A Study on the Role of Reflection and Bridge Learning in Service-Learning: Through the Survey of the “Community Service Learning” Course at Ritsumeikan University *

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The purpose of this article is to investigate how students developed through reflection and Bridge Learning in the service-learning course of Ritsumeikan University. In this study, we analyzed a questionnaire survey in which 61 students participated. Factor analysis found three forms of Bridge Learning: links between community service activities and in-class studies, between different classes, and between past, present and future studies. It distinguished these three forms of Bridge Learning from reflection. We classified the 61 students into three groups. The results of ANOVA on six learning outcomes showed that students who engaged in Bridge Learning as well as reflection achieved higher learning outcomes than those in the other groups. We conclude that Bridge Learning combined with reflection is an effective factor for student learning and development in service-learning.

Keywords: Student Learning, Service-Learning, Bridge Learning, Reflection, Higher education

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

1.1. Service Learning in Higher Education

Recently, experiential learning-based educational practice has been increasing in higher education. Broadly speaking, it consists of field activities where students gain experience. Examples of experiential learning-based educational practice are cooperative education via vocation and workplace experience, overseas training where one learns from different cultures, project-based learning centered on learning from project-type activities, and service learning conducted in community service activities.

Experiential learning-based educational practice “requires students to become involved in their own learning activities” (Inoshita 2010: 8). Thus, students acquire knowledge related to their own experience, gain motivation, and become autonomous learners with self-awareness of their learning goals.

This study focuses on service learning because it is increasingly of interest among researchers and educators in higher education. It has been a long time since Boyer (1987) argued that higher education has the responsibility of research, teaching, and service. This responsibility increasingly came to be accepted by the end of the twentieth century. Thanks to the establishment of “Campus Compact” and the enactment of the “National and Community Service Act” in the U.S., service learning has been spreading. Its aim is to integrate community service experience and academic learning.

Likewise, in Japanese higher education, service learning has been adopted by more and more institutions in the context of the “Good Practice Policy” by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology since the 2000s (Sakurai & Tsudome 2009).

Therefore, this study investigates the effect of service learning in the “Community Service-Learning” course at Ritsumeikan University. Next, we overview service learning research and student learning research to show the purpose and framework of this paper.

1.2. Survey-based Research on Service Learning

With the increase of service learning practice, research in this field has developed in the United

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States (Clayton et al. 2013). First, large survey research projects found that service learning resulted in the development of academic skills, problem solving, interpersonal relationships, learning motivation, and civic responsibility (Astin & Sax 1998; Eyler & Giles 1999). Meta-analysis of 103 research papers on service learning outcomes revealed that these outcomes fall into four categories: academic, personal, social, and civic (Conway et al. 2009).

Second, service learning is defined theoretically as “a pedagogical model that intentionally integrates academic learning and relevant community service” (Howard 1998: 22). It is reflection that takes an important role in this intentional integration. Reflection means the “intentional consideration of an experience in light of particular learning objectives” (Hatcher & Bringle 1997: 153). Students learn by reflecting on their own community service experiences and research on service learning recognizes the effectiveness and relevance of reflection (Ash & Clayton 2009; Bringle and Hatcher 1999; Eyler & Giles 1999).

In Japanese higher education research, however, survey-based research on service learning has yet to develop. First, nationwide and big institutional surveys revealed that students who were engaged in volunteer activities showed higher scores for learning motivation and the acquisition of knowledge and skills (Yamada & Inoue 2009; Kawai 2012d). However, these studies could not investigate the student learning process in service learning practice because these are limited simply to whether or not students participate in volunteer activities.

Japanese researchers also gathered case study data on service learning. Examples of this kind of research are observation in volunteer and service activities, records of student reflection, and interpretation of students’ development process (Iwai 2010; Nakane 2010; WAVOC ed. 2010). However, these research projects could not examine student learning quantitatively because they examine only the gross description of student satisfaction or arrange interview data.

Thus, there is not enough service learning research in Japan. We need research that focuses on course educational practice and investigates student learning quantitatively while connecting with nationwide survey-based projects and specific case-based projects.

Through a questionnaire survey on training of a non-profit organization, Yamada (2008) showed that service learning has a positive effect on student acquisition of academic ability, ethical judgment and social interest. Hashimoto (2010) compared international and domestic service learning through a questionnaire survey. She revealed that international service learning developed cross-cultural understanding, flexibility, and implementation skills while domestic service learning developed communication skills and leadership. Kimura & Kawai (2012) used the frameworks from Eyler & Giles (1999) and Conway et al. (2009) to understand learning outcomes comprehensively and investigated Japanese service learning practice. The aspects of learning outcomes were categorized as “skill,” “personal,” “civic,” “academic,” “inquiry” and “career.”

1.3. Survey-based Research in General Student Learning

From a broader perspective, survey-based research on student learning has also been developing in Japanese higher education research (Ogata 2008). Since 2000, nationwide survey-based research on student learning has revealed that undergraduate students in Japanese higher education lack sufficient out-of-class study time but students who have a sense of their own development engage in out-of-class learning and balance both learning and leisure activities (Mizokami 2009; Yamada 2009; Yamada and Mori 2010).

Following these findings, new research has analyzed the relationship between in-class and out-of-class learning. Another nationwide survey found that bridging between out-of-class learning and in-class learning is an effective factor for student learning and development (Kawai and Mizokami 2011). These studies conceptualized connecting and integrating different kinds of learning in different contexts as Bridge Learning (BL) (Kawai 2012a). This concept is based on survey findings, learning science, knowledge transfer research and research on boundary crossing.

Research on students’ BL (Kawai 2012a, 2012c) revealed that through BL, students engage in bidirectional interaction: on one side, students understood class knowledge (subject matter) on a deep level by using out-of-class experience and other class knowledge; on the other side, students create out-of-class activities based on in-class learning and use class knowledge to fully understand the meaning of out-of-class experience.
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1.4. The Purpose and Framework of this Study

This section details the purpose and framework of this study based on the studies above. As we saw in 1.2 and 1.3, reflection and BL are effective factors in SL. It is through reflection that students investigate the meaning of their own experiences and think about themselves and others deeply. It is also through BL that students connect and integrate service activity experiences, course knowledge in SL and subject matter knowledge from other courses. Thus, this study focuses on reflection and BL. First, we examine the actual condition of student learning in the community service-learning course at Ritsumeikan University through a questionnaire survey. Next, we classify questionnaire participants in terms of reflection and BL. Third, we examine the learning outcomes of each group. In sum, the purpose of this study is to clarify how reflection and BL function in student learning and development in the SL course at Ritsumeikan University.

1.5 The Community Service-Learning Course at Ritsumeikan University

The community service-learning course at Ritsumeikan University is provided by its Service-Learning Center and is a credit-bearing course, rather than an extracurricular educational program. The goal of this course is to develop the recognition and skills of community membership and acquire applied knowledge related to them through community service activities.

This course first provides preparatory and orientation sessions (May and June) that introduce the actual community conditions that students will participate in. Students also explore the contents of their future activities. The preparatory session requires students to understand the concept and practical meaning of service activities. They also set their team activity goal and learning goal.

Next, students engage in local community service activities. In this period, students apply course knowledge and try to engage in problem solving in the local community. During their activities, students are provided with opportunities to reflect both in their journals and in the mid-term reflection session (August and September). Later, this course has a post-activity session (November) and a final reporting session (December). In these sessions, students reflect on what they learned through this course and how they can use their experience and learning in the future. They make a presentation about their own activities and reflections. This course offers a variety of projects. For example, one project aims to stimulate cinema culture in Kyoto and another project aims to protect the environment and landscape of Mt. Ogura.

2. METHOD

2.1 Outline of our survey

81 undergraduate students enrolled in the community service-learning course. They participated in our survey in the post-activities session (November and December) after the community service activities. There were 61 valid responses (75.3%) consisting of 25 males, 34 females and 2 missing values. There were 5 first-year students, 21 second-year students, 29 third-year students, 5 fourth-year students and 1 other student.

2.2 Measure

2.2.1 Reflection and BL

In order to collect question items about reflection and BL, we asked faculty and students who had participated in the community service-learning course "What did you learn?" and "How did you learn?" and "How were you able to learn?" We adopted the semi-structured interview method used in a previous study (Kawai 2012c). We conducted a preparatory survey of 40 students from another course in September 2011. We examined the relevance of contents and expression of question items in terms of the definitions in 1.2 and 1.3 and made 25 question items about reflection and BL. Participants could choose six responses from "I do not agree at all" to "I agree thoroughly."

2.2.2 Learning Outcomes

We adopted factors from our previous study (Kimura and Kawai 2012) and examined the same data. We founds six outcome factors (29 question items): skill, personal, civic, academic, inquiry, and career. The Skill outcome factor consists of 8 items including problem solving and interrelationship communication, for example: "This course develops my teamwork skill." The Personal outcome factor consists of 6 items including satisfaction in class and a sense of personal development, for example: "As a whole, I felt satisfied with my learning experience." The Civic outcome factor includes 6 items and means a sense of membership and effectiveness toward local community, for example: "I intend to contribute to the improvement of the local community." The Academic outcome factor (4
Table 1 The Results of Factor Analysis of Reflection and BL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BL between activity and learning in this course</strong> ((\alpha=.856))</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I sought the meaning of my experience in this activity by making use of knowledge from the course and reading books</td>
<td>.778</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>-.075</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop our activity in this course, I sought the necessary information and knowledge actively</td>
<td>.750</td>
<td>-.022</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read books in order to think deeply about the experience of our activity in this course</td>
<td>.719</td>
<td>-.135</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>-.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I searched for relevant information and knowledge taking advantage of the experience of our activity in this course</td>
<td>.713</td>
<td>-.037</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>-.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflection</strong> ((\alpha=.817))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I thought about social structure and problems through this course</td>
<td>.196</td>
<td>.869</td>
<td>-.194</td>
<td>-.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I thought the meaning of our activity in this course</td>
<td>-.254</td>
<td>.754</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>-.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I thought about my way of learning through this course</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.697</td>
<td>-.073</td>
<td>.204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I thought about my values and ways of thinking through this course</td>
<td>-.080</td>
<td>.620</td>
<td>.259</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BL between this course and another</strong> ((\alpha=.910))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>In other course settings, I used knowledge and skills from this course</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.905</td>
<td>-.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this course, I used and applied knowledge from other courses</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.782</td>
<td>.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I made effort to understand other course contents by applying knowledge and skills from this course</td>
<td>.266</td>
<td>-.056</td>
<td>.719</td>
<td>-.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BL between present and previous courses</strong> ((\alpha=.893))</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I engaged in this course activity by making use of what I had learned in college so far</td>
<td>-.134</td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>1.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through this course, I made effort to understand deeply what I had learned in college so far</td>
<td>.184</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>-.050</td>
<td>.748</td>
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Factor correlation matrix

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.321</td>
<td>.636</td>
<td>.510</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.370</td>
<td>.473</td>
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<td>.386</td>
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Figure 1: Groups based on Reflection and BL

Participants chose six responses from "I do not agree at all" to "I agree thoroughly." The analysis in this section used each category of factors, which are simple averages.
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Factor Analysis of Reflection and BL

Employing the twenty-five question items on reflection and BL, factor analysis (maximum likelihood method, promax rotations) revealed four factors supported by the scree test. After dropping the items exhibited by substantial cross loading across factors, the rerunning factor analysis revealed a four factor structure which included thirteen question items (in Table 1).

The first factor shows high loading on the items about bridging between activities and learning in the local community and so we labeled it “BL between activity and learning in this course.” We labeled the second factor “Reflection” because it had high loading on the items about intentional consideration through this course. The third factor showed high loading on the items about connecting the knowledge between this course and another and so we labeled it “BL between this course and another.” Finally, we labeled the fourth factor “BL between present and previous courses” because it loaded on the items about bridging previous courses to this course.

3.2 Discussion on Reflection and BL

From the results of 3.1, we found the three forms of BL: “BL between activity and learning in this course,” “BL between this course and another,” and “BL between present and previous courses.” We can also contrast reflection as intentional consideration about one’s own experience and BL as the connection and integration of different kinds of learning crossing different contexts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Frequency Table of each Group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
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<td>2nd</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16 (69.6)</td>
<td>4 (17.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21 (65.6)</td>
<td>5 (15.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Group Classification in terms of Reflection and BL

We conducted cluster analysis (the Ward’s method) by using the four scales of Reflection and BL. Our results were the three groups shown in Figure 1. The ANOVAs of the four scales of Reflection and BL reveal a significant difference among these groups in all four scales ($F(2, 54)$ = 26.743, $p < .001$; $F(2, 54)$ = 15.859, $p < .001$; $F(2, 54)$ = 49.061, $p < .001$; $F(2, 54)$ = 12.582, $p < .001$). Frequency distributions of gender and year in four group are shown in Table 2. Multiple comparisons (the Tukey’s method) revealed that Group 2 students showed the highest scores among the three groups in “BL between activity and learning in this course,” “BL between this course and another,” and “BL between present and previous courses”. Second, the scores of students in Group 1 are higher than those of students in Group 3. Third, Group 3’s “Reflection” score is lower than that of Group 1 and 2 students and there is no significant difference between Group 1 and 2 students in this scale.

Fig. 2 Outcomes in each Group

![Fig. 2 Outcomes in each Group](image-url)
From these results, we can see that students in Group 3 were not engaged in reflection and BL as fully as Group 1 and 2. In addition, Group 1 students engaged in both reflection and BL more than Group 3 but did less of the latter than Group 2. Furthermore, students in Group 2 were engaged in reflection equal to Group 1 and greater than Group 3. Finally, Group 2 used BL more than Group 3 and 1.

3.4 Learning Outcomes of Each Group

The ANOVAs of the learning outcomes on three groups reveal significant differences in all items (F(2, 54)=15.896, p<.001; F(2, 54)=13.959, p<.001; F(2, 54)=11.892, <.001; F(2, 54)=14.152, p<.001; F(2, 53)=3.470, p<.05; F(2, 54)=10.764, p<.001). The scores and comparisons on learning outcomes in each group are shown in Figure 2. A multiple comparison (the Tukey’s method) showed that Group 3’s score was significantly lower than scores of Group 1 and 2 on “Personal” and “Civic” outcomes. On the “Career” outcome, Group 3’s score was also significantly lower than Group 2’s. Furthermore, on “Skill,” “Academic,” and “Inquiry” outcomes, Group 2’s scores were highest and Group 3’s were the lowest. The differences among these three groups were significant.

3.5 Discussion on group classification in terms of Reflection and BL and their learning outcomes

First, we discussed the comparison between Group 3 and the other two groups. The results from 3.4 revealed that students in Group 3 did not achieve sufficient learning outcomes compared with other two groups. Thus, we can see that Reflection and BL significantly help the achievement of learning outcomes.

Second, we discussed the role of reflection and BL through the comparison of Group 1 and 2. Group 1 and Group 2 students were engaged in reflection at the same level. The “Personal” outcome, meaning satisfaction in this course and personal growth, and the “Civic” outcome meaning local community membership and sense of effectiveness were the same in both groups. However, students in Group 2 were more engaged in BL than Group 1 and achieved the “Skill” outcome, regarding problem solving and interrelationship communication. Likewise Group 2 students scored higher on the “Academic” and “Inquiry” outcomes, which refers to acquisition of knowledge and curiosity.

In addition to Reflection, BL is necessary for high scores in the “Skill,” “Academic,” and “Inquiry” outcomes because BL integrates the different kinds of learning: between an activity and a course, this course and another course, and previous learning and present learning. Referring, connecting and applying different kinds of learning promote the development of academic knowledge, curiosity, and investigation based on higher education discipline. BL positively influences generic skills like problem solving and managing relationships as well as deepening understanding academic knowledge.

3.6 Discussion on the relation to the Course Objective of “Community Service-Learning”

The course objectives of “Community Service-Learning” are to develop the skills and awareness of local community membership and to deepen the understanding of academic disciplinary knowledge. The former aspect of the objectives corresponds to the “Civic” outcomes and the latter corresponds to the “Academic” and “Inquiry” outcomes. To achieve these objectives, course participants should have rich opportunity for reflection and three kinds of BL: between activity and learning in this course, between this course and another, and between present and previous courses.

3.7 Discussion for the possibility of Reflection and BL

In this final discussion, we focus on the possibility of Reflection and BL in SL educational practice. Further discussion will generate more hypotheses for future research and new potential in this field (Cole & Scribner 1974). First, many previous SL studies pointed out the usefulness of reflect on. Recently, SL research discussed the necessity of depth in critical reflection (Ash and Clayton 2009). Critical reflection is defined as “a process of metacognition that functions to improve the quality of thought and of action and the relationship between them” (Whitney and Clayton 2011: 150). Deep critical reflection on collaborative community activities and related course knowledge improves the benefit students derive from them. Furthermore, through bridging different kinds of learning such as out-of-class activity and in-class learning, students can re-envision the knowledge gained in such different contexts. For example, through local community service activities, students found that some events in local communities did not occur spontaneously.
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but were supported by local people. Then students themselves gave meaning to the events and were more engaged in them, thereby learning through these activities. In another course (on local governance), students learned the background of local community problems such as an aging society, declining social networks in the community and declining interest in social issues. This kind of learning falls into the category of a course lecture. BL means the connection and integration of these two kinds of learning. As previously mentioned, when students recognized that those local community problems would emerge in their own communities in the future, they became aware that these problems were their problems.

At this moment, students could think more deeply about what they could and should do based on their experience, findings and thoughts. In this way, critical reflection could be achieved in the form of complex understanding gained through activity, academic courses, and holistic life experience. With this critical reflection, students can produce more quality thinking and engage in meaningful activities. BL deepens critical reflection because it functions as a catalyst, connecting and integrating several kinds of learning. Therefore, we can reinterpret BL itself as a supporting action of deeper reflection.

From a broader perspective, BL also plays a role in the SL educational practice of higher education. Experiential Learning–based educational practices emphasize Action Learning in which students learn through action in each activity field. These kinds of educational practice include the following examples: cooperative education through vocational and workplace experience; study-abroad programs with different cultural experiences; project–based learning through engaging project-type activities; and SL through local community activity. The risk of Action Learning is that learners devote themselves to action without learning, or even at the sacrifice of learning (Mintzberg 2004; Raelin 2008). Thus, in educational practice based on Action Learning, the fundamental objectives are to achieve a good balance between action and learning. As such, one of the principal tasks of this practice is to embed learning into the design and use reflection to mediate between this learning and action (Kawai 2012b).

SL is a kind of Experiential Learning–based educational practice and has the same focus as other practices in this field. This study revealed that BL and reflection are effective factors for students learning and development in SL. Based on these findings, we can improve on balancing action and learning and begin enabling, building, and facilitating students' BL. That is, the focus of these educational practices is not to facilitate learning randomly but to facilitate their engagement in BL: the connection and integration between community activities and course learning, between different courses, and between past, present and future learning.

In conclusion, the focus points for the improvement of SL in higher education are as follows: to engage fully and actively in local community activities; to deepen reflection and critically examine thoughts and actions; to investigate related knowledge simultaneously; to develop three kinds of BL; to balance and enhance action and learning.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND REMAINING ISSUES

Through the questionnaire survey on the community service-learning course at Ritsumeikan University, this study revealed that not only reflection but also BL have key impacts on student learning. Also, it found the possibility that bridging different kinds of learning supports deep critical reflection and that the focus of SL is to facilitate BL.

However, the discussion of the possibility of BL and reflection in 3.7 remains abstract and there were not so many participants in this survey. This study is the first step of our investigation in educational practice because it discussed only the relationship between course objectives and survey results. Thus we will need further surveys of educational practice, with more participants, enabling longitudinal analysis and comparisons with other courses. Further research will also provide analysis in terms of students’ characteristics and what they do in local community practice. We also need to explore the effective means of student reflection and BL. We did not analyze how students reflect on their experience or how they used bridge learning. We still need to investigate this through interviews or observation based on this study.

On educational practice, there are risks that too much attention to reflection and BL results in too weak action2). Engaging fully in community action is a principal task in Experiential Learning–based educational practices. In order to fully engage students, these practices need to involve the institutional effort of higher education.
and the "educational effort of local community". Finally we must study the actual activity in the local community and the educational practice supporting it.

1) The course details are in Sakurai & Tsudome (2009) and Nakane (2010)

2) This point was suggested by the discussion at the service-learning study group at Ritsumeikan University. The "educational effort of local community" was same.

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