Chapter 8
Academic Service-Learning as a Pedagogical Tool and Strategy:
Promoting Critical Thinking among Pre-Service Teachers

Estanislado S. Barrera, IV
Louisiana State University, USA

Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell
Louisiana State University, USA

ABSTRACT

This chapter presents academic service-learning (AS-L) as a pedagogical tool and strategy for promoting critical thinking among pre-service teachers. The results of the two cases discussed reveal that many well-intentioned young education majors' frames of reference about urban education indicate a dissonance of experience. Public urban education in the US is becoming increasingly stratified with teachers representing White, female, middle income backgrounds and resultant perspectives, but public school children in the United States represent families of color and communities that are predominantly poor. AS-L truly promotes critical thinking about teaching and learning, especially when the tensions surrounding difference surface. Findings indicate that pre-service teachers must first overcome bias, negative expectations, and stereotypes before they synthesize the elements of the instructional process that leads to achieving reflective praxis.

INTRODUCTION

Public urban education in the United States (US) is becoming increasingly bifurcated with teachers representing White, female, middle income backgrounds and resultant perspectives while urban public school populations primarily consist of children in the US from families of color and communities that are predominantly poor (Au, 2006; Ayres & Ford, 1996; Compton-Lilly, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Freedman, Simons & Casareno, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Sulentic Dowell, 2008, 2009, 2012). This dynamic gives rise to tensions between the lived experiences of

teachers which can be markedly different than the lived experiences of the students with whom they teach (Barnes, 2006; Cochran-Smith, 2000; Delpit, 1995; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994). One example of this can be found at Louisiana State University (LSU) in the School of Education where the majority of the elementary education candidates are White, female, and from middle-income households preparing to teach in public school districts that are predominantly Black and populated with students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This dissonance of experience between teacher and student is exacerbated by the fact that the participants' personal K-12 school experiences reflect parochial education environments. This dissonance requires pre-service teachers to think critically about their practice and the decisions they will make in the classroom. The purpose of this study was to investigate how pre-service teachers' engagement with academic service-learning (AS-L) promoted critical thinking (CT).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For the purpose of this study, we turned to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory to guide our research. Building on Dewey's (1910, 1916, 1933) work, Kolb's (1984) model outlines how learning involves the translation of experiences through the process of reflection into understanding, which is then applied through active experimentation in the form of new experiences (See Figure 1). Zuber-Skerritt (1992), found it to be a "comprehensive theory which offers the foundation for an approach to education and learning as a lifelong process and which is soundly based in intellectual traditions of philosophy and cognitive and social psychology" (p. 98). Highlighting the significance of reflection, Anderson and Adams (1992) supported that Kolb's theory "is rooted in a theory of learning that affirms all major aspects of active learning, usefully accounting for an array of individual and culturally derived differences" (p. 25).

Figure 1. Kolb's Experiential Learning Process.
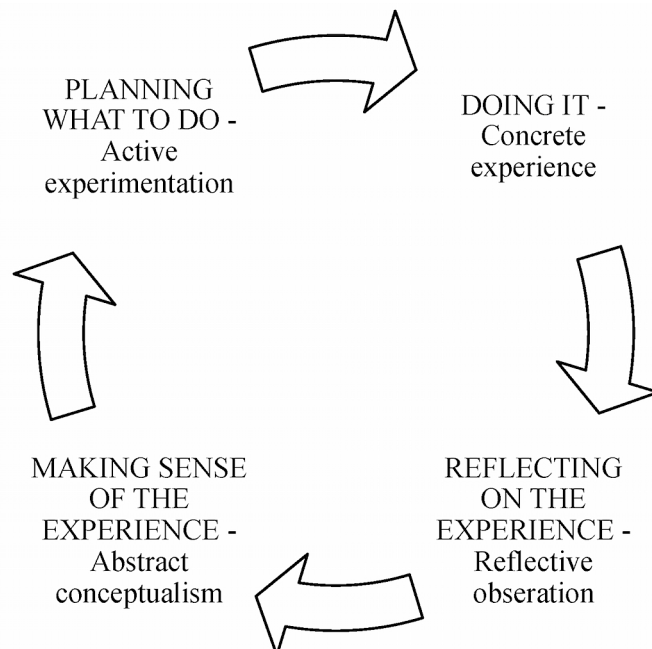
22 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/academic-service-learning-as-a-pedagogical-tool-and-strategy/133718

Related Content

The Role of International Student Mobility and Language Policies in the Process of Internationalization of Higher Education: The Case of Turkey
Aylin Gözta, Emel Kuku Özdemirand Fusun Topsümer (2019). *Policies and Initiatives for the Internationalization of Higher Education (pp. 126-152).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-role-of-international-student-mobility-and-language-policies-in-the-process-of-internationalization-of-higher-education/213261

Civic Responsibility Development Among College Students: How Is It Different by Student Race?
Young K. Kim, Jennifer L. Carterand Cameron L. Armstrong (2017). *Cultural Awareness and Competency Development in Higher Education (pp. 92-110).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/civic-responsibility-development-among-college-students/177456

Degree Attainment in Online Learning Programs: A Study Using National Longitudinal Data
Heather Carter, Credence Baker, Kim Rynearsonand Juanita M. Reyes (2020). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (pp. 19-43).*
www.irma-international.org/article/degree-attainment-in-online-learning-programs/265505

Creating a Culture of Assessment: A Case Study for Building a Sustainable Model for Communicating Results to Guide Change
Amy E. Heathand Carrie Barrett (2024). *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (pp. 1-15).*
www.irma-international.org/article/creating-a-culture-of-assessment/337288

How Can Higher Education Create, Deliver, and Capture Value Through Microlearning?
Albert Rof, Andrea Bikfalviand Pilar Marques (2024). *Global Perspectives on Micro-Learning and Micro-Credentials in Higher Education (pp. 213-234).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/how-can-higher-education-create-deliver-and-capture-value-through-microlearning/340430