Course Design: The Importance of Critical Reflection

Why Reflect?
According to John Dewey, "truly educative" experiences generate interest, are intrinsically worthwhile, present problems that awaken new curiosity and create a demand for new information, and take sufficient time to foster development. Reflection is an essential process for transforming experiences—gained from the service activities and the course materials—into genuine learning. It is crucial for integrating the service experience with the classroom topics. It fosters learning about larger social issues such as the political, economic, and sociological characteristics of our communities. It enhances students’ critical understanding of the course topics and their ability to assess their own values, goals, and progress.

What is Critical Reflection?
Reflection is a process designed to promote the examination and interpretation of experience and the promotion of cognitive learning. It is "a process by which service-learners think critically about their experiences." It is the process of looking back on the implications of actions taken - good and bad - and determining what has been gained, lost, or achieved and connecting these conclusions to future actions and larger societal contexts. Through reflection students analyze concepts, evaluate experiences, and postulate theory. Critical reflection provides students with the opportunity to examine and question their beliefs, opinions, and values. It involves observation, asking questions, and putting facts, ideas, and experiences together to derive new meaning.

What Are the Benefits of Reflection?
Reflection improves basic academic skills and promotes a deeper understanding of course subject matter and its relations to the non-academic world; it improves higher level thinking and problem solving and students’ ability to learn from experience. Critical reflection promotes personal development by enhancing students’ self-awareness, their sense of community, and their sense of their own capacities.

How Can Reflection Be Facilitated in the Classroom?
Effective reflection depends on appropriate contexts and real problems and issues. The culture of the class community must be one in which students feel included, respected, and safe. The dialogue between instructor and students must be meaningful to the students. Students are helped to feel respected and included in the class community through small groups in which they can exchange concerns, experiences, and expectations about the service and the class. By involving them in real community problems, service-learning provides students with a need to know, a desire to enhance their skills and a commitment to solving problems of importance to them.
Effective Service-Learning Reflection Will:
● Clearly link the service experience to the course content and learning objectives;
● Be structured in terms of description, expectations, and the criteria for assessing the activity;
● Occur regularly during the semester so that students can practice reflection and develop the capacity to engage in deeper and broader reflection;
● Provide feedback from the instructor about at least some of the reflection activities so that students learn how to improve their critical analysis and develop from reflective practice;
● Include the opportunity for students to explore, clarify, and alter their values.


### Tips for Facilitating Reflection

Provide an environment for rigorous intellectual work. “Rigor arises from a willingness to disagree, to engage in honest questioning, to challenge current thought, and in acknowledgement of what one does not know. Rigor can only occur when students feel the environment is hospitable to such dynamics” (Palmer Parker 1998).

● Prepare a framework for guiding the discussion
● Lead the group by actively engaging each student.
● Set the tone by establishing norms of behavior such as:
  ● Anyone in the group may speak at any time—no hand raising is required, but the rules of polite conversation should be followed.
  ● Profanity and sexual innuendoes are not necessary to make a point.
  ● Speakers should be respectful, open-minded, and not aim to put anyone down.
  ● Insist that responses are clear, coherent sentences, not just a few words.
  ● Clarify students’ responsibilities and expectations (write them down and copy for all).
  ● Arouse interest and commitment to the service-learning.
  ● Assess the values, knowledge, and skills that each student brings to the project.
  ● Develop background information about the people and problems the students will encounter in the service situations to sensitize them and help to revise any misconceptions.
  ● Develop and practice any skills that will be required, including being active observers and questioners of experience.
  ● Get closure on emotional/affective issues by the end of each reflective session.
  ● Leave some cognitive/topical issues open until the next session to give group members an opportunity to think more about them.
  ● Caution students about protecting the confidentiality and integrity of persons at their worksite.

### Reflection Activities and Questions

When facilitating reflection, vary the activities to accommodate multiple learning styles; create a reflective classroom - don’t just add a reflective component.

### Journals

Students may be asked to keep a journal as they engage in the service experience. The journals should not merely be simple inventories of events. They should address situations objectively, subjectively, and analytically. Instructors may provide questions to guide students in
addressing issues and should review the journals periodically. It is helpful to offer written comments, questions and feedback that will encourage, challenge and essentially provide a dialogue that deepens the students’ thought process. Taking up an entry each week or reading a weekly online posting can ameliorate problems at the worksite and challenge students to rigorous intellectual inquiry.

**The ORID Model**
The ORID model provides a progression of question types designed to move students from reflecting on the concrete experience to analytical and subjective reasoning. It mirrors the Kolb learning cycle and may be used to create journal or discussion questions and to guide assignments and activity types. The progression may be completed within one assignment and/or over the whole semester.

- **Objective**: Begin with questions related to the concrete experience. What did students do, observe, read, and hear? Who was involved? What was said? What happened as a result of their work?
- **Reflective**: Next introduce questions that address the affective experience. How did the experience feel? What did it remind them of? How did their apprehension change or their confidence grow? Did they feel successful, effective, and knowledgeable?
- **Interpretive**: Then ask questions that explore their cognitive experience. What did the experience make them think? How did it change their thinking about…? What did they learn? What worked?
- **Decisional**: Finally, students are prepared to incorporate their experience into a new paradigm. They may have a shift in knowledge, awareness, or understanding that affects how they see things and, ultimately, how they will act. What will they do differently next time? What decisions or opinions have they formed? How will the experience affect their career path, their personal life choices or their use of new information, skills or technology?

**Group Discussions**
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**Portfolios and Notebooks**
Students may be asked to compile materials relevant to the service-learning experience and the course of which it is a part. These materials may include: journals, analytic papers, scripts/notes for class presentations, items created or collected as part of the service, pictures, agency brochures, handbooks, time-sheets, service agreement and training materials. Portfolios provide a focus for reflection on the service experience and its documentation. Introductory letters or papers addressed to the reader can help students to discover meaning through writing.
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Simulations and Role Playing
Students may problem-solve by acting out potential problems or issues at the worksite. Games can simulate challenging situations.

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Engaging the Community
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Examples of Reflective Questions:
● What will/have you been doing? Who have you been serving?
● So what will/have you been learning? Why is your service work needed?
● Now what should others do about it? What are you going to do about it?
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Closure:
● Create a class/group product.
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What is Critical Reflection?
Reflection is a process designed to promote the examination and interpretation of experience and the promotion of cognitive learning. It is "a process by which service-learners think critically about their experiences." It is the process of looking back on the implications of actions taken - good and bad - and determining what has been gained, lost, or achieved and connecting these conclusions to future actions and larger societal contexts. Through reflection students analyze concepts, evaluate experiences, and postulate theory. Critical reflection provides students with the opportunity to examine and question their beliefs, opinions, and values. It involves observation, asking questions, and putting facts, ideas, and experiences together to derive new meaning.

What Are the Benefits of Reflection?
Reflection improves basic academic skills and promotes a deeper understanding of course subject matter and its relations to the non-academic world; it improves higher level thinking and problem solving and students’ ability to learn from experience. Critical reflection promotes personal development by enhancing students’ self-awareness, their sense of community, and their sense of their own capacities.

How Can Reflection Be Facilitated in the Classroom?
Effective reflection depends on appropriate contexts and real problems and issues. The culture of the class community must be one in which students feel included, respected, and safe. The dialogue between instructor and students must be meaningful to the students. Students are helped to feel respected and included in the class community through small groups in which they can exchange concerns, experiences, and expectations about the service and the class. By involving them in real community problems, service-learning provides students with a need to know, a desire to enhance their skills and a commitment to solving problems of importance to them.
Effective Service-Learning Reflection Will:
● Clearly link the service experience to the course content and learning objectives;
● Be structured in terms of description, expectations, and the criteria for assessing the activity;
● Occur regularly during the semester so that students can practice reflection and develop the capacity to engage in deeper and broader reflection;
● Provide feedback from the instructor about at least some of the reflection activities so that students learn how to improve their critical analysis and develop from reflective practice;
● Include the opportunity for students to explore, clarify, and alter their values.


Tips for Facilitating Reflection

Provide an environment for rigorous intellectual work. “Rigor arises from a willingness to disagree, to engage in honest questioning, to challenge current thought, and in acknowledgement of what one does not know. Rigor can only occur when students feel the environment is hospitable to such dynamics” (Palmer Parker 1998).

● Prepare a framework for guiding the discussion
● Lead the group by actively engaging each student.
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Examples of Reflective Questions:
● What will/have you been doing? Who have you been serving?
● So what will/have you been learning? Why is your service work needed?
● Now what should others do about it? What are you going to do about it?
● Can you talk more about that? Why do you think that happens?
● What evidence do you have about that? What does this remind you of?
● Do you see a connection between this and ___?
● How else could you approach that? What do you want to happen?

Closure:
● Create a class/group product.
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Course Design: The Importance of Critical Reflection

Why Reflect?
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What is Critical Reflection?
Reflection is a process designed to promote the examination and interpretation of experience and the promotion of cognitive learning. It is "a process by which service-learners think critically about their experiences." It is the process of looking back on the implications of actions taken - good and bad - and determining what has been gained, lost, or achieved and connecting these conclusions to future actions and larger societal contexts. Through reflection students analyze concepts, evaluate experiences, and postulate theory. Critical reflection provides students with the opportunity to examine and question their beliefs, opinions, and values. It involves observation, asking questions, and putting facts, ideas, and experiences together to derive new meaning.

What Are the Benefits of Reflection?
Reflection improves basic academic skills and promotes a deeper understanding of course subject matter and its relations to the non-academic world; it improves higher level thinking and problem solving and students’ ability to learn from experience. Critical reflection promotes personal development by enhancing students’ self-awareness, their sense of community, and their sense of their own capacities.

How Can Reflection Be Facilitated in the Classroom?
Effective reflection depends on appropriate contexts and real problems and issues. The culture of the class community must be one in which students feel included, respected, and safe. The dialogue between instructor and students must be meaningful to the students. Students are helped to feel respected and included in the class community through small groups in which they can exchange concerns, experiences, and expectations about the service and the class. By involving them in real community problems, service-learning provides students with a need to know, a desire to enhance their skills and a commitment to solving problems of importance to them.
Effective Service-Learning Reflection Will:

- Clearly link the service experience to the course content and learning objectives;
- Be structured in terms of description, expectations, and the criteria for assessing the activity;
- Occur regularly during the semester so that students can practice reflection and develop the capacity to engage in deeper and broader reflection;
- Provide feedback from the instructor about at least some of the reflection activities so that students learn how to improve their critical analysis and develop from reflective practice;
- Include the opportunity for students to explore, clarify, and alter their values.


Tips for Facilitating Reflection

Provide an environment for rigorous intellectual work. “Rigor arises from a willingness to disagree, to engage in honest questioning, to challenge current thought, and in acknowledgement of what one does not know. Rigor can only occur when students feel the environment is hospitable to such dynamics” (Palmer Parker 1998).

- Prepare a framework for guiding the discussion
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Adapted from Bringle, R. and Hatcher, J. (1999) Reflection in service-learning: Making meaning of

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Examples of Reflective Questions:
● What will/have you been doing? Who have you been serving?
● So what will/have you been learning? Why is your service work needed?
● Now what should others do about it? What are you going to do about it?
● Can you talk more about that? Why do you think that happens?
● What evidence do you have about that? What does this remind you of?
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Closure:
● Create a class/group product.
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What is Critical Reflection?
Reflection is a process designed to promote the examination and interpretation of experience and the promotion of cognitive learning. It is "a process by which service-learners think critically about their experiences." It is the process of looking back on the implications of actions taken - good and bad - and determining what has been gained, lost, or achieved and connecting these conclusions to future actions and larger societal contexts. Through reflection students analyze concepts, evaluate experiences, and postulate theory. Critical reflection provides students with the opportunity to examine and question their beliefs, opinions, and values. It involves observation, asking questions, and putting facts, ideas, and experiences together to derive new meaning.

What Are the Benefits of Reflection?
Reflection improves basic academic skills and promotes a deeper understanding of course subject matter and its relations to the non-academic world; it improves higher level thinking and problem solving and students’ ability to learn from experience. Critical reflection promotes personal development by enhancing students’ self-awareness, their sense of community, and their sense of their own capacities.

How Can Reflection Be Facilitated in the Classroom?
Effective reflection depends on appropriate contexts and real problems and issues. The culture of the class community must be one in which students feel included, respected, and safe. The dialogue between instructor and students must be meaningful to the students. Students are helped to feel respected and included in the class community through small groups in which they can exchange concerns, experiences, and expectations about the service and the class. By involving them in real community problems, service-learning provides students with a need to know, a desire to enhance their skills and a commitment to solving problems of importance to them.
Effective Service-Learning Reflection Will:
- Clearly link the service experience to the course content and learning objectives;
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**Tips for Facilitating Reflection**

Provide an environment for rigorous intellectual work. “Rigor arises from a willingness to disagree, to engage in honest questioning, to challenge current thought, and in acknowledgement of what one does not know. Rigor can only occur when students feel the environment is hospitable to such dynamics” (Palmer Parker 1998).

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● Create a class/group product.
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What is Critical Reflection?
Reflection is a process designed to promote the examination and interpretation of experience and the promotion of cognitive learning. It is "a process by which service-learners think critically about their experiences." It is the process of looking back on the implications of actions taken - good and bad - and determining what has been gained, lost, or achieved and connecting these conclusions to future actions and larger societal contexts. Through reflection students analyze concepts, evaluate experiences, and postulate theory. Critical reflection provides students with the opportunity to examine and question their beliefs, opinions, and values. It involves observation, asking questions, and putting facts, ideas, and experiences together to derive new meaning.

What Are the Benefits of Reflection?
Reflection improves basic academic skills and promotes a deeper understanding of course subject matter and its relations to the non-academic world; it improves higher level thinking and problem solving and students’ ability to learn from experience. Critical reflection promotes personal development by enhancing students’ self-awareness, their sense of community, and their sense of their own capacities.

How Can Reflection Be Facilitated in the Classroom?
Effective reflection depends on appropriate contexts and real problems and issues. The culture of the class community must be one in which students feel included, respected, and safe. The dialogue between instructor and students must be meaningful to the students. Students are helped to feel respected and included in the class community through small groups in which they can exchange concerns, experiences, and expectations about the service and the class. By involving them in real community problems, service-learning provides students with a need to know, a desire to enhance their skills and a commitment to solving problems of importance to them.
Effective Service-Learning Reflection Will:
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● Include the opportunity for students to explore, clarify, and alter their values.


Tips for Facilitating Reflection

Provide an environment for rigorous intellectual work. “Rigor arises from a willingness to disagree, to engage in honest questioning, to challenge current thought, and in acknowledgement of what one does not know. Rigor can only occur when students feel the environment is hospitable to such dynamics” (Palmer Parker 1998).

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● What will/have you been doing? Who have you been serving?
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Course Design: The Importance of Critical Reflection

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What is Critical Reflection?
Reflection is a process designed to promote the examination and interpretation of experience and the promotion of cognitive learning. It is "a process by which service-learners think critically about their experiences." It is the process of looking back on the implications of actions taken - good and bad - and determining what has been gained, lost, or achieved and connecting these conclusions to future actions and larger societal contexts. Through reflection students analyze concepts, evaluate experiences, and postulate theory. Critical reflection provides students with the opportunity to examine and question their beliefs, opinions, and values. It involves observation, asking questions, and putting facts, ideas, and experiences together to derive new meaning.

What Are the Benefits of Reflection?
Reflection improves basic academic skills and promotes a deeper understanding of course subject matter and its relations to the non-academic world; it improves higher level thinking and problem solving and students’ ability to learn from experience. Critical reflection promotes personal development by enhancing students’ self-awareness, their sense of community, and their sense of their own capacities.

How Can Reflection Be Facilitated in the Classroom?
Effective reflection depends on appropriate contexts and real problems and issues. The culture of the class community must be one in which students feel included, respected, and safe. The dialogue between instructor and students must be meaningful to the students. Students are helped to feel respected and included in the class community through small groups in which they can exchange concerns, experiences, and expectations about the service and the class. By involving them in real community problems, service-learning provides students with a need to know, a desire to enhance their skills and a commitment to solving problems of importance to them.
Effective Service-Learning Reflection Will:
● Clearly link the service experience to the course content and learning objectives;
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● Include the opportunity for students to explore, clarify, and alter their values.


Tips for Facilitating Reflection

Provide an environment for rigorous intellectual work. “Rigor arises from a willingness to disagree, to engage in honest questioning, to challenge current thought, and in acknowledgement of what one does not know. Rigor can only occur when students feel the environment is hospitable to such dynamics” (Palmer Parker 1998).

● Prepare a framework for guiding the discussion
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Reflection Activities and Questions

When facilitating reflection, vary the activities to accommodate multiple learning styles; create a reflective classroom - don’t just add a reflective component.

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What is Critical Reflection?
Reflection is a process designed to promote the examination and interpretation of experience and the promotion of cognitive learning. It is "a process by which service-learners think critically about their experiences." It is the process of looking back on the implications of actions taken - good and bad - and determining what has been gained, lost, or achieved and connecting these conclusions to future actions and larger societal contexts. Through reflection students analyze concepts, evaluate experiences, and postulate theory. Critical reflection provides students with the opportunity to examine and question their beliefs, opinions, and values. It involves observation, asking questions, and putting facts, ideas, and experiences together to derive new meaning.

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Reflection improves basic academic skills and promotes a deeper understanding of course subject matter and its relations to the non-academic world; it improves higher level thinking and problem solving and students’ ability to learn from experience. Critical reflection promotes personal development by enhancing students’ self-awareness, their sense of community, and their sense of their own capacities.

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Effective reflection depends on appropriate contexts and real problems and issues. The culture of the class community must be one in which students feel included, respected, and safe. The dialogue between instructor and students must be meaningful to the students. Students are helped to feel respected and included in the class community through small groups in which they can exchange concerns, experiences, and expectations about the service and the class. By involving them in real community problems, service-learning provides students with a need to know, a desire to enhance their skills and a commitment to solving problems of importance to them.
Effective Service-Learning Reflection Will:
● Clearly link the service experience to the course content and learning objectives;
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● Include the opportunity for students to explore, clarify, and alter their values.


Tips for Facilitating Reflection

Provide an environment for rigorous intellectual work. “Rigor arises from a willingness to disagree, to engage in honest questioning, to challenge current thought, and in acknowledgement of what one does not know. Rigor can only occur when students feel the environment is hospitable to such dynamics” (Palmer Parker 1998).

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