By linking technical skills and community needs, by bringing together concrete action and guided reflection, individual initiatives such as these begin to constitute an invaluable resource for business education as a whole.

When, moreover, one adds to these models a number of other, more consulting-type efforts focused on inner-city needs,[28] it becomes clear that the time has come to begin developing a national network of business-school educators able and willing to share both methods and results. Syllabi from business courses with community-based components or options, techniques for orienting faculty and students to nonprofit issues, strategies for faculty-agency collaboration, approaches to assessment and evaluation – these are just a few of the items that could be gathered to create a resource database capable of developing ever more effective business school-community agency partnerships.[29]

Conclusion

In an article entitled "The New Management: Business and Social Institutions for the Information Age", William Halal, professor of management at George Washington University, postulates that we are now in the midst of a worldwide "managerial revolution" – a revolu-

tion encompassing "business, government, and all other institutions" (Halal, 1990, p. 41).[30] Of the various aspects of the "new management" Halal identifies, most – a rededication to quality and service; less hierarchical, more flexible structures; more participatory leadership – have long since begun to emerge as central features of a new business paradigm. One development, however, a shift in institutional values towards "multiple goals", has remained more "illusive":

> The notion that business should serve broader interests beyond sheer profit-making remains an illusive goal . . . because there seems to be a prevailing belief that a tough focus on money is essential to survive the dog-eat-dog world of commerce. The profit-motive has become enshrined as an immutable belief in capitalism, attaining the status of a sacred cow transcending logic. . . .
>
> This is unfortunate because the evidence shows that the concept of a social contract not only serves all needs better – it also enhances profit. (Halal, 1990, p. 46)

It is also unfortunate because, according to Halal, it helps perpetuate a government-business relationship wherein government is viewed primarily as a "civilizing counterforce" (Halal, 1990, p. 51) to corporate social indifference.

> But as the trends described earlier toward redefining corporations as a coalition of interests become more prominent, opportunities should appear for fundamentally changing this adversarial business-government relationship. If corporations were to assume a broader democratic role in which they were governed to serve all constituencies instead of investors alone, they would absorb the social impacts of the firm to become self-regulating. The net effect might be a major decentralization of economic control. . . .

Thus we arrive back at the place where we began: the imperative of finding – within business-oriented institutions – an appropriate balance between what Porter and McKibbin describe as "an internal and an external focus" (Porter and McKibbin, 1988, p. 85). Whether that balance comes from without – imposed by the "external legal/political/social environment" – or from within – the result of a new internalization of social considerations within business organizations – the question is not "if" but "how". By exploring and exploiting the potential of service-learning to help their students develop on a variety of levels – technical, interpersonal, and ethical – business schools can themselves play a leading role in defining how that balance is achieved.

Notes

[1] See, for example, the articles by Williams and Lynton cited later in this essay. As James W. Schmotter, associate dean of the Johnson Graduate School of Management at Cornell, has noted:

> [H]ardly a month passes without a new article in the business press lamenting the narrow, overly quantitative focus of graduate business curricula, the irrelevant research done by business schools' faculty members, and the inability of graduates to grapple successfully with the nation's economic problems. (Schmotter, 1992, p. A44)

[2] For a thoughtful and provocative discussion of the full dimensions of this shift, see Fritjof Capra's *The Turning Point* (1992).

[3] See the article by Keith Morton and Marie Troppe in this volume for more on Campus Compact's mission and activities.

[4] The parallels here to the work of David Schon (*The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) and *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1987)) are immediately apparent. Indeed, it is surprising that Schon's work has not been cited more frequently by service-learning proponents.

[5] For other useful attempts to define service-learning, see "Service-Learning: Three Principles" by Robert Sigmon (1990) and "Service-Learning: Groping Towards a Definition" by Timothy Stanton (1990). Also of special interest is Barber and Battistoni's "A Season of Service" (1993) where different approaches to service-learning are compared.

[6] For examples of programs that link business education and community needs, see the summary entitled "Business Schools Pursue the Business of Rebuilding Urban Economies" (1993). It should, however, be noted that the programs identified in this summary do not necessarily represent "service-learning" in the full sense described above. For still other examples of business education-community linkage, see "Models" section below.

[7] These examples are not merely hypothetical. Class projects in all these areas have been developed in conjunction with the Bentley Service-Learning Project. (See Kenworthy essay later in this volume.)

It is, moreover, important to stress that business-oriented service-learning projects can be developed for courses on a variety of levels – from introductory accounting courses though graduate policy seminars. Indeed, at Bentley we have found great educational – and social – value in being able to offer students projects appropriate for their level of learning at every stage of their academic careers. The "trick", so to speak, is to develop a database of projects sufficiently large and varied to permit an accurate matching of skills level and project requirements.

[8] It could, of course, be objected that such an approach merely "passes down" the problem of insufficient space and time from the curricular to the course level. However, many pedagogical strategies exist to circumvent this danger.

At Bentley, we have begun to make greater and greater use of "course clusters" whereby a group of students enrolls in two "complementary" courses at the same time. By electing special sections of Accounting Information Systems and Technical Writing or Principles of Composition and Introduction to Computer Information Systems simultaneously, students can approach a single community-based project from two disciplinary perspectives, one of which allows them to focus directly on questions of context, audience, and communication.

Even without such "clustering", service-learning assignments allow students to learn directly from a variety of outside professionals. For example, several of our community partners play an active role in helping students understand the social problems dealt with by their organizations. They also help the students develop some of the interpersonal skills their organizational environments call for.

[9] Relatedly, as the number of women and minorities in business schools continues to grow, these groups can find in community-based organizations important managerial role models. Two years ago Bentley began working intensively with a homeless resource center in Boston's South End. This alliance immediately made available to our students several African-American and Latino managers. Their work with us – both on and off campus – proved to be a rich experiential opportunity for our traditional students as well as our students of color.

[10] In their comments on the "international dimension" in contemporary business education, Porter and McKibbin implicitly provide still another argument for ensuring that students develop a sensitivity to cultural diversity. While pointing out that "America's future managers need to understand the degree to which U.S. methods are unique rather than universal and the related ethnocentric character of their own attitudes", they note that these same students "need also to appreciate the pluralist nature of the culture in their own society" (Porter and McKibbin, 1988, p. 320). In other words, international and domestic "parochialism" go hand in hand.

[11] It is interesting to note how Buckley picks up on the very point here at issue; namely, the potential coincidence of moral responsibility and pre-professional advantage in service work:

> We are talking now about twenty-year-olds, and their increased maturity and experience would not only make it easier to train them for more specialized work than that expected of eighteen-year-olds, there would be time, during the first two college years, to give special thought to the nature of national service work done, with the view to wedding it to the profession the student has in mind to pursue – doctor, lawyer, businessman, accountant, government worker, teacher. It could thus be compatible with internships, field work, etc. (Buckley, 1990, p. 149)

[12] In this way service-learning differs from ordinary "consulting opportunities" with non-profits. An element of "intentionality" – present from the start – helps take full advantage of a potentially rich experiential opportunity so that an integrated – technical and social, skills-related and values-related – whole results.

[13] As Michael Lane *et al.* (1988) suggest, after referencing a number of studies of the relationship between formal ethics training and ethical behavior:

> The literature suggests, then, that a business curriculum incorporating ethics may heighten the awareness of students regarding ethical problems and their ability to think and speak about them, at least in the short run. But there is little empirical evidence to suggest that ethical behavior and decision-making are enhanced through ethical education. (Lane *et al.*, 1988, p. 224)

[14] From a Bentley undergraduate reflective essay.

[15] The importance of accomplishing this is vividly suggested by research that shows a negative correlation between corporate social performance and senior executive graduate management training:

> Formal management training . . . may direct executive attention away from the human dimension of managing the work force. That this concentration on other concerns is not simply a product of hard-headed management thinking is evident in the economic performance of the two groups of companies [studied: socially] progressive corporations were on average more profitable than nonprogressive firms (Kanter, 1984). (cited in Unseem, 1986, p. 99)

In other words, the decisive distinction here is not between profitability and values considerations but between an educational background more exclusively and one less exclusively focused on profitability. Indeed, one could argue – and many have – that going beyond the traditional bottom line actually enhances profitability, at least in the long run.

[16] Key, of course, to success in this area is the care given to planning such projects – including their values-related dimension. At Bentley, where business service-learning projects are almost always offered as an optional "track" – i.e., in lieu of other, library-based or purely hypothetical assignments – it is rare that some percentage of students in a class does NOT opt for that track. Once this has happened, questions of values, stereotyping, and social responsibility find a natural entry into full-class discussions. It is up to the individual instructor to decide how much to utilize this opportunity.

[17] At Bentley we have developed good working relationships with both The Support Center of Massachusetts/Accounting Assistance Project and Business Volunteers for the Arts/Boston. What has been particularly gratifying in our work with business professionals from these two groups is the enthusiasm they have shown for serving as socially responsible role models, sensitive to a professional's need "to give back".

[18] For a short but illuminating history of the tensions between business and the liberal arts, see Thomas Jones's "Liberal Learning and Undergraduate Business Study" (1986, pp. 124–133).

[19] The ever more frequent appearance of the "compromise" term "community service learning" hasn't helped this situation – as if what were needed was a further blurring rather than a confident distinction!

[20] All of which is not to deny that there are important differences between for-profit and nonprofit organizations that must be taken into account. Hence, before its volunteer executives can begin working with community-based organizations, Business Volunteers for the Arts/Boston insists that they go through a special workshop on nonprofit culture. A similar orientation would be useful for all business service-learning students, and at Bentley we are moving in this direction.

[21] For a full description of this program, see the essay by Graham Mercer included in this volume.

[22] One should not, however, exaggerate the amount of movement in this area. In an unpublished report entitled "Service-Learning as a Part of MBA Programs", my graduate assistant Susan Schneider (1993) concluded that there are only about a dozen MBA programs nationwide that include some kind of "service-learning" component.

[23] For a detailed description of Bentley's program, see the essay by Amy Kenworthy included in this volume.

[24] The college's mission statement has long included the goal of producing "liberally educated business professionals", and to this end it not only sponsored one of the country's first centers for business ethics but also experimented with courses seeking to integrate business and liberal arts learning. See Jones, 1986, pp. 135–136.

[25] For an extended discussion of the program's utilization of these principles, see my "Service-Learning as Campus Culture" (1993).

[26] Many of the reservations raised elsewhere about the difficulty of launching service-learning initiatives have been addressed by such collaborative arrangements. For example, the active participation of the Behavioral Sciences Department has meant assistance both in facilitating reflection and in designing tools for assessment. See note eight for other faculty-faculty collaborations.

[27] So successful has been this strategy that in some departments, a departmentally based service-learning profile has begun to emerge.

[28] Such consulting efforts may or may not be formally linked to an academic program, and most of them do not offer any structured reflection on non-technical issues. For a good example of this kind of effort, see Alison Leigh Cowan's "Helping Business in the Inner City" (1994), which describes a new initiative led by Michael Porter of the Harvard Business School.

[29] Syllabi from courses in nonprofit management are already available from the publications department of the Independent Sector in Washington, D.C.

[30] Halal is, of course, only one of many writers who have explored the contemporary challenge to traditional institutions. It is interesting to note that two of the most thoughtful non-business texts to

investigate this area, Fritjof Capra's *The Turning Point* (1992) and Robert Bellah *et al.*'s *The Good Society* (1986), arrive at conclusions that are fundamentally compatible with Halal's.

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