Service Learning and Teacher Education: Mapping the Territory

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Since the mid-1980's there has been a renewed interest in progressive approaches to the education of intending teachers. In the context of this progressive teacher education activity, several distinct, but related, ideas converge and become the theoretical base for teacher education practices involving (community) service learning. Among these ideas are renewed interest in authentic field experiences, multicultural education, child advocacy, democratic education, social justice, school reform efforts, autobiography and teacher thinking, and an emphasis on community service in K-12 education. In addition, teacher educators increasingly recognize the gap between the backgrounds of those who intend to teach and those whom these new teachers will teach. In other words, teacher educators are concerned that preservice teachers in their programs are predominately white, middle class, women while many teaching positions are in either urban or rural areas working with minority children or children living in poverty. Most teacher educators who write about their work with service learning cite some combination of these ideas and concerns as reasons for their work.

In this paper, I explore the different definitions of service learning used by teacher educators and the impact these different definitions have on the types of programs designed. I compare service learning with traditional pre-student teaching fieldwork in teacher education. I also look at the extent of interest in service learning reported in a survey of teacher education programs in the northeastern United States. Finally, I identify key features of service learning projects and develop an interpretive and heuristic framework for thinking about and designing different types of projects. I discuss sample projects in terms of program characteristics, faculty involvement required, community involvement, student activities, challenges in establishing and conducting this type of project, evaluation strategies, outcomes for the community and for the preservice teachers, and relationship to the political goals of "charity or change."

1 The term intending teachers is taken from Johnson, V. G. (1994).
2 Colleges and universities use a variety of terms including community learning, community service, and service learning to designate projects that combine community service with classroom learning. In this paper, I use the term service learning throughout for clarity.
3 My understanding of the political nature of community learning projects and the distinction between "charity and change" as outcomes comes from Kahne, J. and Westheimer, J. (1996). In their article, "In Service of What? The Politics of Service Learning," they argue persuasively that educators need to be clear about their underlying goals and
Background

I have been concerned for some time that many intending teachers view their work in schools almost exclusively as being about themselves and their own learning. For example, teacher education students in traditional, pre-student teaching, field placements often comment in their journals, "I learned nothing from being in this classroom because the teacher was bad." Since teaching is primarily a helping profession (Brammer & MacDonald, 1996), this view of their work as being about them and not about the children is potentially problematic. The way much of the early fieldwork for preservice teachers is constructed seems to foster this preoccupation with self. Service learning offers a way to reconstruct early field experiences for preservice students if these students join their professor or university in helping a school or other community agency serving children fulfill its mission. Service learning also connects in important ways to other reforms and addresses problem areas widely recognized by the profession. For example, it is widely recognized that teacher education needs to be reconnected to public schools through direct collaboration among teacher educators and public school administrators and teachers (Holmes Group, 1990; Book, 1996; Barone, Berliner, Blanchard, Casanova, & McGowan, 1996). Service learning projects by their nature involve this type of collaboration. In addition, as I mentioned before, novice teachers, who are largely white and middle class, need carefully constructed field experiences that help them begin to understand and value all children (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Richardson, 1996).

It is generally recognized that schools are not meeting the needs of the growing numbers of children living in poverty (Comer, Haynes, Joyner, & Ben-Avie, 1996; Delpit, 1995; Meier, 1995; Rose, 1995). "Cultural conflict" between the experiences of teachers and the life experiences of children and families living in poverty contributes to misunderstanding and miseducation of children (Delpit, 1995; Heath, 1983; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). It is imperative that new teachers understand their preconceived notions of children and families and then transform or extend these that program design and attitude of the planners influences the outcomes service produces.
ideas so that they can begin to value and work with parents and children whose experiences differ widely from their own (Weiner, 1993). Carefully designed service learning projects have the potential to make vital contributions to the process of helping students understand and confront this "cultural conflict" in ways that will enable them to become effective teachers of all children.

In addition, teacher educators are challenged to both prepare teachers who can be successful in schools as they exist and work toward school reform that will make schools better, more effective environments, for all children (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Comer, Haynes, Joyner, & Ben-Avie, 1996). This challenge is especially urgent in these times when schools are "dysfunctional for disproportionately large numbers of children who are not part of the racial and language mainstream" (Cochran-Smith, 1995, p.494) and there is enormous political pressure on public education to improve (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). In order to make working in difficult, real world settings a positive experience for preservice teachers, being part of projects that have goals that extend beyond a specific case or classroom can help students see themselves as contributing to overall school improvement.

What is Service Learning in Teacher Education?

The service learning/teacher education literature reveals that teacher educators approach this work from differing definitions of and goals for their service learning projects. For some teacher educators, these definitions and goals grow out of critical pedagogy and its emphasis on "empowerment." For others, the focus is on connecting teacher education programs to communities different from the home communities of the majority of teacher education students, while others have a very loose interpretation of service learning that appears to be a new name for what most teacher education programs have traditionally called "fieldwork."

Kahne's and Westheimer's (1996) framework for analyzing service learning opportunities, first developed for K-12 education, is useful for looking at this literature. Kahne and Westheimer argue that most current service learning programs are designed to emphasize either "Change or Charity" and these projects should be analyzed within moral, political, and intellectual domains.
Kahne and Westheimer are clear that these categories are neither discrete nor exhaustive; rather they see them as a heuristic to "help clarify our understanding of the possible relationships between service learning activities, their outcomes, and the goals that motivate their design." (pp. 595-596)

In Kahn's and Westheimer's framework, service learning that emphasizes change would be associated with caring in the moral domain, social reconstruction in the political domain, and a transformative experience in the intellectual domain. In teacher education programs, a change orientation would mean that programs would have most of the following critical features:

1. Projects jointly designed by both agencies involved in the project;
2. Projects designed to meet needs identified by the community agency while helping teacher education students fulfill course objectives;
3. Work and methods used emphasize empowerment of members of the community where service is given;
4. Faculty and teacher education students connect the fieldwork with work in the university classroom; and
5. Teacher education students reflect on their service experiences in structured situations in terms of broader social and intellectual issues.

In addition, teacher education students should have a voice in the structure and design of projects to the greatest extent possible given the constraints of working within a typical university semester (Sentner and Freeman, 1994). Teacher educators designing programs using most of the elements of this definition expect that students will develop understandings of the complexities of working with children, families, agencies, and schools.

In contrast, service learning that emphasizes charity would be associated with giving in the moral domain, civic duty in the political domain, and an additive experience in the intellectual domain. In my research, I found several teacher education programs with a charity orientation. For example in one program description, the authors defined service learning as "an individual or group act of good will for a person, group, or community, based on planned educational outcomes." Their goals were to develop "students' sense both of social responsibility and of what is learned by contributing to society" (Olszewski and Bussler, 1993, p. 1). Additionally, program developers with a charity orientation think that teacher education students learn to appreciate the strengths of the "at risk" students with whom they work as well as increase their technical teaching...
skills.

In the category of programs that appear to be renaming traditional fieldwork, one requires students to complete 80 hours of paid or volunteer work with students whose "cultural, social, or ethnic" background is different from their own by the end of the sophomore year. The teacher education program suggests a variety of social agencies and public schools where students may volunteer and requires that students provide documentation verifying service. The express purpose of this work is explained, "The requirement is based on the facts that demographic changes are common in the nation's public schools and that future teachers must be familiar with the differences and similarities of learners in cultures different from their own. ... Participation in activities that promote and understanding of teacher-learner then contribute to better decision-making about academic and career goals." (Emphasis in the original). From this perspective, the objective of service learning is framed only in terms of what the teacher education student performing the service will learn.

One important distinction between service learning in K-12 schools and service learning in teacher education programs is that in K-12 schools students usually perform service within their own communities (Bhaerman, et. al., 1995). In teacher education programs, the service is most often explicitly provided in communities that the students do not regard as their own with the express purpose that students develop an understanding of the other community.

**How does Service Learning differ from Traditional Fieldwork?**

Service learning in teacher preparation differs from traditional fieldwork in several important ways. Service learning emphasizes the outcomes of the work teacher education students accomplish for the agency where they volunteer. In traditional fieldwork, teacher education students are in the field to learn the craft of the teacher and little or no attention is paid to the outcomes of their work for the children, classroom community, or school. Service learning explicitly asks teacher education students to connect their work to larger social issues, especially those having to do with equal opportunity and the effects of living in poverty.
fieldwork, little attention is paid to issues beyond the classroom level. While teacher education students may be aware of ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic differences among their children, it is difficult for teacher educators to address these issues meaningfully in terms of the specific situations where the students are completing fieldwork. In addition, service learning models collaboration between the university or the course instructor and the school or agency where service is given. Table 1 summarizes these and other differences between service learning and traditional fieldwork in teacher preparation.

Looking closely at the differences between service learning and traditional fieldwork reveals that in service learning there are many more opportunities for faculty to interact with teacher education students about the specifics of their work and to help them make meaning from their work than in traditionally designed fieldwork. Service learning expands the equation that has guided the development of many reflective teacher preparation programs. Many programs have used Posner's (1985) adaptation of Dewey's idea that "EXPERIENCE + REFLECTION = GROWTH" as a heuristic for designing field experiences. While this idea may be appropriate for certain types of experience and certain types of growth, it does not seem to work well when we apply it to learning to teach children whose backgrounds and experiences are very different from those of the teacher education students. Many studies have found that typical field experiences, especially in urban schools serving minority children living in poverty, lead to little change in stereotypic thinking about these children and their families and may in fact reinforce negative preconceptions (Haberman, 1991; Haberman and Post, 1992, Zeichner and Hoeft, 1996).

Service learning adds the notion of the importance of mediation by knowledgeable teacher educators and creates an expanded equation "EXPERIENCE + APPROPRIATE MEDIATION +
REFLECTION + APPROPRIATE MEDIATION + REFLECTION = QUESTIONS & GROWTH." While not a guarantee that teacher education students will move beyond preconceived negative images or stereotypes of children whose lives are markedly different from their own, the service and mediation components have been shown, at least in the short run, to have the potential to effect teacher education students thinking in positive ways (Freeman, 1997; Johnson and Button, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1991). In addition, there is evidence that this is a cyclical process with many rounds of experience, appropriate mediation, and reflection necessary to promote the growth teacher education students need to become effective teachers of all children (Bondy, Schmitz, and Johnson, 1993; Johnson and Button, 1996).

How much Service Learning is there in Teacher Education Programs?

It is not clear exactly how much service learning there is in teacher education programs. My 1995 survey of teacher of teacher education programs in the northeastern United States showed that among the 45 programs that responded (26% of the sample), 26 (58%) reported some involvement with service learning. My sense is that this may be overstating the case to some extent, but I do not know to what extent the sample was biased by the tendency for those institutions with programs to respond as opposed to those without programs or with little knowledge of the concept of service learning. We need more research to find out both how many programs are using service learning and what definition of service learning guides their practice.

One thing that is fairly clear from the survey data is that there has been an upsurge in interest in service learning since 1990. Twenty-one of the programs responding (81%) reported that their service learning activities had been designed and implemented since 1990. The other five programs had programs that dated from the beginning of their institutions (1900 and 1909); the remaining programs began around 30 years ago in the late 1960's. In five programs, service was reported as a part of the mission of the college or university.

The survey also revealed that service learning was taking place at a variety of different types of institutions. At least one institution within each of the categories of major public research
university, smaller public university, major private research university, smaller private university or college, and Catholic college or university reported some involvement with service learning. Table 2 summarizes the data on types of institution and involvement with service learning.

It is also interesting to note that 10 out of the 12 (83%) Pennsylvania institutions that responded reported some involvement with service learning, including 3 of the major research universities, while only 5 of the 12 (41%) New York institutions did so with no major research universities reporting involvement.

How are Service Learning/Teacher Education Programs Organized and Enacted?

Service learning projects fall into two broad categories. In the first category are those projects that are part of an institutional commitment to service learning and that may be administered through an office of service or community learning or an office of teacher education field experiences. In the second are those that result from faculty development of projects to enhance university courses. They may or may not be supported by an office of service learning. Within the course based option, two strategies are employed. These are service components within foundations or methods courses or "stand alone" service learning courses such as those sponsored by "literacy corps." Some institutions in my survey reported using a combination of these approaches as well. Table 3 summarizes the survey data about type of service learning project.
individual courses. Forty-two percent of the actual service learning experiences were located in individual courses where faculty could function as mediators of the teacher education students' experiences.

Institutionally developed projects often offer a variety of choices for volunteer opportunities in community agencies. These include organizations such as Junior Achievement, Big Brothers & Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs as well as schools and child care centers. Students may complete their service independently or as part of a fieldwork seminar. Support for student learning may come from university seminars and feedback from faculty or from the agency that sponsors the community service project. Some institutions have extensive programs that are carefully designed and monitored. Others have loose organization and little involvement with student learning.

Faculty developed projects are generally more closely tied to course objectives and the needs of a group of students. The process of developing these projects involves collaboration between the faculty member and the agency (or school) where students will complete their work. The goal of this collaboration is to match agency needs with the knowledge and skills students are learning and design a project that brings these two components together. These projects may take place in schools, community agencies, or on the university campus. They can be designed to involve interaction with individual children or groups of children. They can be semester-long or more limited in terms of the amount of interaction preservice teachers have with children. They should have strong links between work in the community project and course content and involve students in planning and evaluating the success of the projects as well as participating in carrying them out.

Using what we know about current practices in service learning in teacher education, I have developed a framework for analyzing service learning. It is based on the two broad categories (institution based or course based) and includes examination of: (1) type of project; (2) goals of project in terms of charity or social change; (3) needs of preservice teachers; (4) features of program or course; (5) faculty involvement; (6) community involvement; (7) student activities; (8) desired outcomes for the community and for the preservice teachers; (9) challenges in this type
of project; and (10) assessment of project success in terms of teacher education student learning and community needs. The framework can be used to analyze or assess on-going projects and as a tool for planning future projects. Figure 1 is the framework for analysis of service learning projects in teacher education.

The framework is useful for planning, analysis of on-going projects, and as a research tool. I use it to examine on-going projects and to help me decide if the features of the project are consistent with my goals. Table 4 presents my analysis of a Reading and Writing Workshop service learning project I designed for my Developmental Reading class. A foster care agency and a parochial school near campus serving an all black student population served as community partners. Both the foster care agency and the school had asked for help for their children with reading. All children served by the agency and the school were invited to attend weekly workshops over a period of nine weeks.

Table 4 reveals that this service learning project requires commitment from all participants. The faculty member is intimately involved in planning, administering, and coaching during the project. Teacher education students, while not involved in the initial design of the program, have responsibilities for planning and decision making in their teaching and communicating with families.

In this particular project, the final activity is a performance by the children on campus for their families. The teacher education students are always impressed with the commitment of the families, including the foster families, to bring their children each week and the enthusiasm everyone shows during the final celebration. Surveys of the families reveal that they are impressed
with the increased motivation their children show for reading and writing following the workshops. Families return semester after semester and have requested similar workshops in mathematics. Currently, the mathematics methods teacher is implementing similar workshops. The teacher education students have the opportunity to work with many of the same children again when they enroll in Math for Teachers.

**What do we know about the Effectiveness of Service Learning in Teacher Education?**

My survey revealed that teacher education programs, while believing that service learning is an effective method, have little evidence at this time to support that belief. The research literature is also quite thin. A few studies have been done. These have primarily looked at the impact of service learning experiences on the preservice teachers' beliefs about minority children and children living in poverty. The findings from these studies are consistent with Haberman and Post (1992). That is that for some teacher education students service learning projects help change beliefs about teaching children from different cultural backgrounds than their own. For others, however, their initial preconceived negative beliefs are strengthened (Freeman, 1997; Johnson and Button, 1996). We need a great deal more research before we can make statements about the effects of service learning in teacher education with any degree of confidence.

Future research also needs to pay attention to the different types of service learning in teacher education programs. Programs with little faculty mediation will likely have different outcomes than programs where faculty participate alongside students. We also need to pay attention to the goals of charity or change that we use as we plan and implement service learning with teacher education students. What are appropriate goals for our profession and for the students we want to help become teachers of all children?

**Conclusion**

As we move toward the year 2000 and teacher educators work to reconnect with communi-
ties and public schools (K-12), we will need multiple kinds of arrangements between colleges or universities and community agencies or schools to support this process. One type of arrangement that we have learned a great deal about over the last ten years is the professional development school. These large, institutionally supported ventures are important but alone will not meet the needs of all teacher education programs or all students within these programs. Community learning projects, whether institutionally supported or the work of individual faculty in the context of their courses, offer another type of arrangement. We need to understand more fully the issues in establishing and maintaining these sorts of projects and the ways that their design impacts on pre-service teacher learning.
Bibliography


### Table 1

**Compare and Contrast One Program's Typical Field Experiences and Service Learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-student Teaching Fieldwork</th>
<th>Service Learning Fieldwork</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students find own placements</td>
<td>Instructors help students find placements based on projects planned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement sites determined by student knowledge of schools available</td>
<td>Placement sites determined by community identified needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal communication between University and Schools</td>
<td>On-going communication between instructor and agency or school for most types of projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students keep a reflective journal but instructor has little insight that is specific to the setting</td>
<td>Students keep a reflective journal and instructor can respond in terms of the project and the stated goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of fieldwork into the course is difficult and varies from faculty member to faculty member</td>
<td>Fieldwork is designed as an integral part of the course expectations through the project selected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program remains static from semester to semester</td>
<td>Program is dynamic and changes from semester to semester. Over time, projects evolve and trust between the agency and university develops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor has little ability to address problems that occur in the field</td>
<td>Instructor can use a variety of strategies to address problems that arise in the field--students and faculty engage in problem solving, faculty and agency engage in problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of student learning in field is dependent solely on journal and minimal response from teacher</td>
<td>Evaluation of student learning involves journal, integration of course material with field experience, and self-reflective essays by students related to project/course goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2
Involvement with Service Learning In Teacher Education by Type of Institution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Major, Public, Research University</th>
<th>Small Public University</th>
<th>Major, Private, Research University</th>
<th>Small Private University or College</th>
<th>Catholic College or University</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
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Table 3
Types of Approaches to Service Learning in Teacher Education Programs

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Approach</th>
<th># of Institutions Reporting</th>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Education Program Based</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand Alone Course</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Course Based</td>
<td>16</td>
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</table>