

Problem-based service learning with a heart: Organizational and student expectations and experiences in a postgraduate not-for-profit workshop event

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Service learning and problem-based learning (PBL) are distinct, yet related educational approaches. When collaborative learning events which encourage the application of the PBL principles to real world challenges faced by Not-For-Profit organizations (NFPs), these learning approaches become potentially synergistic. However, there is limited research exploring expectations and experiences of NFP stakeholders and students involved in such events. By interviewing a sample of stakeholders in relation to an experiential NFP-focused workshop initiative, it was revealed that while tangible benefits were identified by both parties, opportunities exist to optimize the design, management, marketing and learning benefits of future initiatives. These opportunities centre on closer collaboration with NFPs to clarify and manage expectations, as well as encouraging practicality and applicability in ideas generation. This research provides insights into the challenges and benefits of the service learning / PBL interface when directed towards the NFP sector. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 2013, 14(4), 281-293*

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In 2012, Deakin University piloted a workshop which aimed to provide a collaborative forum for local NFPs and postgraduate students, in which students would work to develop solutions to real-world organizational challenges. Exposing students to 'real world' or simulated organizational or operational challenges lies at the heart of problem-based learning, with a heritage based in medical disciplines, and extending into education, social work, engineering and business (Parton & Bailey, 2008). Service learning has gained rapid ground as an educational strategy, and is considered valuable in developing the social conscious of students, as well as being a catalyst for developing stronger links between the educational institution and its community (Brown & Kinsella, 2006). As distinct yet related paradigms, it is important therefore to explore this interface, as the workshop event manifested aspects of both schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Problem-based Learning

Based within a constructivist paradigm, problem-based learning (PBL) aims to develop students' abilities to think, collaborate, and synthesise in the pursuit of solutions, applying personal, interpersonal, professional and academic learning and experiences to a 'real world' issue. There is a distinction to be drawn between PBL and problem-solving learning (Savin-Baden, 2000) in which the latter centers on eliciting answers to questions posed specifically in relation to the discipline curriculum. Highlighting the advantages of the PBL approach in relation to didactic methods, the authors propose that it "is characterized by flexibility and diversity in the sense that it can be implemented in a variety of ways in and across different subjects and disciplines in diverse contexts" (p. 2).

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Researchers have identified central features which characterize PBL, including the focus on real world challenges, collaborative team working, the application of cognitive processes, the acknowledgement and application of past experience and current understanding, the accommodation and integration of multiple perspectives and the development, evaluation and presentation of solutions and reflection (Hammar Chiriac, 2008; McKendree, 2010; Mykytyn, Pearson, Paul, & Mykytyn, 2008; Servan, Soto, Murillo, Sola, & Perez, 2009; Vardi & Ciccarelli, 2008). However, the diversity of PBL approaches and applications continues to make both robust definition and comparative evaluation of effectiveness problematic (Hung, 2011; Taylor & Mifflin, 2008).

When gauging the effectiveness of a PBL approach against more conventional learning approaches, a paucity of evidence has been noted by researchers (Pease & Kuhn, 2011), with research sometimes identifying that PBL may actually be actually less effective than traditional classroom teaching (Allen, Donham, & Bernhardt, 2011). Advocates of PBL however identify that the strength of the approach lies not just in the transfer of technical knowledge but in the development of social and process skills (Nielsen, Du, & Kolmos, 2010) and in advancing 'work-readiness' by bridging the theory/reality gap (Cojanu, Gibson, & Pettine, 2010). PBL also has a role in growing reflective thinking abilities (Yuen Lie Lim, 2011). This supports a position which identifies PBL as delivering specific advantages in relation to traditional methods, including, according to Bell (2010) "learning responsibility, independence and discipline" (p. 40).

PBL implies a learning culture shift on the part of both students and faculty, but despite student reservations relating to team work, time and the ambiguities of self-directed collaborative learning, alongside faculty reservations relating to resource intensity, Tonts (2011) found the overall PBL experience to be positive for both parties, while Ribero (2011) identified specific professional advantages for faculty involved in PBL. However, in an internationalized context, the degree of PBL effectiveness may be lessened due to the impact of cultural factors relating to students/teacher interactions (Hussain, Mamat, Salleh, Saat, & Harland, 2007). Some argue however, that the adoption of PBL teaching philosophy should not be an 'either/or' decision, but rather that it is adopted as a complementary approach which may offer an increasing return over time despite initial hurdles of resource, expectation and experience (Benson, 2012).

The importance of a structured approach to the PBL process is emphasized (Abdelkhalek, Hussein, Gibbs, & Hamdy, 2010), further highlighting PBL as not just a different way of class teaching, but as a distinct learning process which requires additional resources in terms of student preparedness, faculty support and infrastructure.

Central to the notion of PBL, and ultimately the success of the learning strategy is the identification, design and communication of the problem itself, a factor which has been revealed to be complex and multi-dimensional (Jonassen, 2011) and highly significant from the student perspective (Sockalingam & Schmidt, 2011).

Due to the team-based nature of the majority of PBL initiatives it is especially relevant to consider peer evaluation as a factor of the collaborative learning environment. It can be argued that students make a higher personal investment in PBL activities than in more conventional learning settings, due to their 'whole person' not just 'subject matter recipient' involvement and the reliance upon others to deliver a result for which all could be deemed responsible and accountable. Evidence suggests that students are able to assess the performance of their peers reliably and accurately (Kamp, Dolmans, Van Berkel, & Schmidt,

2011), although research into team-based learning has in one case revealed that the managerial, social and procedural contributions were more highly valued than cognitive abilities (Hye-Jung & Cheolil, 2012).

Service Learning

Service learning is aligned with experiential learning (Petkus, 2000), and provides a context “where students and community members work together to address relevant community issues, and where academically rigorous assignments are used to connect the community experience with specific classroom learning goals” (Gibson et al., 2011, p. 285). Service learning is, like PBL, acknowledged to have many definitions and operational variants (Permaul, 2009). Millican and Bourner (2011) describe service learning as a form of volunteering and suggest that depending on which country students are based, service learning is represented under various names: “community-engagement, community-pedagogy, community-knowledge exchange and community-based learning” (p. 94). In essence however, it involves students, as part of their curriculum, applying their time, intellect, skills and abilities to contribute to community advancement.

Although often subject-specific, service learning can support institutional visions of community engagement and can therefore transcend disciplines (Newman, 2008). This may often be charity-based, taking the form of volunteering or internships, or involve more ‘transformative’ forms of community engagement (Verjee, 2010), where it is argued higher and more rewarding levels of civic engagement may be realized (Harkness, 2009). Along with PBL, service learning can be viewed not just as a different ‘class’, but a different paradigm, with its own theoretical and conceptual base, models and structures, such as those proposed by Long, Larsen, Hussey and Travis (2001) and Payne-Jackson and Haynes (2006). Like PBL, service learning has a heritage base in medicine, social, engineering and infrastructure disciplines, and although its use within higher education is widespread, its adoption within the business curriculum may be less prevalent (Ayers et al., 2010).

Implementing effective service learning has deep ideological and strategic resource implications for faculty (Becket, Refaei, & Skutar, 2012). Service learning or community engagement initiatives have resource implications and present challenges to educators as they move away from the safety of their classroom, to the uncertainty of the real-world stakeholder environment, with its inherent risks of real world/academic world contradiction, and practitioner ‘counter-expertise’, forcing, as Butin (2007) stated, “faculty members to confront the limits of their identity as productive and effective scholars” (p. 35). Students are often provided with additional support prior to, during and after the service learning event, although service learning which involves cross-disciplinary student participation may require distinct ‘scaffolding’ interventions (Schaffer, Xiaojun, Xiumei, & Oakes, 2012).

Illustrating the significance of engagement and preparation factors, Levesque-Bristol, Knapp and Fisher (2010) found that direct exposure to the recipients of the service learning project and in-class project discussion time were key to enhancing the student experience. The significance of listening to, and accommodating student feedback in future course developments has been also endorsed (Connor-Greene, 2002).

Advocates of service learning propose a wide range of benefits centering on enhanced learning experiences, for example closer institution/community ties, personal and moral student development and increased work readiness (Bringle, Studer, Wilson, Clayton, & Steinberg, 2011; D’Agostino, 2008; Haski-Leventhal et al., 2010; Kielsmeier, 2010; McLaughlin,

2010; Miller, 2012; Strain, 2005; Tower & Broadbent, 2011). Focusing on work readiness in particular, students increasingly need a point of differentiation to distinguish them in the competitive employment marketplace and a core attribute that may add value is work experience (Jusoh, Simun, & Chong, 2011; Perrone & Vickers, 2003; Stuart, Lido, Morgan, Solomon, & May, 2011). Service learning initiatives provide tangible work experience opportunities and therefore in principle can fulfill this demand. Specifically, learning outcomes (i.e., problem solving, critical thinking, cognitive development), personal outcomes (i.e., moral development, leadership skills, communication skills) and social outcomes (i.e., commitment to service, sense of social responsibility, citizenship skills) are all potentially enhanced by service learning involvement (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001), again reinforcing the potential synergy between service learning and a student's personal and career advancement. There are also many other valuable life and career skills and personal qualities that may develop as a result of service learning and problem-based learning involvement (Bobbitt, Inks, Kemp, & Mayo, 2000; Klink & Athaide, 2004; Major & Palmer, 2001; O'Connor, Lynch, & Owen, 2011; Prentice & Robinson, 2010).

In summary, research has revealed a resource intensive yet potentially beneficial learning approach in both PBL and service learning initiatives. The challenges involve, balancing rigorous learning design with stakeholder priorities, alongside institutional reputation and student agendas. As such initiatives occur within what can be considered a resource-pressured environment, it is essential to have established clear aims and objectives, the ability to anticipate and accommodate resource demands, the skills to manage stakeholder expectations and, accommodate improvements through experience and relevant evaluation. The complex and multi-faceted nature of service learning related initiatives, with diverse objectives, models, participants, stakeholders, and outcomes means that the evaluation debate continues to evolve, with robust assessment measures still, it is argued, remaining elusive (Mackaway, Winchester-Seeto, Coulson, & Harvey, 2011) and with calls for the more effective assessment of programs with a civic engagement aspect (Hatcher, 2011).

THE LEARNING EVENT - WOFIE

In 2012, an experiential learning event focusing on the NFP sector was launched at Deakin University. Based on an established program offered by Denmark's Aalborg University, the WOFIE (Workshop for Innovation and Entrepreneurship) event sought to challenge postgraduate students from all disciplines to provide innovative and entrepreneurial solutions to real challenges or problems submitted by participating NFPs. The focus on NFP's contributed towards a key aspect of the institution's strategic plan, namely to focus on engaging with, and supporting, its broader community. The WOFIE initiative was non-credit-bearing, and therefore was offered as an extra-curricular opportunity.

Potential student participants were contacted through targeted email, and via a dedicated event web page. As a non-credit program, the key features and benefits that were communicated to students to encourage participation centered on helping NFPs, participating in a unique competitive learning event, learning about the sector, entrepreneurship and innovation and the prize pool (\$10,000AUD) on offer for the winning teams. On this basis, other awareness measures were implemented such as campus-wide posters, LCD screen displays, as well as the support sought from multiple discipline leaders to promote the event via lectures and learning portals. NFPs were made aware of the event via media, press releases, direct contact and promotion through association forums.

Key Challenges

There were several key challenges evident in relation to the event's management and marketing which are noteworthy. Firstly there was the issue of raising interest and awareness amongst the student population. Secondly, in terms of scheduling, the workshop had to occur between teaching semesters so that students could participate without compromising their study commitments. Thirdly, the event had to attract multiple NFPs with achievable, comparable challenges to provide a fair context for student engagement. A steering review process sought to ensure that the challenges were realistic and could feasibly be addressed within the time-frame of one week. This process involved a degree of negotiation and refinement in relation to some of the initial challenges submitted.

The Workshop in Practice

In total, 47 students applied to participate in the event. The students came from a diversity of postgraduate discipline areas, including MBA, Commerce, Communications, Finance, Health and Human Services, Accounting, IT, Education, Psychology and Chemistry and ranged from Graduate Certificate to PhD levels. This diversity was capitalized upon in the formation of student groups which were mixed discipline, gender and culture. The students were therefore assigned to one of eight teams and worked on a specific challenge submitted by locally-based NFPs. These representing a variety of focus areas, for example medical condition support, social causes, gender advocacy and community groups. The challenges were unique to each organization and included requests to develop ideas around fundraising, membership attraction, retention and growth, developing community awareness and involvement, using social media to market, educate and promote and incorporating indigenous culture into key activity areas for example.

Through a series of presentations, participants were provided the opportunity to learn from industry guest speakers and local and visiting academics. The presentations explored innovation, entrepreneurship, problem solving, the NFP landscape, presentation and sales 'pitch' skills. The teams worked progressively throughout the week, applying the theories and concepts they had learnt toward their challenge solutions. On the final day all teams presented their solution to a panel of judges. Three teams judged to have delivered the most effective and impactful solutions shared a cash prize.

As the WOFIE program was extra-curricular, students volunteered for what could be perceived to be a high pressure, competitive and potentially stressful event, its conceptual roots may be closer to the high youth appeal challenge or adventure-based learning paradigm critiqued by Brendtro and Strother (2007). This is because the challenges were not just 'real world' in that they were provided by NFPs who identified a specific challenge or problem, but that the expectation was that workable and implementable solutions would be generated within the groups that could be adopted by the participating NFPs.

RESEARCH AIM

This research sought to investigate the motivations, expectations and experiences of both NFPs and students who participated in the event, and identify the benefits yielded as a result of participation in an event that possessed both problem-based and service learning attributes. In addition, it was intended to gain insight to aid the refinement of event design and promotion in the future.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed method, qualitative approach was applied, involving surveys and telephone interviews. Ethics clearance was obtained from the University's Human Research Ethics Committee; a plain language statement and consent form were forwarded to all participants prior to the interviews and survey taking place. Participation in the event and the research was entirely voluntary.

For student participants, two survey tools were used to measure their motivations, expectations, learning and personal outcomes. Short, semi-structured pilot interviews were conducted with five students in order to gain information about their decision to participate in the forthcoming event. The information sources from these interviews were used to develop a survey for all participants to complete at the commencement of the event. The survey sought to establish how the students had found out about the event, their expectations and what they hoped to gain as a result of participation. At the completion of the week-long event, a second survey was administered to all student participants in the event. There were 47 students involved in the event itself. Of this population, 40 completed the pre-event survey and 39 completed the post-event survey, the results of which were collated using Survey Monkey.

To determine the participating NFPs perspectives, in-depth telephone interviews were conducted pre-event, to identify perceptions and expectations and post event to review experiences and outcomes. Of the eight NFPs who participated in the WOFIE event, seven participated in these semi-structured telephone interviews. Upon completion of the transcription process, interview participants were provided with a copy of their transcript for verification and validity. The software program NVivo was used to collate and code the pre and post NFP interviews.

RESULTS

The Student Perspective: Pre-event

In terms of gauging expectations, prior to the event students were asked to identify which factors they perceived to be of most personal importance going into the event. The factors that held the most significance (rated very important/important) were the opportunity to work on a real problem (97%); the opportunity to work with peers in other disciplines (90%); the opportunity to support NFPs (85%); to learn more about innovation and entrepreneurship (85%) and the intensive workshop approach to learning (85%). Of least apparent interest was the cash prize on offer (22%).

In terms of what specific benefits students were hoping to gain as result of participation, students ranked most highly critical thinking skills (83%); problem solving (78%); personal development (76%); the opportunity to apply their discipline skills to the real world (68%) and communication skills (59%). Of least significance was the development of citizenship skills (20%).

Post-event

Following the event, the skills which were considered to have been most developed as a result of participation were teamwork (95%), problem solving (83%), critical thinking (68%), the application of discipline material to real world scenarios (65%) and personal development (65%). The development of citizen skills was less significant (22%). Capturing

the multifaceted nature of the event, one student summarized it as “It was a great experience and opportunity to contribute to the NFP sector. It was also an opportunity to learn about working with people from different disciplines, interests, and countries”.

Students were generally positive in reporting the benefits of participation. The highest agree/strongly agree ratings related to an increase in knowledge of innovation and entrepreneurship (34%); the enjoyment of working on a real -world problem (34%); a positive teamwork experience (30%) and multidisciplinary peer engagement (30%). Many students also indicated that they had learnt more about the NFP sector and would continue to support it. As one student reported “I have developed a relationship with the NFP we represented which will continue long after this event”.

When considering the most positive aspect of the event, a wide range of factors were cited which included social, technical, and personal factors, with the dynamism of working with a cross discipline, multi-cultural team being frequently cited. One student summarized the advantage of “... using learnings to solve a real world problem and seeing the possibility of this being rolled out by the challenge provider”.

This highlighted the attraction of bridging the theory/reality gap, potentially making a real difference to a good cause in the process. Simultaneously, general challenges were reported in navigating the complex dynamics of multi-faceted teams, as one student stated “dealing with how to work in a group with different disciplines, different cultures, different perspectives”. Specific challenges in terms of language barriers, managing dominant (or disinterested) team members, long hours and high pressure were also cited.

From a marketing perspective, it was interesting to note that by far the most popular formal means by which students became aware of the event was via email (47%) and website (17.5%) although less formal channels of awareness (friends) accounted for 17.5%. When asked how more students might be encouraged to participate in future events, 42% cited that more advertising, promotion and awareness would be advantageous, as one student observed “many don’t know about the program”.

The Organizational Perspective: Pre-event

Interviews with participating NFPs prior to the event revealed four key motivations for participating in this event: 1) the opportunity to become involved with the tertiary institution; 2) to provide participating students with opportunities; 3) to provide their NFP with a competitive edge as a result of participation and, 4) the attraction of a ‘low cost’ yet potentially high return resource investment. In terms of expectations of the event, three core themes emerged. NFPs hoped that participation would raise more awareness for their respective organizations, encourage student volunteering beyond the event and provide them with novel student ideas. These motivations and expectations were not surprisingly reflected in the main focus of the challenges received from participating NFPs, which centered on developing awareness, raising funds and driving volunteer numbers. In relation to driving overall awareness of the NFPs, one respondent was prepared to acknowledge a degree of compromise between the benefits of participation and the value of the results generated:

So, bottom line, even if at the end of the project, what the students come up with isn’t 100% useable, all those people will have a better understanding of (our cause) and some of the issues faced by a Not for Profit.

Another seemed willing to accept that the responses generated by students might prove controversial in that they could challenge conventional organizational thinking and decision-making practice. The ideas, it was anticipated, may be "... quite radical, some of them probably quite unworkable, but nevertheless they've applied their thinking and look, it's up to us to see... to think well we could try that". This sentiment was echoed by another respondent who stated "(the NFP) has been there for such a long time, and the staff that we have who've been working here for 10, 15 some of them 30 years, and it's better to get new ideas and the innovative projects that come along". One interviewee highlighted that their organization needed new thinking which was not confined to identifying ways to attract volunteers, but the ways to increase the resources necessary to support volunteer endeavors:

Then there's a lack of awareness about the need for money and not volunteers. When we ask for support people will volunteer but we don't get the funds to actually then be able to match those volunteers with a young person at risk. We were hoping that there might be some people out there that could ... come up with some ideas that would help us raise that awareness.

The attraction of an external, multi-disciplinary approach to problem solving was also highlighted "it's an opportunity to get a fresh perspective on it (their challenge) and for that fresh perspective to be a bit more across the board". The relevance and potential of the student demographic was highlighted by one NFP whose main focus was on youth development:

... (we're) mainly for people between 18 to 40 years old, and we recognize that if we want to, I guess, stay competitive and to serve our membership, we need to find out what people need, and the best way is to find out what people need by the people who are actually between 18 and 40 years old, and then we thought that students fall in this category... and we would like to learn a little bit more about their perspective.

This view of capitalizing upon the youth perspective was echoed within another NFP, who, by its own admission had an aging membership base. They were seeking "practical ideas and suggestions that we can employ to foster membership and interest in our organization from the younger generation".

Post-event

A post-event review of their expectations largely confirmed the initial themes identified prior to the event including the chance to benefit from new thinking, to tap into new skill sets, to gain fresh ideas and perspectives and, to drive awareness. One respondent did question the expectations they held in relation to the task they presented to the team stating "look, in hindsight I wonder from the expectations we had maybe we went in a little high in that our task was perhaps too broad".

When considering the tangible benefits of participating in such an event, while opinion was largely positive there were some reservations expressed relating to the relevance and value of the ideas generated by the student teams. There were two main reasons which seemed to contribute to this conclusion. Firstly, a lack of understanding of the specifics of the NFPs ethos, operations, culture and resources. Secondly, although students were encouraged to be both innovative and entrepreneurial in their approach to problem solving, in some cases it seemed the ideas they proposed were too idealistic to be of practical benefit. One respondent stated "I don't think that expectation has been realized in the way we were hoping. The team came up with an idea that had already been tried and has found to be wanting". Another

observed "I don't really think the outcomes were realistic from our perspective....logic says that's not a realistic ongoing way to raising awareness and would be quite labor intensive".

The sentiment 'innovative but not practical' was noted when the respondents were asked about the value, relevance and applicability of the ideas developed by the groups. However, two of the seven NFPs were already incorporating the ideas of their student team into their strategies. One reported that a significant proportion of their future strategic focus would be driven by just one of the recommendations made by their student team - the suggestion to conduct a research-based review of comparable NFPs in terms of awareness and membership. However, three NFPs seemed unlikely to pursue the ideas of the groups, with two reserving judgment until the proposals had been presented to wider member forums. As one remarked "some of the recommendations were a bit, in a way, airy fairy I think mainly because they didn't have enough time" (to understand the organization's operation and agenda).

In seeking views on how the event could be improved for the future, some interesting points were noted. One suggested more time was needed for the students to more fully understand the organization's operations, and two highlighted the need for students to be more aware of the NFP paradigm, stating, "a couple of people in my group just couldn't get the concept that we didn't have money". This view was expressed in relation to the international student contingent of the workshop in particular, who, it was perceived, would potentially have less exposure to and understanding of NFPs. Despite some of these reservations identified, all respondents stated they would recommend the event for other not-for-profit organizations, albeit with, as two respondents noted, the recommendation to invest time and resource in developing clear and specific challenges for the students to work on.

Interestingly, while participation in the event was identified as a means to drive awareness by many of the NFPs prior to the event, six weeks after the event there was scant evidence of the organizations using their participation for external media or public relations purposes, perhaps highlighting a lack of organizational resource or competence in this area.

Overall, the participating NFPs provided some insightful information about the challenges they face in participating in events designed to provide a service. While all NFPs were appreciative of their involvement, issues exist in relation to the development of clear and specific challenges to which students can develop realistic and practical solutions workable within the cultural and resource frameworks of the organization, and within the time available for the event.

DISCUSSION

The event confirmed the benefits identified by (Eyler, et al., 2001) whereby providing experiential learning opportunities for students allowed the development of a host of personal benefits including learning, personal and social outcomes, career development and strengthened relations with the tertiary institution. In particular, evaluation of the student experience revealed endorsement for the views of Nielsen, Du, & Kolmos, (2010) that such events develop both social and process skills specifically. In relation to the challenges provided by the NFP's, and the specific views on the practicality of the suggestions generated in some cases, there is perhaps cause to review the way in which challenges are defined, reviewed and revised prior to acceptance. Jonassen (2011) identified the clear definition of the problem as key yet complex, however, if the challenges presented are not

rigorously assessed and evaluated, then perhaps the experiences of the students and the expectations of the stakeholders may be subsequently compromised.

The event was designed to unite students from multiple disciplines and cultures; this predictably provided a set of varying starting points in terms of knowledge and expectations. This problem was similar to the implementation challenges discussed by Klink and Athaide (2004). While some students had a relatively stable knowledge of marketing for example - a discipline central to many challenges - others were both learning and applying knowledge simultaneously - an approach which may not suit all learning styles. This may prompt consideration of the real need for the interventions proposed by Schaffer, Xiaojun, Xiumei, & Oakes (2012). The evidence suggests however that the multi-discipline approach was significant for the event in that it was valued by students as a novel engagement opportunity, provided a more holistic knowledge and experience base upon which to address the challenges.

The intensive nature of this event may be viewed as a hurdle for participants. Ideally service learning would involve multiple opportunities for students to reconnect with the client to reaffirm direction and make necessary amendments before the final presentation is provided (Klink & Athaide, 2004). This is a consideration that organizers should take note of when planning future intensive events by providing additional opportunities for discussion, review and clarification. The event did however provide the opportunity for students and challenge providers to meet and engage, supportive of the approach proposed by Levesque-Bristol, Knapp, and Fisher (2010).

With a deficit of research on the NFP dynamic in this arena, this study revealed several important factors that should be considered in the planning of such events. NFPs, especially small or localized ones, are often resource-poor and see tertiary institutions as an untapped resource. Tertiary institutions are well-positioned to enhance the profile and effectiveness of NFPs and in building community partnerships, attracting and retaining NFP participation provides a win-win-win scenario for all three stakeholders. The experience of the faculty involved in the design management and operation of this event would however be supportive of the views expressed by Abdelkhalek, Hussein, Gibbs, & Hamdy (2010) that such initiatives demand time, resource and infrastructure to ensure their success. With this in mind, the following recommendations are offered to those wishing to innovate in the PBL/service learning interface:

- Consider resource implications early and dedicate a working group to design, market and project manage the event
- Position the event against the institution's community engagement agenda to demonstrate relevance and build internal rapport
- Secure senior management ownership/buy in
- Create a distinct brand, theme and set of promotional resources for the event that is relevant and appealing to both students and stakeholders
- Discuss and manage stakeholder expectations in relation to the problem or challenge identified
- Encourage inter-disciplinary participation via inter-school promotion
- Actively communicate the benefits of participation to all parties: students, faculty, stakeholders
- Provide in situ support to help overcome any learning hurdles
- Ensure strong dialogue between students and organizations over the duration of the event to ensure that the team's thinking and ideas remains on track

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This research has provided evidence as to why students participate in intensive service learning events, what they expect and what they receive in terms of benefits. In addition, it has provided an insight into NFP motivations, perceptions and experiences. From the perspective of the organizers of such an event, there are key operational and communication challenges to ensure the program 'gets off the ground', most notably raising awareness and interest amongst potential NFPs and students and ensuring there is suitable matches between the NFP agenda and the objectives of the event. WOFIE was designed to provide a cross-discipline opportunity to integrate innovation and entrepreneurship whilst addressing NFP issues. Students regarded this as a valuable experience where they developed new industry and peer networks and enhanced their personal and social skills at the same time as building their work readiness and career building portfolios. Not only were students able to extend their ability to communicate but they were immersed in the NFP issues allowing them to connect theory to real world challenges. NFP issues provided the key to uniting disciplines and attracting participation from students and industry alike. This event provided an opportunity for the tertiary institution to partner with industry thus establishing relationships and strengthening networks. Involvement in socially responsible and community building activities helped positioned the University as a society-centered institution (Millican & Bourner, 2011) providing a valuable platform for student, institution and community engagement.

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The Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education publishes peer-reviewed original research, topical issues, and best practice articles from throughout the world dealing with Cooperative Education (Co-op) and Work Integrated Learning/Education (WIL).

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The Journal's main aim is to allow specialists working in these areas to disseminate their findings and share their knowledge for the benefit of institutions, co-op/WIL practitioners, and researchers. The Journal desires to encourage quality research and explorative critical discussion that will lead to the advancement of effective practices, development of further understanding of co-op/WIL, and promote further research.

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