

Building Public Engagement into the Curriculum

February 13th, 2013



Theoretical Framework

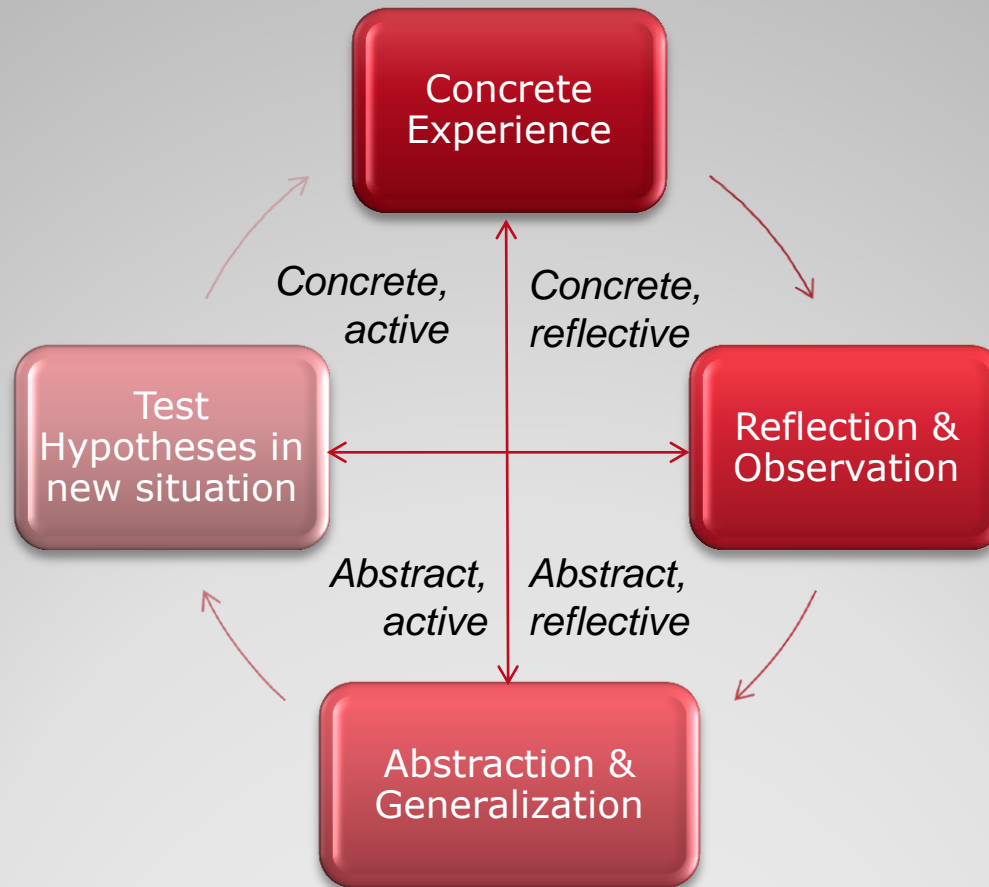


Figure 1: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

Experiential Learning theory defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience"(Kolb 1984, p. 41).

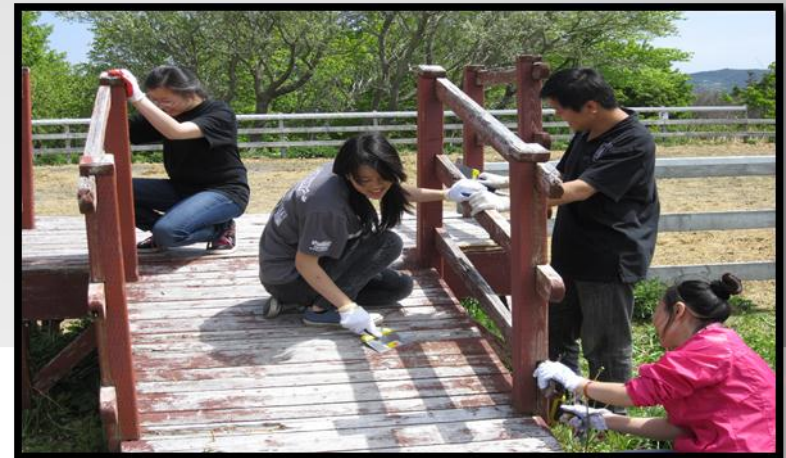
What is happening?

Career Development

- Both curricular and co-curricular experiential opportunities
- Make Midterm Matter (MMM)
- Community Service Learning Day

Current and Past Community Partners

- Eastern Health
- Oceans Net
- Rainbow Riders
- Street Reach
- Autism Society
- Pippy Park
- Habitat for Humanity
- Tree of Life
- SPCA



Specific Examples



Geog 3350- Community and Regional Planning and Development

Introduces students to a range of community and regional planning and development theories, techniques and approaches. Of interest to senior students of human geography and related fields, to community and regional development professionals and to students interested in careers in planning and development.

Evaluating the implementation of socioeconomic plans in central Newfoundland

3350 class project in partnership with:

- Rural Secretariat – Executive Council (Gander-NWV region)
- Kittiwake Economic Development Corp.
- IBRD (Gander region)
- ACOA (Gander)

- Participating community organizations in 7 planning processes



Jen Daniels, MA Candidate,
Memorial University



Phase 1 – Term project, 7 case studies (Sept. 2009-Jan. 2010)

Phase 2 – Cross-case analysis, workshop feedback session (Jan.-April 2010)

Phase 3 – Provincial survey of regional planners (June-Sept. 2010), comparison to literature

Ongoing - Knowledge mobilization

Results

Findings & Outputs

- Success factors & good practices
- Key challenges
- Recommendations
- 7 individual case study papers, synthesis report, provincial survey report
- Workshops and presentations, continued outreach, new research

Student Learning

- Making learning “real”
- Developing relationships
- Understanding of NL regional and rural context
- Background (content + skills) in sub-field to build on in graduate studies and future volunteer and professional endeavors

Understanding Land Use Issues in the Grand Falls-Windsor – Baie Verte – Harbour Breton Region

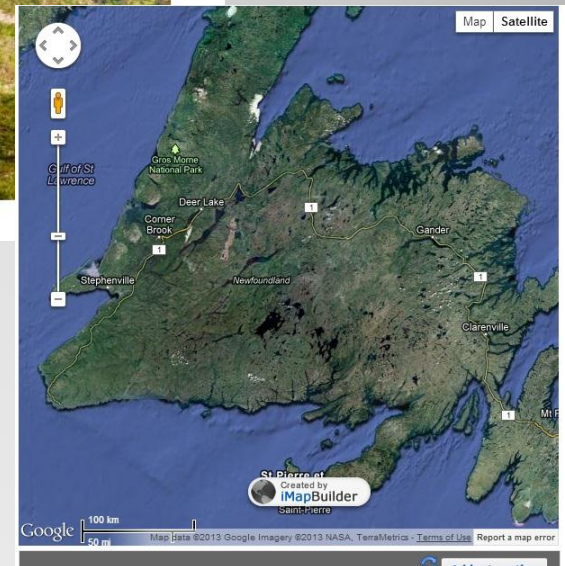
1. Key informant interviews
2. *Compiling case studies*
3. Development and promotion of web-based engagement tool
4. Engagement sessions
5. Reporting back



Partners: Rural Secretariat, Central West Regional Council,
Municipalities NL

CW Land Use

Exploring Land Use in Central West Newfoundland



Opportunities for continued student engagement

Future implications

Value of engagement in the curriculum

For faculty:

- Integration of research, teaching and service
- Meaningful research relationships and outputs

For partners:

- Expertise, assistance, voice, inspiration

For students:

- Learning that “sticks”, application of and critical engagement with taught principles and content
- Career relevant skills, knowledge, publications
- Relationships
- Opportunities for further study



Challenges

For students:

- Requires a genuine commitment to make the most of the experience
- Requires flexibility, acceptance of a degree of ambiguity, scheduling

For partners:

- Time to develop and implement, variability in outputs, some \$ still required, understanding of university environment

For faculty:

- Requires a significant investment of time prior to, during and after semester
- Research outputs and investments may not be recognized in P&T
- Space, technology

- ✓ **Rewards greater than risks**
- ✓ **Increasing supports**

Services may include:

- Initiating contact with community partners
- Conducting information sessions and workshops
- Designing project guides, forms and evaluations
- Providing resources on related topics
- Evaluation of initiatives
- Reflection sessions:
 - Facilitate reflection sessions in your classroom, leadership programs, community service events or other projects
 - A variety of reflective tools available to best suit the needs of the learner.



What services are available?

“Experiencing what was discussed in the class material firsthand changed my preexisting views and cemented the information in my head. It was extremely rewarding to be able to give back to my community and to connect with some of the people. It also inspired me to continue with volunteering in this area and it showed me the importance of philanthropy. This experience was by far the most memorable and influential aspect of my semester and I would gladly participate again if given the chance.”

Laura Bonnell, 4th year, Faculty of Science



Testimonials



“The service-learning event was a very productive day. Things that were not a priority for many years were accomplished in a few hours. You have a great volunteer group and it was really wonderful to see so many come out and take part in the projects.”

Chris Dedde (Provincial Outreach Coordinator, Autism Society of Newfoundland and Labrador)



*Bethany Thompson
(2nd year, Faculty of
Science)*

"I think it's absolutely fantastic that, as Memorial University students, not only do we have the opportunity to give back to our community, but we are encouraged to do so, as well. Participating in the Street Reach Community Lunch was, by far, the best thing I did in my first year at university!"

Feedback



- Feedback from students at the end of the term indicated that the learning they achieved in this course was more significant than the learning they had achieved in any other course they had taken throughout their university education.
- They reported that they had gained more than knowledge, they had grown as individuals.
- They had become more understanding and more accepting.
- They had enhanced their communication abilities.
- They had become more analytical in their ability to think critically about issues.
- They had become socially aware.
- They had become friends and they valued the collegial relationships they had forged. They had changed.

Dr. Lilly Walker, Professor, Department of Psychology



Questions/Discussion

Thank you!

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