

Exploring a Deeper Meaning in Service-Learning Pedagogy and Implementing it in Family and Consumer Sciences Education

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Abstract : Service-Learning pedagogy includes community service and reflection as main components. Students can learn integration and application of knowledge beyond specific fields through experiences and reflection. The purpose of Family and Consumer Sciences Education is related to connect theory and practice to improve individual, family, and community life. The curriculum focuses not only on content mastery in subjects, but also application of that knowledge to the real lives of students. Considering the purpose of service-learning as integration and application of knowledge, service-learning pedagogy can contribute to rethink Family and Consumer Sciences Education. Reflection as a key component is examined for service-learning pedagogy. Exploring a deeper meaning of reflection in aspects of community connection, critical thinking, and transformative learning would extend the value of it and provide implications for implementing reflection in service-learning pedagogy in Family and Consumer Sciences Education.

Key Words : reflection, service-learning pedagogy, family and consumer sciences education

I. Introduction

1. Purpose of Research

The National Curriculum for Family and Consumer Sciences Education in South Korea has emphasized more student experiences related to real life and voluntary applications in the world (KICE, 2006). The curriculum provides opportunities for students to develop rational values, diverse competencies, and skills. Family and Consumer Sciences Education have practical characteristics as well as a theoretical discipline. Changes in society include an increase of the elderly, family diversity, environmental problems, the increase of technology, and internet usage. Considering these issues in society, integration and application of

knowledge could be more important in Family and Consumer Sciences Education instead of only the content knowledge in a specific field. Family and Consumer Sciences Education recommends some ideas in teaching and learning methods as follows: 1) focus student experience 2) use real life resources for learning 3) use experiment discussion and examination 4) use interdisciplinary knowledge beyond a specific content and 5) develop communication skills, interpersonal, and problem solving skills (KICE, 2006).

Service-Learning (one experiential learning) has had a positive affect on student learning through providing direct knowledge related to real life, helping them to master course content, and providing opportunities to apply knowledge to the real world (Miller, 1994). Martin (2001) discusses that service-learning provides integration

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and application of the knowledge. According to Dewey (1938, p. 18), experience can be a strong tool for integrating diverse knowledge and preparing students for the future. Kolb (1984) proposed a circular experiential learning model, including reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation, and concrete experience. The reflective thinking of Dewey and the experiential learning of Kolb have supported the conceptual framework for service-learning since the last decade. After the *Community Service Act*, established in the early of 1990s, service-learning that includes community service and reflection as learning activities has spread throughout higher education as well as K-12 education in America.

Moely and colleagues (2002) discuss the outcomes of students through service-learning such as 1) Civic action 2) Interpersonal and problem solving skills 3) Leadership skills 4) Political awareness in the community 5) Diversity attitude, and 6) Social justice attitude. Service-Learning courses serve the needs of the community through community service, while student can gain knowledge and skills from reflection on the community service and interaction with community members in and out of the classroom. Considering integration and application of real life knowledge, service-learning pedagogy can contribute to the development of new paradigm for Family and Consumer Sciences Education. Service-Learning pedagogy can make contribution for deeper understanding of community as well as understanding of individual and family in the Family and Consumer Sciences Education.

Comparing internship or field trip, service-learning courses are very flexible and focus learning objectives than the purpose of company or industrial agents (Rha, 2004). But, there was little research regarding experiential learning as one of the teaching methods of Family and Consumer Sciences at the elementary level (Kang *et al.*, 2003). The examples of experiential learning are discussion, examination, and field trips. The process of experiential learning is as follows: 1) preparation activities 2) main activities 3) wrap up

activities, and 4) reflection activities. However, there was a lack of sense of community connection and meaning of reflection that was interpreted narrowly as a tool for summary or evaluation.

Dewey believed that reflective thinking can provide opportunities for students to construct knowledge based on experiences and reflection. The book, *Experience and Education* (p. 23) by Dewey mentions that knowledge is not be the end of education, but the means of education. His ideas along with other researchers regarding service-learning believe that reflection is a key component in service-learning pedagogy. Therefore, it would be meaningful to reconsider reflection for service-learning pedagogy, and to implement it into Family and Consumer Sciences Education.

2. Research Questions

- a. What is the definition and research on reflection for service-learning pedagogy?
- b. How is the meaning of reflection related to community connection, critical thinking, and transformative learning?
- c. What would be implications for implementing service-learning pedagogy in Family and Consumer Sciences Education?

II. Deeper Understanding of Reflection for Service learning Pedagogy

Reflection is defined as a new understanding through events to be given by Hatcher *et al.* (2004). Learning can occur within the reflection process in any subject because reflection is described as a pedagogical tool (Ikeda, 2000). According to Bringle and Hatcher (1996), the function of reflection is to bridge experience and learning through feedback and value clarification based on real life environment. Dewey established the conceptualization of reflection that connects experiences

to new knowledge. Another researcher identifies reflection as a strong tool for making meaning connected to experience through sharing different viewpoints, seeking out related information, and evaluating values (Henry, 2004). Reflection is a powerful learning tool related to rethink experience and to connect learning to another real life situation. Therefore, reflection takes a connecting role that could be another learning experience as well as a new way of evaluation.

Brockbank and McGill (1998, cited in Ikeda, 2000, p. 2) proposed a process of reflection as following: 1) bring experience related to thinking, feeling, and action into consideration, and 2) creating meaning from experience to apply to another situation. If service-learning pedagogy includes integration and application of knowledge, that function might come from the reflection activities in service-learning courses. Hatcher *et al.* (2004) found the positive relationship between learning objectives and reflection enhanced student learning. Explicit learning objectives can lead student reflection to enhance learning related to course topics. In addition, the study reported that providing feedback and using reflection as assessment criteria also enhanced student learning. Reflection in course design could be accomplished depending on providing explicit learning objectives, appropriate feedback, and assessment criteria for reflection. Considering the components of course design are learning objectives, learning activities, and assessment, reflection could be connected to all components in course design. The meaning of reflection ranges from a type of evaluation tool to a type of learning activity for all course components.

Research regarding reflection has been actively accomplished by experiential educators because reflection is more meaningful in experiential learning. Mabry (1998) mentions the types of reflection in service-learning as writing/oral reflection, ongoing reflection (i.e. weekly journal)/end of course reflection (i.e. final paper), individual/group discussion, in/out of class reflection. In this study, reflection at least through

weekly journals had significantly higher scores in personal social values than those done once or twice a month. According to Howard (2001), there were some examples of reflection as a structured journal, discussion groups, integrative papers, portfolio, group journal, artistic reflection, and reflective interview. In addition, the course includes reflection before experience, during experience, and after experience (Eyler, 2002). This means that the meaning of reflection could be beyond summarizing activities after experience. Reflection on activities can be accomplished by students during the class time.

Mabry also revealed that students who had more quantity of reflection had academic benefits and civic attitudes than those with less. The results illustrated that class reflection could contribute to student learning, including academic, personal, and civic learning. However, other research revealed that reflection in a good quality of learning environment was more essential for student learning than the quantity because reflection was related to evaluate prior knowledge based on values and attitudes (Hatcher *et al.*, 2004). Both quantity and quality of reflection are important in course design. Reflection questions relating to quality and quantity of reflection for service-learning pedagogy are shown in Table 1.

Reflection activities can be accomplished alone, with friends, and off campus partners. Ikeda (2000) revealed that teachers can facilitate student reflection in learning. Mabry reported that students who talked with the instructor, site supervisor, and students had higher scores in personal social values as well as course contents than those with only students. Other researchers reported that learning objective and critical thinking can improve the quality of reflection, but they found student reflection more depending on instructors (Ash *et al.*, 2005). They also suggest that providing guidelines for reflection based learning model, including clear learning objectives could reduce student dependence on teachers in reflection activities.

<Table 1> Guidelines for Evaluating Reflection Activity

| Items | Reflection Questions |
|--|---|
| Integration of academic content | How experience was connected to the course content? |
| Learning objectives | Were reflection related to learning objectives? |
| Assessment criteria | Were reflection used as assessment criteria? |
| Teachers' feedback | How feedback was provided to students? |
| Learning environment | How learning environment is considered? |
| Quality of Reflection | |
| Structure of reflection | How reflection was well structured? |
| Regularity of reflection | Were reflection activities given regularly? |
| Type of reflection | Formative, summative, collaborative? |
| Clarification of values | How reflection allowed for the clarification of values? |
| Quantity of Reflection | |
| Hours spent | How many hours do students spend? |
| Total number of page of reflection | How many pages do students write? |
| Others | |

1. Reflection for Community Connection

Students in service-learning courses provide community service to meet the needs of the community while they gain knowledge and skills from reflection on experience and interaction with community members through service activities. The curriculum emphasizes reflective activities related to real community experience in order to improve competencies including knowledge, ability, and value internalized attitudes since reflection allows them to reach the growth through integration of prior knowledge and real world experience.

Even though service-learning pedagogy is used for designing diverse courses, it could be the design for many names of curriculum depending on what they focus: for example, on academic service-learning, and community service learning. Howard (2001) discusses three outcomes in service-learning course design, so different focus of each outcome could have different characteristics of the courses. Three outcomes of service-learning pedagogy are relevant and meaningful service, enhanced academic learning, and civic learning. The contents of Family and Consumer Sciences are related to community life, so community service, academic learning, and civic learning are integrated into

the curriculum of Family and Consumer Sciences Education.

Teachers have the responsibility to play a facilitating role in student reflection. During the before service, reflection would be needed for students to reveal assumption, stereotypes, and connection between past experience and theory (Henry, 2004). During service, teachers provide opportunities for diverse ways of thinking in the process of experience, and finally during after service, teachers provide opportunities for students to interact with classmate, teachers, and community partners. Especially, reflection for community connection could be mostly accomplished by teachers through selecting service places and providing interaction with community people. Identifying the needs of community and defining current community issues are very important for student to engage and serve the community.

2. Reflection as Critical Thinking

Dewey expressed the reflective process as ‘critical examination’ and Ikeda described ‘critical analysis’ (2000, p. 5). Based on a comparison of critical thinking and reflection, this study found the meaning of reflection to include the meaning of ‘critically examination’ or

'meaning evaluation'. However, reflection without critical thinking has shortcomings in learning such as 'reinforced stereotype', 'interpretation based on untested assumptions', 'inappropriate generalization', and 'reach to simplistic solution without considering complex issues' (Ash *et al.*, 2005, p. 52). Therefore, reflection needs to include critical thinking characteristics for student learning.

The reflection process provided by Henry (2004) is hard to clarify reflection from critical thinking or problem solving process. Even though reflection is much related to critical thinking, the framework can be different depending on the definition of critical thinking: for instance, critical thinking skill, disposition, or critical thinking process. Critical thinking skills include examining problems with different perspectives, while critical thinking dispositions include openness, empathy, flexibility, intellectual honesty, and objectivity (Mimbs, 2005; Smith & Kienzler, 2003). Smith and Kienzler (2003) discuss critical thinking process as: 1) defining issues, 2) clarifying key terms, 3) identifying assumptions, and 4) using evidence. The critical thinking process in learning embraces critical thinking skills and dispositions. Based on those meanings, reflection could be narrowly integrated as an essential tool for encouraging students to join the critical thinking process after the learning experience.

3. Reflection as Transformative Learning

Beyond critical thinking characteristics, reflection embraces creating a new perspective or understanding for applying to another situation. Another characteristic in regard to reflection is transformative learning from experience to learning (Mimbs, 2005). Reflection takes a role of connecting experience to new understanding or connecting prior knowledge to new knowledge. Prior knowledge can be continuously changed to new knowledge through reflection from experience (Dewey, 1938, p. 28). 'Transformative learning' means to transfer another form of knowledge. Not only are the

perspectives of learners changed from the previous understanding to new understanding, but also learners internalized new attitudes and perspectives through reflecting experience or actions.

Reflection can be interpreted as a transformative bridge that connects theory to practice (Mimbs, 2005). Especially, experiential learning such as observation of the real world, internships, field trips, apprenticeships, and service-learning, is learning from first hand experiences (Kang, *et al.*, 2003; Moore, 2000). Another interpretation for experiential learning is to extend the learning environment to off campus (Kang, *et al.*, 2003). Experiential learning leads students to structure subjective framework from experience (Lee, 2001); reflection can be different depending upon individuals with different prior knowledge even though they were at the same place or went through the same type of experiences. David Kolb (Kolb, 1984) proposed a circular model for experiential learning: 1) reflective observation 2) abstract conceptualization 3) active experimentation 4) concrete experience, and 5) reflective observation. Experiential learning as well as reflection connects theory to practice, and it relates to transformative learning. Experiential learning and reflection create contextual meaning structure in order to apply a new one to another context. Additionally, experiential learning and reflection contribute to active interaction between prior knowledge (Dewey, 1938) and new perspective through real life experience (Lee, 2001).

According to Moore (2000), experiential learning contributes to: 1) academic learning for apply concept or theory to the real world 2) practical skills 3) career exploration and 4) personal development. Experiential learning contributes to personal development such as characters. Reflection activities made students internalize new understanding or attitudes based on hands on learning experience. Reflection is more focused on internalized or personalized process rather than experiential learning experience (Ash *et al.*, 2005; Jones, 2002). That is the reason why reflection contributes to

personal development, value clarification, and a change of attitudes beyond academic outcomes.

III. Implementing Reflection Based Learning in Family and Consumer Sciences

This study identified some purposes of reflection based learning in service-learning pedagogy as community connection, critical thinking, and transformative learning. Reflection activities can facilitate students to join learning activities for community connection, critical thinking process, and transformative learning in the curriculum. These three purposes generate student outcomes related to extending perspectives to the community, meaning evaluation such as thinking reinforced stereotype and assumptions, and involvement in internalized process to personally apply to another situation.

Family and Consumer Sciences Education deals with content related to individual and family life, including adolescent development, nutrition, relationships with friends, life management, clothing, family, career development, parenting, and consumer economics (KICE, 2006). In order to use reflection for community connection, students provide community service to the nursing homes for the elderly, Head Start programs for young kids, food preparation and retailing store for homeless people, and job seeking agents for unemployed people. Students can meet diverse community clients and understand how the community agents work around us within the daily life. Community service is very connected to course content and knowledge related to real life. When students provide community service to the community, reflection activities can contribute to looking at individual and family life with extended viewpoints. Reflection can be accomplished from the learning experience within the classrooms. However, reflection for community connection is helpful for students to extend the understanding of course contents.

Preflection can be a critical process for examining stereotypes or untested assumptions. In Family and Consumer Sciences Education, students can have many assumptions regarding friendship, family relationships, sex related knowledge, buying, saving, room arrangements, parenting, marriage, and family culture. A critical examination of these assumptions and an integration of diverse knowledge are important in reflection activities to apply knowledge to the real world. Even though they cannot think critically during the reflection session, they can reflect during ongoing service process or after service session. One merit of experiential learning is the ability to confirm or rethink reflective thinking through real community service.

Transformative or internalized learning process is an essential component because the subject deals with value clarification, taking actions, and consequences of action in the curriculum. However, it is not sufficient for students to learn knowledge related to nutrition, clothing, consumer economics, and parenting in the class. Experiencing community activities can be useful for learning deep and internalized learning for students. For instance (Adolescent development content for the 7 grade) students can learn development by serving in a daycare and nursing home in the same semester. They can understand that characteristics of development are continuous, changeable, growing to single direction, and they recognize their position on the process of development through meeting diverse people and families. They also understand the diverse needs and wants from interaction with young kids and older people, and they can think critically how to help families with different age groups. Some components are considered in order to implement a new way of reflection in the Family and Consumer Sciences Education curriculum.

1. Course Design based on Reflection

Academic content integration is to integrate specific academic contents into reflection activities in Family

and Consumer Sciences Education, including nutrition, clothing, financial life, housing, environment, parenting, and family relationships. Identifying the learning process and assessment criterion related to the reflection process is another important consideration. Curriculum coordinators need to consider how experience is connected to reflection activities. Learning objectives and assessment criteria related to reflection activities are important in course design.

Reflection can be used as a learning experience for community connection, critical thinking, and transformative learning. Another practice for reflection is the diverse type of reflection before main activities as well as after. Reflection before the main activities could be connected to learning objectives, while reflection after activities could be connected to assessment criteria. Group reflection process can provide opportunities to improve personal development (i.e. communication skills and leadership) as well. The class topic needs to be integrated with community connection, timing for reflection, regularity of reflection, and group reflection needs to be clarified as well as provided for by teachers.

2. Learning Environment

The learning environment for the reflection process is another important component to improve the learning through experience by students. One of the learning environments for reflection is community resources. It can be useful for practicing student applications to the real world. Community partners or people can be community resources to use for class reflection because interactions between students and community people contribute to student reflection as well.

Hatcher *et al.* (2004) suggests that reflection in course design should be considered from the student viewpoint. If the viewpoint is not accepted, then transformative learning cannot occur. The ultimate purpose of Family and Consumer Sciences Education is to integrate theory and practice related to real life. Reflection as a bridge or connection between prior knowledge and new

understanding of real life experience plays a very crucial role for student learning.

Designing diverse setting or situation related to reflection activities can be helpful for student learning. Researchers discuss that diverse perspectives and levels are required for students to internalize critical perspectives in the learning process because they have different learning styles and perspectives toward life. Role playing (Kienzler & Smith, 2003) is another learning opportunity for students to internalize multiple standpoints.

Another learning environment is related to interaction with teachers. Hatcher *et al.* (2004) suggest that the feedback of teachers is one factor that can influence student reflection. Communication between teachers and students can critically contribute to student reflection as well. Teachers need to encourage dispositions, such as patience, respect, and openness in order to provide effective reflection. The student reflection process and the diverse perspectives should be respected by teachers.

Modeling is helpful for students to link theory and practice through service-learning pedagogy (Mimbs, 2005). As a leader, teachers must practice reflection for community connection, critical thinking, and transformative learning for internalization. Teachers need to understand the deeper meaning of reflection and use reflection in their lives in order to provide modeling or supervising reflection process by students.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

Family and Consumer Sciences Education enable students as family members to improve the conditions of humanity. The service-learning pedagogy has a philosophical foundation of integration and application of knowledge provided by the reflective thinking of Dewey and the experiential learning of Kolb. The pedagogy can help reach the goals of Family and Consumer Sciences Education. Even though reflection

has been an important component in education, the meaning of reflection in service-learning pedagogy is deeper than those in other teaching and learning pedagogies.

There are three purposes for using reflection in course designs for: community connection, critical thinking, and transformative learning. If teachers design reflection based learning, courses for student learning will cause the integration of knowledge and the application of knowledge. Family and Consumer Sciences are tied to the lives of students and the reflections of students related to their lives can facilitate a personal understanding of the contents. Reflection, including community connection, critical thinking, and transformative learning, is essential for personal acceptance within the subject. Structure and type of reflection could be different depending on the specific contents. Feedback from teachers and community partners is helpful for student learning and will lead students to participate in the community for the future.

Deeper meaning of reflection related to community connection, critical thinking, and transformative learning provides implications for teachers, researchers, and administrators in Family and Consumer Sciences Education. Teachers and administrators may expose students to the community for providing opportunities to learn from the community. Students may reflect on community activities, and then connect learning to real life using critical thinking. Researchers may examine all processes related to transformative learning through reflection in Family and Consumer Sciences Education. Service-learning is a powerful pedagogy for student learning. Furthermore, deeper meaning of reflection in service-learning would be examined and applied to the curriculum.

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