

“This course is like paying to volunteer” or is it? Effects of a Mandatory Service-Learning Course on Teacher Candidates
« Ce cours d'apparente à payer pour faire du bénévolat » ou est-ce le cas ? Conséquences d'un stage d'apprentissage communautaire obligatoire sur les candidats à l'enseignement

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Article abstract

One hundred teacher candidates enrolled in a mandatory course on service learning were surveyed pre- and post-course to determine their civic attitudes and willingness to take the service learning course. Quantitative analysis indicated significant growth in civic attitudes in all students, and this growth was not differentially affected by the students' willingness to take the course. Qualitative data were analyzed to determine the underpinnings for students' perceptions, and recommendations about the wisdom of making such courses mandatory in teacher preparation programs are provided.

“THIS COURSE IS LIKE PAYING TO VOLUNTEER” OR IS IT? EFFECTS OF A MANDATORY SERVICE-LEARNING COURSE ON TEACHER CANDIDATES

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ABSTRACT. One hundred teacher candidates enrolled in a mandatory course on service learning were surveyed pre- and post-course to determine their civic attitudes and willingness to take the service learning course. Quantitative analysis indicated significant growth in civic attitudes in all students, and this growth was not differentially affected by the students' willingness to take the course. Qualitative data were analyzed to determine the underpinnings for students' perceptions, and recommendations about the wisdom of making such courses mandatory in teacher preparation programs are provided.

« CE COURS S'APPARENTE À PAYER POUR FAIRE DU BÉNÉVOLAT » OU EST-CE LE CAS? CONSÉQUENCES D'UN STAGE D'APPRENTISSAGE COMMUNAUTAIRE OBLIGATOIRE SUR LES CANDIDATS À L'ENSEIGNEMENT

RÉSUMÉ. Cent futurs enseignants inscrits dans un cours obligatoire portant sur l'apprentissage en milieu communautaire ont été interviewés avant et après leur cours afin de déterminer leurs attitudes civiques et leur volonté de s'inscrire à un stage d'apprentissage par le service communautaire. Les analyses quantitatives indiquent une augmentation significative de la conscience citoyenne chez tous les étudiants. Cette hausse n'était pas explicitement influencée par la volonté de l'étudiant de suivre le cours. Les données qualitatives ont été analysées pour déterminer les fondements des perceptions étudiantes. Finalement, les auteurs ont formulé des recommandations en ce qui a trait à la pertinence de rendre obligatoire de tels cours au sein de la formation initiale des enseignants.

Since the 1990's there has been a burgeoning number of service-learning programs initiated in primary, secondary, and post-secondary education (Lavery & Hackett, 2008), and teacher education programs are no exception to this trend. Research suggests that service-learning programs benefit students,

universities, and communities in the short term (Chambers & Levery, 2012). In addition, teacher candidates who take part in successful service learning have the opportunity to develop attitudes that will create long-term, exponential gains in the students they will teach in the future (Donnison & Itter, 2010).

WHAT IS SERVICE LEARNING?

Service learning (SL) involves unpaid community placements for students and is best undertaken in situations where the students are outside the “comfort zones” of their past experiences. The factor that distinguishes SL from other forms of volunteerism is the expectation that both the SL provider and the recipient will benefit from the experience (Bender & Jordaan, 2007). In this way SL differs from volunteering, where learning on the part of the volunteer is not necessarily required but instead the focus is enhancement of the service receiver. Reciprocity and reflection are key components of the SL experience (Bender, 2004), suggesting that SL has clearly articulated academic goals. SL is therefore a dynamic reciprocal relationship between students and the community resulting in mutual benefits, where service and learning goals are of equal weight and enhance each other (Eyler, 2002). It is this mutual benefit that defines SL as distinct from charity or volunteerism, in that the benefits to the provider in terms of personal development, specifically civic engagement, are clearly articulated.

One of the main goals of SL is the promotion of civic engagement in the students who provide service (Berman, 2008; Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2007; Glickman, 2008; Haynes & Pickeral, 2008; Leighninger & Levine, 2008). Erlich (2000) defined civic engagement as “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference” (p. vi). After reviewing the history of the SL movement, Carrington (2011) suggested that the focus of SL has moved away from a charity orientation and toward the transformative approach to social justice that is the goal of current manifestations of SL.

Service learning in teacher candidates

Despite the convergence of generally positive outcomes of SL courses on teacher candidates that are presented in the literature (Chambers & Levery, 2012; Donnison & Itter, 2010), it is necessary to disaggregate the findings to determine whether SL courses serve all teacher candidates equally well. If some students are already civically engaged, then requiring them to take SL courses for cost may not yield any additional benefits. Furthermore, it is possible that a mandatory course in SL may not only fail to enhance those students’ civic attitudes, but may foster resentment in students who see no value in the course (Warburton & Smith, 2003).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the current study was to explore how students’ civic attitudes prior to a mandatory SL course affected the development of their civic attitudes over the duration of the SL course. In the current study, we used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to capture pre-post civic attitudes of teacher candidates enrolled in a mandatory SL course. Next, we compared the pre-course to the post-course civic attitude scores across the entire sample to see if they differed from one another. Then, we compared the effects of a SL course on civic attitudes of teacher candidates who were reluctant to take the course with those of teacher candidates who were happy to take the course, in order to determine if differential effects were present. Finally, we investigated the rationales that underpinned these attitudes. Based on the findings, we made recommendations about the wisdom of including mandatory SL coursework in teacher education programs.

THEORETICAL BASIS FOR AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SERVICE LEARNING

The roots of SL in its earliest form can be traced back to Dewey’s (1938/1963) educational and social philosophies, which emphasized experiential learning and citizenship through connecting classroom learning with learning in the real world. This theory was extended by other researchers through its application to SL (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1969; Cook, 1985). Building on the work of Allport (1954), Erickson (2009) maintained that there are seven characteristics of programs that are essential, but not always sufficient, to promote attitudinal change and civic engagement in students. These are: 1) equal status contact (in the service recipient and service provider); 2) mutual pursuit of common goals; 3) intergroup co-operation; 4) support for positive contact through custom, law, or authority; 5) extended contact; 6) attention to the affective dimensions of the providers’ experiences (e.g. anxiety or attitudes); and 7) provider’s awareness of their own in-group membership and positioning. When these seven characteristics are in place and the students are provided with opportunities to process both their affective and cognitive responses to their SL experiences, it is likely that their tacit understanding will become explicit (Hannay, Wideman, Seller, & Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, 2006).

Benefits of including service learning in teacher education

In general, studies of SL in teacher candidates have generated impressive results. Chalmers and Levery (2012) investigated the effects of two SL courses on teacher candidates in Australia. Using discourse analysis, they found that the candidates developed empathy, leadership skills, confidence, and the ability to reflect about themselves and society. Furthermore, the candidates developed knowledge and skills relevant to teaching that teacher candidates could bring into their professional practice. Although encouraged to journal about both positive and negative aspects of their SL experiences, only 5% of teacher candidates in

this study mentioned negative experiences, those being time constraints and concerns about working with people with disabilities. Overall, Chalmers and Lavery's (2012) findings suggested, "service learning units demonstrate their importance and value in pre-service teacher education" (p. 135).

Likewise, Dowell (2008) found benefits of incorporating a SL course in a teacher education program in Louisiana. The focus of Dowell's study was the cultural, linguistic, socio-economic, and ethnic mismatch between the teacher candidates and the communities where they would one day be employed. Using a pre-during-post qualitative methodology, teacher candidates participated in a community garden program located in the local schoolyard and the adjacent housing development. The teacher candidates were primarily White women, while the community school and housing development served Black children and families. Dowell traced the transformative experiences of her students from their initial judgmental attitudes and feelings of displacement to attitudes of acceptance. She concluded that through SL "teacher education can be improved and strengthened in terms of adequately preparing students to teach successfully in urban environments" (p. 14).

Two other studies attempted to use mixed methods designs to look at the effects of SL on teacher candidates. McFadden, Maahs-Fladung, and Beacham's (2009) study generated findings with a response rate that was too small for quantitative analyses. However, almost all of their qualitative findings suggested that the teacher candidates "grew" from the course and viewed their experiences in a positive way. In light of their generally positive results, it is noteworthy that the most negative teacher candidate feedback was in their response was to the statement, "students in high school should be required to provide a certain number of hours of community service in order to graduate" (p. 7). Almost 20% of the teacher candidates agreed less with this statement after completing their SL placement, suggesting that the mandatory nature of a SL experience generated strong negative feelings amongst some of them.

Maynes, Hatt, and Wideman (2013) conducted another mixed methods study. Although Likert scales were used to collect quantitative data at the completion of the SL placement, no statistical analyses were reported outside of frequencies of responses at each point of the Likert scale. Overall, the students retrospectively reported on their growth as a result of the course and placement. They found that over 93% of the teacher candidates found the SL experience valuable. While 13% believed that SL should not be mandatory, and 40% were unsure, 47% of teacher candidates agreed that SL should be mandatory. Although over 70% of the teacher candidates in this study had volunteer experience prior to the SL course and almost all of the teacher candidates found the experience valuable, less than half of the teacher candidates agreed with a mandatory SL requirement. This study raises interesting questions about the relationship between students' prior SL experiences and their beliefs about the merit of a mandatory course on SL.

When implemented effectively, research in general has shown that college-level SL courses can be effective in increasing students’ perceptions of their interpersonal, problem-solving, and leadership skills, and social justice orientations (Moely, McFarland, Miron, Mercer, & Ilustre, 2002). While the benefits of SL are widely supported, the merit of mandatory participation in these courses is less accepted by teacher candidates.

Limitations of including mandatory service learning in teacher education

The introduction of a mandatory SL component to teacher education programs might potentially suffer from three types of limitations: quality, student characteristics, and student attitudes (Bender & Jordaan, 2007; Erickson, 2009; Stukas, Snyder, & Clary, 1999). In terms of quality, Erickson (2009) cautioned that without attention to meeting the seven aforementioned criteria, SL programs may not only fail to meet their intended attitudinal and civic outcomes, but may also perpetuate discrimination. Likewise, Dowell (2008) suggested that experiences with those perceived as the “other” may encourage paternalistic and stereotypical attitudes in the teacher candidates involved in SL work. Erickson and O’Connor (2000) have argued that negative and stereotypical attitudes can be strengthened in SL situations if the interactions’ durations are too short or if other minimum standards are not followed. Thus, without careful design and support, it is possible that the outcomes of a SL course may be the opposite of those intended.

A second threat to the intended goals of SL is the demographic variables within the teacher candidate population. Demographic variables have been shown to affect the participants’ responses to SL activities. Bender and Jordaan (2007) showed that students with prior knowledge of and/or participation in a SL course showed greater willingness to participate in SL courses. Moely, Mercer, Ilustre, Miron, and McFarland (2002) as well as Henderson, Brown, Pancer, and Ellis-Hale (2007) have shown that females are more likely to have more positive views toward civic action through SL participation. Thus, being female and having previous SL experiences are associated with more positive views of SL courses. When one considers that most teacher candidates are women and that many have participated in service activities prior to university enrollment (Maynes et al., 2013), it calls into question the additional gains that might be garnered from a mandatory SL course. That is, can measurable gains in civic engagement be made by teacher candidates who have already developed strong civic engagement through prior SL activities?

A third and related threat is students’ attitudes toward the mandatory nature of the SL course. As SL is a part of many high school curricula, it is likely that high school graduates entering teacher education programs would have been offered such experiences in the past. Indeed, Bender and Jordaan (2007) showed that over half of the teacher candidates in their study had prior experience with SL. In students who have already developed positive civic engagement

either through SL coursework or volunteering through their own volition, being required to pay for a course with the same goals may promote feelings of exploitation and decreased motivation to volunteer in the future (Warburton & Smith, 2003). Stukas, Snyder, and Clary (1999) showed that these negative effects were strongest on university students who had been active community volunteers before being required to take mandatory coursework. Bender and Jordaan (2007) showed that 33% of the teacher candidates in their program would not choose to enroll in a course with a SL component. Furthermore, Marzano (1992) showed that students' valuing of a specific unit of study affected their attitudes, which in turn predicted their outcomes in that unit. According to Donnison and Itter (2010), the primary outcome of a SL course at the post-secondary level is the precipitating impact on professional practice once these teacher candidates graduate. If the mandatory nature of these experiences created resentment in the teacher candidates that were obligated to partake in them, it is unlikely that the full benefits of the SL experience would be gained in either the short-term for the teacher candidate or in the long-term for his or her students.

OUR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Although the literature in general supports the benefits of SL courses, we sought to expand the literature in two ways. First, we have observed that the majority of research about SL is qualitative in design. Although some studies incorporated quantitative methods, these tend to be descriptive rather than analytic. By using a mixed design, we were able to investigate statistically significant trends, and then to complement our understanding of these trends through qualitative analysis. Second, rather than using demographic variables such as gender as has been done in the past (Moely, Mercer, et al., 2002), we sought to investigate how students' pre-course attitudes toward a mandatory SL course influenced their growth in civic awareness over the duration of the course.

METHODS

The study took place over two cohorts of students who participated in the SL course. The course is part of a larger mandate within the University of Winnipeg and its Faculty of Education.

Service learning at the University of Winnipeg

Under the leadership of its President, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, the University of Winnipeg had initiated a "community learning" mandate (Axworthy, 2009). Bringle and Hatcher (2000) suggested that SL should be represented at an institutional level within its mission statement. Axworthy outlined his vision for community learning in a policy paper where he recognized that one of the core values of a university community is to take

on wider responsibilities as neighbours and citizens. Under this mandate, the university has engaged in a wide variety of initiatives aimed at developing its role as a “community learning” provider. In this way, the mandate meets another core value within the SL literature in that “community agency resources are coupled with the academic institution to build reciprocal, enduring and diverse partnerships which mutually support community interests and academic goals” (Bender & Jordaan, 2007, p. 633).

Synchronous to the vision and programs initiated by the President’s office were complementary programs and projects within the university’s Faculty of Education. In the 2008-09 academic year, *Educational Leadership within a Service-learning Framework* was introduced as a mandatory course for all first-year students enrolled in the five-year teacher education program. The course begins with five weeks of classes, totaling 15 hours, focused on curricular topics and themes that enrich students’ understanding of community needs and opportunities. Current themes in the course are: the importance of community service; cultural connections; challenges for newcomers to Winnipeg and immigrants; and the disenfranchised poor. As the students study these topics and hear community speakers present, they begin journaling and reflecting on the social issues involved in each situation. They reflect on “who am I, and what do I bring?” In the seven weeks following the classes, students complete forty hours of non-school-based community service, where they mentor, tutor, or teach with one of the partner agencies that serve families, children, and adults, including immigrants. As they serve, students reflect through directed responses to their instructor via an online management system. The cues to the responses are carefully chosen to guide the learners through transformation as they take part in the SL process. Through these processes, best practices for SL (Erickson, 2009) are addressed.

The servant-leader model of leadership serves as the basis in this course. This model, which challenged traditional, top-down models of leadership, was proposed by Greenleaf (1977). Greenleaf’s model emphasized the shared responsibility for decision-making and the importance of building and maintaining a sense of community within an organization, school, or business. Self-interest is the antithesis of the servant-leader model, as the focus is instead on the needs of others and providing resources such as time and attention so that others can find meaning in their work (Russell & Stone, 2002). Russell and Stone posited that the fundamental motivation in a servant leader is the desire to serve. Through adopting this model of leadership, the philosophy of the course moves away from one of charity and toward the equal status espoused by Erickson (2009).

Procedures

During the first week of classes, all SL students were invited to complete online surveys using student-selected pseudonyms. The first survey asked for demographic information. The second instrument measured attitudes and civic engagement. When the students had completed the 12-week SL course, they were again invited to participate in the surveys using the same pseudonym. Students who completed both the pre-treatment and post-treatment phases were paid ten dollars as an honorarium upon their request and conditional on them making the request using a pseudonym found on the current study's database and providing evidence of completion of the SL course.

Instruments

Demographic survey. The demographic survey asked the students to indicate their age, gender, the type and duration of previous SL experience associated with a course, and the type and duration of previous volunteer experience not associated with a course. One additional question was asked at both data collection points. At course onset, students were asked whether they would choose to take the course if it were not required and asked to provide their reasons. At course completion, students were asked whether they would take the course again if they could go back in time and if it were not required. They were again asked to provide their reasons.

Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ). The CASQ (Moely, Mercer, et al., 2002) is a 44-item questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale (see Appendix A). Eight of the statements are reverse-scored. Statements represent six components of attitudes and civic engagement: civic action, interpersonal and problem-solving skills, political awareness, leadership skills, diversity attitudes, and social justice attitudes. *Civic action* represents intention to become involved in future community services or actions that helps others. *Interpersonal and problem-solving skills* represent the participants' self-evaluation of their abilities to listen to others, work co-operatively, make friends, think logically, and solve problems. *Political awareness* requires self-assessment of participants' awareness of local and national current events and social issues. *Social justice* refers to participants' self-assessment of their attitudes about the causes of poverty and how it can be solved. *Diversity attitudes* refer to the participants' attitudes toward diversity and willingness to engage with those from other cultures. *Leadership* refers to participants' self-assessment of their ability to lead as well as their effectiveness in this role. Two items of the leadership subscale were omitted, as they were antithetical to the definition of leadership in the SL course. Students who adhered to Greenleaf's concept of leadership would probably have agreed with statements 27 and 30, which said, "I am a better leader than a follower" and "I would rather have somebody else take the lead in formulating the solution." As these two items represent a traditional, top-down construct of leadership, they were omitted from the survey.

Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) indicated that the criteria for acceptable alpha levels that indicate internal reliability are those greater than .70, while an alpha level of .80 is considered good. Cronbach alphas were computed for each of the CASQ sub-scales using the current sample. They ranged from .76 to .86, with three scales above .80, including the revised leadership, civic action, and political awareness subscales.

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

One hundred forty-six teacher candidates completed the surveys at time one. All but three of the candidates had completed previous community service. The participants included 107 females and 39 males. Age ranges included 3 candidates who were 17, 119 candidates aged 18 to 20 years, 15 candidates aged 21 to 25 years, 7 candidates aged 26 to 35 years, and 2 candidates over age 35. Of these, 30.1% ($n = 44$) indicated that they would not take the *Educational Leadership within a Service-learning Framework* were it not required in their program. When asked at the course onset why they would not choose to enroll in the course were it not required, responses indicated that candidates would rather take courses they perceived as being more directly related to their degrees ($n = 10$), they were unsure what the course was about and therefore would not have selected it ($n = 10$), they viewed the course as unnecessary ($n = 2$), they were already committed to giving service ($n = 14$), the course was perceived as a heavy time commitment ($n = 4$), or the course was “pointless” ($n = 4$).

One hundred candidates completed the surveys at time two. These candidates included 72 females and 28 males. Age ranges included two candidates who were 17, 79 candidates aged 18 to 20 years, 13 candidates aged 21 to 25 years, four candidates aged 26 to 35 years, and two candidates over age 35. Of these, 12% ($n = 12$) indicated, after taking the course, that they still would not have taken the *Educational Leadership within a Service-learning Framework* were they offered the choice. The reasons offered for not choosing to take the course included already being committed to community service prior to the course and therefore perceiving that they already understood the benefits ($n = 8$), holding a perception that the course placement aspect took a lot of time ($n = 4$), seeing the class as having no direct relationship to teaching ($n = 1$), and being dissatisfied with the variety of placement options ($n = 1$).

Preliminary analysis sought to identify potential differences at time one in the variables of interest (civic action, interpersonal and problem-solving skills, political awareness, leadership skills, diversity attitudes, and social justice attitudes) between candidates who completed both time one and time two surveys and those who did not. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedure was conducted using completion status as the independent variable and the six components of civic engagement as the dependent variables. Findings indicated that there were no significant differences between completers ($n = 100$) and non-completers ($n = 46$), ($F_{\text{range}} = .07$ to 7.65 , $p_{\text{range}} = .06$ to $.79$) on any of the dependent variables at course onset.

The next set of analyses sought to determine whether completer scores on the six variables were significantly different from the beginning to the end of the course. Paired sample *t* tests indicated significant growth in all six variables (civic action, interpersonal and problem-solving skills, political awareness, leadership skills, diversity attitudes, and social justice attitudes) ($t_{\text{range}} = -5.20$ to -8.04 , $p = .000$) over the duration of the course.

Follow-up analyses were conducted to determine whether the magnitude of growth was different between those candidates who indicated at course onset that they would not take the *Educational Leadership within a Service-learning Framework* course were it not required and those who would take it regardless. An ANOVA was conducted with the growth averages in civic action, interpersonal and problem-solving skills, political awareness, leadership skills (3-question score), diversity attitudes, and social justice attitudes as dependent variables and the desire to take the course or not as the independent variable. Findings indicated that there were no significant differences in any of the dependent variables between the two groups ($F_{\text{range}} = .00$ to $.31$, $p_{\text{range}} = .58$ to $.99$).

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the current study indicate that a mandatory university-level course in SL can promote positive growth in civic attitudes and skills in teacher candidates. Candidates indicated that they perceived significant growth in all six components of civic attitudes and skills (civic action, interpersonal and problem-solving skills, political awareness, diversity attitudes, social justice attitudes, and leadership).

An interesting finding was the lack of effect of the candidates' initial levels of inclination to take the course, were it not required. Although almost one third of candidates indicated at course onset that they would not have taken the course if it were not a requirement of the Faculty of Education program, a proportion similar to that found by Bender and Jordaan (2007) – at course onset these candidates demonstrated no significant differences in any of the six civic attitudes scales from the candidates who wanted to take the course. Furthermore, their magnitude of growth in all the six subscale was not statistically different from the growth of candidates who wanted to take the course, and their endpoint scores on all scales were not significantly different from those of candidates who wanted to take the course. In effect, these candidates were no different from other candidates at onset, at endpoint, and in their magnitude of growth over the duration of the course. This finding challenges Marzano's (1992) finding that student attitudes toward a unit of study predict their outcomes in that unit. The negative attitudes of these teacher candidates toward the required SL course did not inhibit their growth in civic engagement during the course.

Why, then, did these candidates perceive themselves as different and why were these candidates reluctant to take the course? It is interesting to note that the most common reason given at course onset for not wanting to take the course related to candidates’ prior experiences and their self-perceptions that they had already developed civic awareness and skills. Their comments at onset collected through the survey reflect these sentiments:

I would volunteer on my own working with inner city youth because I know how much of a difference I can make with those children from past experiences.

I feel that working in a school setting with classes full of different attitudes / races / financial situations has given me enough experience.

I feel that I am already extremely active in my community and do it for no reward. Therefore I feel no need to do service not of my choosing for credit.

This finding contradicts the work of Bender and Jordaan (2007), which showed that candidates with prior knowledge of and/or participation in a community service project showed greater willingness to participate in SL courses. However, it supports the findings of Warburton & Smith (2003) and Stukas, Snyder, and Clary (1999), who suggested that students who are already active volunteers may develop feelings of resentment and exploitation when required to take mandatory SL courses. Moreover, at the completion of the course, 12% of candidates maintained these attitudes, including candidates who believed that they had already developed the skills prior to taking the course. Their comments reflect these perceptions:

I think that this is the stuff that you can learn simply in everyday life. There doesn’t need to be a course for it. I did enjoy placement, but it’s not necessary.

I do volunteering already, and taking this course is like paying to volunteer. It’s still a good course, just for the right audience.

It seems that these candidates were unaware of the growth they demonstrated over the duration of the course. If it were the case that these candidates had already developed the skills prior to the course, they would have shown significantly higher scores at the pre-course data collection than other candidates, which they did not. If these candidates did not grow in their civic awareness during the course, they would have demonstrated no difference when their pre-post course growth scores, which again was not our finding. Our findings have demonstrated that these candidates were unaware of their significant growth over the duration of the course as measured by the CASQ.

Although some candidates did not want to take the course because they perceived that had already developed skills in the course goal areas, other reasons for reluctance were also given. One candidate who indicated at course onset that he/she would not have taken the course if it were not required stated at that time, “I did not know what this course was about.” After taking the course, she was happy to have taken it: “Thank you for such an amazing opportunity.”

Other candidates who indicated at onset that they did not want to take the course said that they did not perceive it as related to their development as teachers. Comments at onset were revealing:

I don't want to take this course just simply because there are other courses related to my major that I would have liked to take.

I would have taken another course that helped me towards my degree.

These comments indicate that the candidates did not perceive the *Educational Leadership within a Service-learning Framework* course as related to their degree at course onset. Of the 10 candidates who, at onset, gave this reason for not wanting to take the course, seven completed the post-course survey. Of those, five maintained that the course was not related to their development as teachers:

Coming into university, my plan was to take required courses that would get me through university as quickly as possible and get me into the field of teaching quickly because that is my passion.

I don't think that the class time is necessary.

I already had the experience in this field. I should not have had to pay to volunteer. It was a nice experience but it should not be mandatory.

The two candidates who indicated at onset that they saw the course as unrelated to teaching development but were then happy that they had taken the course once it was completed did not provide comments as to why.

It is noteworthy that candidates overall were generally very positive about their SL experiences. The percentage of candidates who wanted to take the course at onset was approximately 70%, while 88% indicated by the end of the course that they were happy that they had taken the course and would take it again if they could go back in time. Their comments indicated these sentiments:

I have enjoyed the experience, the children have changed my life. I hope to continue volunteering after this class ends.

Amazing life experience.

Before I took it, I thought the course would suck, but now it's amazing.

I feel it is a very effective course because it teaches you about cultural diversity, as well as involving a person in the community through volunteering. It was great!

I would take the course again because it opened my mind to wider things that are out there in my community.

It gives you experience with different types of people, cultures, and financial areas that people are placed in. You get out of your comfort zone.

I think it teaches you good life skills and makes people better and humbles people.

CONCLUSION

Overall, findings suggest that a mandatory university course in SL promotes more positive civic attitudes in teacher candidates with prior service experiences, and this finding holds true regardless of whether the students wanted to take the course or not. These findings point to several areas for future exploration. First, it is noteworthy that all but three of the candidates had prior SL experiences and that this did not diminish their capacity for subsequent, measureable growth in their civic attitudes. Our study did not ask for details of the candidates' prior experiences, so it is impossible to determine the quality of these experiences. It is possible that their prior experiences did not meet the criteria set by Erickson (2009), did not garner the desired effects, and therefore left lots of room for development of civic attitudes within the university-based course. It is also possible that civic awareness develops in stages and that the high school experiences were of high quality, and the course offered by the university was a good fit for the teacher candidates at their current level of development. As many schools are involved in promoting volunteerism and SL initiatives, future research is required to assess the quality of these experiences as well as their outcomes so that university courses complement students' prior learning.

Additionally, future research is needed to unravel the mismatch in data from candidates reluctant to take the course based on their perceptions that they had already developed these skills. Their comments indicated that they did not perceive that they grew and benefitted from the course, while measured gains in civic awareness were clearly in evidence in the CASQ data. It is likely that in-depth, qualitative research may be able to add clarity to this anomaly.

Finally, although all the students indicated growth in civic engagement as a result of participation in the SL course, including their likelihood to be engaged in service in the future, it would be interesting to follow up with these students at a future date after the course. It is possible that the students who were unhappy with having to take the course and maintained their negative attitudes toward its mandatory nature from onset to completion may be less likely to pursue future service activities in actuality if not in intention (Stukas, Snyder, & Clary, 1999).

As with any research project, there are several limitations that must be considered. First, it is important to recognize the small sample size. Replication with a larger sample would provide validation of our findings. Second, we must recognize the possible bias in the views of those candidates who filled out the surveys. It is not possible to determine whether the views expressed by those candidates who participated in the study represented the views of those who did not. However, the lack of differences at onset between the survey completers and non-completers suggest confidence in our findings.

These limitations notwithstanding, the current research shines light on the potential of a SL course to develop candidates' civic attitudes. It is noteworthy that gains were made on all six scales despite these teacher candidates already having had extensive volunteer experiences prior to taking the SL course and despite the reluctance of 30% of the candidates taking the course. The research findings raise interesting questions about candidates' perceptions of their own growth compared with the growth measured by a survey instrument. Future qualitative research is suggested as a means to unravel this mismatch. Considered together, the findings provide some validation for the claim that mandatory SL courses can foster the civic engagement even in reluctant teacher candidates. Future research that uses a broader range of both qualitative and quantitative methods is suggested.

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APPENDIX A. CIVIC ATTITUDES AND SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE (2002)

Civic action

1. I plan to do some volunteer work.
2. I plan to become involved in the community.
3. I plan to participate in a community action program.
4. I plan to become an active member of the community.
5. In the future, I plan to participate in a community service organization.
6. I plan to help others who are in difficulty.
7. I am committed to making a positive difference.
8. I plan to become involved in programs to help clean up the environment.

Interpersonal problem-solving skills

9. I can listen to other people's opinions.
10. I can work co-operatively with a group of people.
11. I can think logically in solving problems.
12. I can communicate well with others.
13. I can successfully resolve conflicts with others.
14. I can easily get along with people.
15. I try to find effective ways of solving problems.
16. When trying to understand the positions of others, I try to place myself in their position.
17. I find it easy to make friends.
18. I can think analytically in solving problems.
19. I try to place myself in the place of others in trying to assess their current situations.
20. I tend to solve problems by talking them out.

Political awareness

21. I am aware of current events.
22. I understand the issues facing this nation.
23. I am knowledgeable of the issues facing the world.
24. I am aware of the events happening in my local community.
25. I plan to be involved in the political process.
26. I understand the issues facing Winnipeg's community.

Leadership skills

27. I am a better follower than a leader.* (omitted)
28. I am a good leader.
29. I have the ability to lead a group of people.
30. I would rather have somebody else take the lead in formulating the solution.* (omitted)
31. I feel I can make a difference in the world.

Social justice attitudes

32. I don't understand why some people are poor when there are boundless opportunities available to them.*
33. People are poor because they choose to be poor.*
34. Individuals are responsible for their own misfortune.*
35. We need to look further than the individual in assessing his/her problems.
36. In order for problems to be solved, we need to change public policy.
37. We need to institute reforms with the current system to change our communities.
38. We need the change people's attitudes in order to solve social problems.
39. It is important that equal opportunities are available to all people.

Diversity attitudes

40. It is hard for a group to function effectively when the people involved come from diverse backgrounds.*
41. I prefer the company of people who are very similar to me in background and expressions.*
42. I find it difficult to relate to people from a different race or culture.*
43. I enjoy meeting people who come from backgrounds different from my own.
44. Cultural diversity within a group makes the group more interesting and effective.

*indicates that the statement is reverse-scored in analysis

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