DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 436 017 CS 510 177

AUTHOR Schwartzman, Roy
TITLE Teching Down without Copping Out: Service-Learning as a Counter to Technological Elitism.
PUB DATE 1999-11-06
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual National Communication Association Convention (Chicago, IL, November 4-7, 1999).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Citizen Participation; *Educational Principles; Higher Education; Interpersonal Communication; *Service Learning; Socioeconomic Status; *Student Participation; *Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS Social Education; Technology Based Instruction

ABSTRACT

Service-learning places students and educational institutions in direct contact with surrounding communities, teaches them greater appreciation for persons of different social privileges, and helps them to recognize the necessity of social intervention in distributing the benefits of democracy. Service-learning is inherently democratizing by combating the separation of higher education from its beneficiaries, and by avoiding the social stratification that new technologies can bring. Including a service component in education can offset the individualistic focus of technologized learning and encourages students to take responsibility for how they and their classmates learn. Contains 5 references. (EF)

ERIC

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original document.

ED 436 017

Teching Down Without Copping Out:
Service-Learning as a Counter to Technological Elitism

Roy Schwartzman, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Speech Communication
Department of Theatre, Speech, and Dance
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208
(803) 777-0055 office and fax
docroy@mindspring.com

Presented at the 85th Annual National Communication Association Convention
6 November 1999
Chicago, IL

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
° Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
R. Schwartzman
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

0 177

Teching Down Without Copping Out:
Service-Learning as a Counter to Technological Elitism

A sizable body of literature chronicles the democratizing nature of service-learning (Lisman, 1998; Eyler and Giles, 1999) in the sense that participation is open to anyone willing to serve. Through their collaboration not only with other students, but with diverse populations in the community beyond the college environment, students develop greater appreciation for people who do not enjoy a full range of social privileges. Perhaps more importantly, students begin to recognize that active intervention in public affairs may be necessary to help others reap the benefits of democracy. As a counter to ivory tower intellectualism, service-learning places students and educational institutions in direct contact with surrounding communities.

In another sense, service-learning is inherently democratizing apart from combating the mandarin separation of higher education from its beneficiaries. Service-learning is the quintessential low-technology program. The students, bearing knowledge, skills, and concern, propagate educational missions directly to populations that might not notice or have become jaded with the abstract mission statements of institutions. Aside from efficient low-tech outreach, service-learning also counters the growing temptation to rely on technology to improve educational experiences for the students. Lisman (1998) somewhat cynically identifies drives toward technologies such as distance education and computer-based instruction as signs of instrumental reasoning in education (p. 66). According to Lisman, these sorts of technologies are essentially scalable investments, allowing institutions to economize by having burgeoning enrollments with the fewest possible faculty hires and direct contact hours. This economizing reduces

student-faculty collaborations in learning by attenuating face-to-face contact and personal involvement with student learning. Service-learning, while labor-intensive, could restore the student-faculty partnership in learning by involving everyone as a learner from their contributions to the community.

A vast armada of expensive high-tech gadgetry is being imported into classrooms and employed as adjuncts to—and sometimes replacements for—teaching. While equipment such as live Internet feeds, interactive tests, and read-write CDs can increase student interest and perhaps enhance student satisfaction with a course, no innovative instructional delivery method can substitute for direct student experience. Granted, students could not be expected to experience all course-related events directly. For example, a public speaking class could not attend an off-site speech delivered during class time. In this situation, a live video feed to the class could allow the speech to be viewed and discussed. But even here, the students witness only the finished product. How much more instructive it would be if students could operate behind the scenes with, for example, voter registration drives to craft messages and adapt them to communities with low voter turnout. Service-learning affords students opportunities to participate in the creation and revision of communication rather than settle for being spectators of a final version of discourse whose developmental history remains a mystery.

In contrast to technological innovations that help bring material to the students, service-learning brings the students to venues where their subject matter is being practiced, not just studied. One of our students, a sophomore majoring in communication, performed an internship with a local chapter of Planned Parenthood that had suffered from severe funding pressures and chronic understaffing. The student

specialized in crafting prevention messages regarding pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases targeted to college students. She found that her preparation of text for brochures, decisions on where to place materials, and delivery of public service spots on the radio taught her far more than all her courses that required delivering speeches to the same homogeneous group of listeners who had no stake in the speech topic.

The danger in becoming too reliant on technology to deliver instruction is that it might encourage intellectual passivity, with students operating on the principle of least effort and confidently assuming that the course materials will be brought to them. It is important not to equate easier access to course material with a wider range of available experience. Regardless of the fidelity virtual experiences have to lived praxis, students who interact with technology rather than humans never would confront the variables operable in interpersonal interactions. Despite the value of being technologically savvy, the ability to negotiate with different sorts of people and navigate amid personality conflicts, political agendas, and the like surely remain more valuable skills than the ability to navigate through a series of menu bars and hyperlinks.

Service-learning, which by nature encourages participation from as many students as possible, also avoids the social stratification that new technologies can bring. As Warnick (1999) explains, women were initially induced to go online in the mid-1990s in terms that simultaneously alarmed them about the technology's dangers (e.g., harassment in chat rooms, molestations and rapes resulting from online meetings) while stigmatizing them for their technological ignorance when compared to men. Indeed, technological innovations almost by definition further stratify society because the technologies are initially expensive, so only the wealthy can afford them. Such stratification holds for

educational institutions as well as individuals, with the wealthier institutions infusing technologies much earlier and much deeper into their curriculum than the "have-nots." Service-learning, to the contrary, might require a substantial financial commitment, but the benefit is limited primarily by the willingness to engage in a commitment to serve. The research on service-learning reports no systematic or widespread differences in the perceived quality of service-learning that correlate with gender, race, or economic status. Students who do report negative experiences with service-learning tend to identify problems in the administration of the program as a bad fit with the community group in which they were placed (Eyler and Giles, 1999). There is also some evidence that students who engage in service-learning could become more reflective about their own class status and begin to question the reasons for class stratification and social privilege (McEwen, 1996).

Putnam (1996) suggests that technological innovations contribute to social fragmentation. He points the finger at television. If nothing else, television usurps time that could be spent in group activities or conversations. But other media, including the Internet, also demonstrate this isolationist effect. The image of a lone student glued to the computer screen has become an icon of how the idealized global village has shrunk into global cubicles.

Before educators jump on the bandwagon of online coursework and similar technologies, it might be wise to consider how these novelties affect student perceptions of their obligations to each other. The authors recall a situation a few years ago that raises concern. One of us had to be out of town for a professional convention. Not willing to cancel class, a videotape version of the day's material was shown. The

teaching assistant who screened the video reported that the situation was chaotic. An auditorium of 120 students who were ordinarily courteous and friendly turned into an unruly mob. Some students talked throughout the video, a behavior they never would exhibit in a live class. Several students wandered throughout the room, blocking the view of the screen. Other students brought dinner and feasted rather than take notes. Throughout the video, students entered and departed at will, apparently oblivious to the distraction these disruptions caused.

These students were reasonably mature adults, so they should have outgrown the "When the cat's way, the mice will play" syndrome. As many students reported later, although the video lecture was announced beforehand, they were unprepared for its depersonalizing effect. The students' behavior, however, demonstrated something more disturbing. Apparently they were unwilling to recognize their obligation not to distract each other. Thus the civility in the everyday classroom was not generalized to other contexts, and the class degenerated into bedlam without the presence of someone to remind them of the need for courtesy.

While technological innovations might not turn an attentive class into an angry mob, they do change the relational dynamics of the classroom. Rather than engage each other in questions and conversation, attention shifts to the screen (television or computer). Without the checks and balances of teachers and students regulating what is deemed appropriate, the civilizing effect of education suffers. Behaviors that might be normal when watching television alone do not always transfer to social settings. Including a service component in education can offset the individualistic focus of technologized learning. With service-learning, students discover that they are responsible

not only for allowing their classmates to learn, but that they shoulder responsibility for taking part in accomplishing concrete tasks associated with their studies. The passive ethic of non-interference converts to more active involvement in testing theories discussed in the classroom.

ERIC

References

Eyler, J., and Giles, D. E., Jr. (1999). Where's the learning in service-learning? (Fwd. A. W. Astin). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lisman, C. D. (1998). Toward a civil society: Civic literacy and service learning. Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey.

McEwen, M. K. (1996). Enhancing student learning and development through service-learning. In B. Jacoby et al., Service-learning in higher education (Fwd. T. Ehrlich) (pp. 53-91). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Putnam, R. D. (1996, Winter). The strange disappearance of civic America. The American Prospect, no. 24 [On-line]. Available: http://epn.org/prospect/24/24putn.html.

Warnick, B. (1999). Masculinizing the feminine: Inviting women online ca. 1997. Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 16, 1-19.

CS 510 177

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

Reproduction Release

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Teching Down Without Copping Out: Service-Learning as a Counter to Technological Elitism	
Author(s): Roy Schwartzman	
Corporate Source:	Publication Date: presented 11/6/99

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, Resources in Education (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign in the indicated space following.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY SAMPLE TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY SAMPLE TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY SAMPLE TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
Level 1	Level 2A	Level 2B
☑	☐	☐
Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g. electronic) *and* paper copy.	Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only	Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche, or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Signature: [signature]	Printed Name/Position/Title: Roy Schwartzman, Asst. Prof. of Speech Communication	
Organization/Address: Dept. of Theatre/Speech/Dance Univ. of South Carolina Columbia, SC 29208	Telephone: 803/777-0055	Fax: 803/777-0055
	E-mail Address: docroy@mindspring.com	Date: 1/10/00

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

ERIC/REC Clearinghouse
2805 E 10th St Suite 150
Bloomington, IN 47408-2698
Telephone: 812-855-5847
Toll Free: 800-759-4723
FAX: 812-856-5512
e-mail: ericcs@indiana.edu
WWW: http://www.indiana.edu/~eric_rec/

EFF-088 (Rev. 9/97)