The Role of Service-Learning in Training Industrial-Organizational Psychologists

Kecia M.Thomas, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology &
The Institute for African American Studies
University of Georgia

The field of Industrial/Organizational Psychology (I/O), like many areas of applied psychology, embraces the scientist-practitioner model. Yet, the training that is often provided by I/O graduate programs, especially those at the Ph.D. level, focus mainly on building students' scientist competencies (SIOP, 1996). Yet, less than 40% of psychologists trained in I/O pursue an academic track where these competencies are most visible and valued (SIOP, 1996). In addition, graduate programs in I/O do not formally train students to be practitioners. Students acquire sporadic and informal experience as practitioners through contract work and through assisting their faculty with their consulting. Rarely is there a formal mechanism whereby students work *with* faculty to understand the practitioner identity and the role of I/O practice for business and for society.

Service-learning (SL) appears to be an optimal vehicle for training students in I/O. SL offers students the opportunities to test out and develop their practitioner skills, but it also affords students the opportunity to learn about and embrace the values of I/O psychology. For example many I/O practitioners work in the area of organization development, and the values and process of SL overlap considerably with those of OD (Thomas & Landau, 2002). Specifically, Thomas & Landau (2002) discuss the congruence between OD and SL's values for reciprocal learning, reflection, collaboration, and empowerment. Furthermore, the Society for I/O Psychology (SIOP) promotes collaboration between scientists and practitioners in order to continue the development of both the science and the practice of I/O, while simultaneously closing the gap between the two (Brice & Waung, 2001). Recent articles in *The Industrial/Organizational Psychologist* (the SIOP newsletter) have also focused on the importance of pro bono work by I/O psychologists to the larger community as well as to the profession itself (e.g. Klein, 2001). Through SL opportunities students not only enhance their chances of developing socially responsible knowledge (Altman, 1996), but they also gain the experience of collaborating with I/O professionals who are faculty members or practitioners. Together they can provide valuable services to those small business or community agencies that may not otherwise have the time, personnel, or financial resources to address needs that can be fulfilled by SL students.

Service-Learning in an I/O Seminar

During the fall of 2001 I introduced a SL requirement into my doctoral seminar on Organizational Effectiveness and Change. Prior to engaging in SL with my students this seminar had been very traditional in its pedagogy. Previously, the seminar had been comprised of lectures, reviews of too many articles, discussions of cases, and on occasion some type of experiential activity. With the inclusion of the SL component, in the form of pro-bono consulting projects, every class was dynamic and unique.

The twelve doctoral students enrolled that semester were organized into three consulting teams. Each team worked with a separate client-sponsor to address an organizational issue or problem over the course of the 16-week semester. In order to assist the student teams in working with their client-sponsors, I developed a detailed working contract and timeline that both the students and client-sponsors could refer to in keeping their expectations realistic and their efforts on track (syllabus attached). As students completed milestones in their consulting relationships, they submitted short written briefings to me and to their clients, which served as a mechanism for student reflection, for communication, and as opportunities for feedback from both the client-sponsors and myself.

With this new SL requirement, the topics covered in class were reorganized in order to address students' needs as consultants prior to students having to engage in those issues with clients. So therefore rather than covering the "Ethics of OD" as the last content area of the class, the issue of ethics became the primary topic covered. Also, class time was also restructured so that each week the class engaged in a large group discussion of each project. These 1-1.5 hour discussion sessions became important opportunities for collective reflection and learning. Each team regularly sought out the advice of not only myself as the instructor, but also their student peers in order to better understand the organizations and the issues with which they were dealing.

The SL experiences also gave students new insights regarding the literature we covered that semester. Rather than taking the authors at face value, the SL experiences provided students with a new critical lens that they used in order to better understand the boundaries that textbook knowledge offers. In addition, the instructor I needed to become more responsive to students' needs as service providers. For example, as leadership and interpersonal issues threatened the effectiveness of individual teams, I had to be prepared to address those organizational issues as part of my in-class curriculum so that every team could stay on track.

Service-Learning Outcomes

Overall, my assessment of this experience was that it was a success. Students became engaged in their own learning. They reviewed literature and texts outside of the course syllabi and class requirements that would help them better serve their clients. They appeared enthusiastic about class and the opportunity to apply what they learned in order to fulfill the needs of a real organization. Although the students enrolled that semester were equally inexperienced, they learned to trust one another and respect one another's opinions as they worked to fulfill every client's needs. Furthermore, they developed interpersonal and team development skills, as well as writing and presentation skills that are different from those that are acquired when working solely with academic audiences.

As the instructor I found my relationships with the students different as a result of the class's SL component. Rather than viewing me and reacting to me as someone responsible for imparting knowledge within the classroom boundaries, students seemed to respond to me more as a seasoned partner. They turned to me to test out their interpretations, to gain feedback, and basically to engage in some reality testing. They understood that I was not an expert on the organization with which they worked. Rather, I was an expert on behavioral science and an experienced consultant who could provide guidance, rather than solutions, when needed.

The client-sponsors were very pleased with the outcomes of these experiences. In their evaluations provided to me as the class instructor, they commented positively on the professionalism of the students and the valuable insights students' provided on their organizations and the particular issues these companies were facing. In addition, they often commented that the student teams provided much needed feedback or information that the organization desired but simply did not have the time or resources to address. In addition, 2 of the 3 clients commented that the timing of these experiences should be reconsidered. They felt that the semester-long length of these projects were restrictive and at times created a rushed work environment for both the students and the client-sponsors. It was suggested that perhaps in the future the students could engage in yearlong relationships with client-sponsors in order to reap the most out of the SL arrangement.

Given the success of this class, I am currently working to develop a doctoral student practicum based upon SL principles for my doctoral program. The practicum would focus on organizational development and provide yearlong services to clients in the college and local community. Weekly meetings would include reviews of the literature and collective reflection of issues facing client-sponsors as well as student teams. In addition to providing presentation and reports to fulfill client-sponsors' needs, students enrolled would also be required to develop a "lessons learned" manual for the graduate program in regard to their consulting experiences, and also be encouraged to develop other forms of scholarship based upon these SL experiences.

Conclusion

In many ways SL is an ideal vehicle with which to train applied psychologists, especially those interested in I/O. Students working in a SL paradigm are able to acquire valuable experience while integrating that experience with traditional classroom instruction. Furthermore, SL helps to bridge the practitioner-scientist gap by making practitioners and other organizational members partners in learning. For students considering consulting careers, SL experiences help them assess their readiness for practitioner life and better discover the types of work environment in which they would like to practice. For students considering an academic career path, SL experiences provide them with the opportunities to enrich their instruction with real life experiences outside of academe. These SL experiences also provide new questions and ideas for generating new research and knowledge in the field.

SL experiences, especially those that involve more community-oriented engagement, help students to better understand the vast opportunities for applying their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Small non-profit and community organizations can benefit from the discipline as well as those organizations that are in the Fortune 500 or which are a part of the government or military. In reaching out to the community, SL also provides an enhanced new impression of I/O and Psychology as disciplines that are both socially conscious and responsible.

References

Altman, I. (1996). Higher education and psychology in the millennium. American Psychologist, 51(4), 371-378.

Brice, T.S. & Waung, M. (2001). Is the scient-practice gap shrinking? Some encouraging news from an analysis of SIOP programs. The Insdustrial-Organizational Psychologist, 38(3), 29-37.

Klein, E. ((2001). Pro Bono: When, Why, and How. The Insdustrial-Organizational Psychologist, 38(3), 112-113.

Thomas, K.M. & Landau, H. (2002). Organizational development students as engaged learners and reflective practitioners: The roles of service learning in teaching OD. Submitted to Organization Development Journal.

SIOP (1996). Multiple Facets of Industrial-Organizational Psychology II. Bowling Green, OH: SIOP.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS & CHANGE (PSY8980)

Kecia M. Thomas, Ph.D.
330 Psychology
542-0057 or kthomas@arches.uga.edu

OVERVIEW:

This is a class in transition. As the title suggests, I ordinarily have the class focus for a few week on "what does effectiveness mean," and then we move to the topic of "bringing about effectiveness." However, like organizations my courses are always evolving, and hopefully improving.

Although an understanding of the topics of effectiveness and organizational development are the building blocks of this seminar, you will also learn by doing. In order to assist with your education as aspiring organizational practitioners, you will have the opportunity to provide real-world OD services to a client in the area!

Therefore you should consider yourself not only a student, but also a partner in an organizational development consulting firm, "OEC Consultants." Our weekly meetings will be used to discuss what is presented in the literature and review lecture material These meetings will also be used as opportunities to brief one another on our consulting practice.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND CHANGE: THE CLASS

TEXT:

French, W.L., & Bell, C.H. (1999). Organization development: behavioral science interventions for organizational improvement. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Reference Texts:

Cameron,K.S., & Whetton, D.A. (1983). Organizational Effectiveness: A comparison of multiple models. Academic Press

Cummings, T.G. & Worley, C.G. (1993) Organization Development and Change. Minneapolis/St. Paul: West Publishing Company.

Harvey, D.F. & Brown, D.R. (1993). An Experiential Approach to Organization Development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

RESOURCES:

I have retained space on the webct server for this class. Visit http://webct.uga.edu to access the course syllabus, discussion items, and lecture outlines. There is also a discussion list on the website. Please use the discussion list to communicate with me regarding exam items or issues that arise throughout your consulting experiences. By using the list, everyone will have the benefit of your questions and my responses. I will also use the discussion list to post announcements, presentation and publication opportunities, etc.

Each consulting team has also been assigned a chat room. Feel free to use this space when you are unable to meet face to face.

In addition, there are a number of interesting websites that provide information on the profession of organizational development and the tools that practitioners use. In addition the three firms for which you will work are book marked as well. These book marks are located on the entry page to the webct site.

EVALUATION:

Course evaluation will be based on four parts: 1) a mid-term exam (33%); 2) a final exam (33%) 3) your group's paper and presentation (33%); and 4) a meeting participation (1%). The exams will be take home and designed to facilitate the integration and application of the material covered in the readings, cases, and class discussions. The other 1% of your grade will reflect your class participation; specifically, your level of preparation for class meetings and ability to engage in meaningful dialogue during our weekly meetings.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS & CHANGE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
August 16	Introduction	French & Bell Chapter 1-2; 5
August 23	Ethics in OD	Lowman; Wooten & White; F&B 4
August 30	The Action Research Model	Aguinis; F& B Chapters 6-7
September 6	Diagnostic Models	Bray; Burke; Fordyce & Weil; Weisbord
September 13	Understanding Systems and Power	F&B 14-16; **Exam 1 distributed** ******Pre-assessment Brief due today*****
September 20	Effectiveness I	Cameron & Whetten; Schneider; Seashore; **Exam 1 due**
September 27	Effectiveness II	Nord; Weick & Daft; Starbuck & Nystrom;
October 4	Effectiveness III	Goodman, Atkin, & Schoorman; Schreiber; Cameron & Whetten
October 11	Individual Interventions	F & B 13
October 18	Group and Inter-group Interventions	F&B 9-10; Abilene Paradox [video] *****Action Plan Brief due Oct. 22nd******
October 25	**FALL**	**BREAK**
November 1	Structural & Comprehensive Interventions	F&B Chapter 11,12
November 8	OD Evaluation	Brown-Hinckley; Head & Sorensen; Porras & Berg; F& B Chapter 17 *****Evaluation Plan Brief due Nov. 12th***.**
November 15	Being an OD Consultant	Burke; Byham, Tragash, Weisbord
November 22	**THANKSGIVING**	**BREAK**
November 29	Presentations	**Presentations and Final Report Draft.** **Exam 2 distributed - due finals week.** **Final Reports due with final exam.**

References

Ethics

Lowman, R.L. (1991). Ethical Human Resources Practice in Organizational Settings. Working with Organizations and Their People (1991). D.A. Bray (ed). New York, New York: The Guilford Press

Wooten, K.C., & White, L.P. (1983). Ethical problems in the practice of organization development. Training and Development Journal, 37 (4) 16-23.749.

Action Research

Aguinis,H. (1994). Action research and scientific method: Presumed discrepancies and actual similarities. Journal of applied behavioral science, 29, 416-431.

Diagnosis

Bray, D.W. (1994). Personnel Centered Organizational Diagnosis. In A. Howard (Ed.) Diagnosis for Organizational Change: Methods and Models. NY: The Guilford Press.

Burke, W.W. (1994). Diagnostic Models for Organization Development. In A. Howard (Ed.) Diagnosis for Organizational Change: Methods and Models. NY: The Guilford Press.

Fordyce & Weil (1979). Methods for finding out what's going on. Managing with People. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, pp 143-158.

Weisbord. (1976). Six places to look for trouble with or without a theory. Group and Organization Studies. pp 430-47.

Effectiveness I

Cameron,K.S. & Whetten, D.A. (1983) Organizational effectiveness: One model or several? In D. Whetten, K. Cameron (Eds). Organizational Effectiveness. Academic Press.

Schneider,B. (1983). An interactionist perspective on organizational effectiveness. In D. Whetten, K. Cameron (Eds). Organizational Effectiveness. Academic Press.

Seashore,S.E. (1983). A framework for an integrated model of organizational effectiveness. In D. Whetten, K. Cameron (Eds). Organizational Effectiveness. Academic Press.

Effectiveness II

Nord,W.R. (1983). A political-economic perspective on organizational effectiveness. In D. Whetten, K. Cameron (Eds). Organizational Effectiveness. Academic Press.

Starbuck, W.H., & Nystrom, W.H. (1983). Pursuing organizational effectiveness that is ambiguously specified. In D. Whetten, K. Cameron (Eds). Organizational Effectiveness. Academic Press.

Weick,K.E., & Daft,R.L. (1983). The effectiveness of interpretation systems. In D. Whetten, K. Cameron (Eds). Organizational Effectiveness. Academic Press.

Effectiveness III

Cameron,K.S. & Whetten, D.A. (1983) Some conclusions about organizational effectiveness. In D. Whetten, K. Cameron (Eds). Organizational Effectiveness. Academic Press.

Goodman, P.S., Atkin, R.S., & Schoorman, F.D. (1983). On the demise of organizational effectiveness studies. In D. Whetten, K. Cameron (Eds). Organizational Effectiveness. Academic Press.

Screiber, C.T. (1983). Organizational effectiveness: Implications for the practice of management. In D. Whetten, K. Cameron (Eds). Organizational Effectiveness. Academic Press.

Being an OD Consultant

Burke, W.W. (1991). Practicing Organization Development. Working with Organizations and Their People (1991). D.W. Bray (ed). New York, New York: The Guilford Press

Byham, W.C. (1991). Practitioners in Consulting/Vendor Firms. Working with Organizations and Their People (1991). D.W. Bray (ed). New York, New York: The Guilford Press.

Tragash, H.J. (1991). The role of the In-house Practitioner . Working with Organizations and Their People (1991). D.A. Bray (ed). New York, New York: The Guilford Press

Weisbord,M.R. (1985). The organization development contract revisited. Consultation, 4, 305-315.

Evaluation

Brown-Hinckley, B.P. (1989). Visions of current and future issues in organization development. Group & Organization Studies, 14, 271-279.

Head, T.C., & Sorensen, P.J. (1990). Critical contingencies for the evaluation of O.D. interventions. Organization Development Journal, 58-63.

Porras, J.I., & Berg, P.O. (1978). Evaluation methodology in organization development: An analysis and critique. The Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences, 14, 151-173.

OEC: The Firm

As a firm we embrace the ethics and values set forth by the American Psychological Association as well as those promoted by professional O.D. organizations such as the OD Network and the OD Institute. Therefore, when establishing a working contract with your client, please be sure to discuss the following. In addition, follow up with the client on these issues by restating them in a letter or memo that presents each of the following.

OEC Values and Ethics

- **Respect toward the client and its representatives**
  - Students should respect the client's willingness to assist with this educational endeavor. Please understand that the client has many other important responsibilities and that their schedule should be respected. Work diligently to accommodate the sponsor's schedule and requests.
  - The sponsor and client personnel should not be placed in positions where they are physically or psychologically vulnerable. Never suggest to a participant or respondent that their involvement in your research will affect their current or future employment status.

  - Students should be able to respond to client's concerns and questions. Respond to phone calls and emails in a reasonable amount of time. Do not over burden the client with unnecessary requests for documents, time, access to personnel, or resources.
  - Students should not in any circumstances approach the sponsor, his or her representatives, or any other member of the client system with a request for a paid position or for payment for work conducted.
  - Participants in any data collection [qualitative or quantitative] included as part of the organizational diagnosis will be treated in accordance with UGA's "Guidelines for Investigators and the Use of Human Subjects" [see http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/guidelist.html]. In order to protect the participants of any data collection and to expose them to minimal risk or less, the following must occur:

✓ The identities of all respondents must remain confidential
✓ The OEC seminar will retain ownership of all raw data
✓ Data collected will not be used for scholarly purposes (e.g. conference presentations or publications) without the prior consent of the client and the respondents
✓ Data collected as part of the organizational diagnosis will be fed back to the client in the aggregate only—individuals will not be able to be identified from the information delivered to the client
✓ Participation in any data collection should not be used as a condition of current or future employment.

- **Respect toward the consultant**
  - Students should not be placed in positions where they are physically or psychologically vulnerable.
  - Sponsor's commitment to this relationship indicates their willingness to meet with students, make relevant personnel available, return emails, and encourage participation by relevant others.
  - The client should not ask students to conduct work outside of the boundaries of the class. If the client is interested in pursuing a relationship [paid or non-paid] with a particular student or team of students they should contact the program chair, Dr. Charles Lance [clance@uga.edu] after the end of the fall 2001 semester.
  - Sponsors should understand that these service learning projects are just one of many student responsibilities. Please be respectful of students' time, other academic endeavors, and university holidays.

Issues to Negotiate

- The area of focus for the investigation. Narrowing down the focus of the investigation should allow for the projects to be completed by the end of the semester.
- The points of contact on both the parts of the client and the student team.
- Meeting times.
- Forms of communication [e.g. phone, email, in person].
- Deliverables. In addition to the project report that will be submitted to me at the end of the semester, clients may also request an executive summary for distribution purposes or a formal presentation to interested parties as some examples of other deliverables.

Timeline for Consulting Projects

Task	Explanation	Goal
Meet with Sponsor	Gain an introduction to the organization and the issue identified by the client. In your interview, try to gain insight into: • History of the org • Structure • Who do you employ? [background, age, demographics, education] • Who do you serve? [ditto] • What is your interest in working with us? • What do you hope to get out of this collaboration? • How do you expect things to be different? • What would you have done had this opportunity not developed? • What deliverables would you like to receive other than the final report that will be submitted to Dr. Thomas [e.g. executive summary, presentation]. • Discuss access to client documents that will help you understand the organization and the issue at hand.	August 30
Review Relevant Literature	Gain an understanding of the issue from both the scientific and practitioner literatures. Review at least 2 review articles from academic publications such as: • Journal of Applied Psychology • Academy of Management Review • Academy of Management Journal • Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes Also, review at least 3 articles from practitioner outlets such as: • Organization Development Journal • Academy of Management Executive • Training and Development • Human Resource Quarterly • Harvard Business Review	September 6

<table>
<tr><td>Review Archival information from client</td><td>Gain an understanding of the organization’s history, structure, language, as well as its missions and goals.</td><td>September 6</td></tr>
<tr><td>Develop Diagnostic Plan</td><td>Given your pre-diagnosis [what some refer to as an environmental scan] how will you confirm your hypothesis? Develop a 8-10 page diagnostic plan that outlines:
Your interview with the sponsor
Your review of the literature and archival information
Your pre-assessment hypothesis with rationale
What data do you need and why?
From whom
How will you acquire this data
How long will it take from the perspective of the participant
How long will the process of data collection take?
How will you protect respondents?
How will you feedback this information to the client?
Submit a Request for Human Subjects form, instruments, letter [consent] to me!</td><td>September 13</td></tr>
<tr><td>Review Plan with Client</td><td>Meet with client to review what you plan to do next:
What data do you need?
From whom?
How do you plan to acquire data
What resources [personnel, copying, addresses, etc.] do you need
For how long?
When?</td><td>September 27</td></tr>
<tr><td>Collect Data</td><td>Just do it!</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Summary of Findings and Preliminary Action Plan	**Outline findings and interpretations of the data in a 5-8 page draft report. In the brief discuss**: • Pre-assessment hypothesis • Data Collected with Rationale • Interpretations • Action Plans with Rationale	October 22
Review with Client	Review with client the data collected, how it was analyzed, and your interpretations of it. Also review potential actions plans that develop from your understanding of the literature, this particular organization, and the data.	November 8
Develop Evaluation Plan	How would you evaluate the efficacy of the action plans you've recommended given your understanding of the organization? **Develop a 3-5 page outline of your evaluation plan** that addresses: • What information do you need? • Why? • From whom? • For how long will you need to collect this information? • How will you analyze the data collected? • How will you know if the intervention was effective?	November 12
Final Report	Deliver report to class; deliver final report to client by end of finals week! No exceptions.	November 29