

Chapter 54

Preparing Globally Competent Educators Through Critically Engaging in Service–Learning

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ABSTRACT

As teacher-preparation programs educate and evaluate candidates to become globally competent instructional leaders, special attention should be given to international service-learning. Immersing teacher candidates in real-world experiences beyond their comfort zone is a cornerstone of this theoretical inquiry, including self-reflection strategies grounded on Paulo Freire's liberatory pedagogy for social justice. The research team reviews self- and cultural-awareness experiences, dispositions, and profiles of university teacher candidates, during a semester of curriculum studies affording opportunities to engage in local, local to global, and/or global/international service-learning. The discoveries will inform teacher educators as they develop and strengthen critical inquiry and service-learning components of their own courses.

INTRODUCTION: THE FUNNELS THROUGH WHICH WE FILTER OUR WORLD

Teacher education is perhaps the most strategic field to engage in addressing social responsibility and justice because of the far-reaching impact of both in-service and pre-service teachers. This analysis explored the educational experiences and learning outcomes of local to global service-learning to add to the knowledge base regarding service-learning pedagogy.

As part of a university commitment to develop intercultural, international competence in teacher candidates, students critically reflect on their service-learning (SL) experiences through multiple analytical processes. This chapter evolved from graduate courses focused on curriculum methods and practitioner inquiry embedded in service-learning opportunities. Grounded on Paulo Freire's (1970/1986) liberatory pedagogy and critical inquiry focusing on social responsibility and justice, students engaged in local, regional, and/or international service learning.

OUR PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE BASE: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Defining International Service Learning

Service learning *is* the synergistic power of (a) academic study, (b) practical experience, and (c) civic engagement (Kniffin & Clayton, 2017, p. 3) in real-life settings with uncontrollable variables. The international component of this exploration is based on the definition espoused by Bringle and Hatcher (2011) who have defined *international service learning* (ISL) as:

A structured academic experience in another country in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that addresses identified community needs; (b) learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others; and (c) reflect on the experience in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a deeper understanding of global and intercultural issues, a broader appreciation of the host country and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally and globally. (p. 19)

Perhaps most problematic to teaching for global awareness is the third aspect of the Bringle and Hatcher definition—how educators plan for and assess the *reflection, deeper understanding and broader appreciation* for which Bringer and Hatcher call. The need for critically reflective teaching and learning strategies and assessments is paramount to developing service-learning curriculum to prepare globally competent educators. What these assessments might be and how they can be implemented were the primary focus of this theoretical exploration.

Bowman, Brandenberger, Mick, and Smedley (2010) determined that educationally effective community engagement experiences “integrate academic content into real-world experiences, take students out of their comfort zone for a sustained period of time, and [are] designed to achieve identified learning goals” (p. 26). Their research highlighted the importance of immersion experiences preceded and followed by opportunities for structured reflection and academic integration. Regarding dispositions toward equality, justice, and social responsibility, students in both short-term and longer courses gained significantly on the majority of outcomes (p. 20). A finding of the Bowman et al. research was that short-term immersion “may work especially well in the context of a semester if the immersion occurs

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