

Breanna Fitzpatrick
GNST 501.53
Dr. Tania Smith
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Literature Review #2

CSL and ESD: Cost and Benefit

Haigh, M. J. (2006). Promoting Environmental Education for Sustainable Development: The Value of Links between Higher Education and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Journal of Geography in Higher Education, 30(2006), 327-349.

Kellogg, Wendy A. "Community Development and Environmental Quality: Benefits and Challenges Using a Service Learning Model for University Engagement." Journal of the Community Development Society 33.2 (2002): 72-90.

My research started with a question about the overlap between two movements, the community service learning (CSL) and the education for sustainable development (ESD). After seeing the similarities these two share, it became very apparent that the question was not just about the similarities, but what the costs and benefits were under each model to the community partner. From there, is one of these movements, as similar as they are, more effective at achieving the goals of creating local action with a global awareness through the efforts of life-long learners?

The pieces I have selected to explore the cost/ benefit relationship surrounding CSL and ESD are two journal articles that deal with CSL and ESD as separate topics. The first, about CSL, is by Wendy A. Kellogg entitled, "Community Development and Environmental Quality: Benefits and Challenges Using A Service-Learning Model for University Engagement." Kellogg's article tracks the outcomes, both positive and negative, over a three year CSL project. Her results provide a direct view into the costs and benefits for community partners throughout the project.

The second piece focuses on ESD. In his work "Promoting Environmental Education for Sustainable Development: The Value of Links between Higher Education and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)", Martin J. Haigh links the concepts of higher education and life-long learning to ESD. From this perspective he is able to explore the cost and benefit of ESD and, indirectly, CSL.

Community Service Learning (CSL)

As defined by the Canadian Alliance of Community Service-Learning (CACSL), Community Service-Learning, "is an educational approach that integrates service in the community with intentional learning activities (CACSL, 2009)." They further state that, "within effective CSL efforts, members of both educational institutions and community organizations work together toward outcomes that are mutually beneficial (2009)." CSL can be identified as a distinct triangular relationship between the community partner, educational institution and students.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

ESD is defined by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) as interdisciplinary and holistic learning that is values-based and promotes critical thinking, multi-method approaches, and participatory decision-making while remaining focused on a local level as opposed to a national one (2005). UNESCO has promoted ESD within their online document called the *Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) Highlights* which explains that the movement

aims at changing the approach to education so that it integrates the principles, values and practices of sustainable development. Its primary goal is to: “encourage Governments to consider the inclusion[...] of measures to implement the Decade in their respective education systems[...] and national development plans. [United Nations General Assembly resolution 59/237] (UN Decade, 2008)

The Decade’s (UNESCO, 2005) goals can be classified through four main objectives:

- Facilitating networking, and collaboration among stakeholders in ESD;
- Fostering greater quality of teaching and learning of environmental topics;
- Supporting countries in achieving their millennium development goals through ESD efforts;
- Providing countries with new opportunities and tools to reform education

Similarities and Differences

What are the defining characteristics of these two movements? The objectives of “think globally, act locally”, life-long learning and sustainable outcomes seem to be consistent across the mandates for CSL and ESD. The similarities are numerous and the baseline goals appear to be nearly identical.

The main differences I have discovered are in the models of each movement. For example, CSL is designed to be a three-way interaction between the students, higher education institutes (HEIs) and the community partner; whereas ESD is more complex. Initially, ESD appears to be simpler than CSL, containing only two partners, the community partner and participant; however, to engage in successful ESD interactions requires a network of committed individuals that can span beyond the triangular interaction of CSL. This is not to say that CSL is limited to a three-way partnership but, that it is more common.

Another main difference is the types of individuals who participate in each movement. In CSL, the participants are typically students. The majority of studies I have focused on in my research have defined the students as being in college or university settings. It should be noted that there are discussions of some programs that involved elementary, junior high and high school students. In contrast, the ESD movement is focused on many different types of participants and is not limited to HEIs. A perfect example of this in Haigh’s article where he speaks about the Earthwatch ESD program run out of Oxford Brookes University. He describes the participants as

ranging from high school students to corporate teams (2006). To compare, Kellogg limits her article to the relationship of university students' involvement in CSL.

This distinction highlights the differences between the movements. While most of the ESD projects have been fuelled by specific tasks and objectives (usually exhibited through physical labour and participation), the CSL projects, in HEIs, were focused on more rigorous research and mental labour. Kellogg describes this as the university recognizing "their responsibility to benefit the community around them through their applied research and education of citizens (2002)."

To summarize, the goals and objectives of each movement are rooted in similar philosophies; but the method comprises the main distinctions. The goals of global thought coupled with local action that create citizens who are focused on life-long learning are consistent through each movement.

Cost and Benefit Definitions

I have used the terms *cost* and *benefit* to define some of the objectives of this literature review. Further definition of these terms is required. When I use the term *cost*, I am not referring only to a monetary cost. More often in CSL and ESD *cost* can be identified in terms of time, resources, or manpower. In the same way, *benefit* is not directly recognized as a profitable bottom-line, as it is so often referred to in business. *Benefit* in this paper is measured as having sustainable outcomes, by longevity and success of the program (both for the organization and the participants).

I did not realize that this terminology would poise such confusion. Typically in NGOs instead of using "cost" the term preferred is "challenge", leaving the more concrete term "cost" when addressing monetary objectives. For the purpose of this review I will use the word "cost" as it signifies that there are specific, measurable inputs required to sustain the development of holistic learning, be it through CSL or ESD.

Cost and Benefit in CSL

Kellogg (2002) discusses some of these benefits and challenges in her article while positioning universities as vital contributors to the community. She argues that if universities embrace their responsibility to the community, they have the ability to educate citizens by providing applied research and mobile resources (specifically information and problem solving expertise). Her research model is founded on the belief that positive CSL interactions result in "learning efforts [that] are designed to enhance the capacity of the community to address problems of its own". She promotes the ideas of supporting researchers that some of the benefits students provide to their community partners are that they "infuse activities and energy beyond the resource and time constraints of community organization member and residents (Reardon, 1994; Harkavy, 1993)." She also speaks about skills and abilities to assemble data at a highly proficient level offered by students. On a more tangible level, universities can outsource their resources and facilities, such as computer labs.

On a cost level, Kellogg's article concisely juxtaposes the challenges community partners experienced against the numerous benefits she outlines. She states that building a partnership requires "time and willingness to make mistakes and learn from each other (2002)." She

promotes building relationships that have longevity as they are more successful at overcoming the trust and commitment issues that many organizations can face if CSL students are too transient within their organization. She noted some smaller organizations experienced difficulty “mobilizing time and resources to use student time and energy most efficiently when it was available (2002).” This suggests that high levels of organization and planning on the part of the educator and community partner are essential in a successful and productive CSL partnership.

Costs and Benefits in ESD

Through the evaluation of the Earthwatch program, Haigh was able to identify several benefits to the program. A majority of the benefits were rooted in long-term objectives. The main one was the awareness that the programs provided. As he states “you have to be involved in an environmental issue to truly appreciate its strengths and weaknesses...many feel powerless to become involved-so projects like this one provide both an opportunity and an incentive for personal action (2006).” Another benefit that was mentioned by participants was the tangible results for their output, which would result in immediate perceived progress for the community partner.

Another benefit is that the participants in ESD are often referred to as volunteers and are motivated through their own convictions or areas of interest. As a result many of the participants are motivated to return or speak highly of the program to friends, family and coworkers, making the program more sustainable in the long-term. Along with this, Haigh identifies that enthusiasm is regarded as being the most effective method for involvement in successful NGO involvement in environmental education and conservation (2006). He also attributes the type of networking that happens in ESD stimulates further networking that can be beneficial to the organization later on.

Costs (monetary, time and resource) were less discussed in ESD. Because many of the ESD projects involved the improvement of an environmental space, most of the costs involved were around those spaces or dealing with unfavourable conditions when working in those spaces. All of these costs are directly in relation to the type of project being executed.

Although there is less documentation of the costs in Haigh’s article, we can assume that they are similar to those in CSL. As Haigh mentions in his article some of the main costs NGOs identified were “costs of activities, instructors and educational materials (2006).” A statement he further clarifies by saying that it is difficult to find an NGO that is not financially burdened. He concludes his concerns in this area by identifying that NGOs can often be at risk of being swayed by potential donors through compromising their organization’s values. This alone can be a very high cost for a community partner to maintain their integrity as an organization when funds are at such a premium.

Conclusions

Through this literature review I have found that CSL, in many circumstances, can be viewed as a branch of ESD. Because ESD is focused on many different groups of people and organizations, it serves as a larger, more encompassing movement. CSL falls under the same motivating goals and objectives but refines the type of participants and the method.

Could we have one without the other? Or more important, is one more effective than the other? I think that this is the same as asking if one branch of a tree is more important than the whole tree. Both are anchored and nourished by the same roots. The growth of one enhances the other. Just the same, life-long learning through local action can be achieved through both CSL and ESD. Each one has its place in society and is useful in its own method and ultimately, both have one important key. While each one is associated with a certain set of costs and benefits, in each case, the benefits far outweigh the costs. As Martin Luther King Jr. stated in his final sermon, “For when people get caught up with that which is right, and they are willing to sacrifice for it, there is no stopping point short of victory.” (King, 1986)

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