

Chapter 15

Pedagogical Approaches and Service–Learning in Teacher Preparation

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ABSTRACT

As the initial chapter in this volume, the authors set the tone by inviting service-learning practitioners who are situated within teacher education into dialogue regarding the foundational aspects of service-learning as an effective pedagogical approach for preparing pre-service teachers to teach from a culturally responsive stance. In this chapter, practitioners from across the field of teacher education's spectrum, from emerging scholars to veteran service-learning researchers, are encouraged to reflect on the ways they envision and position service-learning. Overall, service-learning is presented as a pedagogical approach involving various partners, including faculty, staff, students, community members, and agencies. This chapter foreshadows the varied methods and approaches contributors to this edited volume employ to strengthen and extend traditional field experiences and, thus, teacher preparation.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AND MODELS OF SERVICE-LEARNING IN TEACHER PREPARATION: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND COMPARISON

As career educators who took vastly different paths into teacher education in the United States (US), the co-authors of this introductory chapter and co-editors of this volume, Ty and Margaret-Mary, came to view service-learning as an instructive pedagogical method that can be implemented to adequately prepare teachers to teach proficiently and from a culturally-sensitive and inclusive perspective. Despite being separated by age, ethnicity, teacher preparation orientations, working environs, and living in locales over a 1000 miles from one another, the authors embrace service-learning as co-researchers and

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co-authors, bound by a shared vision of teaching and learning, especially, but not limited to – urban education – and a passion and deep commitment for socially just teacher education.

Ty began her teaching career, electing to pursue preparation as a Teach for America (TFA) Corps member in 2002, teaching in both the Rio Grande Valley in Texas (USA) and the Baltimore City Public Schools in Maryland (USA). Ty was drawn to teaching as an opportunity to be an authentic and visual representative of what is possible for children growing up in low-income communities of Color. Committed to education and TFA's mission, Ty returned to higher education, earned a Masters of Education degree from the University of Texas Pan-American (USA), then she pursued a PhD in education at Pennsylvania State University (USA). Ty has worked at a liberal arts institution, St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin (USA) since 2009. As the Co-Chair of Teacher Education and associate professor of education at St. Norbert, service-learning has emerged as a powerful theoretical orientation and purposeful pedagogic tool for Ty in preparing teachers to teach from a culturally competent stance in both rural Wisconsin and in the urban center of Green Bay.

Margaret-Mary chose a traditional path to teaching, enrolling in a former Normal School, the University of Northern Iowa (USA), first earning a Bachelor's Degree in Secondary English then a Masters of Arts in Education, specializing in literacy. After spending 15 years in public school classrooms in both Waterloo, Iowa and rural communities in northern Iowa and Minnesota (USA), Margaret-Mary earned her PhD in education at the University of Iowa. She then moved south, first to Mississippi (USA) as a teacher educator and Faculty Service-Learning Fellow at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, then to Louisiana (USA), initially as an assistant superintendent in a large urban public school district, supervising 64 elementary schools in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System in Louisiana, and then onto Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge in 2006 as a teacher educator and coordinator of the Grades 1-5 Teacher Education Program. For Margaret-Mary, service-learning has developed into a personal and professional theoretical perspective and a powerful pedagogical method for preparing teachers to teach from a culturally responsive perspective.

Ty and Margaret-Mary's paths converged around service-learning and literacy. Initially the authors functioned as distant associates with a shared interest in the potential impact of service-learning field components within teacher preparation. The authors soon began investigating service-learning as a more nuanced and specific method. Finally, as close colleagues and co-collaborators, Ty and Margaret-Mary share a view of service-learning as an optimal pedagogical pathway to preparing teachers to teach literacy authentically in varied environments and configurations (Sulentic Dowell, 2008; 2009; Sulentic Dowell & Meidl, 2016) co-aligned within a broader social justice framework (Sulentic Dowell, Barrera, Meidl & Saal, 2015).

Perhaps due to the escalating high stakes accountability environment or increasing political scrutiny of both literacy and teacher preparation, over time, Ty and Margaret-Mary have discovered that within the teacher education field, varied assumptions are often made regarding personal perspectives of service-learning and field experiences. Surmising that misperceptions about the nature of interactions with communities, potential misunderstandings about the characteristics, qualities, and purposes of field experiences themselves, and possibly, a lack of knowledge about the elements of service-learning, all contribute to a dearth of tolerance, consideration, and support for service-learning as a pedagogy – a pathway to preparing teachers to teach.

In response to the many variations of field work in teacher education, diverse perspectives of service-learning, and differing kinds of teacher preparation programming in the US and globally, the authors thought it was important to briefly trace the tradition of service-learning initiatives within teacher edu-

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