Patterns on Civic Engagement, Service Learning and Campus Community Partnerships from the "Program for the Advancement of Service Learning and Social Responsibility of Universities"

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In Germany, a growing number of universities begin to explore their neighborhoods, engaging in partnerships with community organisations and involving students in service learning and civic engagement activities. Across regions practitioners gain experience in the design and promotion of community-based teaching approaches. In order to meet future challenges, a program has been set up to foster pattern-based exchange between teaching staff, students and engagement coordinators. This paper presents the first steps in developing a pattern language, which meets likewise educational activities. It contains the three preliminary patterns RIGHT PEOPLE FOR RIGHT PROBLEMS, IMPROVE STUDENTS' COOPERATION SKILLS and ATTRACT UNBIASED TEACHING STAFF.

PLEASE NOTE: This is the revised Writers' Workshop Version of the EuroPLoP'13 conference.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past few years many universities in Germany have developed distinct practices in interacting with local community partners and integrating civic engagement into their curricula through the "Service Learning" (SL) pedagogy. As didactic approaches towards campus-community partnerships (CCP) gain more relevance, the nation-wide university network "education through responsibility" has been constantly growing bigger since 2009. In order to foster the exchange between practitioners in the field, i.e. teachers, learning researchers, students, community partners, coordinators and policy makers, the development of a pattern language has been initiated. In this paper first results of the "Programme for the Advancement of Service Learning and Social Responsibility of Universities" funded by the German Federal Ministry for Families, Senior Citizens, Women and Youths (BMFSFJ) are presented. By providing patterns of SL and CCP approaches on the online platform Campus-vor-Ort.de, the programme aims at promoting communication and cooperation between places of higher education and civil society. These patterns serve as a basis for practitioners' discussion, further research and expert training.

The pattern approach has been chosen, as educational design patterns repeatedly proved to be a useful methodology, which makes it possible to explicate tacit knowledge and encourage discussion on teaching practices between experts [Anthony 1996; Baumgartner 2012]. Many educational design patterns have already been published – also on problem-based learning, see e.g. [Fricke and Völter 2000 or Schmolitzky 2007] – but none of them explicitly discuss the aspect of integrating community organisations and civic actors into teaching practices. Still, the presence of a "third actor" aside teacher and student requires competencies and teaching strategies, which differ from traditional models. An openness to interdisciplinary work is a precedent condition as well as the ability to deal with increased complexity and the understanding of forces that underlie in open and innovative educational settings.

In this paper, after a definition of service learning and related terms, the structure of the proposed pattern language is being deducted. As patterns are developed in a participatory process with relevant actors in a pragmatic fashion, no complete map of the contained patterns can be drawn. However one can see from the involved actors, which sort of patterns is likely to be written. The proposed patterns are not necessarily the most

significant ones but those where the authors felt that they could make their best contribution. The paper authors themselves are expert trainers, teachers, organisational developers and students, who thereby account for a broad range of perspectives.

2. DEFINITION OF SERVICE LEARNING AND RELATED TERMS

The three terms civic engagement, service learning and CCP are closely interconnected. Service learning names the pedagogical method of integrating civic engagement into academic teaching by addressing real-world problems of the community within the framework of student projects [Seifert and Zentner 2010]. Thus society will benefit from a concrete profit through CCPs while students can address significant actual issues in responsible ways. This service experience produces an action- and experience-oriented learning environment that encourages strategies apart from common ways of thinking, substantive and continuous reflection and the experience of practical problem solving [Sliwka 2007].

Thus service learning promises a positive influence on the personal and social development of youths, they can gain a clearer sense of their identity, self-worth and belonging and develop fundamental key competences. To conclude, service learning can on the one hand make education more meaningful and relevant, on the other hand CCPs have the potential to close the gap between educational institutions and their communities.

3. THE PATTERNS

In this paper we propose the three patterns RIGHT PEOPLE FOR RIGHT PROBLEMS, IMPROVE STUDENTS' COOPERATION SKILLS and ATTRACT UNBIASED TEACHING STAFF. The structure that these patterns follow is on the one hand based on Peter Baumgartner's elaborations on educational patterns for e-learning [2012], and on the other it is influenced by precedent pattern languages that focus on educational issues [Pedagogical Patterns Project, Fricke and Völter 2000, Schmolitzky 2007 or Schuler 2008].

The format inherent in the following patterns is divided into two larger and one appended section, the first of which involving the challenge and the forces, the second presenting one possible solution, a critical discussion and the new situation.

The description of the *challenge* introduces the pattern, so that the reader can quickly decide whether it relates to his or her situation or not. What follows is a closer analysis of the conflicting *forces* that further define the challenge. There are numerous factors of influence for every challenge, such as social, economic or spatial circumstances, different participating actors and their interrelations, and this section exemplifies which forces are dealt with when applying the solution. Thus, it has to be regarded as an approach to the ideal *solution*. Advantages and disadvantages, newly resulting problems and weaknesses of the solution are to be reviewed in the subsequent *discussion*. The *new situation*, which is the consequence of applying the pattern, goes back to the beginning in a way that it reflects upon the circumstances again. For the user of the pattern this section makes definite what is likely to be the outcome of making use of the pattern at hand [Baumgartner 2012].

The last section, which varies from the previous ones with regard to style, is a passage that tells a *story*. This story can focus on the development of the solution, it can provide fictional or non-fictional examples of situations, in which the pattern is applied, or it can describe the consequences of using the pattern. Here he authors are free to narrate in a way they find helpful for the reader to decide whether the pattern is suitable for his or her situation.

As many actors contribute to the field of service learning, the following visualization shows, which fields are likely to be represented in the evolving pattern language.
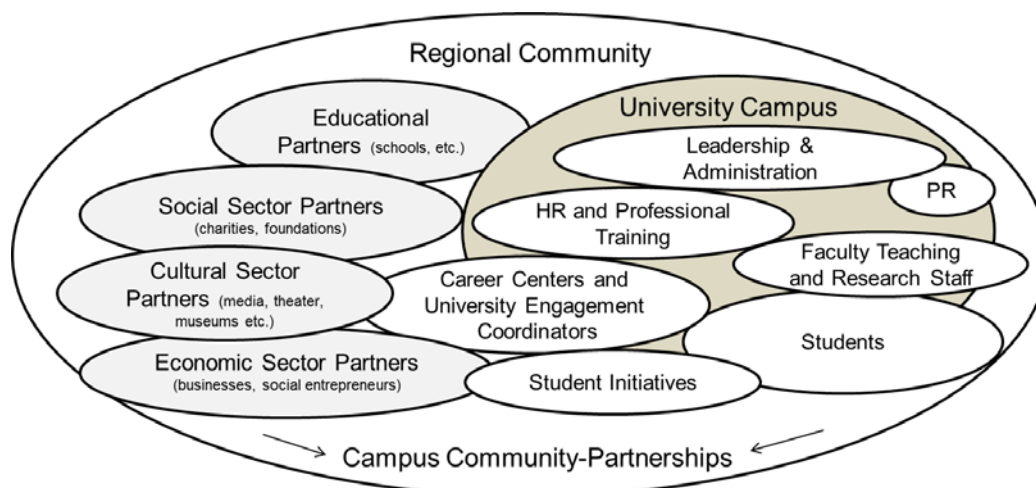
Pattern: RIGHT PEOPLE FOR RIGHT PROBLEMS

Author: Philip Meyer

❖❖❖ Challenge ❖❖❖

For an ambitious service learning project to be successful, it is essential that the students involved have a motivation to participate. Motivation is largely driven by social dynamics within the team as well as an interest in the SL task given. There are ways to ensure that the right group of people (students and community partners) meets the right problem, so that the project is less likely to end up as a failure.

Therefore, from the perspective of a service learning teacher and project coordinator it is important to put together teams at the start of the semester that work on the basis of shared interests and matching competencies. This ensures that teams are able to handle projects to the satisfaction both of their own and the partner organisations. Under the circumstances of limited time and space, finding the right constellations is highly demanding. If teachers do not actively encourage group formation, teams tend to be less motivated, short-lasting and unlikely to be equipped with the features needed to perform adequately in collaboration with their partners. Also, team composition can be less stressful for the teacher when s/he tackles it in a structured way.

❖❖❖ Forces ❖❖❖

Potential student team members are likely to know each other from other courses. Often preferences are articulated regarding who to work with in a group. A teacher should be aware of these preferences and their influence on motivation. Nevertheless s/he also has to manage group size, not allowing teams to get too big or that partners do not get any student support at all.

A group formation process must include mechanisms to distribute the students on as many projects as possible. The ideal team composition process respects the partners' need for getting student participants and informing them adequately, as well as the individual interest and team work preferences of the students. The process must remain feasible under the circumstances of limited time and capacities, so the partners' urge to inform thoroughly must be channeled (see solution: information phase) and boundaries should be set for the students' will to make overly thought-out decisions (see solution: voting phase).

❖❖❖ Solution ❖❖❖

A four-step team formation process for service learning courses has repeatedly proven to be useful to support the composition of SL teams over a period of 2-3 weeks. Various forms of medial presentation are applied, using web technologies to support phases of both information and voting.

This is how it works:

1. First Information Phase. Already a few weeks before the beginning of the semester, the partner organisations send a PROJECT IDEAS FORM to the service learning teacher, which thoroughly describes ideas for

student projects. The teacher then hands information on project ideas to the students before the semester starts by communicating them through the web. Firstly, only the following aspects are shared: Who is the project partner? (with organisation logo) What is the project title? (includes field of commitment, target group and rough description of the task)

2. First Voting Phase. The students are now asked on the first seminar session to give multiple unbinding votes on project ideas that sound generally interesting to them. A free online voting tool is suitable for supporting this step (e.g. tricider.com, see www.tricider.com/de/brainstorming/KEZK for an example service learning vote). The students should be actively encouraged by the teacher to give many votes for different ideas, so that the broad interests are captured in this step. Also the voting via tricider or similar tools is easily accessible, not requiring any registration or student data except the prename. The voting phase should go over a period of 1-2 weeks.

3. Second Information Phase. In order to bring students and partners together for the discussion of project ideas, the partner organisations with the most famous ideas are invited to the 90 min. second course session to present their ideas in 10 minutes (approx. 7 partners, who present their ideas) and answer questions on the projects. Also, the full information material (see step 1) is now communicated to the students. Moreover the students get the chance to talk to each other about the projects and find potential team partners in an INTRODUCTORY SERVICE LEARNING COURSE SESSION.

4. Second Voting Phase. After the introductory session the students are required by the teacher to adjust their project preferences in the online voting tool (see step 2) on the basis of the presentations and discussions they had on that day. The decision they make within a week after the session is binding. The teacher then decides on the data basis of the two voting phases about the team composition. Goal is to find the balance between a) enabling as many projects as possible an b) giving each student at least one of the projects he favored in voting phase 1 or 2. With the help of the preference data it is easier for the teacher to balance the individual interest of students and community partners.

❖❖❖ Discussion ❖❖❖

The solution has been successful three times in an interdisciplinary service learning course at the University of Augsburg, which was attended by students of media, economics and pedagogy. It worked for low numbers of participants as well as for higher number (~25 students in ten projects), meaning that overall partners and students were very happy with the results of the project work. Despite this success, a good team composition process cannot ensure that matching competencies really come together that are suitable for the project work. It can only mark the beginning of a close communication between teachers, partners and students. In the tested cases, motivation was kept high over the whole collaboration period. This is at least partly coming from the circumstance that all students earn credit points for their participation in modules of their study programmes. There are no experiences with how this process works for solely voluntary course participation. Furthermore it has not been tested what happens when one of the four steps is left out, as always all steps have been gone through until now.

❖❖❖ New Situation ❖❖❖

When you take the students' preferences into account to such a high degree as in the described solution, it can happen that partner organisations don't get any students at all for their ideas. This problem is not to be solved here, the ideas are simply not realised in that case. The pattern SAYING „NO!", DISAPPOINTING PARTNERS shows ways to keep disappointment low on the side of the partners in order to ensure future collaboration. Moreover it might happen that students change their decisions after completion of the voting process. Clear communication and the open articulation of arguments can help to bring the composition process to an end, which is acceptable for all parties. Another possible drawback is that the solution might be time-intensive as it is best to discuss project ideas with the partner organisations via telephone or face-2-face. This takes time and commitment from the teacher side.

<div align="center">❖❖❖ Story ❖❖❖</div>

The following story shows what can happen, if RIGHT PEOPLE FOR RIGHT PROBLEMS is not applied and group formation is left to chance in the INTRODUCTORY SERVICE LEARNING COURSE SESSION.

In his first week at university, John attends the introductory session of the faculty's service learning course. It's the beginning of summer term 2013. Initially on this day, John is really motivated to take on a project. He listens carefully to the words of the teacher, who explains the service learning method to the students. Ten local social organisations have been invited to present project ideas in few minutes of time each. In John's eyes, the first two speakers do a really good job in explaining their ideas, though they remain a bit unspecific and present too long, giving more background information than required. The following speakers tend to rush through their presentations, knowing that they haven't got much time left. John would have liked to ask several questions to the speakers, but there was no possibility. Already frustrated, John waits until the presentations are over. Two speakers didn't even get the chance to present at all. For the last few presentations, it was already hard to focus and listen. Now the teacher is asking the two dozens of students in the room for their preferred projects and starts composing teams. John is confused. He would have liked to get more time and information to decide, which project suits best for him. Also, talking to his fellow students would have helped. Uncertain of how to react, John raises his hand for the first project idea that caught his attention.

Pattern: IMPROVE STUDENTS' COOPERATION SKILLS

Author: Nadine Ruda

❖❖❖ Challenge ❖❖❖

The problem arises when students work in personal cooperation with a community partner organisation, what they usually do in service learning projects.

They are most likely not used to having work relationships with professionals from outside the university. Therefore, students might not know what to expect or how to behave, they might even encounter their partner with the distinct awareness of hierarchy and might feel inferior to them. This causes intimidation and insecurity that inevitably inhibits them to act self-confidently. In consequence, students are not able to present their ideas convincingly, to defend their point of view or to utter constructive criticism. In the long term, this will impair the success of the cooperation project.

❖❖❖ Forces ❖❖❖

Students, mostly those with little or no working experience, might feel uncomfortable when they leave their familiar surroundings. They are used to being in contact with fellow students, lecturers and tutors and are most of the time in a situation where they are taught something. In the world of employment they will no longer be treated as 'learners' but as experts in their field, which means they are expected to achieve something.

At university, which is an educational setting, their achievements are mostly appreciated. However, in cooperation with professionals they will have to defend their ideas and convince their conversation partner. Not being used to that situation, their insecurity will hinder them from actively participating in the conversation and if the partner more eloquently and insistently presents his position or expectations, they will not be able to contribute a lot to the process themselves.

❖❖❖ Solution ❖❖❖

The lecturer or tutor has to prepare the students for their cooperation. This means that service learning seminars have to include the training of some skills, such as communication and consulting skills, furthermore, the role of the students as experts has to be made clear.

Before the service itself starts, there are normally discussions within each group and the ideas and results are to be presented before the rest of the seminar. Throughout the semester, the students are also regularly asked to present the process of their project to the class. Regularly practicing presentations students will learn to cope with the pressure and their nervousness and they get used to giving explanations without long preparations. Participating in group discussions they will train to articulate and to defend their opinion and to find arguments

spontaneously to convince the other team members. Usually in every group and in every class there are students who take over such tasks very willingly and who participate very actively. However, the workshop leader ought to encourage those students who do never present or lead any conversation voluntarily.

To make students aware of the non-hierarchical nature of the cooperation, it is important to already introduce it as such from the very beginning. On top of that, the mixture of not only practical work but also theoretical content will give the students a background against which to argue. The seminar gives room to discuss and revise issues that are current for the individual groups, so that they feel they have the knowledge available that they need in the cooperation.

Finally, it is important for a successful project that the tutor also instructs the partner beforehand.

❖❖❖ Discussion ❖❖❖

The main weakness of this solution is temporal resources: It is important to train the students' social skills, however, it can be the case that there is no time for that. Similarly, there is maybe no room for revisions and discussions of individual problems.

On top of that, the workshop leader is in the end only able to prepare the group not accompany it throughout the whole process. And there is no guarantee that the tutor is able to encourage every student to actively participate in group discussions and presentations.

❖❖❖ New Situation ❖❖❖

However, if practicable, both sides, the students and the cooperation partner, will benefit from this solution. Confident students enable dynamic cooperation that usually results in successful projects. In that way, service learning will in the long run even improve the students' social skills and they will recognize how theoretically learned knowledge can become a tool in practice.

❖❖❖ Story ❖❖❖

The following story shows how students that are adequately trained and feel confident may react in a conflicting situation:

It was in a quality management seminar that students were involved in the exercise of developing a standardized questionnaire for all employees of a nursing care facility. The aim was to collect data about the employees' contentment with their work and the organisation in general. The students' contact person who was the managing director openly admitted that he expected mainly positive feedback, as he intended to use the results of the poll for an advertising campaign to recruit new employees.

So the students were confronted with choosing between fulfilling the partner's expectations properly or developing a scientifically valid questionnaire that would probably bring about critical perspectives. They regretted that their partner did not appreciate the opportunity to get valid data and the possibility of encountering deficits of his organisation. Thus, the students proposed to select the collected data according to private and public relevance and the managing director was very content with this suggestion. Not only was he impressed that the students uttered disagreement, but he was as well very thankful that they pointed out his deficient approach. After all, he found the new perspective that he now had access to very inspiring and was willing to improve what his employees had criticized. Moreover, there was still enough material that could be used for a successful and authentic campaign.

Pattern: ATTRACT UNBIASED TEACHING STAFF

Author: Jörg Miller

❖❖❖ Challenge ❖❖❖

It is always a challenge to encourage teaching staff to use new innovative methods, most of all if they have been in their position for a long period of time. But also new teaching people become creatures of habit rapidly enough. In the first case this is due to self-assurance and conviction, in the second case it is caused by insecurity and adaptation. As research assistants and professors have to prove themselves in a very broad field of activity, especially those who have been at the university for a long period of time are frequently not willing to alter the format of their sessions. They recoil from new methods that they have no experience with because of the expected additional expenditure of time and effort. They fear modification particularly when there is no transparent additional value for their scientific career and simply because old and well-known methods have proven well. Teaching staff that has just come to a new university is unfortunately particularly willing to adapt to their superiors and to follow the old and proven conventions at the university. Furthermore, although they might be more motivated and open in their attitude towards teaching, they are affected by insecurity and thus easily influenced by colleagues. On top of that, they have to cope with various tasks of organisational, social and economic nature so they might not be willing to take over extra time exposure, as well.

Acknowledging this situation, service learning has not yet become an acquainted didactic method in the daily life of university. Teaching people who might not have heard about it at all are likely to be even more skeptical and as long as there is no increase of service learning practitioners at a university this rejection on the base of ignorance will continue.

❖❖❖ Forces ❖❖❖

Longstanding teaching staff tends to behave in a reactionary way, when they are asked to change their accustomed ways of teaching. Newly hired research assistants and professors, however, usually have to orient themselves, not merely in the new surroundings of the university but also with regard to the format of their sessions. They have little social contacts that can influence them and equally little experience with the local student body. Furthermore, they are lacking a network of regional actors and a status in the local scientific community.

❖❖❖ Solution ❖❖❖

In order to achieve an increase in service learning practitioners at university it is most fruitful that the Campus-Community-Center addresses newly hired teaching staff members. Those "rookies" do not yet hold a long-established position and might thus be willing to change their habitual teaching ways.

It is advisable to establish contact as early as possible and to proceed according to the following steps:

1. Present extensive information about service learning itself and about individual possibilities of simple implementation in a course. Of major importance is rather practical information, such as disciplinarily related examples that have worked out well before and concrete indications for implementation, for which patterns could serve very well (see Welcome Package).

2. Make the scientific value of service learning clear. Whereas the research assistants and professors are well aware of the additional expenditure of resources, however, the increased benefit might not be transparent to them at all. Thus it is important to point out the concrete values of service learning relevant to him or her, that is to depict the significant advantages of an action-oriented learning environment, the remarkable influence on the working atmosphere and the possibility to become active in networking among the community.

3. Offer support and steady contact if you can. It is likely that the assurance of constant accompaniment can encourage the teaching person to try out something new.

❖❖❖ Discussion ❖❖❖

This solution has proved helpful in the process of teaching staff member acquisition. Insecurity on their side concerning the legality of cooperating with external organisations (see Am I Allowed To Do Service Learning?) and concerning their ability of cooperating with communal partners (see Am I Able To Do Service Learning?) are obstructive factors. To reveal and to counteract to them, these insecurities must be met with individual consultation and following company.

❖❖❖ New Situation ❖❖❖

Since the acclimatization phase of newly hired teaching staff is the best opportunity to spread service learning, there ought to be more measures (see Welcome Package) to reach out to those people.

❖❖❖ Story ❖❖❖

The following story is an example of how Attract Unbiased Teaching Staff can provide a useful solution. It is based on the concrete personal experience of the author.

As part of an information event at the university a member of the local CCP center met the Politics lecturer Dieter, who had just started to work at the university. He was going to prepare his new seminars and the CCP Center member talked to him about the ways to use service learning in his specific disciplinary context as well as about the support services he could expect. They agreed upon a follow-up meeting in which they developed a concept for a service learning seminar with Politics-related content. Dieter started teaching his first service learning seminar in the following semester. He communicated his contentment with the CCP Center's preparation and support. He enjoyed the cooperation and felt not only encouraged to try out SL for the first time but was also pleased to have a steady contact with the members of the CCP Center from the beginning on.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Appendix A

In this appendix we present all patterns that are related to the three patterns proposed in this paper. They are of different states, but the ones that have already been written are available in German language and will be published within the next two years on www.campus-vor-ort.de.

Related patterns: RIGHT PEOPLE FOR RIGHT PROBLEMS

The patterns are related to RIGHT PEOPLE FOR RIGHT PROBLEMS in the sense that they are all written from the perspective of a teacher, who is confronted with initiating student service learning projects.

— PROJECT IDEAS FORM [Meyer, unpublished] - Partner organisations should be encouraged to send their project ideas to the university. The pattern tells how to develop a project ideas form in a structured way.
— INTRODUCTORY SERVICE LEARNING SESSION [Meyer, unpublished] - The first impression is important. This is why some effort should be put in the design of the first service learning session.
— SAYING „NO!", DISAPPOINTING PARTNERS [Meyer, unpublished] - Not every idea gets student support. Acknowledging this reality, we need to find empathic ways to give the "bad news" to the partners, showing possibilities for future collaboration.

Related patterns: IMPROVE STUDENTS' COOPERATION SKILLS

For the reader who is confronted with a situation in which IMPROVE STUDENTS' COOPERATION SKILLS is a relevant pattern, the following ones may be helpful, too. All of them focus on students and their successful interaction with cooperation partners.

— ACCEPTING DIFFERENCES [Ruda, unpublished] – Deficits in communication can be caused by a lack of understanding each other. Thus, students and partner organisations ought to get to know each other and accept their differences.
— PARTNER-CASTING [Ruda, unpublished] – Students ought to freely chose their future partner. Therefore, it is helpful if he/she presents himself in a competition along with the other partners.
— STUDENTS AS EXPERTS [Miller, unpublished] – This pattern discovers the shifting roles in service learning with regard to students and tutors.
— VISITING EACH OTHER [Ruda, unpublished] – An enduringly comfortable working environment can be created by exchanges of visits: the students go to the partner organisation and the partner comes to the university, as well.

Related patterns: ATTRACT UNBIASED TEACHING STAFF

The following patterns relate to ATTRACT UNBIASED TEACHING STAFF as they also target SL developers and coordinators at universities. They are written from the perspective of a SL developer.

— WELCOME PACKAGE [Miller, unpublished] - The Welcome Package is a collection of information material about the service learning approach, about didactical settings and about support options in the organisation and beyond. It is passed from the university principal to the professors during the vocation call and has a formal meaning.
— INFORMATION MEETING [Miller; unpublished] - The briefing intents to inform teachers about the methodology and support options for service learning at the university.
— CAMPUS COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP CENTER [Miller unpublished] - The CCP Center is an organisational unit at a university, which supports the implementation of service learning, The unit fulfills tasks such as acquisition of new lecturers, partner matching and course and curriculum development. At the same time the center is responsible for the interface management between Non-Profit organisations and university.
— AM I ALLOWED TO DO SERVICE LEARNING? [Miller, unpublished] - Organisational framework condition for the implementation of service learning.
— AM I ABLE TO DO SERVICE LEARNING? [Miller, unpublished] – The pattern formulates the skills needed to do service learning for recruitment processes.