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[Carrington, Suzanne & Selva, Gitta](#)
(2010)

Critical social theory and transformative learning: Evidence in pre-service teachers' service-learning reflection logs.

Higher Education Research and Development, 29(1), pp. 45-57.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360903421384>

Critical social theory and transformative learning: Evidence in pre-service teachers' service-learning reflection logs

Suzanne Carrington^{a*} and Gitta Selva^a

^a Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

This paper reports on the opportunities for transformational learning experienced by a group of pre-service teachers who were engaged in service-learning as a pedagogical process with a focus on reflection. Critical social theory informed the design of the reflection process as it enabled a move away from knowledge transmission toward knowledge transformation. The structured reflection log was designed to illustrate the critical social theory expectations of quality learning that teach students to think critically: Ideology critique and utopian critique (Leonardo, 2004). Butin's lenses (2003) and a reflection framework informed by the work of Bain, Ballantyne, Mills and Lester (2002) were used in the design of the service-learning reflection log. Reported data provide evidence of transformational learning, and highlight how the students critique their world and imagine how they could contribute to a better world in their work as a beginning teacher.

Keywords: critical social theory; pre-service teachers; reflection; service-learning; transformational learning

Introduction

'Reflection in education is a field full of promises: promises for improving professional proficiency, for fostering personal growth, and for increasing social justice' (Procee, 2006, p. 252).

The development of reflective practice (eg., John Dewey and Donald Schön) as a key learning objective has been used across various disciplines including occupational therapy (Kinsella, 2001), social work (Morley, 2007), management (Pavlovich, 2007), athletic training (Walker, 2006), communication sciences (Goldberg, Richburg & Wood, 2006), and pre-service teacher education (Baker & Shahid, 2003). Put simply, reflection is the formation of a thought or idea as a consequence of meditation. In the case of the service-learning program we report on here, pre-service teachers examine their own experiences, forming thoughts and ideas about them in relation to the material that they are studying at university. As Russell (2005, pp. 203-4) argues, 'Reflective practice can and should be taught – explicitly, directly, thoughtfully and patiently – using personal reflection-in-action to interpret and improve one's teaching of reflective practice to others'. Reflection, particularly self-reflection, can be linked with critical social theory and thus to transformational learning (Gur-Ze'ev, Masschelein & Blake, 2001; Thompson, 1990, pp. 320-327). As Thompson (1990, p. 330) states, the critical social theorists:

'emphasize the enduring significance of domination in the modern world; they were right to stress that individuals are self-reflective agents who can deepen their understanding of

* Corresponding author. Email: sx.carrington@qut.edu.au

themselves and others and who can, on the basis of that understanding, act to change the conditions of their lives; and they were right to regard the critical analysis of ideology as one phase in the dynamic relation between domination and action, between the establishment and reproduction of forms of domination, on the one hand, and the process of critical self-reflection which may enable individuals to challenge the forms, on the other.'

Critical social theorists propose 'that quality education is as much about teaching students the ability to read the world more critically (ideology critique) as it is imagining a better world that is less oppressive (utopian critique)' (Leonardo, 2004, p. 16). These theorists support the production and application of theory that underlies a transformative approach to learning (Althusser, 1976), and provides the framework for a form of critical discourse that can change the pedagogical process from one of knowledge transmission to knowledge transformation (Leonardo, 2004). 'In quality education, criticism functions to cultivate students' ability to question, deconstruct, and then reconstruct knowledge in the interest of emancipation' (Leonardo, 2004, p. 12). However, critical social theorists do not only focus on critique. Their approach to quality education also engages in a language of transcendence, so there is a capacity to imagine an alternative reality and a hope for education and society (Giroux, 1983; Giroux, 1988; Greene, 1986; Kincheloe, 1993). Critical social theory can be linked back to the Frankfurt School of sociologists such as Theodore Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse and Eric Fromm. The Frankfurt School theorists were anti-positivist and had an emancipatory ideal in that they sought to free people from a 'false consciousness'. They were sceptical of prevailing ideologies and the thoughts associated with them as they argued that these ideologies and thoughts concealed social inequalities. Transformation is thus required (eg., Agger, 2006, 1991; Leonardo, 2004; Dant, 2003). This transformation does not occur through military force or a hierarchical structure. Rather, it occurs through 'the freedom of all people in modernity ... [where] the interests of all should be identified and accepted' (Dant, 2003, p. 159).

Within education, critical social theory is associated with Paulo Freire, who is 'synonymous with the very concept and practice of critical pedagogy' (Giroux, 1993, p. 177). Leonardo (2004, p. 12) highlights that critical social theory draws on the work of Freire and Giroux by promoting 'ideology critique, and analysis of culture, attention to discourse, and a recasting of the teacher as an intellectual or cultural worker'.

Use of this theoretical framework is important because pre-service teachers often enter teacher education programs with problematic or unexamined assumptions, beliefs and knowledge about students, teaching and the role of schools in society (Carrington & Sagers, 2008). Traditional teacher education has strengthened the transfer of knowledge that reinforces power relations between institutions and community, and between institutions and faculty. Use of critical social theory in teacher education programs can assist teachers to become 'attune' to their own assumptions through self-reflection and self-criticism (Agger, 1991, p. 111).

In this paper we report on the transformational learning of a group of pre-service teachers who were engaged in service-learning as a pedagogical process, with a focus on reflection. The service-learning program is a component of a final year unit on inclusive education. The program aims to develop a set of principles that would form an inclusive ethical framework for the pre-service teachers. This framework would influence a beginning teacher's approach to relationships with staff, with students and their families, with pedagogy, and with curriculum such that they sought to continually identify and overcome inequalities and promote inclusive education. We now turn to the understanding of service-learning used in our program.

Service-learning

Service-learning can be conceptualised within a social-cultural framework and can be described as 'people learning as part of developing a practice' (Comas, Bunn, Hiller & Miller, 2005, as cited in Butin,

2005, p. 110). This approach to pedagogy requires university students to become involved in their community in order to critique and reflect on knowledge learned at university. In doing so, they become more aware of their beliefs and practices and those of others, and how they can contribute to a more socially just society. According to Butin (2005), the service-learning experience can be viewed through four distinct lenses: Technical; cultural; political; and postmodern/poststructural. Through the *technical* lens, we can focus on the pedagogical effectiveness of service-learning, where learning is conceptualised as ‘one among multiple pedagogical strategies; it serves the function of better teaching for better learning’ (Butin, 2005, p. 90). The technical perspective concentrates on the innovative elements that link the service to improved student outcomes in the university unit of study, rather than the implications of the placement for the student, the organisation or the wider community. A *cultural* dimension involves ‘the meanings of the practice for individuals and institutions involved’ (Butin, 2005, p. 90) and can assist with acceptance of diversity. The cultural perspective suggests that by undertaking service-learning, students will develop a greater respect and understanding of diversity, increase their engagement and will gain a greater sense of who they are in their community.

A *political* focus involves ‘promotion and empowerment of the voices and practices of disempowered and non-dominant groups in society’ (Butin, 2005, p. 91). This perspective is related to power. Service-learning is viewed as a process that will alert students to recognise dominant groups and values in our society. The combined experience of service and reflection may develop goals to transform power relationships. Finally, a *postmodern/poststructuralist* perspective would focus on ‘how the service-learning process creates, sustains, and/or disrupts the boundaries and norms by which we make sense of ourselves and the world’ (Butin, 2005, p. 91). The postmodern/poststructuralist perspective has two premises: There is no single truth, and individuals are constructed and construct themselves in society.

Use of the Butin Conceptual Model (2005) reinforces how service-learning can assist beginning teachers to learn about equity, diversity, global interconnectedness (Merryfield, 2000) and attitudes towards ‘others’ (Gomez, 1994). Through guided reflection, the model can encourage critique and development of goals to improve practices in education in order to ensure that all students have a positive future (Butcher et al., 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2001). The challenge is - can we structure the reflection process to change the pedagogical process from one of knowledge transmission to knowledge transformation that is expected in a quality education program informed by critical social theory? Student reflection associated with service-learning can be scaffolded using a framework of the four Butin lenses. We predicted that a scaffolded Service-learning Reflection Log, designed with this framework, would facilitate transformative learning. It is to this component of the service-learning program that we will look at next.

Teaching students how to reflect

After spending years of providing little structure for student reflection, Russell (2005, p. 202) decided to scaffold a series of questions intended to foster thinking and to provide feedback. Sample questions included: ‘What do you see as your major strengths as a new teacher?’; ‘Summarize your major insights into the nature and challenges of teaching during the practicum?’; and ‘In what specific ways could we improve the contribution of theory to practice?’. Students were asked to reflect about these issues at several points throughout the pre-service program. Russell (2005) determined that engaging in a dialogue with students was very important to help students reframe their perspectives over the duration of the course.

Nolan (2008) reports on a small scale study involving early childhood education undergraduate students from the University of Melbourne, which trialled a variety of guided reflection techniques. The data from the survey showed that some techniques were considered more helpful than others in aiding reflection. Analysing their own past school experiences, creating a montage of magazine articles to represent their philosophy of teaching and learning, and reading and commenting on journal articles were identified by students as the most effective techniques. Nolan (2008, p. 31) suggests that ‘skills for

reflection can be taught and should play more of a role in pre-service teacher education courses'. She points out that the development of reflective practice requires skilled facilitation and appropriate support. Presenting her experience of teaching critical reflection to undergraduate social work students, Morley (2007) contends that critical reflection is an important part of education that enhances students' opportunities to engage in citizenship, and influence developments in human rights, social justice and social change. She writes that a primary aim of critical reflection is to challenge and change dominant power relations and structures: 'Critical reflection holds great emancipatory potential' (Morley, 2007, p. 419).

Most studies with pre-service teachers are about reflections on students' pre-service and in-service teaching experiences (Baker & Shahid, 2003; Kasten, 1996; Nolan, 2008). For the field of service-learning, a study by Goldberg et al. (2006) is relevant to our findings. Graduate students completed a weekly electronic journal about their service-learning experience, addressing several categories: A description of what occurred; comments on their reactions and feelings; integration of observations and reactions with information presented in the classroom; and suggestions for future study (Goldberg et al., 2006, p. 135). The categories provide the scaffolding for the reflection process for the students. The instructor provided written feedback and facilitated an on-line discussion with classmates. Goldberg et al. (2006, p. 131) conclude that 'through active and thoughtful engagement in learning, students develop the ability to reflectively and critically question assumptions'.

There are many strategies to facilitate reflection, but one teaching method that has been employed extensively is journal writing (Walker, 2006). The reason for using this technique is because 'The act of writing facilitates deeper analysis of the experience through assessing and articulating it. This activity assists the writers to stand outside the experience, to see it more objectively, and to become detached from the emotional outcomes' (Pavlovich, 2007, p. 284). Writing in a reflective journal requires development and practice. Clear guidelines are needed also. Pavlovich (2007, p. 284) states that, 'for many students, this journal writing is very challenging because of the unfamiliar use of the personal voice, so divergent from the usual passive voice and densely referenced text familiar in academic writing' (p. 284). Many authors agree that reflection can be taught through the use of journal writing (Baker & Shahid, 2003; Boud, 2001; Carter, 1997; Janssen, de Hullu & Tigelaar, 2008; Kasten, 1996; Pavlovich, 2007). 'However, much research has shown that a typical, unaided journal entry is likely to be a descriptive account of an incident or concern, rather than a careful analysis of the issues involved and consequent reformulation of practice' (Bain et al., 2002) and therefore would not lead to transformational learning.

To assist students to move beyond description and engage in such transformational learning, we used Bain et al.'s (2002) 5Rs framework. This framework is used to assess the levels of reflective writing and thinking in student teachers' journal entries. This framework assists pre-service teachers to understand the complexity of reflection, and enables them to assess their own journal writing. The 5Rs framework gets its name from the five components of reflection that comprise the scale – Reporting, Responding, Relating, Reasoning, and Reconstructing (Bain et al., 2002). Our adaptation of the 5R framework entailed combining reporting and responding such that 5Rs become 4Rs – reporting and responding, relating, reasoning, and reconstructing. These components link back to the relationship between self-reflection, ideological critique and the challenge to the status quo that can come with transformational learning.

Overview of this study

The research question guiding the study was, Can a group of pre-service education students provide evidence of transformational learning in service-learning reflection logs that are informed by Butin's lenses (2003, 2005) and the 5Rs framework (Bain et al., 2002)? The study involved teacher education students (primary and secondary) enrolled in a unit on inclusive education in a large urban Faculty of Education. In 2006, the service-learning program was trialled within a core unit for Bachelor of Education

students at a large university in Australia. The service-learning program aimed to broaden students' experience and understanding about the backgrounds and values of people in society. One of the specific aims of the unit of study was to develop and work within legal and ethical frameworks that promote diversity, equity and inclusive education (Carrington & Saggars, 2008; Saggars & Carrington, 2008).

Seventy-two students completed the service-learning pathway in 2007. The majority of these students were white, mono-lingual and from middle-class backgrounds. The students were in their fourth and final year of study and had experienced three different teaching placements in schools. Students had not participated in service-learning in other years at university. The program involved students completing service in partner organisations such as refugee homework centres, playgroups for single mothers who need financial and social support, respite groups for terminally ill children, leisure programs for children with disabilities, meal support for adults, and adult literacy programs. The service reinforces and strengthens the learning in the academic unit on inclusive education, and the learning reinforces and strengthens the service in the organisations. The service activity is voluntary, non-paid work and involved the university students completing 20 hours of work in the various organisations supporting people in need.

The service-learning reflection log was a key element of this project. It was initially adapted from Boud (2001), Connors and Seifer (2005), and the Northwest Service Academy (2005). Our analysis of the first set of student reflection logs was informed by Butin's model discussed earlier. We found that the reflection process assisted the students to see the links between their acts of service in the organisations, the connection to their university study on inclusive education and their view of the world (Bringle, 2003). However, we found that there was a need for the reflection questions to engage students at a deeper level of thinking at the *political* and *postmodern/poststructuralist* perspectives (Butin, 2003). These deeper perspectives of reflection are required to challenge and facilitate the development of a personal teaching philosophy for inclusive education (see Saggars & Carrington, 2008 for a full account) that would be informed by a transformative learning process. It was evident that the service-learning reflection log needed more provocative questions, informed by all four lenses from Butin (2003), to scaffold the transformational learning required in the university unit. In contrast, there was a need for fewer questions that required simple and basic reporting of what the students saw or did while participating in the service-learning program.

For 2007, an improved service-learning reflection log (Appendix 1) was developed to ensure that all students engaged in deeper levels of reflection. The log was structured so that students completed journal entries before, during, and after the service-learning experience. The questions in the log were linked directly to the pre-service teachers' experience. Students wrote in their journals over the eight-week course and participated in online tutorial discussions. Twenty-seven students gave permission to access their service-learning reflection logs, including twenty-three female and four male students.

Data analysis

For this paper, comments from thirteen students have been included. The comments were selected based on being representative of the entire group, instead of being isolated voices. All data were accessed once student grades were finalised according to ethical clearance guidelines. Service-learning reflection logs used in the study had student names removed and were allocated a log number. The numbers in the data analysis below are represented in the log quotes reported in this paper.

Data from the student reflection logs were imported as text files into NVivo 7 (http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo.aspx). This software package is a tool to assist with qualitative data management and analysis. It has purpose built tools for classifying, sorting and arranging information and assists the researcher to analyse data and discover patterns, identify themes, and develop meaningful conclusions. Qualitative data analysis techniques were employed such as organising and coding student reflection log data. Marshall and Rossman (1999, p. 154) state that 'identifying salient

themes, recurring ideas, language and patterns of belief that link people and settings together' allows categories and sub-categories to be formed into which segments of text can be placed. The researchers generated categories from the data; constantly checking the emergent understandings and clarifying these with the research team. Categories were drawn from the data to address the identified research question.

Data was analysed according to Butin's (2003) theoretical framework: Technical, cultural, political and postmodern/poststructural lenses. Such perspectives are not necessarily clearly delineated but overlap and blend together to some extent; the lenses do however help us to bring greater clarity to the service-learning experience. Viewing service-learning from multiple perspectives is useful and can assist us to 'move forward in developing, extending and reconstituting diverse means and goals for service-learning' (Butin, 2003, p. 1689).

In the following section data are reported to highlight reflection and transformational learning across the four lenses.

Technical lens

A technical conceptualisation of real-world learning focuses on its pedagogical effectiveness. In the service-learning program, all students commented on the pedagogical effectiveness of the experience and described how the learning in the community organisation reinforced the learning about the theory of inclusive education at university. The following data from the reflection logs is categorised under the technical lens.

'Being able to observe and apply the inclusive practices discussed in the lectures and outlined in the textbook allowed me to form a solid knowledge and understanding of inclusive education.' (8)

'Through my service- learning experience I was able to attend the lectures and then immediately put into practice and try things that I had learnt.' (10)

'Being able to relate the theories and ideas that were put forward to practical applications made them come alive for me.' (25)

Cultural lens

A cultural perspective reflects how the experience fosters a respect for diversity, to gain a greater awareness of societal concerns, develop a stronger moral and ethical sense and encourage volunteerism and civic engagement (Butin, 2003). The students completed service in an array of community organisations that catered for the needs of a diverse population of children and adults. The service-learning experience was an opportunity for many university students to interact with people from different cultures and backgrounds. The following reflections indicate growing understanding and awareness of different people's needs.

'The refugee and migrant students are making huge efforts to learn the English language and understand how the Australian culture operates therefore it is our opportunity to do the same.' (3)

'Through participating in this experience I have gained awareness that people in the community have different backgrounds, requirements, and support.' (4)

'This role gave me a unique bird's eye view of the diverse individuals that make up our local community.' (14)

'From my experience I have come to more fully realise how distinctive all people are and that it is important to understand what their life goals and desires are.' (5)

Political lens

The students were able to witness examples of discrimination and marginalisation that influence choices people have in society. These macro power relations included the difficulties experienced by some people and the harsh reality of hierarchy and effects of the power of the dominant voice. The following data are categorised in the political lens and illustrate student's learning in this area.

'The organisation addresses the need within the community for individuals to retain their independence, that is, for the elderly and persons with a disability to remain in their own homes.' (21)

'(The organisation) helps reduce ostracism within society by allowing people with disabilities to effectively interact within their local community.' (5)

'The students feel a sense of belonging to and identification (with the organisation), specifically as through their contributions, they may feel a sense of responsibility, empowerment, and ownership.' (8)

'The culture of the organisation is to empower students to express their own opinions and ideas, as well as attitudes and beliefs and to provide them with the skills to do so.' (13)

Postmodern/Poststructural lens

This perspective would focus on how the learning experience 'creates, sustains, and/or disrupts the boundaries and norms by which we make sense of ourselves and the world' (Butin, 2005, p. 91). The students in the service-learning program demonstrated deep thinking and learning in the data gathered in the reflection logs. The log was scaffolded to encourage the students to link their experience in the community to their learning about inclusive education at university. The questions were designed to challenge their assumptions and beliefs and to consider their future roles as teachers. Critique was expected in this section so that students could question, deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge. The following sections of data illustrate how the learning experience challenged ingrained traditional beliefs and understandings about people in society and in particular prompted a reconsideration of identity and opportunity.

'We finished off the session with some dancing and in the middle of the choreographed dance, there was an opportunity to freestyle. The group formed a circle and one by one, clients went into the middle and showed us their moves. It was great to see and was the same sort of thing that happens in nightclubs – my first moment of realisation that, despite impairments, the clients have fun the same way I do when I am out with my friends.' (23)

'Autism emerged as the disability that I had unknown prejudices about. There was one boy with severe autism who was described as occasionally violent and this made me weary when working with him. I kept him in my sight at all times and took a step back when he came close to me. I realised after working with him that this was an absolutely ridiculous reaction and if anything I was setting myself up for a bad situation because I created a tense environment with my actions. After this incident I decided not to value labels, but to value personal experience instead.' (18)

'I was surprised that this woman had not learned her birthday before. She told me that her husband knew that sort of thing so it had not been important for her to know. The rigid gender roles in her family's culture are so different from my own. I imagine this has a huge impact on her self expectations. I hope that she will see for herself greater opportunities in Australia for more independent participation in society. However, I recognise that this is my own value formed by my life experiences in this culture so I do not pass judgement about her dependence on her husband.' (7)

Thus through this data from students' reflection logs, we can see how students developed an understanding of diversity in society, and of their own assumptions about people and difference. The scaffolded reflection process enables students to challenge personal assumptions and consider how they might operate differently. For example, the quotation from the pre-service teacher working with a student with autism is particularly telling here because, through experience and reflection, this student reconstructed his/her assumptions and considered an alternative way to proceed in a more inclusive manner.

Discussion

Of course, reflection in and of itself does not necessarily demonstrate a change in students' attitudes. It is possible that some students could have written entries to please their lecturers and/or to get a good grade. Yet, in our view, for the majority of students, the service-learning experience appears to have posed an opportunity for transformation. It is interesting to note that there were no observable differences among male and female students. In this sample, the majority of students were white, mono-lingual, and from middle-class backgrounds. It is possible, however, that other variables such as political orientation or ethnicity might have had an impact on students' participation in the service-learning program and on their reflections. We are also aware that some organisations provided greater opportunity for students to make connections between theory and practice than other organisations did. For this reason, the coordinators review the organisations participating in the service-learning program on an annual basis to ensure that students gain maximum opportunities to engage in reflection and transformational learning.

The sample data from the service-learning reflection logs illustrates the depth of reflection and transformative learning that is analysed across the four Butin lenses (2003). It is important to note at this stage that the revised service-learning reflection log used in this study (Appendix 1) facilitated all students (n=27) to reflect across all lenses: Technical; cultural; political; and postmodern/poststructural. This is in contrast to the pilot research (Saggers & Carrington, 2008), where the reflection log data included very little evidence of the last two lenses. In the pilot project, only three out of 23 students demonstrated reflection that could be coded postmodern/poststructural. A section that focused on the development of a personal teaching philosophy in the revised reflection log further encouraged the students to consider how their learning would influence their future role as a teacher and therefore indicate transformative learning.

It is a challenge to evaluate and grade student journals due to their subjective nature. We were very aware that students needed to engage in dialogue about their reflections in a safe environment (Baker & Shahid, 2003; Walker, 2006). Boud (2001) points out that great care needs to be taken regarding formal assessment, which might inhibit reflection. Pavlovich (2007) acknowledges the debate about grading assessments, but writes that assessment criteria play a central part in the success of journal writing, because they provide the structure and foundation for what is expected. Walker (2006) proposes that before assigning journal writing, the instructor must convey to the students all expectations with regard to completing and grading the journals. Adding a grade to the journals puts value to them and establishes their importance. We suggest that the Butin (2003) and Bain et al. (2002) models can provide an excellent assessment framework for grading student reflection with a focus on transformational learning. Through the data from students' reflection logs we can see that Butin's (2003) lenses and Bain et al.'s (2002) framework are useful models for teaching students how to reflect. Through their self-reflection and their experience in community organisations, these pre-service teachers identified and critiqued their own assumptions, gained a greater understanding of diversity in their society and developed an understanding of how they could be more inclusive of others.

Conclusion

The pedagogy of service-learning, combined with the reflection log in this paper, illustrates the critical social theory expectations of quality learning that teach students to think critically: Ideology critique and utopian critique (Leonardo, 2004). The data highlight how the students critique and read their world, and

imagine how they could contribute to a better world in their work as a teacher. Further to this knowledge transformation, the students demonstrated an enhanced understanding about inclusive education and the students were able to reconstruct their own vision of what their future role as a teacher could be. This enabled them to consider their roles as activists and change agents in the teaching profession. The reflection process, informed by the work of Butin (2003) and Bain et al. (2002), facilitated the students to see the links between their acts of service, their university study and their view of the world (Bringle, 2003).

A group of pre-service teachers in this study did not just learn about their broader community, they experienced this diversity from a more informed and authentic perspective. Through being socially connected to people from diverse backgrounds, awareness can be raised about power dynamics in our society that might inform a new language of possibility (Giroux, 1988) where teachers can imagine their role as contributing to a better education for all. Transformational learning is expected in this service-learning program which includes a carefully scaffolded reflection process. This approach is informed by a critical social theoretical framework (Gur-Ze'ev et al., 2001; Thompson, 1990). It is our expectation that as a result of the service-learning program, teachers can identify practices in education that reinforce the status quo and challenge them so that the best interests of all students can be promoted. It is this critical frame that we consider significant in the development of pre-service teachers.

As reflection is an ongoing process for educators, there is hope that this group of students saw the value of the reflection journals, and we hope that reflection will continue to guide these beginning teachers when they critically review their own and others' assumptions and practices. However, Smyth (1992, p. 286) warns that the school system may focus on 'a preferred model of reflection that is inextricably connected to state and national guidelines on what constitutes acceptable qualities and standards of good teaching, with teachers being subjected to increased forms of surveillance and appraisal'. If the preferred model dominates, our beginning teachers might lose their focus on ideology critique and utopian critique that we have facilitated in their pre-service teacher education degree.

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Appendix 1

Service-learning Reflection Log

Section One – Information about You (approx 500-600 words)

1.1 Introduction

Why did you choose the Service-learning pathway?

1.2 School Reflection

Think back to your own experiences of school (primary/secondary):

- a) How did you respond to the range of diverse students (disability, culture, family differences etc) in your school community when you were a student?
- b) Describe how some students were excluded and included at school.
- c) How can schools contribute to the development of a more inclusive society?
- d) What problems do you have with the concept of inclusive education?

Section Two - Reflection in Anticipation of Events (500-600 words)

2.1 Focus on Aspects of the Context

- a) What do you know of the context of the community organisation in which you will do your service Learning?
- b) Use the organisation's website, make some phone calls and explore the following issues:
 - What is the main work of the organisation?
 - Whose needs does the organisation serve?
 - What type of work is involved for the people working in the organisation?

2.2 Focus on the Learner

- a) What would you like to achieve in this experience?
- b) How are you feeling before the placement?
- c) What challenges do you expect for you personally in the experience?

2.3 Focus on Learning Skills and Strategies

- a) While you are working for the organisation, what do you think will be important to observe?
- b) What do you want to find out more about?
- c) How will this learning reinforce and extend your learning about inclusive education at university?

Section Three - Reflection in the Midst of Action

- 3.1** Describe and critically reflect on 3 important events/observations and the impact on you personally. It is recommended that you keep a journal during the Service Learning experience, which will assist you with this task. Use the 4R's framework adapted from Bain et al., (2002) to scaffold and structure your reflection. This section should reflect your own experience but should link to your learning at university and in particular your textbook. You should have 10 references (minimum) throughout section 3.1.

Starting points for discussion include:

- Document your observations about the culture and values of the organisation, processes of communication, collaboration, team work.
- Were any of your ideals or beliefs challenged or reinforced?
- How is your experience different from what you expected?

- How did you respond to the challenges you discussed in section 2.2?
- Consider how your learning from this event will contribute to your future teaching role in schools.

Event /Observation 1 (500-600 words)

Event /Observation 2 (500-600 words)

Event /Observation 3 (500-600 words)

Section Four - Reflection after Events (approx 500 words)

4.1 How did your experience in the organisation reinforce your learning about inclusive education at university?

4.2 What practical knowledge and skills have you gained?

4.3 When you are a first year teacher, how will you operate to inform and progress the development of more inclusive culture, policy and practice in your school community?

4.4 Discuss how your beliefs have changed as a result of this experience?

4.5 Did you achieve what you described in 2.2 in the Service Learning Reflection Log?

4.6 What could be improved in the Service Learning Experience?

Word count: 6,543