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A conceptual framework for the institutionalization of youth service programs in primary and secondary education

ANDREW FURCO

Founded upon three principles, the paper presents a conceptual framework that lays out the important philosophical, structural, and programmatic foundations upon which K-12 service programs may be built. The philosophical principle is based on results from service program studies that have focused on the educational outcomes of students engaged in service. The structural principle is presented through a comprehensive rubric that identifies nine possible ways to structure K-12 service programs. The programmatic principle is based on 12 important issues that should be addressed to ensure program institutionalization.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, community service programs have engaged students in exciting and meaningful learning experiences that have profoundly and positively affected their lives. Quantitative and qualitative study results have found that well-designed K-12 service programs can enhance students' academic learning, improve self-esteem, increase motivation towards school, develop leadership and higher order thinking skills, build citizenship among students, and introduce them to various career options and opportunities (Harrison, 1987; Conrad and Hedin, 1987; Boyer, 1990; Fowler, 1990). By creating learning environments in which "the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied rather than simply reading about, hearing about, or talking about these realities", K-12 community service programs bring context and meaning to an often fragmented school curriculum (Cairn and Kielsmeier, 1991). However, despite these encouraging study findings, as well as the recent increase in governmental financial support for service programs, a widespread institutionalization of youth service programs in K-12 education has not occurred.

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One explanation is that various constituents of the educational community are not convinced that service programs are an effective and appropriate way to educate young people. For example, some educational policy-makers maintain the belief that community service programs are exploitative; service programs not only force students to perform duties that distract them from their academic studies, but such programs only benefit the special interest groups that support and sponsor the programs (Conrad, 1990). Teachers have suggested that community service programs add needless paperwork to an already over-burdened system (Conrad, 1990; Harrison, 1987). School administrators have viewed service programs as being legally fraught and politically charged, and parents have compared children in such programs to prisoners who are sentenced to fulfil community service requirements (Furco, 1991). Supporting this skepticism, various regulations concerning academic requirements, student employment, transportation liability, and student health and safety have, in many states, held up efforts to institutionalize service in K-12 education (Cunningham, 1989).

A second explanation is that there is a pervasive lack of clarity regarding the philosophies and purposes which undergird the various types of K-12 service programs. For example, distinctions among terms such as: community service; youth service; volunteerism; service-learning; experiential education; cooperative education; field education; work-based learning; apprenticeship; and internship remain unclear to many educators; often, these terms are mistakenly used interchangeably.

Thus, before service programs can be fully institutionalized in schools, youth service needs a conceptual framework that will clarify "what is meant by youth service, its aims and how to measure them..." (Lewis, 1988). Much of the existing literature on youth service promotes service program institutionalization by identifying model service programs and the various characteristics that make them successful. However, because service programs are inherently idiosyncratic—their purposes and structures are defined by the school in which they operate, the students they involve, the persons who coordinate them, and the community they serve—the design of a successful service program at one school may not be appropriate for other sites. Currently, no clear, well-defined conceptual framework exists that presents K-12 educators with the universal principles for creating and designing successful and long-lasting site-appropriate service programs.

The conceptual framework presented here attempts to extract from a pool of confounding service paradigms the principles essential to institutionalizing service programs in K-12 education. It lays out the foundation upon which all individual school site programs may be built. The frame-

work is founded upon three principles: (1) philosophically, the educational purposes of a program must be identified and defined; (2) structurally, a service program must be designed to serve the identified educational purposes, meet the particular educational needs of the students, and operate effectively in a particular community; and (3) programmatically, every issue raised by the implementation of a service program must be clearly and fully addressed and must be reconciled with a school's existing programs (Shumer, 1987; Lewis, 1988; Conrad and Hedin, 1989; Cunningham, 1989). Collectively, these principles provide the key ingredients for developing educationally sound K-12 service programs that will attain institutional longevity.

PRINCIPLE 1: IDENTIFY AND DEFINE THE PROGRAM'S PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES

Quantitative and qualitative studies of youth engaged in service have revealed that K-12 service programs can successfully serve to: enhance academic achievement; enhance social development; enhance personal and moral development; build political and civic participation; and enhance vocational development.

Depending on the needs of the participating students, the nature of the local community, and the type of school in which the program operates, a service program may be designed to serve any one or combination of these educational purposes.

Academic achievement

More and more of today's K-12 service programs are being implemented to enhance students' academic achievement. Such programs focus on bringing relevancy to the classroom curriculum by giving students opportunities to integrate curricular and apply academic learning to meaningful, real-life situations. Now nationally referred to as service-learning, such programs are intended to facilitate academic learning by allowing students to develop reasoning skills, exercise abstract and hypothetical thought, and enhance their ability to organize diverse sources of information into a constructive problem-solving process (Newmann and Rutter, 1983).

One often-heard argument against service programs is that they take time away from students' academic studies and retard student learning. Two studies conducted during the 1970s concluded that engaging students in active learning outside the traditional classroom does not retard their academic achievement (Urie, 1971; University of Pittsburgh, 1975).

A 1982 national study of 30 school-sponsored youth participation programs found that students' problem-solving ability, as measured by reactions to a series of real-life situations, increased more for students engaged in community service than for those in comparison groups (Conrad and Hedin, 1987; 1989).

A 1987 meta-analysis of tutoring programs revealed consistent increases in the reading and math achievement scores of both tutors and students engaged in tutoring services (Hedin, 1987). In addition, consistent gains in factual knowledge were observed when researchers used tests designed to measure the kinds of information students were likely to encounter in their community and service experiences (Conrad and Hedin, 1989). And in his review of research studies on field education programs, Williams (1991) concluded that students who participate in field work have higher grade point averages at the completion of their program.

In a nationwide qualitative study of nearly 4000 students involved in service and other experiential education programs, Conrad and Hedin (1982) found that 75% of the students reported learning "more" or "much more" in their participation program than in their regular classes. Similarly, a 1987 analysis of journals of high school social studies students who volunteered in schools and social agencies 4 days a week revealed that more than 95% of the students felt they had learned more or much more than in their regular classes (Conrad and Hedin, 1987).

Social development

In some cases, service programs are specifically designed to build camaraderie among students, improve the community's attitudes towards students, and build students' awareness of community issues (Newmann and Rutter, 1983). Service programs that serve this purpose are often associated with the terms "volunteerism" and "community service". In K-12 education, these often appear as altruistic, after-school programs in which students participate in a school club to take on an issue of personal interest.

Several quantitative studies have looked at the effects of service on a number of factors regarding students' social development including social responsibility, attitudes towards others, and sense of belonging. A 1977 study revealed changes in attitudes towards others among students engaged in field education service programs. Usher (1977) concluded that students engaged in field work had a greater tendency to approach others in social interactions as well as have a lower level of anxiety in social situations (in Williams, 1991). Likewise, Newmann and Rutter (1983) found that students engaged in community service are better able to communicate with others, initiate conversations, and conduct persuasive conversations with adults. A 1982 study of 27 school-sponsored programs found

that youth engaged in service to the community gained in social and personal responsibility (Conrad and Hedin, 1982), and a 1988 study of 44 youth in 12 volunteer projects revealed that service has positive effects on young people's social attitudes and sense of themselves (Hamilton and Fenzel, 1988).

Personal and moral development

Some service programs attempt to build students' intrapersonal leadership qualities and organizational skills. Intrapersonal development is often a goal of service programs which operate as part of leadership courses, student government, and other student-run school organizations. By allowing students to design their own service, work independently, and supervise their peers' service projects, such programs have been powerful in raising self-esteem and improving self-knowledge (Newmann and Rutter, 1983).

Other service programs are focused on promoting and improving students' awareness of particular agencies' or institutions' political or social agenda. Such programs engage students in experiences that allow them to develop moral judgements and build an understanding of right from wrong, and good from bad. These service programs are often the most controversial in that they center around social, political, and moral issues which profoundly affect students' beliefs and values.

Several quantitative studies have shown that attitudes towards self and others are more favorable among students engaged in service. In 1974, Sprinthall (1974) found that high school students who served as peer counselors as part of a psychology course moved from being wary and self-protective to being more trusting and open (in Conrad and Hedin, 1989). Studies by Urie (1971), University of Pittsburgh (1975), and Beister *et al.* (1978) all found positive effects on self-concept among students in field education service programs. Likewise, Usher (1977) found that students engaged in a field work course saw themselves as being more liked and accepted by peers; having greater self-understanding, self-satisfaction, and patience; being less easily distracted; and being less inclined to daydream. From these findings, Usher (1977) concluded that students engaged in such a course tend to be more outgoing, uninhibited, impulsive, and sociable. Luchs (1981) also found that high school students involved in community service had higher self-esteem and gained more positive attitudes towards others than non-participating comparison students.

Political development

An often-cited rationale for infusing community service programs in schools is that such programs help increase students' civic participation

(Conrad and Hedin, 1989). This rationale is founded upon the belief that service provides a means for students to contribute to their nation in an effort to build national democratic citizenship. In K-12 education, service programs designed to meet these outcomes are typically part of an academic course (e.g. Civics, Government, Social Studies) or after-school groups which organize their activities around particular political or social issues. Studies that have examined the effects of community service on students' future participation in civic and political issues have had mixed results. While no specific studies were cited, Conrad and Hedin (1989) contend that about an equal number of studies find increases, as find no increases in these dimensions.

However, several studies report that students engaged in political and social action at school or in the community become more open-minded (Wilson, 1975). In addition, in a study of junior high school youth engaged in a service program for students with behavioral difficulties, Calabrese and Shumer (1986) found fewer discipline problems and lower levels of alienation and isolation among students engaged in service. In examining the potential of community service to enhance students' civic responsibility, Newmann and Rutter (1986) concluded that it is the presence of a reflective component within community service programs that makes a clear difference in students' intellectual and social dimensions of development.

Vocational development

Lastly, some service programs are specifically designed to expose students to career options and prepare them for the work force. K-12 programs of this type appear in the forms of field education programs, volunteer programs, apprenticeships, internships, and cooperative education programs.

Two studies looked at the effects of field education programs on students' career interests. While Usher (1977) found no significant difference in career interests among students enrolled in a field education course and those who were not, Newton (1975) found that the strength of interest in a career declined among students in the field education course. Newton (1975) concluded that this decline was due to the students having a more realistic appraisal of the career.

Stead *et al.* (1977) found positive gains among the field education students in knowledge about themselves, choosing a job, and planning for the future. Beister *et al.* (1978), found that over a year period, the cumulative change in scores on the Career Maturity Scale (CMI) for the students engaged in field education was significantly better than for the control group.

PRINCIPLE II: DESIGN A PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The next step to building a program vision is to structure the service program so that the program's intended purposes can be best served. The structure will need to take into account the nature of the school, the interests and abilities of the participating students, and the needs of the community. Currently, there are three well-delineated typologies, based on differing criteria, that identify the various ways successful service programs are structured.

One typology identifies five service program types—local, state, national, college, and youth corps programs—based on the institution that coordinates and manages the program (Lewis, 1988). In another typology, Conrad and Hedin (1987) identify three service program types—school-based, the collaborative model, and community service programs in youth organizations—also delineated according to the institution that coordinates and manages the program. However, Conrad and Hedin take their typology one step further by identifying six subtypes within the "school-based" program type. These six subtypes are delineated according to the degree to which service is integrated with the school curriculum; they are ordered hierarchically from "Club Co-curricular Activity" programs to school programs that use "Community Service" as a "School-wide Focus" or "Theme". A third typology focuses entirely on Conrad and Hedin's "School-based" type and delineates 11 program types identified by "the degree to which service is integrated with school curricular" from "Club or Co-curricular Activity" through "Fostering an Ethic of Service", (McPherson, 1989).

While these typologies are helpful in revealing the types of programs that exist, they individually do not fully capture the structural foundations upon which K-12 service programs may be built. Collectively, however, the typologies reveal that K-12 service programs are generally defined by two key structural dimensions: (1) the degree to which service is integrated with the school curriculum (What role does service play in the overall delivery of a school's daily academics—is it peripheral to, integrated with, or a central part of the curriculum?); (2) the institution where the program is based (Which agency coordinates, manages, and finances the program—the school or a community agency?)

Using these two structural dimensions as the foundations for designing K-12 service programs, a new, more comprehensive structural rubric is proposed.

A new structural rubric for K-12 service programs

This rubric is formed by first dividing each of the two structural dimensions—degree of curriculum integration and coordinating agent—into

Table 1(a). *Structural designs of service programs in K-12 education: peripheral programs*.*

School-based	Community-based	Sponsor-based
The school serves as the coordinating agent	A local community agency serves as the coordinating agent	The agency that offers the service opportunities serves as the coordinating agent
Coordinated and supervised by school administrators or faculty sponsors	Coordinated and supervised by a local community agency (usually non-profit) that places students at their service sites	Coordinated and supervised by a volunteer-seeking agency that recruits students to serve at its site
typically open to all students school-wide	typically open to all students a school-wide	not formally affiliated with any particular school program or club
tend to attract altruistic student volunteers willing to donate their time for a specific cause at school or in the community	tend to attract altruistic student volunteers who are willing to donate their time to a particular community cause	tend to attract altruistic students willing to donate their time to a particular agency and its specific causes
unaffiliated with any school course or curriculum	unaffiliated with any school course or curriculum	especially effective in enhancing students' vocational skills
often operate as part of after-school clubs or student organizations	often operate as part of an after-school club that is linked with a local community agency which supports the club's cause(s)	also effective in serving social, political, moral and personal educational purposes
especially effective in serving social, political, moral, and personal educational purposes	especially effective in serving social, political, personal, and moral educational purposes	

*Peripheral programs: students perform service independent of course curriculum.

three categories and then coalescing these categories across both dimensions. This results in nine broadly defined service program designs (See Tables 1(a), 1(b) and 1(c)).

Within the first structural dimension—degree of curriculum integration—there are three categories of programs: peripheral programs; integrated programs; and experiential programs. Peripheral service programs operate after school or are offered to students as an elective program in addition to their core curriculum or daily courses. Such programs are not

Table 1(b). *Structural designs of service programs in K-12 education: integrated programs*.*

School-based	Community-based	Sponsor-based
The school serves as the coordinating agent	A local community agency serves as the coordinating agent	The agency that offers the service opportunities serves as the coordinating agent
Coordinated and supervised by one or more teachers	Coordinated and supervised by a local community agency (usually non-profit) that places students at their service sites	Work especially well for students in academic or vocational programs that concentrate on a particular area of study (i.e. Health, Music, etc.)
provide students with opportunities to apply their academic learning to real-life situations at school or in the community	provide students with opportunities to apply their academic learning to real-life situations at school or in the community	allow students with specific skills to offer their service to the coordinating agency
incorporate service projects that are dependent upon the curricular content of particular courses	place students in a wide range of service opportunities that in some way relate to the content of the particular course(s) in which students are enrolled	encourage students to apply specific academic knowledge and vocational skills to real-life situations pertaining to a specific cause or field of study
offered primarily to those students taking participating courses	especially effective in enhancing academic learning	especially effective in enhancing academic learning and the development of vocational skills
especially effective in enhancing academic learning	also effective in serving social and personal educational purposes	also effecting in serving social, political, moral, and personal educational purposes

*Integrated programs: the curriculum drives students' service experiences.

integrated formally with any of the students' daily curricula and operate peripherally to the students' daily academics (See Table 1(a)). In contrast, integrated K-12 service programs are tightly interwoven with one or more of the students' daily academic subjects. In integrated service programs, classroom learning and service learning go hand in hand; the services students perform enhance classroom learning, and vice versa (See Table 1(b)). Experiential service programs, on the other hand, are programs in which the service is central to student learning. Academic learning evolves primarily from the service students perform rather than from a prescribed curriculum offered in a classroom setting (See Table 1(c)).

Table 1(c). *Structural designs of service programs in K-12 education: experiential programs*.*

School-based	Community-based	Sponsor-based
The school serves as the coordinating agent	A local community agency serves as the coordinating agent	The agency that offers the service opportunities serves as the coordinating agent
Coordinated and supervised by teachers or school program directors	Coordinated and supervised by a local community agency that works in collaboration with teachers and other school personnel in placing students at particular service sites	Coordinated and supervised by a local agency that offers students service opportunities in a particular area of study
use service as the primary pedagogical strategy for teaching curriculum	use service as the primary pedagogical strategy for teaching curricula	allow students in a particular academic or vocational program to apply specific academic knowledge and/or vocational skills to real-life situations at the agency site
involve every student in the service activity, whether it be for a particular course or school-wide project	base the academic curriculum on the skills and knowledge that enable them to learn a variety of skills and to apply their knowledge in a variety of ways to real-life situations	tend to involve students in long-term, intense service projects
base the course or school curriculum on what students need to know to successfully perform their service assignments	place students in a wide range of service opportunities that enable them to learn a variety of skills and to apply their knowledge in a variety of ways to real-life situations	base academic coursework around students service experiences
allow students to derive interdisciplinary knowledge from the daily service experiences	effectively serve academic, social, personal, and/or vocational purposes	focus classroom instruction on improving students' service site skill and knowledge deficiencies
focus learning on real-life issues at school or in the community		especially effective in enhancing academic learning and vocational skills
especially effective in serving academic, vocational, social, and personal educational purposes		also effective in serving social, political, moral, and personal educational purposes

*Experiential programs: students' service experiences drive the curriculum.

The second dimension—the coordinating agent—delineates three structural categories that encompass the possibilities for coordinating, managing, and financing a program. K-12 service programs may be school-based, community-based, or sponsor-based. School-based programs are

coordinated by school site personnel. In such programs, school officials operate and maintain the program by placing students in service assignments, supervising their work, and evaluating the students. This does not mean that students only perform service at school; students in school-based service programs may perform service both at the school and in the community.

Community-based service programs are coordinated and managed by a community agency, located outside of the school environs, which serves as a liaison or intermediary between the school and the various sites at which the students serve. This community agency is responsible for placing students in their service assignments. This community-based organization often has a particular agenda and will engage students in its service. For example, a group committed to promoting democracy and citizenship might place student in assignments that promote these values.

In contrast, sponsor-based service programs are coordinated by the actual agency where students serve; there is no intermediary coordinating agent. An example is provided by hospitals that have well-articulated outreach programs recruiting student volunteers to serve their patients. The school provides the volunteers, but the hospital organizes and manages the entire service program.

According to Shumer (1987) and Conrad and Hedin (1989), the educational purpose(s) of a service program will determine the degree to which the program is integrated into the curriculum (peripheral, integrated, experiential) and which institution will act as the coordinating agent (school, community, sponsor). Therefore, the vision for the service program structure will be based on the particular educational purposes the program is intended to serve. Once the educational purposes and structural design of a service program are established, the final step in securing its institutionalization is to consider how its various programmatic issues will be reconciled with the school's other existing programs.

PRINCIPLE 3: CLEARLY AND FULLY ADDRESS THE PROGRAMMATIC ISSUES

In order for a service program to be accepted and ultimately institutionalized at a school site, a number of programmatic issues must be reconciled with the existing system of academic and statewide requirements (Cunningham, 1989). While the idiosyncratic nature of service programs makes it virtually impossible to define all the programmatic issues, one set, comprising 12 issues, plays a key role in ensuring a service program's success and longevity (See Table 2).

Table 2. *Programmatic issues inherent in K-12 service programs.*

Issue	Guiding questions
(1) Appropriate service opportunities	What types of service opportunities are available at school and in the community? Which of these opportunities will best serve the program's purposes?
(2) Service program requirements	Will there be a minimum number of hours that students must serve? Which students are eligible to participate?
(3) Student assessment criteria	How will students' work be assessed? Will the assessment focus be on the process or the product?
(4) Compensation and reward system	How often will students be rewarded for their service? What compensation will they receive?
(5) Student recruitment plan	What criteria will be used to select students? How often should students be recruited?
(6) Marketing plan	What mechanisms will be employed to promote the program?
(7) Transportation options	Which modes of transportation are available to students? What travel time factors must be considered?
(8) Liability plan and a legal manual	Who is responsible for students' safety while they are on their service assignments? What are the rights and limitations of the involved parties? What permission or other approvals must parents provide?
(9) Teacher training and staff development	Which teachers will participate in the program? What role will they play? What will be the focus of the staff development?
(10) Program funding	What funds are available for the program? Which funds are short-term and which are longer-term? What other resources are there to supplement current program funds?
(11) Program flexibility and change	Which elements of the program may be eliminated? What alternate plans should be developed?
(12) Program evaluation	What data should be collected? Which records need to be maintained and updated? What roles will the service sites play in evaluating the program?

While two service programs might serve the same purposes and have identical design structures, the manner in which these programmatic issues are addressed will give each program its unique, individual character and vision. These 12 programmatic issues are derived from recurring discussions on implementing and operating youth service programs that have appeared in a variety of research papers, curriculum guides, and other resource materials (Conrad and Hedin, 1987; Lewis, 1988; Conrad and Hedin, 1989; McPherson, 1989; Kendall, 1990; Cairn and Kielsmeier, 1991).

Many service programs fail quickly because they either start off too ambitiously and become chaotic, do not pursue exciting service options for students, or do not fit well within the existing school culture (Newmann and Rutter, 1986; Cairn and Kielsmeier, 1991). Therefore, clearly defining and fully addressing each of the programmatic issues in the context of the school's culture and overall vision will ensure the likelihood that a service program will triumph over competing school reforms and sustain potential budget cuts.

Given the resistance confronting service programs, it is essential that each programmatic issue be considered in the context of the educational benefits it provides students. For example, a service program is more likely to be accepted if parents and students understand that particular requirements (for instance, no student may serve after 1800 h or all students must serve in pairs of two) exist for the benefit of the participating students. Being able to fully justify and rationalize each programmatic issue provides school officials with strong leverage for justifying a program's existence and securing its institutionalization.

CONCLUSION

Service programs have long been part of our educational system. However, prevailing misconceptions and confusion surrounding them, coupled with the lack of a conceptual framework that delineates the important principles upon which school-sanctioned service programs may be built, have held up the development of K-12 youth service programs. The conceptual framework presented here establishes a systematic approach to understanding the philosophical, structural, and programmatic foundations that underlie K-12 service programs. It is through such an approach that the confounding paradigms surrounding youth service can be clarified, resistance to youth service programs can be overcome, and a clear vision for institutionalizing powerful and effective service programs can be developed.

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