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COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE SETTINGS AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR STUDENT CONSTRUCTED CASE STUDIES

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This article describes the process of incorporating case study development by students in a teacher education methods course. Based on their one-on-one tutoring experience with a linguistically and culturally diverse child, teacher candidates engaged in the following activities: 1) review the elements that are necessary for case study development; 2) gather information about the sociocultural background of their tutees; 3) examine the contextual factors that may affect their tutees; 4) review the pedagogical factors that may be involved in the case; 5) write a rough draft; 6) revise and complete their case studies, and; 7) write a final reflection paper and give an oral presentation about their experience. The students weekly and final reflections, in addition to the high quality of their case studies, suggested that case study development by teacher candidates is an effective approach to increase their understanding of and competence to work with second language and culturally diverse people.

In a teacher preparation methods course for elementary and secondary education at the University of San Diego, the integration of community service learning and the development and application of the case methods are proving a powerful approach to assess the teacher candidates' understanding and ability to apply university course content. In constructing their case studies, teacher candidates must provide information that will require readers to identify the factors that contribute to the situations or problems facing an immigrant child they are tutoring one-on-one. Along with case design, candidates provide their own evaluation of the case. These case studies are then reviewed by the instructor and distributed to other students for analysis and evaluation in class. This form of case methods development departs from the more traditional use of case studies where the instructor or textbook provides the students with the material to be analyzed. Instead of asking the students to analyze hypothetical cases in light of theory covered in class and field based learning experiences, they are asked to build cases themselves. This paper describes salient aspects of this interactive instructional approach that has effectively contributed to building bridges between theory and practice.

Incorporating Case studies as Part of Experiential Education

Case studies are useful because they provide college students with opportunities for decision making based on personal beliefs and educational theories (Greenwood & Parkay, 1988) that lead to effective practices. In adding experiential education or community service learning as an element for constructing case studies, these students are able to make professional decisions

based on direct observation, interaction and practice with the subjects and school contexts with which they interact. Community service learning is a "pedagogical model that connects meaningful community service experiences with academic course learning" (Howard, 1993). It has proven effective to "socially engage students" (Alexander, 1993) and encourage active citizenship (Boyte & Farr, 1996). In the field of teacher education, research has shown that service learning helps to enhance prospective teachers "moral knowledge", and make them more aware of their own attitudes and biases. The experiences in the community also teach future teachers about inequities in the schools, and prepare them to teach populations who are culturally and linguistically diverse and different from them (Alexandrowicz & Kujawa, 1998; Anderson and Guest, 1993; Root & Bachelder, 1994; Root, 1997; Siegel, 1994; Sullivan, 1991).

The development of case studies by teacher candidates is part of a framework designed to achieve the course objectives for EDUC 145/245 "Methods for Language and Academic Development in English", which has an enrollment that ranges from 20 to 30 students each semester. These objectives include:

- Acquiring knowledge of theories and models of second language acquisition;
- acquiring knowledge of pedagogical factors affecting second language/literacy development;
- acquiring knowledge of cognitive and affective factors affecting second language learners development of literacy;
- developing an awareness of theory of bilingual education;

- acquiring knowledge about language arts programs for English learners;
- providing hands-on assessment of second language learners for instructional planning;
- developing and implementing lesson plans for language and academic development;
- becoming aware of the key issues that promote or hinder a student's access to equal and quality education;
- promoting an awareness of the relationship between socio-cultural contexts, second language development, and school success, and;
- understanding and being more sensitive to the process of language development and acculturation.

In designing a "balanced" approach between theory and practice, the course incorporates reading assignments; in class activities, such as analyses of curriculum materials; home assignments, including lesson planning for larger groups; and community service learning. During the service learning experience, teacher candidates tutor beginning second language learners one-on-one. Pupils are tutored in the areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing for ten hours, and participate in small-group instruction for ten additional hours -- twenty hours total per semester. In order to maximize the learning from the field experience, at least thirty minutes of the university course associated with service learning is devoted each week to discussion and feedback of teacher candidates' observations and feelings. A reflective dialogue approach is used among class members to facilitated in a conversation that is conducive to covering pedagogical, socio-cultural, or individual issues that may

arise. Furthermore, the instructor ensures that candidates make connections between their experiences and theory covered in class.

In this way, the examples that emerge from their own experience makes the content of the class not only more "real" and concrete, but also more meaningful as well. Throughout the semester, class members continue to collectively discuss different scenarios and the concepts imbedded in them that will help constructing and analyzing their own cases.

The Case Study Development Process
- In guiding the writing of case studies, the teacher candidates engage in seven main activities. The first activity consists of reviewing in class the "case study development pointers" based on Silverman's case study development process (1996). The instructor provides at least two examples of case studies to clarify the salient parts involved in developing a case. Some questions the instructor and tutors explore on the development of case studies include:
- Do you want to include one or more critical incident? Does the case pose a dilemma with no clear answers? Does it have emotional power? Is it complex to generate discussion?
- What will be the narrative voice? First, second, or third person? Is the story told by the tutee, tutor, teacher, parent, or another person's voice?
- How will you tell the story? chronologically in real time or through flashbacks? What information will be included? What information is missing? Is the story being told without bias?

Second, teacher education candidates must find background information about their tutees. Tutors must gather the information efficiently and quickly because a period of ten weeks does not usually allow for an in-depth investigation of the child's background. Critical to building the best possible student profile in such a short period of time is the examination of the child's socio-cultural and educational contexts. In the methods course, candidates use Cortes' "Contextual Interaction Model" (1986) to examine their students' educational successes and challenges. This model enables the tutors to consider a multiplicity of factors instead of using simplistic explanations that may lead to stereotyping. The "Contextual Interaction Model" helps to answer questions about the ways that school and non-school societal factors affect the students' schooling process. These factors include: a) educational input factors such as the educators/administrators' attitudes and expectations; b) students' qualities such as their family situation, language proficiency and academic levels, and; c) instructional elements such as curriculum, materials, teaching styles and pedagogical strategies. Teacher candidates are encouraged to plan literacy activities with their students; interact with the tutees' teacher, school principal, teacher aides, and parents; and to carefully observe the tutees' environment to elicit information about these factors.

The third activity is reviewing the "Pedagogical Factors list" for teaching second language learners. The "Pedagogical Factors list" is developed by the instructor with the candidates' input during the semester. It is based on the course readings, class discussions, videos, and reflections on community service learning. The list com-

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piles the most effective instructional practices for second language learners which generally includes instruction that a) is appropriate for level of language proficiency of the student; b) is student-centered, c) addresses a variety of learning styles and multiple intelligences, d) incorporates continuous modeling; e) incorporates experiential/authentic learning; f) uses a variety of assessments; g) incorporates the students' cultures; h) promotes collaboration; i) fosters critical thinking /cognitive development, and; j) is purposeful and relevant to the students lives. Teacher candidates are reminded to incorporate information in their cases that elicit examples of these factors. For instance, in a particular case study, there may be an elementary teacher who is expecting beginning second language students to read books at the fourth grade level. This practice is definitely inappropriate for the students' whose reading proficiency level in the English language is at a first grade level.

The fourth activity of the case study development process consists of a written weekly reflection that helps candidates examine their community service learning experience in light of the contextual and pedagogical factors that may affect their tutees' learning. In this assignment, they must comment on the challenges and successes they are facing. Candidates must provide specific suggestions based on optimal educational and social conditions that reduce factors which negatively affect/hinder their tutees' educational success. Thus, each candidate gradually constructs his/her own case study by using information gained through meetings with the tutee, school personnel and parents, by participating in the child's classroom, by exchanging ideas with peers in class, and by doing self-reflection on a continuous basis.

The fifth activity involves the writing of a rough draft of their case studies. This draft is shared in pairs during class where peers provide one another with feedback that takes into consideration the aforementioned factors and suggestions/ questions included in the "case development pointers. They are encouraged to provide "positive criticism" on content and writing style. The fact that this is not a class on case study development is stressed; hence, teacher candidates are not expected to be experts in this area. Instead, they must demonstrate an understanding of the theory covered in class and be able to identify concepts related to effective teaching for second language learners in real situations.

The sixth activity consists of revising and turning in completed case studies. The instructor then reviews each case, and selects two or three for whole class discussion at the end of the semester. The cases must include: 1) The socio-cultural and pedagogical factors influencing the case, written on the margin of the page next to the specific examples, and 2) the "teaching notes" to be used to provoke discussion. The teaching notes which were adapted from Silverman's (1996) notes include: a) A brief explanation of the factors/issues imbedded in the case; b) a minimum of three questions they would ask to provoke discussion of the issues; c) any information to understand the case better but that they were unable to gather; d) the sources of the information gathered and the sources they think may be needed to obtain any missing information; and, e) alternatives/solutions/approaches to help the educational situation.

. Finally, each teacher candidate writes a

final reflection paper that includes a brief description of the highlights, challenges, successes, outcomes, and things they would change about their tutoring experience based on a final reflection of writing a case. An oral presentation that reflects in a creative way (e.g. poster, picture book, poem, song, role play, etc.) these experiences is presented to the whole class. To help the instructor plan for future use of service learning and case writing, the candidates complete a course and service evaluation form.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Students' final reflections and comments included in the course evaluations suggest that they greatly benefited academically and personally from community service learning and writing case studies. Regarding building case studies the following student's comment represents other comments made in the evaluations:

> Creating a case study on my tutee forced me to look at the issues more in depth... the real reasons why he was failing in school. I realized that there isn't just one simple reason why my tutee and other immigrants are not learning in school...

In addition, by working on a weekly basis on establishing trust with and finding out more information about their tutees, a number of tutors stated that it was a life changing experience and that their global awareness expanded immensely :

> This experience is one I will carry with me throughout my entire life. I not only learned about an entirely

different culture , but I learned so much about myself, my strengths as a teacher, as a friend and as a mentor...I have gained a new insight of the world... He (tutee) has been through so much in life, but when I see his smile when he talks about living in America and the opportunities he has here puts a lot of things in perspective for me and my life...

Finally, regarding accomplishing course objectives related to methods and strategies for teaching second language learners, a number of comments pointed to how tutoring provided an important opportunity to understand the theory covered in class and through readings in light of practice:

> Beyond my personal experience, the educational experience has been invaluable. There are so many things that can't be taught or understood when reading about teaching. Being able to work with students and apply what you are learning throughout the semester makes such a difference! Tutoring, reflecting, and writing about my teaching and my tutor has helped me to learn about how difficult is to learn a second language and the difference between teaching and good teaching. I feel now much better prepared to help my students succeed.

In summary, the development of case studies by teacher candidates helps to better asses the teacher candidates' understanding of the factors and issues involved in educating second language learners, thus, preparing them to work more

effectively with culturally diverse people. The following are some of the benefits as a result of constructing case studies based on community service learning:

- College students research in greater depth the context, players and background related to their community service learning experience. This leads to a better understanding of the elements involved in the life of immigrants and, ultimately, to more effectively working with populations who are different from them.
- In order to develop the case and teaching notes, college students have to engage at all levels of cognitive thinking: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. This encourages teachers to become more critical and sophisticated thinkers/professionals.
- Additional reflection required for the case study promotes careful planning for each tutoring session, therefore increasing the quality of teaching. This benefits not only the university students but ultimately the immigrant child.
- The process for case study development based on experiential education and community service learning used in the methods course, could be adapted for courses across a variety of disciplines in higher education. Nevertheless, it may take a faculty member several semesters to effectively coordinate the experience for everyone involved in the process. Some recommendations for successful incorporation of student constructed case studies based on community service learning are:
- Include the process of case study development after at least one semester of

incorporating service learning in a course. This will minimize stress for faculty and students as well as the challenge of trying two new experiences at the same time.

- Incorporate case study development in conjunction with community service learning only if the nature of the course allows for time devoted to reviewing the cases. I had to stop using this strategy after two semesters due to new State reading preparation requirements that demanded to include additional content in the class.
- Devote class time on a regular basis to in class reflection about the cases college students are developing through community service.
- Provide plenty of examples of case studies prior to asking students to construct their own.
- Plan to use the students' developed case studies for analysis in whole and small groups in the classroom as a way to validate their work.
- Be prepared to address cultural issues/challenges that may emerge, for instance, by inviting a dialogue among class members, encouraging them to search for approaches to address these issues as a home assignment, or by inviting experts in the field as facilitators or coaches.
- Carefully study your community service learning placement options in terms of duration and organizations in a particular discipline/field. These may include private industry, public organizations, one time community projects or many hours on one type of experience. The type of placement and projects will -to a great extent- determine the possibilities for case studies college students will

encounter.

In conclusion, this innovative teaching approach provides a powerful tool to accomplish course objectives. In the case of teacher education candidates, they become more sophisticated in understanding the individual, socio-cultural, and educational needs of community members who are linguistically and culturally different. Case study development and analysis support the future teachers' development of a philosophy, skills and competencies required to better provide all students with access to equal and quality education.

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