



Virtual Place-based Community Engaged Learning

Transitioning to Online Community Engaged Learning in the age of COVID-19

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This project was conducted under the mentorship of UBC Centre for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL) staff. The opinions and recommendations in this report and any errors are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of British Columbia.

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Executive Summary

Background: In response to the Pandemic, The Centre for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL) provided support to faculty members for pivoting to online place-based community engaged learning. Through this project, CCEL is interested to deepen its understanding of the pedagogical intersection of online learning with community engaged learning and to understand the increased opportunities for students and partners to engage. The two questions that guided this research are (a) How has transitioning to online community engaged learning in the academic year 2020, worked for faculty members to meet their course's learning outcomes? and (b) How effectively have the CCEL interventions been in building the capacity of faculty members for a smooth transition to online community engaged learning?

Research Findings: Research findings showed that many faculty members found it challenging to form meaningful partnerships. In addition to this, they experienced bottlenecks such as resource constraints, excessive workload, and infrastructural disruptions. Despite such difficulties, many believed that projects during the pandemic were as effective and valuable as before the pandemic. This is because 'Place' played an important role in building deeper connections between the communities and the students. Also, community partners emerged as educators who helped the faculty members in making necessary changes in the curriculum. This persuaded faculty members in becoming flexible in their pedagogical approaches, embrace the opportunities and navigate the challenges by leveraging upon their experiential knowledge. Moreover, faculty members reported that they felt tremendously supported by the CCEL tools, resources, and other interventions in pivoting to virtual community engaged learning. They acknowledged that CCEL financial resources increased their capacity, and faculty toolkit and events increased their knowledge about new pedagogical approach.

Key Recommendations: Taking inferences from the relevant literature and analyzing the data, nine recommendations have been made to CCEL. One of the key recommendations to faculty members, who are interested in pivoting to virtual settings, is to set realistic expectations about student learning goals and project partners' objectives, keeping the challenges and credible opportunities in mind, before moving on to the next step of the project implementation. For this, they are encouraged to seek CCEL supports, gather inferences from tools by many educational institutions, and re-think virtual community engaged learning by reflecting upon the importance of the place, communities, and virtual spaces.

CCEL Response to the Pandemic (COVID-19)

Background

In response to the COVID-19, many universities across the globe, including UBC took major steps to reform the education system. Following the most updated guidelines and rules by the BC Centre for Disease Control, Ministry of Health, and Vancouver Coastal Health, UBC continued to make pedagogical changes to ensure quality education amidst new health and safety rules for all. One of the monumental tasks for the UBC faculty members and the students was transitioning into virtual teaching and learning. Like most faculties and departments at UBC, Centre for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL) pivoted its approach to community engagement and programming to develop new ways of working together during the pandemic. Pedagogical challenges during the pandemic persuaded CCEL to develop new methods and tools for all the stakeholders amidst the practical difficulties, and foreseen learning opportunities due to the place-based and community engaged learning. CCEL developed [tools and resources](#) and strove to provide support to its stakeholders for their smooth transitioning from in-person community engaged learning into a virtual format while maintaining the balance between ‘opportunities’ and ‘challenges’ that were observed during unexpected circumstances.

These tools and resources were carefully made after consultation with the faculty members and lessons learned from the substantial body of literature about pivoting to virtual community engaged learning by other educational institutions (See Appendix A) and reviewing the implications of the theoretical concepts – such as importance of the ‘place’ in community engaged learning (See Appendix B).

In addition to the tools and resources, CCEL provided Advancing Community Engaged Learning Fund (ACELF) and staff consultation to enable faculty members to pivot to virtual community-based projects and support their work with the aim of increasing their capacity. In 2020-21 CCEL has been able to support the launch of 12 projects across a range of faculties and departments such as Land and Food Systems, Faculty of Science, Department of French, Hispanic and Italian Studies, and Vantage College. In summer 2020 and winter terms 2020-21, students residing in different places of the world were supported to engage locally to work closely with communities to develop their skills, knowledge, and expertise, both in and outside Canada.

Purpose of the Project

Through this project, CCEL is seeking to understand how their services and resources have supported faculty members in pivoting to online community engaged learning, and if the inclusion of elements of place-based learning, contributes to increased opportunity for students and partners to engage. In addition to this, CCEL is interested to explore how their efforts have increased the overall capacity for faculty members, and whether student-learning objectives have been met in the new community engaged learning practices as they navigate through the effects of the pandemic.

The two key questions that guides this research are:

- a. How has the transition to online community engaged learning, enabled faculty members to meet their course's learning outcomes? and,
- b. How effectively have the CCEL interventions built the capacity of faculty members teaching online community engaged learning courses?

Integrated Framework for the Study

This research project attempts to explore the pedagogical intersection of the community engaged and place-based learning using both virtual and in-person formats of instructions, by drawing upon the literature by Renshaw and Tooth (2018), Smith (2002), Barkley and Kruger (2013), Iqbal et. al. (2019), Gruenewald (2003), Keppell, Souter and Riddle (2012), Cheers, & Postle (2012) and Takla and Wickman (2019). For this, a conceptual framework has been developed as given in **Figure 1**

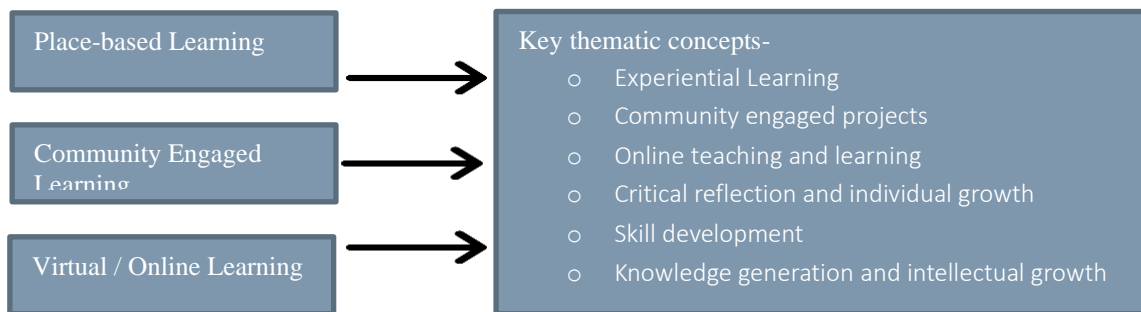


Figure 1: Integrated Conceptual Framework for the Research

Intersection of 'Place-based' and 'Community engaged learning'

While many scholars recognize place in the form of outdoor space (which is away or outside the classroom), some authors such as Gruenewald (2003), Hoskins (2015), Miller (2019) understand place as anything closer to the local communities. On the S.MAH CFE Project website, it says, "Place-based learning grounds education into the communities and neighborhoods of students. Learning takes place and relates directly to places that have meaning and significance to student's lives. Place-based and community education are also key components of the First Peoples Principles of Learning. Now, more than ever, students need to feel connected to where they live, work, learn, and play — even if they are learning online". Thus, in a community based setting, place-based learning involves participation with the local communities for fostering collaborative ideas and knowledge, aiming to meet the developmental objectives of both learners and educators (**Figure 2**).

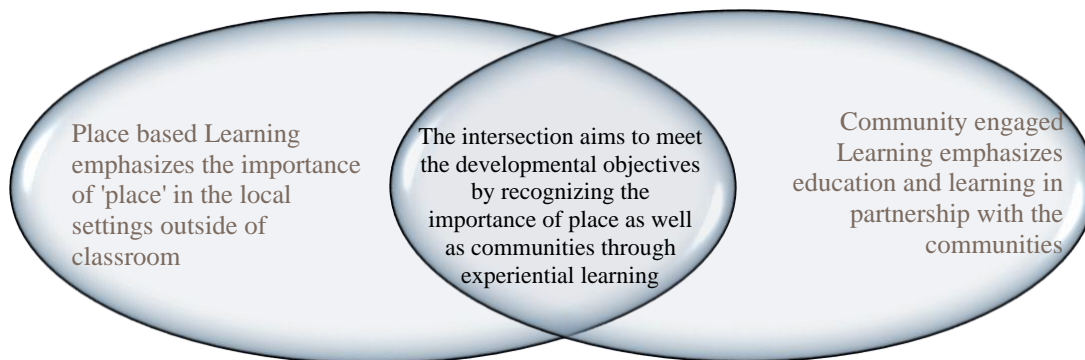


Figure 2: Intersection of Place-based and Community engaged learning

When teaching and learning happen outdoors and amongst the communities, students immerse themselves in their projects. Therefore, "the focus on local community naturally opens possibilities to examine critically the interconnected social, economic, and political forces underpinning oppression as it is manifested locally and globally" (Miller and Twum, 2014, n.a). Place based and Community engaged learning is also well-suited with teaching methodologies that have an "anti-racist, anti-oppressive, decolonizing, and eco-justice vision" (Miller and Twum, 2014, n.a). Since place-based learning heavily grounds on experiential learning, the educators therefore can take a pragmatic leadership role in allowing local community partners, personal experience, place, and the environment as inevitable teachers for their students (Miller and Twum, n.a).

Inclusion of Virtual Learning during Pandemic

The pedagogical aspects in the virtual setting during pandemic open new doors for policy makers, educators and learners to understand the overlap between the concepts of distance learning, open-learning, virtual learning, home-based learning, and even camera optional learning (on zoom for example). The advanced use of technology, specific communication skills and mutual collaboration are other aspects of virtual learning that generate knowledge (Keppell, Souter and Riddle, 2012, Cheers, & Postle 2012, Takla and Wickman, 2019).

In the virtual setting, the concept of 'place' is further expanded into *Distributed Learning spaces* (Keppell, Souter and Riddle, 2012) such as campus, house, coffee shops, etc. that disintegrate the distinction between face-to-face learning, online learning and distance education (p.2).

Pivoting from conventional in-person learning to fully virtual or blended format of learning were seen to be effective when Universities naturally embraced the "multiplicity of spaces for learning and teaching." (Keppell, Souter and Riddle, 2012) and to those who gave importance to self-directed learning (McGrath and Trentadue, 2015). Keppell, Souter and Riddle (2012) believes that, "A crucial aspect of the concept of distributed learning spaces is that both the teacher and learner must understand how a space can be utilised which means that it is necessary to understand both the perceived and actual affordance of a space" (p.8). Therefore, virtual learning in the community-based setting needs emphasis on the experiential learning that happens both formally and informally given the space, place and interactions at multiple levels that defies the rigid learning expectations in the mainstream formal educational settings (See

Figure 3)

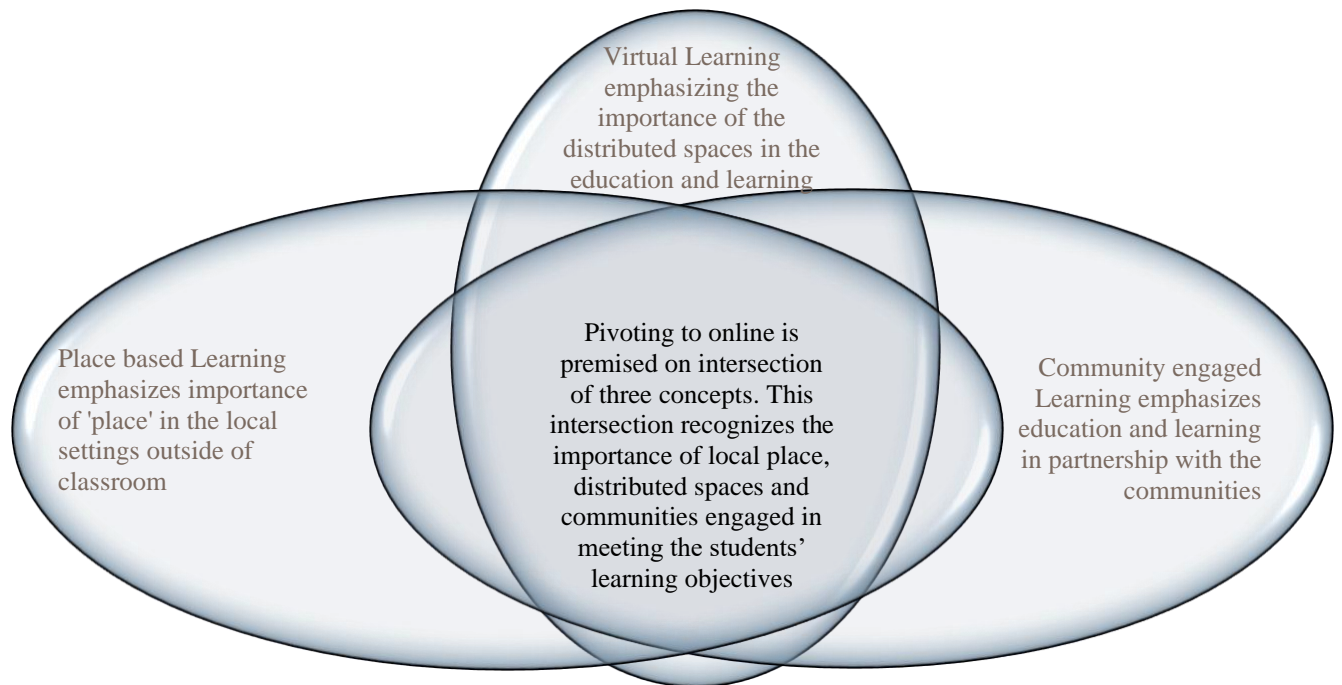


Figure 3: Intersection of Place-based and Community engaged learning

CCEL acknowledges that the “online space, by the very nature of being remote, can dramatically change the experience of, in large part because it isn’t possible to recreate the embodied learning that occurs by being physically present in spaces and communities. Nonetheless, online can still be transformative and immersive for students, especially when the values and principles are encouraged through thoughtful course design and with special consideration given to the unique ways students can meaningfully connect with a place and community in virtual spaces.” (CCEL website, 2021)

Methodology

This research has used a mixed method as an approach for collecting and analyzing primary qualitative and quantitative data. This research followed the “*Embedded Design*” approach by Creswell (2006), in which one data set provides a supportive, secondary role in a study to the other data type (p.67). Following this design, both qualitative and quantitative data has been gathered, where qualitative data is the primary data for interpretation, whereas quantitative data

supplements its key interpretation. In other words, while quantitative data helps in the generalization of the magnitude of each response, qualitative data unfolds the individualistic experiences and reasoning behind each response, based on which further recommendations have been made.

A formal survey was sent to the faculty members and practitioners who have been using the CCEL services and resources during the pandemic. Both closed and open-ended questions were asked in the survey to collect the purposive and focused responses. This enabled the scholar in finding answers to the evaluation questions, using thematic analysis. Fourteen faculty members responded to the survey of which 60% conducted a full year or full semester project with community partners, and the other 40% were engaged with community partners for events or other short-term programs such as virtual tours, virtual conferences, etc. Survey data was collected and collated using UBC Qualtrics software. In addition to the survey, qualitative data was collected through the focus group in December 2020. Through informal conversation, faculty members shared their experiences of CEL-based projects in summer terms and Winter Term 1.

Key Findings

Challenges of Pivoting to Online Community Engaged Learning

Ten out of fourteen respondents expressed that pivoting to online community engaged learning was difficult for them in the areas such as- Partnership development, Assessment of Students' learning, Finding and working with non-Vancouver communities (due to place-based learning for many national and international students), etc. Two faculty members pointed more than one concern that challenged them in smooth transitioning to virtual formal of teaching and learning totaling to 12 responses (**Figure 4**).

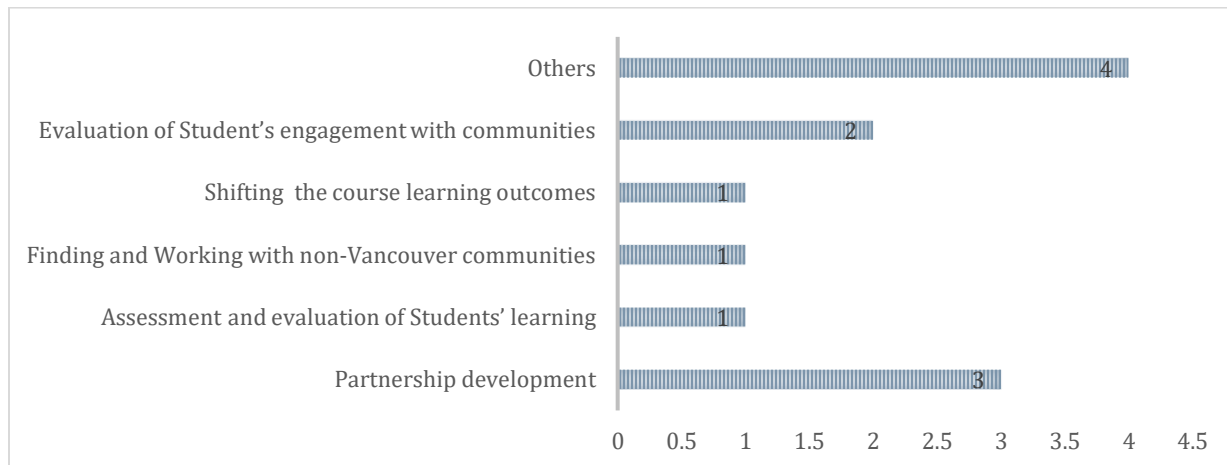


Figure 4: Key Challenge in Pivoting to Online Community Engaged Learning

Partnership development has emerged as the common concern for most faculty members as indicated in the survey and also through the focus group. During focus group discussion, most faculty members acknowledged that it is hard to make meaningful connections due to isolation, and lack of embodied learning. They expressed their fear that due to extensive use of virtual components in teaching and learning, the technical glitch and Zoom fatigue, connections between communities and students and amongst student groups may not be as significant as it should be. There were many other challenges and unresolved problems that were faced by the faculty members. These are given below-

1. **Unfeasible projects-** Some faculty members opined that although many projects could be done in-person, these projects are difficult to implement during pandemic because it requires extensive resources and may entail possible health risks. In addition to this, virtual learning may not be suitable for experiential learning, which is the central idea of place based and community engaged learning.
2. **Added pressure and workload-** Many variables such as improved advertisement campaigns and increased opportunities in local communities during pandemic resulted in overwhelming interests from the prospective partners. This created added pressure and workload for faculty members particularly during screening and evaluation of proposals from the community partners.

As some students were sparsely located due to COVID restrictions, evaluation of their learning outcomes became extremely difficult for the faculty members. Faculty members had to conduct one-on-one consultations with each of these students in the class

because of their individual projects. A faculty member said, “One- one consultations for over 150 students was very difficult and exhausting”.

3. **Difficulty in gauging the stress level of students** – Due to virtual communication, most faculty members agreed that it was a challenging task for them to imagine what was going on at the end of their student(s). Not just because students were distantly located, but not being able to see them in person, and also when cameras were turned-off during zoom-calls, their reactions and body language could not be understood. This acted as a barrier in making deeper connections.
4. **Navigating equity in students’ engagement-** During a session held by the CCEL at the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology (CTLT) of UBC, in Dec 2020, it was observed that faculty members were emotionally invested in the students’ welfare. They expressed their worry about their incapability in supporting their students located at different places. Apart from health and safety, their major concern was finding a way to provide them adequate support and making equitable connections. A faculty member said, “although some students seemed very engaged, as a faculty, it was hard to imagine their problems or to even come up with a solution to their problems due to virtual teaching and learning. Thus, ‘how to be more equitable in engaging students’ was one prominent challenge for me”

Benefits of ‘virtual’ and ‘place- based’ component in teaching and learning

The majority of the faculty members viewed online community engaged learning as a valuable experience for both themselves as well as students, considering the fact that students were living in different places around the world. About 35% of the respondents believe students’ engagement with local communities has resulted in making deeper connections between the community partners and students, leading to contributions in their learning as well as organizational development. Also, about 35% of the respondents confirmed that because students had an opportunity to work with their neighboring communities, they generated and shared knowledge with other students beyond their class. Other benefits of integrating the ‘virtual’ component include skill development, building reliance and solidarity with the community partners.

Faculty members were asked if they find online community engaged learning as a new pedagogical approach or in other words, if they would like to keep online community engaged

learning as an option in their course in the future, assuming that classes would be held in-person or 'as-usual after the pandemic is over. Most of the respondents somewhat agreed to this idea (**Figure 5**) and would like to explore its possibility and feasibility in the future.

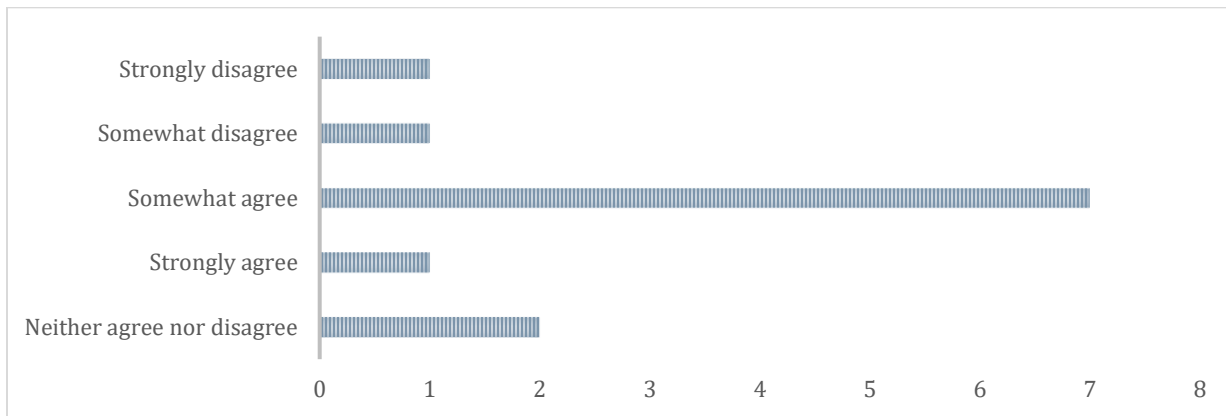


Figure 5: Online CEL as a feasible option in the future

During the CTLT meeting in Dec 2020, faculty members were asked about how they coped with the challenges if any, and the positives of virtual learning. Below are some of the themes that emerged during the conversation-

- 1. Modifications in the curriculum-** Some faculty members gauged the benefits and challenges of doing projects in a blended or fully virtual format, and therefore decided to modify their project ideas completely. They leveraged upon the projects that could be either conducted in the student's neighboring communities or something that can be done online without risking the health of anyone. For example, a faculty member contemplated the idea of engaging students located at many places and who are interested in climate change mapping. A thought emerged that- as many students are placed in their local communities in many geographical locations, they can potentially map their local communities in the future for providing an expansive map with unique details that would be different from a small-scale map, had the project was undertaken at one place. Thus, innovative ideas during pandemic were extremely effective for re-imagining the future possibilities and for planning the projects in the forthcoming semesters.
- 2. Flexibility for both educators and learners-** Some faculty members indicated that virtual learning provided them the flexibility to form several convenient groups of students and maintain a reasonable *mentor: student ratio*. Software such as MS teams

was useful in group-based learning exercises. Also because of vigorous tracking, some faculty members were able to monitor opportunities and challenges faced by their students within the communities

3. **Use of software eased the workload-** Virtual learning enabled faculty members to consolidate documentation. All assessments, reports, and assignments were organized in one place making it easier for the faculty members to manage their tasks
4. **Self-reflection and prioritization-** Pandemic allowed faculty members to take a step back, think, reflect and prioritize their work in the best interest of the students. A faculty member said, “Pandemic forced me to think “what is essential and what is not essential, so I was able to focus more on students’ learning outcomes. This way my community engaged assignments were much more practical”
5. **Expanded connections and solidarity-** Since students were placed remotely and engaged with their respective communities, the number of community partners increased exponentially in some of the programs. Although it added extra workload for the faculty members, it provided an opportunity to learn about diversity, culture, and equity. Community partners were also found to be cordial with students knowing that minimal support could be provided by their faculty members, reflecting gratitude, reliance, and solidarity
6. **Community partners as educators-** Due to the limited in-person interface between students and faculty members, some faculty members decided to train the community partners knowing their closeness with the students. Community partners also reciprocated their trust in the faculty members by making extra effort in engaging students and worked harder than ever before

Community Engaged Learning Projects during the Pandemic

Despite the fact that many faculty members had some difficulties in pivoting to online community engaged learning, most members believed that community-based projects were as effective and valuable even during the pandemic. As much as 70% of the respondents agreed to the fact that community-based projects not just enhanced students’ interest in their local community issues, but they were able to encourage students in understanding the application of the course content in a community context with ease. However, due to unavoidable difficulties such as lack of in-

person meetings, some faculties struggled to help students in developing their skills, although the general opinion about the virtual classroom teaching and learning environment seemed positive and encouraging (**Figure 6**).

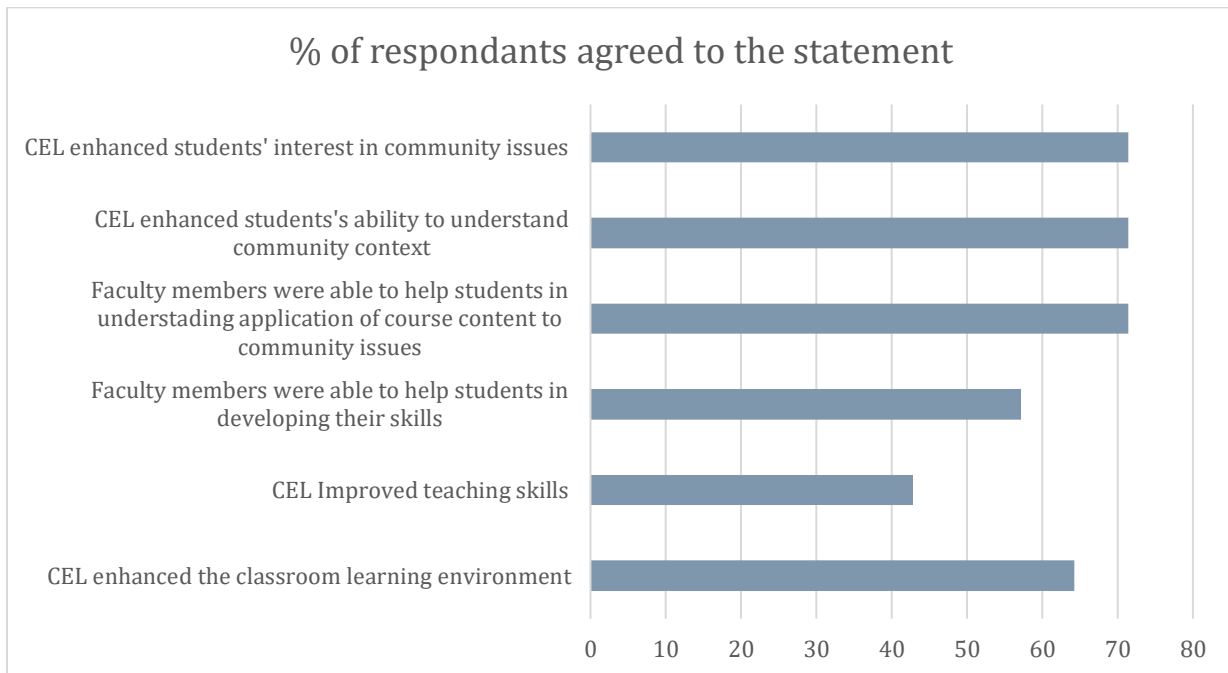


Figure 6: General opinion with virtual community engaged learning

Efficacy of the CCEL Tools and Resources

CCEL prepared a toolkit exclusively to support faculty members and partners in pivoting to online community-based projects. In addition to these tools, other resources such as one-one consultations, events, and funding opportunities were also made available to all the stakeholders for effective transitioning of in-person courses into the blended format of teaching and learning. The survey revealed that ten out of fourteen faculty members who responded to the survey had utilized at least one of the following resources-

- i. Curricular Resources (faculty toolkit for transitioning to online community engaged learning, learning and reflection activities, assessment tools, etc.)
- ii. Faculty Professional Development Events (faculty-specific orientations such as Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Technology Institutes)
- iii. Partnership Development (partnership recommendations, relationship development)

- iv. One-on-One Consultations with Centre staff (on course delivery, assessment and evaluation design, etc.)
- v. Funding Resources (Advancing Community Engaged Learning Fund)
- vi. In-class Support (orientations, reflection workshops, special topic workshops)

The above categories of resources are listed in reverse order of preference of utilization by the faculty members. This means that most faculty members sought help and support from CCEL, by using their curricular resources, participation in the events, recommendations on partnership development, and one-one consultations. And some faculty members utilized the funding resources and in-class support as well (**Figure 7**).

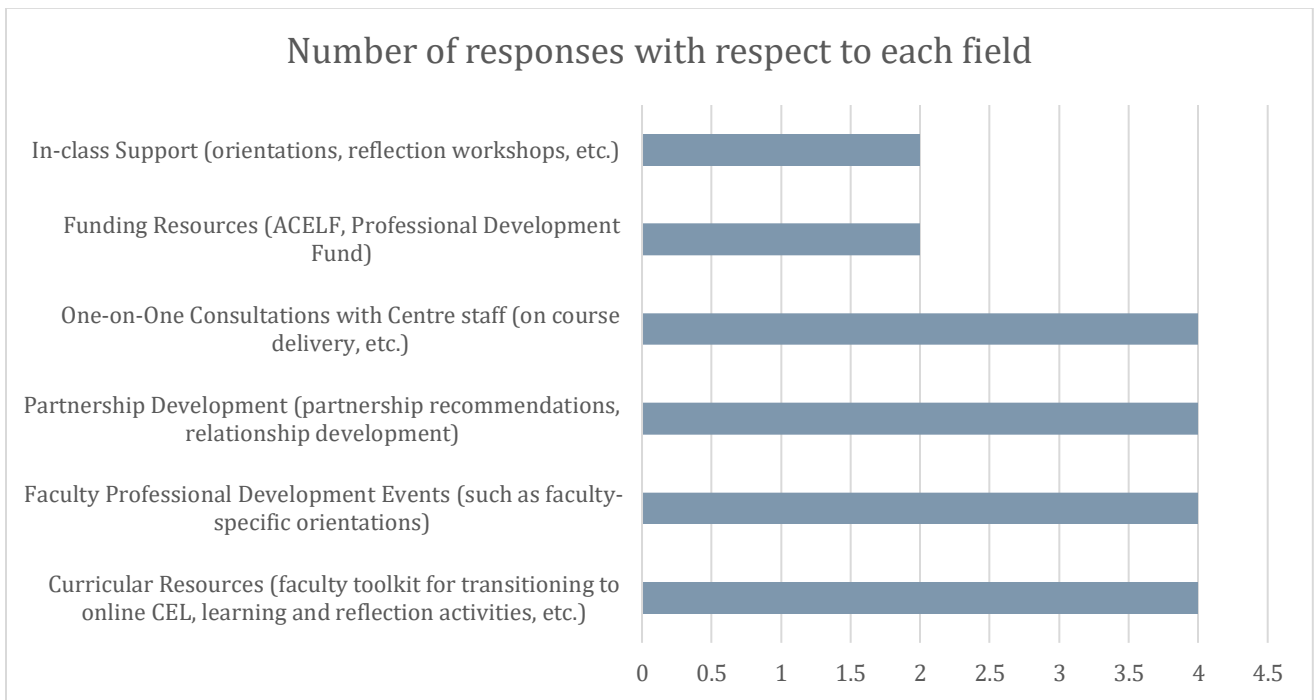


Figure 7: Number of responses about utilization of CCEL resources

Through the survey, faculty members were also asked about the way in which CCEL resources helped them integrating community engaged learning into their online courses. The key themes that emerged from their responses are highlighted below as the advantages of using CCEL resources-

- i. Increased knowledge and awareness about new teaching and learning practices through events and workshops

- ii. Online events and workshops were best utilization of time during isolation
- iii. Reduction in workload and pressure off the faculty members due to availability of readily usable tools, techniques and templates for course design
- iv. Building Communities of Practice and strengthened relationship with partners
- v. Meeting the course learning outcomes due to personalized one-one consultations and knowledge sharing
- vi. Fostered skills and ability to integrate CEL into courses
- vii. Building financial capacity through funding in procurement of additional resources such as manpower and technology

Recommendations

1. Finding the Right Balance

Community engaged learning projects in any format (virtual, in person, or blended) would entail some challenges that could be predicted and analyzed based on experiences or lessons learned from other institutions. Yet, it is also important to understand that continued community engaged learning in all its forms and formats, remains an essential component of a liberal education (Veyvoda and Cleave, 2020), for forming social capital (Fedorowicz, Arena, and Burrowes, 2020) for enhancing the partnerships. CCEL can therefore advise faculty members in understanding the benefits and challenges of virtual and/or place-based learning for them to find the right balance (**Figure 8**) during the project planning stage. At this stage, consultation with partner organizations and student communities is also important.

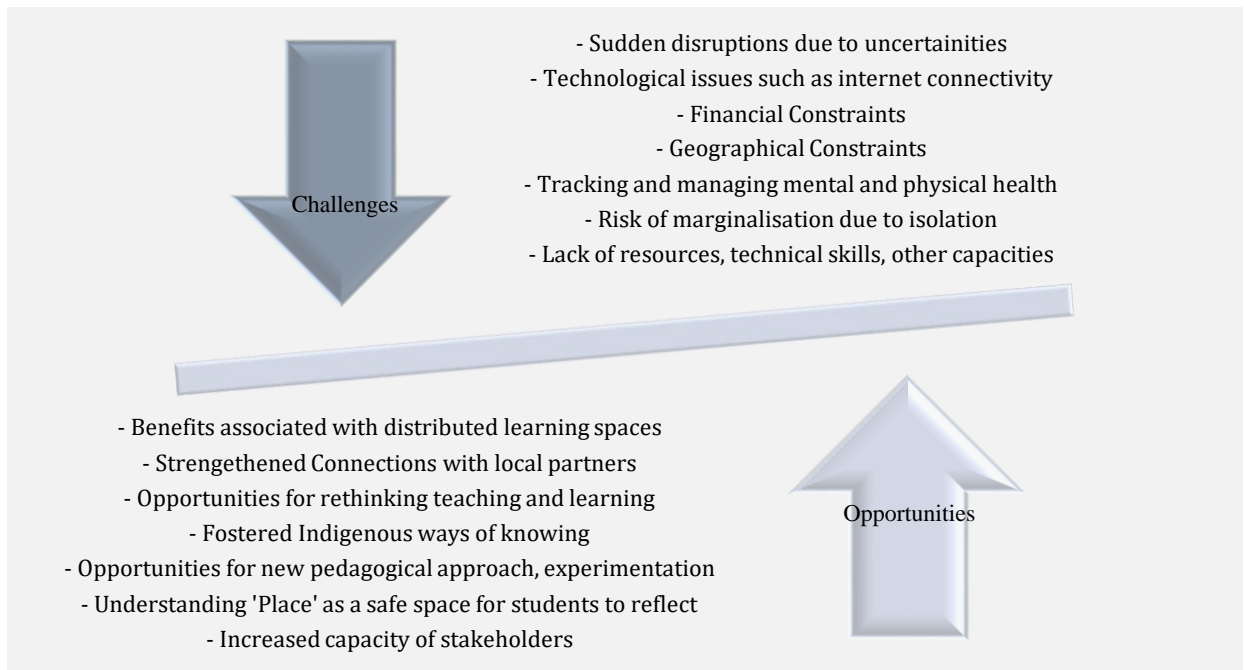


Figure 8: Finding the Balance: Conducting Virtual CEL

Faculty members should therefore take a pragmatic approach and conduct a reality check about their expectations, student learning goals, and project partners' objectives, while acknowledging the given challenges and credible opportunities, before moving on to the next step of project implementation.

2. Understanding the significance of 'Place' and 'Space'

Learning through experience is the key component in community engaged learning. The experience of learning and teaching during the pandemic in 2019-20 has created a new discourse about the challenges and opportunities for pivoting to virtual or place-based education and learning for community involvement. This research and the relevant literature confirm that students engaged in the projects with neighboring communities (due to restrictions of traveling because of a pandemic) are more likely to make useful connections as they are well-versed with the local geographies, language, culture, and community needs. Since place-based and space-based learning has more to do with individual experience and personal engagement with the community, pivoting to local neighborhood-based community engagement is much of the need of an hour to rethink teaching and learning to make it more meaningful to the distributed communities than ever before.

3. Leveraging the ‘Common Factor’

To tackle the challenge of less meaningful connection, faculty members can be advised to encourage students to find a commonality with their community partners for coming up with an issue or a problem they would like to solve in collaboration with each other. Theoretical concepts like Social inclusivity, Equity, Cultural identities, Environment Education, etc. are well-understood and reflected by students who are placed in their familiar communities. Thus, the common factor that can bind the students’ and communities’ learning interests, can be anything - such as neighborhood/place, language, experience, culture, challenges, and opportunities during the pandemic, etc. People who share similar cultures or experiences make deeper connections and are motivated to engage in the collaborative project whole-heartedly. Whether students and partners are engaged virtually or in-person, the personal connection and motivation will not only keep the momentum of the project high, but also provide an opportunity for the students to critically reflect on their experience and self-assess their learning outcomes.

4. Reimagining ‘Engagement’ and ‘Partnership’

Faculty members need to rethink the role and engagement of community partners, especially when students are engaged in remote places or where faculty members have the least grasp of the student’s learning. They can plan to train partners about the requisite or desired UBC policies, teaching and learning standards, students’ learning outcomes, evaluation plans, and strategies. This can create a win-win for all the stakeholders and make the community engaged learning programming effective and efficient. Not only this will ease the workload and pressure of the faculty members, but students can also be closely mentored by the community partners. They could generate knowledge and ideas in collaboration with each other. Community partners can also ensure the health and safety of the students and will also gain a sense of responsibility towards the students’ learning and making their connection stronger.

5. Continue Seeking Support and References

Faculty members can be given reminders and incentives to continue seeking support from CCEL and participate in the events for cross-learning and mutual benefits. Apart from the CCEL [toolkit](#), there are many other tools and references available online that can be referred to faculty members, such as-

- Community engagement during the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond- A guide for community-based organizations, by URBAN Institute
<https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/102820/community-engagement-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-and-beyond.pdf>
- Teaching Community-based Learning Courses online during the COVID-19 Outbreak, by University of Louisville <https://louisville.edu/communityengagement/news/teaching-community-based-learning-courses-online-during-the-covid-19-outbreak>
- Practical resources and COVID related resources by Community Engaged scholarship Institute by University of Guelph <https://www.cesinstitute.ca/covid-related-resources>
- Serve in Place: Community -engaged learning during COVID-19, by Cornell University <https://oei.cornell.edu/resources/covid19/>
- Resources for Community Engaged Teaching & Learning during COVID-19 Social Distancing, Isolation and Quarantine; by Centre for Innovative Teaching and Learning, Indiana University Bloomington <https://citl.indiana.edu/programs/service-learning/resources-service-learning/CEL%20during%20COVID-19.html>
- Small Yet Significant Kindnesses in the Time of COVID-19, International Association for Research on Service Learning and Community Engagement
- Coronavirus and the engaged campus, by Iowa and Minnesota Campus Compact, <https://iacampuscompact.org/resource-posts/coronavirus-and-the-engaged-campus/>
- Remote Resource Guide , University of Michigan <https://its.umich.edu/remote-resource-guide>

CCEL plays a crucial role in fostering the long-term relationship between faculty members, students, and partner communities. Faculty members were seen to be benefited from the tools, resources, and funding support especially during the time of the pandemic. CCEL interventions have built the capacities of some faculty members in terms of budget and skills. However, some faculty members were not able to avail themselves of the resources or seek support from the CCEL because they found their projects and concerns to be unique and may not be resolved with general ideas or simple solutions. CCEL can therefore support faculty members navigate through the challenges and opportunities through one-on-one consultations and/or small group events, as it was found to be very effective in meeting the objectives of faculty members.

6. Recognition of Outstanding Community Partners

Based on the suggestions by faculty members during the focus group, CCEL could explore the feasibility of special funding / awards / acknowledgments and recognition of community partners for their outstanding contribution. Some faculty members expressed their satisfaction with their community partners for investing their time and putting extra effort in students' engagement

7. Further Developments in CCEL Tools and Resources

CCEL tools and resources were found to be extremely relevant and effective for most faculty members. CCEL can therefore, develop these tools by categorizing them based on the following approaches:

- a) Based on disciplines (Example- Applied Science and technology, Environment/Forest/Land use, Arts and Social Science)
- b) Based on the format of teaching and learning (Example- Fully Online, Integrated, Fully in-person)
- c) Based on investment and resources (Example- project ideas that requires the least resources, ideas that requires moderate investment, innovative projects that needs advanced resources and funding)

8. Creation of a Knowledge Hub

The survey and focus group revealed that most faculty members wonder “how to tackle the issue of loss of community engagement and students' collaboration through online learning?” To find answer to this question, CCEL should continue engaging stakeholders' meetings / seminars / events / workshops to communicate about the prioritization of student learning outcomes given the opportunities and challenges of virtual place based CEL. CCEL can encourage faculty members to understand the concept of virtual learning and explore its feasibility in accordance with their course requirements and students' learning expectations.

Also, if deemed feasible, CCEL can expand their scope of engagement and conduct interdisciplinary meetings and events to invite faculty members across UBC from both Vancouver and Okanagan campuses for generation of knowledge, sharing and learning innovative pedagogical approach from each other. For example, a webinar can be organized to allow faculties and or graduate students from the MSCP program (focusing on Community

Development and Social Planning); Department of Community engagement, social change and equity (UBC Okanagan campus) to share their theoretical knowledge on the topics like- community engaged learning during pandemic, student's engagement through virtual learning, etc.

9. Improved Communication Strategies

Some faculty members could not avail the benefits of the CCEL support due to lack of information. Many faculty members indicated that they were informed about the CCEL tools and resources through word of mouth only. Thus, improved communication strategies need to be developed by CCEL to be able to reach to all the partners. For example, CCEL team can expand their presence by participating in UBC interdisciplinary events or explore redesigning the existing CCEL website.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that virtual community engaged learning projects are as effective as in-person or blended community engaged learning projects as long as it caters to the developmental objectives of both the students and community partners. As the CCEL is committed to enhancing students' on/off-campus experience by providing a safe and inclusive hands-on learning environment (CCEL Annual report, 2019), it can leverage upon the opportunities created during the pandemic that compelled all of its stakeholders to pivot to virtual community engaged learning and continue to provide its distinguished support to the faculty members.

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Appendix A Literature Review

Community engaged learning in Higher education

Following the BC provincial Health Authority COVID-19 protocols and guidelines, many educational institutions adopted place-based or/and virtual approaches of learning as effective strategies for their educational programming. The core elements of place-based learning have been found extremely relevant during the pandemic (COVID-19), which replaced the conventional indoor-based formal educational programs. Specifically, the recommended '2m distance' criterion was easier to follow outdoors than indoors, and hence, formal educational classes took place at the field at many places. Learning outdoors also gave a chance for the students to make deeper connections with land.

Change in the pedagogical format from in-person to blended format of community engaged learning during the pandemic is a common strategy used by many educational institutions to meet the learning expectations of the students. The University of Michigan states that "the positive learning outcomes associated with can also accrue from online" (website, 2021). The advantage of having it in the format of remote-based or place-based education is that these projects can be conducted in student's home language or familiar place where students are located, while they can still contribute to the social change as anticipated (Karen et. al. 2020). Educational institutes such as UCLA Community School, and the University of Victoria have reported that community partners have taken a special interest in helping faculty members in changing the curriculum and ensuring the student's learning objectives are met. For example, in a waste management class at UCLA community school, not just students, but their parents were also invited by the community partners to see the impacts of waste recycling methods, plastic pollution, etc. This resulted in enhanced experiential learning through rich interactions and reflective exercises for all the stakeholders leading to changes in policies and societal practices. This increased opportunity for building a strong partnership between all the three key stakeholders thus needs special attention for reconditioning the pedagogical approach in place-based educational settings.

However, unlike UCLA, the University of Toronto (UofT) and REL Pacific (University of Indianapolis) either cancelled a few courses or blended online and in-person formats for course delivery, during pandemic. To these Universities, keeping their program running as usual was difficult mainly due to (a) the lack of funds and (b) technological problems like accessibility to the

internet. Apart from these factors, making deep connections while maintaining social distancing, etc. also seemed impractical. Faculties and departments therefore, made new protocols to ensure the safety of their students while visiting community partners in person (if unavoidable or absolutely necessary). Thus, flexibility in their pedagogical approach allowed them to acknowledge the cultural, and political restrictions that students face locally while dealing with other challenges imposed during COVID-19. For instance, the University of Indianapolis allowed students to learn through 'Alternate learning experiences' such as remote work, telehealth, etc, in place of face-to-face community interactions. In order to protect their students from health risks, they also accepted delays in the completion of their programs at a later date if acceptable alternate learning is not available (University of Indianapolis Guidance document, 2020).

Both academic and non-academic researchers claim that the pandemic has provided an opportunity for educators and learners to reflect upon pedagogical priorities (Veyvoda and Cleave 2020, Greene, 2020, Dempsey et al. 2021). Veyvoda and Cleave (2020) stated that “for both faculty and students, the most pressing concerns related to teaching and learning during the pandemic involved basic needs. Did students have what they needed to be healthy, to be safe, and to learn the academic content? As faculty, were we and our families healthy, both physically and mentally? Did we have the physical and mental space and time we needed to work, now that our homes had become our offices and classrooms and many of us were caring for and even teaching our own children?” (n.a) Thus, pivoting to online or virtual or place-based and community-based learning has pushed educators, learners and community members to re-think importance of virtual CEL while navigating through the practical pedagogical challenges in a positive way.

CCEL and Community engaged learning at UBC

The CCEL at UBC, acts as a catalyst between academia and community members to build a strong partnership between all the stakeholders with the aim of fostering student experiences with communities, while contributing to meeting the organizational goals. CCEL encourages faculty members to build meaningful connections and stronger relationships with the communities “to build capacity and resiliency” amongst them through their CEL-based project initiatives (CCEL website, 2020). CCEL identifies the Five Core Principles of CEL which are: *Connection to Discipline, Community-Driven, Community as Teacher/Co-Educator, Reciprocity and Critical Reflection*, based on which, faculty members are advised to “ensure projects

support partner priorities and develop a balanced teaching and learning space that optimizes synchronous and asynchronous work” (CCEL Annual report, 2019).

In May 2019, CCEL held a consultation meeting with the UBC faculty members to understand their concerns, readiness, and preparedness for integrating community engaged learning into their courses the era of pandemic.

The consultation brought out some key themes that needed utmost attention and careful consideration before pivoting to online teaching and learning. These topics were- faculty’s capacity, student learning outcomes, integration of place-based and virtual learning, partnership with the community members, feasible projects keeping in mind accessibility to isolated / vulnerable communities, compliances with changing local protocols, resource utilization, health and safety, equity, and technical difficulties/inconveniences such as internet issues, and time-zone differences for international students, etc.

CCEL Tools	Intended For	Contents
Student Learning Outcomes	Faculty members interested in course development that aims for students’ academic learning in partnership with communities	Conceptual understanding of: Academic learning Intellectual growth Fostering partnership Critical engagement with practical challenges Increased awareness Skill development
Reflection Questions	Faculty members interested in online assessment of student’s experiences and assignments	Ideas for critical reflections of students about self, communities and overall experiences
Online CEL Project Ideas	Faculty members interested in identifying community partners	Ideas for Community Issue exploration and engagement: projects ideas for Capacity building, Data gathering/

	and/or online community-based projects	analysis/ evaluation/ reporting, Direct Service
Reaching out community Partners	For those who need suggestions and ideas for reaching out to the prospective community partners	Ideas for considerations and suggestions
Project Planning tools	For those who like to plan the students' project in collaboration with the partner community	Community Partner Email Template Project description form Suggestive guide on responsibilities of Faculty, CCEL, Community Partners and Students
Planning worksheet	For those who need clarification about the relationship between activities, outcomes, and assessment strategies.	Example and Template of the worksheet that identifies the relation between learning outcome, online CEL project, CEL project Activities, Reflection activities and Assessment strategies
Student Group resources / Student Toolkit	For students interested in collaborating with group members and/or community partners	Guidelines and templates for Group formation Ideas for researching and communicating with community partners Suggestive framework for Project planning and Management
Student Preparation	Workshop offerings for all	Topics include creating strategic project budgets, understanding community assets, and strengthening community partnerships, as well as how to scope a community-based project and facilitate conversations.

<p>Online Resources</p>	<p>Anyone who needs additional resources for online teaching and learning</p>	<p>References -</p> <p>UBC's Guiding Principles for Fall 2020</p> <p>UBC's Keep Teaching website</p> <p>The Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education</p> <p>Equity, diversity and inclusion in online teaching.</p> <p>teaching and learning resources by UBC wellbeing</p> <p>key considerations and guiding principles for the use of synchronous online teaching by Niagara College</p>
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Appendix B Key Concepts

Importance of 'Place' in Community Engaged Learning

Community engaged learning) can be defined as a structured learning in the community setting to meet the pedagogical as well as community developmental objectives (Comeau et al, 2019, Fedorowicz, Arena and Burrowes, 2020, Prakash, Grunhut and Howard, 2020). Prakash, Grunhut and Howard (2020) assert that “creates opportunities for first-hand and lived experiences with diverse populations and community partners who provide front-line care and program delivery”(n.a). Fedorowicz, Arena, and Burrowes (2020) state that -based projects are particularly helpful for engaging people who have been left out of engagement in developmental projects or community engagement activities. These groups include people with limited internet access, the elderly, immigrants, homeless people, people with disabilities or illness, low-income groups, non-English language speakers, etc. (p.2). Through projects, people can be informed, involved, collaborated, and empowered for transforming their lives.

In higher education, projects can ground on the theories of service-learning or experiential learning, and can be carried out through internships, course components, practical pilot projects, or research-based studies (Fedorowicz, Arena and Burrowes, 2020; Furco, 1996). The way in which communities can be engaged is through townhalls, participatory budgeting, community mapping, planning, surveys, participatory research, focus groups, etc. (Fedorowicz, Arena and Burrowes, 2020). Whether community engagement is done through virtual, hybrid, or in-person practice, remains “an essential component of a liberal education that can help students practice clinical skills, develop cultural humility and cross-cultural knowledge, gain an understanding of social inequities and disparities, and build positive relationships with their community” (Veyvoda and Cleave, 2020, n.a.).

The Centre for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL) at UBC acknowledges community engaged learning as “a powerful pedagogy, allowing students to learn immersively, both from the expertise of the community and discipline and from the experience of being in a place itself, especially through its sights, smells, history, landscapes, people and stories” (CCEL Annual report, 2019). In a based project at UBC, “students learn by doing, observing, applying, analyzing, creating and changing, alongside their community partners, using guidance from disciplinary lenses, primarily in place-based settings” (CCEL Annual report, 2019).

The Concept of 'Place' in Place-based Pedagogy

As the name suggests, the role of 'place' in place-based learning holds a pivotal role in the education and learning process outside the classroom. The "place gives lessons an added practical, demonstrated dimension that isn't necessarily present in conventional Western models of teaching" (Hoskins website, 2015). Eleanor Hoskins (2015) from the Faculty of Education at UBC emphasized the importance of geographical location in engaging students in place-based learning. Peter Renshaw and Ron Tooth in their book, *Diverse pedagogies of Place*, 2018, explain that "Place" can be described and conceptualized into seven diverse forms- "(place as) advocacy, story, slow time, walking, sacred, shifting sands and the edge" (p.1). They prefer to call place-based education "place-responsive pedagogies" (p.2) as both educator and learner make deep connections with the land through their consciousness. They posited that "place-responsive pedagogy relies on a relational ontology of place-making through the intermingling of "learners, places, stories, and all kinds of entities" (p.2). Through improved interactions between educators and learners close to land and environment, new pedagogical possibilities emerge across various times and spaces, and new agencies are made between educators and learners. In the words of Smith (2002), the aim of place-based education, "is to ground learning in local phenomena and students' lived experience" (p.586) to make useful connections with the communities for social change. Therefore "place-based pedagogies are needed so that the education of citizens might have some direct bearing on the well-being of the social and ecological places people actually inhabit" (Gruenewald, 2003, p.2). Grounding in the theoretical concepts such as decolonization and critical pedagogy, place-based learning in the studies of First Nations, and community development promotes a new approach to education and learning for making meaningful change in the future. Gruenewald, 2003)

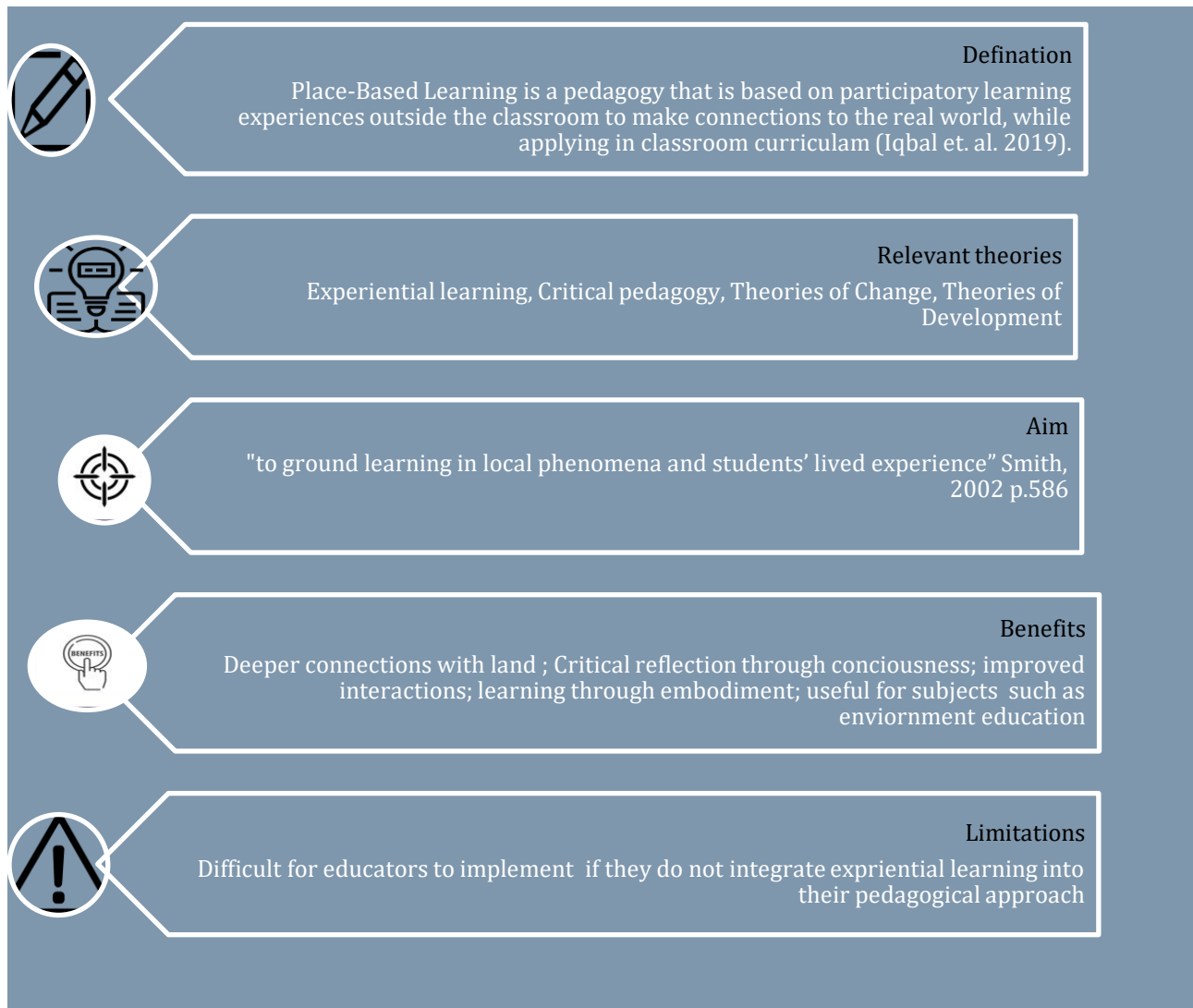


Figure: The concept of Place-based learning

David A. Gruenewald (2003) in the paper, *The Best of Both Worlds A Critical Pedagogy of Place* has provided a rationale for place-based learning as a critical pedagogical approach that can evoke many forms of adult learnings such as experiential learning (Kolb and Kolb, 2005), contextual learning (Berns and Ericson, 2001), problem-based learning (Savery, 2006), constructivism (Hein, 1991), outdoor education (Rubens, 1997), indigenous education (Hoskins, 2015), environmental and ecological education (Tidball and Krasny, 2011), bioregional education (Sickler and Hayde, 2016), democratic education (Sant, 2019), multicultural education (Christine, 2011), and community-based education (Brown, 2011; Joseph and Said, 2020). Some authors such as Loveless (n.a), and Miller (2019) mentioned that the only limitation, place

based learning can entail is its integration with the teacher's approach that do not include experiential learning component. Educators therefore can easily embrace this challenge by altering their subjective ideas and apply the principles of experiential learning through which students can solve the problems of local communities.