

Chapter 10

Inquiry and Service-Learning in Teacher Education

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This chapter describes an inquiry-based approach to a teacher education course at The University of Georgia, called Service-Learning in English Teacher Education. After several years of piloting and developing the course (see Smagorinsky, 2011a, 2014; Smagorinsky, with Brasley, Johnson, & Shurtz, 2017; Smagorinsky, Clayton, & Johnson, 2015; Smagorinsky, Johnson, & Clayton, 2015), it became the Foundations requirement for teacher candidates (TCs) preparing for careers as middle and high school teachers of the academic discipline of English, and is open to other enrollees as well. The lengthy process of development of the course indicates that its own formation was a process of inquiry for the instructor working to develop a course with a unique focus, process, settings, and pedagogy.

Although the course enrolls primarily undergraduate students preparing to become English teachers, its design could suit preservice teacher education programs for any discipline, because the course is about human diversity, not a subject area. It especially concerns learning about people who are quite different from the sorts of students who are admitted to The University of Georgia, whose admissions favor the state's top high school achievers who wish to attend a public university. Yet for those who become teachers, students from lower-tier academic tracks will comprise the bulk of their teaching assignments, especially at the beginning of their careers when more senior colleagues get first choice of which classes to teach (Kalogrides, Loeb, & Béteille, 2013). The Service-Learning in English Teacher Education course helps teacher

candidates to learn about a world of humanity with whom they have had little personal contact in their prior schooling, and often in their community life. Experience with service-learning during teacher preparation could also provide a framework for designing inquiry-based service learning experiences for high school students.

Service-Learning: Definition, Potential, and Potential Problems

Following a summit meeting of English Education leaders and award winners, Miller and Fox (2006) summarized the issues that the field needed to address moving ahead. Their conclusions included the question, “How might endeavors such as teacher research or service-learning provide a framework for methods course or field experience design?” (p. 269). This question was the only occasion in the many post-summit documents in which service-learning was mentioned. The field has shown little interest in taking up service-learning as an essential component of teacher education (see Kinloch & Smagorinsky, 2014, for an exception). Service-learning has been both idealized and disparaged in publications. I next briefly review the case for, and the case against, service-learning as a university-based aspect of learning.

The Case for Service-Learning

Service-learning tends to include the following dimensions (Butin, 2003; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Hart, 2006; Learn and Serve Clearinghouse, n. d.; Maybach, 1996):

1. Service-learning involves hands-on, experiential learning that serves a local community’s needs, thus taking on a social justice emphasis. University-based service-learning brings students into personal relationships with historically marginalized people, connecting its typically more advantaged students with local, less fortunate citizens in mutually enriching ways. Service and learning have equal weight in that participants learn through service that lacks charity’s often-patronizing social positioning.

2. Service-learning should synthesize formal academic learning and experiential learning, shifting university learning from its typical emphasis on abstract knowledge that is detached from the material lives of real people, and promoting direct, empirical, experiential learning through which academic theories may be critiqued and revised. Service-learning takes students out of reactive, passive, and receptive roles and allows them agency because their first-hand learning enables critique, reflection, and evaluation.
3. Students' learning builds on their perspectives and experiential learning, which places them in authoritative roles and does not subordinate their interests and beliefs to those of their instructors or assigned texts.
4. Opportunities for reflection should be included in service-learning curricula, available in writing, discussion, or other means. Students' reflections occur throughout the course of study and contribute to the faculty member's evaluation of the course's success.
5. Service-learning may take place through partnerships with community agencies. These partnerships dissolve hierarchies that privilege the perspectives of schools or universities, instead giving community-based partners an equal say in the design, conduct, and evaluation of the project and its activities. The value is on mutual participation, influence, contribution, and benefit within the parameters of both the university's and community-based partners' rules and priorities.
6. Service-learning requires assessment to continually evaluate the degree to which the project is meeting its goals and those of all stakeholders.
7. Undertaking a service-learning initiative is not simply a matter of writing a curriculum and including these elements. Rather, advance work to develop relationships should precede a

service-learning initiative, and these relationships require ongoing maintenance and development to be productive and to endure over time.

On the whole, service-learning opportunities involve students in a defined community-based project that simultaneously contributes to the quality of local people's lives and provides unique, often transformative experiences for students who engage in the service. It is distinct from typical community charitable work such as conducting food drives at Thanksgiving, planting trees on Earth Day, or otherwise helping people without learning from them, learning with them, or even, as is often the case, meeting them. Rather, it is designed to foster reciprocal relationships such that students, through engagement with local people's lives, learn something essential to their education through their personal experience with the community members.

Service-learning can only be evaluated in context. That is, it is neither ideal, as its advocates argue, nor intellectually weak and superficial, as its critics assert. A service-learning initiative can only be evaluated on its own specific processes and outcomes. Service-learning can surely be fluffy when the project is poorly conceived and managed, involves showing up more than showing out, and leaves neither students nor community members better off at the end.

But it can also provide a highly challenging experience for students when it forces conceptual reorientation in the course of both serving and learning. It is impossible to dismiss all service-learning as innately lightweight, and doing so seems profoundly superficial, ignorant, and anti-intellectual. Rather, what matters is how specific projects and courses institute an initiative, and what sorts of experiences and intellectual and personal growth occur during its process.

Rationale for Course Development

Teacher candidates, especially at selective universities, often lack experience with marginalized students, and conventional field experiences tend to replicate and reinforce the *status quo* by acculturating TCs through the perspective of teachers and their role as agents of the school and by not attending to how students themselves experience their education and the broader school environment in light of their lives outside school.

Teacher Candidates' Lack of Socialization for Teaching Diverse Students

Teacher candidates' initial experiences in teacher education fieldwork often leave them feeling shocked and dismayed at the lack of interest and engagement among students, and the lack of proximity to standard expectations for student work they find in the low and middle track classes to which they are assigned in field experiences.

Their preconceived visions of themselves as teachers often follow the professorial model they experienced in their own exclusive high school classes, and again in university courses in both English and other subjects: standing before attentive and compliant students, immersing them in the qualities and nuances of classic literature and established scholarship, and imposing standards for writing proficiency and use of the English language that conform to college expectations and the white-collar work environment. This image is often shattered in their first visits to classrooms where the students don't read assignments, don't turn in work or turn in work that violates normalized academic expectations, and speak in vernaculars that stand outside the textbook norm.

In large part this dissonance follows from the university students' socialization. High track students tend to come from affluent homes (Biddle, 2001). They tend to be White, often because White parents advocate for their children's academic placements, because White students are less in need of after-school jobs to support families than are students of color and

thus can devote themselves more assiduously to studies than to earning money, because White students tend to affiliate with schools and other public institutions more than do students of color who have historically benefitted less from the cachet of grades and diplomas, because teachers and counselors tend to see Whiteness as a qualification for selective programs, and for other reasons well-documented in the scholarship on equity and educational possibility (e.g., Gosa & Alexander, 2007). Of course, many White students come from less affluent homes, and their possible disaffiliation with school is well-documented (e.g., Eckert, 1989), as is their intelligence and potential (Finders, 1997; Shelton, 2016; Shelton, Flynn, & Grosland, 2018). Yet research has also demonstrated that high-track classes are far more likely to enroll students who are White and affluent than those who are not (Oakes, 2005).

The students who are admitted to UGA tend to fit this general pattern of being White and from reasonably comfortable homes, even as many have defied the reproduction of the social division of labor (Williams, 1977) and provide a degree of racial, social, and cultural diversity to our enrollment. The modal TC, however, is quite different from the sorts of students they will teach to begin their careers. A good part of the motivation for developing this course followed from a belief that students might be prepared *academically* to teach, but tend not to be prepared *socially* to understand many of the students they will teach. Teaching is as much about knowing people as it is about knowing a subject. Service-Learning in English Teacher Education centers on relationships, mutual understanding and respect, knowledge of human diversity, and other people-related understandings. The rest of the program is already fortified with content-area knowledge in state-mandated content-area courses in the Department of English, and a host of interrelated pedagogical courses in the College of Education. This course was designed to fill a gap in their preparation, one that is oriented to understanding human diversity through both

personal knowledge gained in the field and more abstract knowledge available through reading and discussion.

Service-Learning as an Alternative to Assimilative Field Experiences

Field experiences tend to be specifically oriented to classroom observation and assistance under a mentor's guidance. Service-learning, in contrast, may have more subversive goals that work against assimilation. The experience may enable TCs to understand students' lives outside school as a way to *change schools* to accommodate a broader range of student participation. Service-learning promotes an ethic of giving, addressing social inequities, and contributing to stronger communities overall. Service-learning in this context thus broadens the field-experience perspective to take into account the whole of students' lives. As many have noted, students' ability to succeed in school often follows from the sorts of lives they live outside school (e.g., Heath, 1983; Moll, 2000; Majors, 2015). Field experiences tend to view the classroom as the nexus of learning; service-learning positions classrooms as one of many sites, and often one of lesser importance to them, in students' development as social human beings.

The pedagogical dimension of teaching is often outsourced to teachers in schools. Cibulka (2009), arguing from his highly influential leadership role with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), asserted that "In the past, accreditation wrapped clinical experience around coursework. The new approach will reverse the priority, encouraging institutions to place teacher candidates in more robust clinical experiences, and wrap coursework around clinical practice" (2009, p. 2). As an example of this "*robust clinical preparation, including educator preparation in school settings,*" he describes The Tennessee Board of Regents Teacher Education Redesign, which "eliminates traditional university classroom seat

time for teacher candidates, streamlining these experiences into participatory, student directed learning in authentic school settings” (p. 4; emphasis in original).

This view that learning about teaching should be outsourced to clinical preparation is flawed. In contrast, the heavier the field emphasis in teacher education, the more assimilative the process of teacher education becomes, especially when there is no critical perspective or opportunity designed to accompany field experiences in the sorts of university courses viewed so dimly by NCATE leadership. It’s well-documented that schools often make university program coursework irrelevant (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1982), a problem no doubt exacerbated when Cikulba’s desire to shift the balance even more toward clinical experiences is realized. One student teacher interviewed from a field-intensive program could barely remember her coursework and said it had “faded” from her vision with each week she spent in the school. Teachers in the field may directly tell teacher candidates that people on university campuses are out of touch and of little help in learning how to teach; and in many cases, unfortunately, they are right. But that’s a problem with programs and their quality, not a valorization of field experiences as inherently a TCs best teacher.

The heavier the investment in field experiences, the more like a trade school the teacher education profession becomes, with apprenticeship to mentor teachers the most important aspect of training. Many mentor teachers do provide outstanding guidance and socialization for student teachers, but many others avail them to file cabinets of worksheets, speak ill of students who are not acclimated to schooling as the path to a better future, pathologize students of color and varieties of English that violate textbook norms, model authoritarian and formalist traditions, and undermine efforts on campus to help teacher candidates develop a value on equity, social justice, inquiry, critical perspectives, and other diversity-oriented ideals. Socializing TCs to the formalist

values characteristic of more typical field experiences does neither schools nor their students much good. My many years of experience with these issues, coupled with research that confirmed my informal understandings (Smagorinsky, under review), led me to seek alternatives to field experiences in the form of a service-learning initiative.

An Effort to Resolve These Problems

The course in Service-Learning in English Teacher Education offers the potential to disrupt all of these potentially assimilative and normative possibilities through a course designed for TCs to *learn about school from disaffected students*. The teaching profession is, above all, founded in caring relationships. Subject-area knowledge should not assume primacy in the preparation of teachers (Ball & McDiarmid, 1990). Reading a lot of John Milton and James Joyce, while worthy endeavors for people hoping to become literary critics, does little to help someone teach low-track ninth-grade students, or most of the English curriculum. This instruction tends to follow formalist and authoritarian values, investing teachers with explanatory power and knowledge as agents of university professors' priorities and values (Applebee, 1993, 1996).

This conception locates teaching quality in one's ability to explain the meaning of literature, impose conventions for writing and language use on students, and test them according to the knowledge conveyed in lectures and "discussions" that typically rely heavily on teachers' domination (see Marshall, Smagorinsky, & Smith, 1995; Nystrand, 1997). It works against knowledge construction and inquiry, diminishes students' personal knowledge as a source of understanding, treats students' emotions as impediments to clear thinking, and views information as more valuable than relationships. These values originate in the European Enlightenment and its rationalistic, scientific orientation, one that finds people less important than established

knowledge, that focuses on formal knowledge instead of constructed understanding, that views texts as authoritative and people as flawed until they adhere to textual values, and that views cognition as above and separate from emotions, which are considered weak, feminine, and unsuitable for rigorous thought (Smagorinsky, 2018).

First Effort

In contrast to following the common apprenticeship model of preparation, English Education teacher candidates can experience a useful course that challenges their assumptions about education based on their own apprenticeships of observation (Lortie, 1975), reconceived through their direct experiences with marginalized learners. This distinctive way of initiating teacher candidates into teaching requires experiences that bring them into contact with students quite different from themselves and their collegiate orientation. One relatively simple possibility is tacking a tutoring responsibility onto a course in writing pedagogy. Especially if the tutoring is in a community distinct from the students' homes or the university campus, the experience would help the teacher candidates develop relationships with students so that they could see and understand the world from the children's point of view. However, this tutoring needs to be clearly related to the course's stated focus and purpose if the teacher candidates are to understand its role in their development as teachers.

Inquiry as a Service-Learning Course Foundation

An effort to have teacher candidates learn about teaching by learning about human diversity from disenfranchised people themselves is grounded in the notion of *inquiry* as a principal means of learning. In the late 1980s, the Coalition Conference invited participants to reconceive the discipline of English as the end of the 20th century approached. The range of the invited participants made agreement difficult in many cases, but one thing everyone endorsed

was the idea that English studies should be grounded in inquiry (see Lloyd-Jones & Lunsford, 1989). What was hidden beneath the surface of this consensus was that inquiry meant all things to all people. Signing onto inquiry as a value did not signify that everyone conceived of inquiry in the same way. But everyone did agree that teaching and learning should assume that knowledge is fluid and under construction, encourage open-ended and exploratory thinking, and serve the interests of the learner's development at least as much as it emphasizes a teacher's disciplinary knowledge.

George Hillocks, with the M.A.T. program at the University of Chicago, used "inquiry" to describe putting students into a participatory mode and emphasizing activity through inductive engagement with compelling materials as the basis of instruction. To Hillocks (1995, 2009), instruction is predicated on a teacher's planning of activities within a classroom structure through which students develop procedures for engaging in specific sorts of tasks, each with its own conventions, genre expectations, and processes. Learning how to read an ironic text, for instance, relies on understanding how a person constructs a text that says one thing, while on the surface saying something quite different, often its complete opposite. Reading ironic texts involves recognizing ironic cues and interpreting them appropriately. Applying these strategies to following a recipe for a soufflé would result in a discommodious dining experience.

In Hillocks's pedagogy, learning how to recognize irony in texts, or produce it in one's own texts, may be fruitfully taught through his notion of an "inquiry" approach. Inquiry occurs when students inductively manipulate what he calls "data" to develop task-specific procedures for thinking in relation to specific sorts of tasks. Writing narratives, reading sonnets, writing extended definitions, reading a detective story, or reading or producing any text whose composition follows genre conventions requires particular knowledge of both form and

procedure (see Smagorinsky & Smith, 1992). To learn how to define a concept such as “success,” for instance, students might work in small groups to examine and discuss data in the form of a series of either real or contrived scenarios of people whose actions might or might not be considered successful: bullies who get their way, adults who raise children without achieving fame or fortune, people who become wealthy through illegal activities, soldiers who die following orders that subordinate their lives to a bigger strategy, and so on. Rather than being given a definition of success to learn and repeat on a test, as is done in the formalist tradition, students generate their own definitions by engaging with scenarios that they analyze and discuss in order to generate criteria by which people’s actions might be considered successful.

At The University of Georgia, Service-Learning in English Teacher Education was conceived to adapt Hillocks’s inductive approach to concept development to a much different sort of task: learning how to conceive of human diversity in ways that produce equitable classroom teaching. Rather than learning the demands of textual reading and composition, the students in the class learn how to develop relationships with people much different from themselves: students who hate school, come from minoritized backgrounds, might be parents themselves, might be undocumented immigrants, may come from lower socioeconomic circumstances, and others who rarely enroll in elite academic tracks or get admitted to selective universities. The design of the course relies on Hillocksian principles. It further integrates his approach with Vygotsky’s (1987) imperative that robust concepts are available through the synthesis of two conceptual fields: what he calls *scientific or academic* concepts, and *spontaneous or local/everyday* concepts.

Vygotsky and Concept Development

Scientific concepts are what people learn in formal academic settings, primarily schools but any context in which instruction relies on abstractions, often generalized from knowledge in texts. In schools, students tend to learn mathematics through formulas; learn history through reading historical accounts; learn to write through the study of textual forms and features; and so on. The teacher's role is to guide students through official forms of knowledge so that principles may be extrapolated to new situations that bear similarities to the features studied in class.

How those texts are studied might vary. Schools tend to rely on formalism, the study of formal features and knowledge. For example, defenders of the five-paragraph essay format have often stated that these features underlie all writing and can be adapted to any situation such that the formula constitutes a useful, transferable genre (e.g., Dean, 2000). Hillocks (2002) found that this value is built into scoring rubrics on high-stakes writing tests, even rather bizarrely being applied to narrative writing in some states, suggesting a belief that it is indeed an all-purpose foundation for any writing.

Spontaneous or everyday concepts are learned in situated experiences and rely not on formal teaching but on the absorption of both content and procedural knowledge through engagement with other people. A student in a horticulture class might read about tomatoes and how to grow them in a variety of climates and soil types; this learning involves scientific concepts. A person learning about growing tomatoes in New Jersey might learn about how to grow tomatoes in New Jersey, but not Mexico, because what matters is how to apply knowledge for immediate use; this learning involves spontaneous concepts. The knowledge might be attained through guidance from an experienced tomato farmer, but is reinforced through the verification available from the experience of tomato production. This knowledge needn't be

extrapolated to other settings, or other vegetables; spontaneous knowledge is local and experiential.

To Vygotsky, neither book learning nor experience is sufficient for concept development that serves a person well. Rather, experiences benefit from abstractable principles; and formal knowledge is hollow without practical application. Service-Learning in English Teacher Education is designed to include both dimensions to enable TCs to engage with people different from themselves in a caring, nurturing, mutually beneficial relationship; and to read more broadly about human difference through published scholarship, memoir, or other source. In both their academic and everyday learning, the topics and problems are open-ended, and the final decisions about how to teach in sensitive, culturally-aware ways are entrusted entirely to the TCs through an inductive process of concept development.

The course is designed to serve these ends through three directly related components: a field-based experience involving one-to-one engagement with disaffected students; campus-based classes that rely on a book club pedagogy in which the teacher candidates learn formal knowledge about human diversity; and a course project in which they synthesize their spontaneous, field-based understandings with their scientific, class-based knowledge, along with whatever knowledge they recruit from other sources to produce what one could call a *projected teacher identity* that embodies their emerging understandings.

Service-Learning in English Teacher Education became an elective course after an effort to add a tutoring dimension to a writing pedagogy course floundered. The university supported the development of a service-learning course rather than trying to add service-learning to a course designed for something else. The process of searching for a local partnership led to the

city's alternative high school, where a former teacher education student from The University of Georgia was on the faculty as an English teacher.

This positive relationship helped establish this site as the field placement school, one that in turn produced sustainable relationships with school administrators. It had a convenient location, was available for whole school days, and enrolled students whose ages corresponded to the developmental levels of the students our teacher candidates were preparing to teach. The school had needs for tutoring so that their students succeeded in their coursework and were prepared for their graduation exams. It thus fit the qualifications for providing much-needed service, a convenient location with wide availability for teacher candidates to fit their tutoring in with the rest of their scheduling demands, and a population of students whose traits met the goals for having our teacher candidates learn about school from students who hate school.

When the teacher candidates work with disaffected students, the idea is to help them as both tutor and mentor in their academic work, and just as importantly, to learn about a life much different from their own. This process often involves reconsidering stereotypical beliefs developed, in many cases, from years of acculturation to conservative social and political beliefs. Georgia is a "red state" with a history of racism, social stratification, patriarchal and often misogynistic social structures, heteronormative assumptions, both official and unofficial segregation, and other factors. Although these problems are often associated with the southern U.S. states, they persist throughout the country. It's convenient to locate discrimination as an exclusively Southern problem, but it's both a national and international problem, as evidenced by current events around the U.S. and globe.

Students at The University of Georgia map well onto Georgia's conservative belief system. The goal is not to re-educate them so that they become good liberal citizens. Rather, it is

to put them in both formal academic and everyday interpersonal situations through which they reconsider their beliefs and construct personal visions based on their course experiences, ideally in mutually informative ways; and to reflect on these experiences in their course projects as a developmental stage of their ongoing growth as educators whose task is to teach all students well. The course is thus founded in the general value on inquiry as an open-ended, fluid, developmental process of constructing knowledge based on formal and everyday learning.

The course meetings rely on the inductive principles of a Hillocksian approach, albeit in a highly adaptive way. A pedagogical alternative makes this course different from the teacher candidates' educational experiences in as many ways as possible. Book club formats in university courses have already offered alternatives. Cindy O'Donnell-Allen (2006) had adapted them to her teaching at Colorado State University. At the same time, a colleague at UGA had been using book clubs for a literature pedagogy course that was quite popular (see Addington, 2001, for a study of this class; and Faust, Cockrill, Hancock, & Isserstadt, 2005 for a pedagogical text on their function). An adapted method in the service-learning course is consistent in many ways with Hillocks's conception of an inquiry approach in which students engage with "data" to generate processes for task-specific reading and composition procedural knowledge. In this case, the most obvious "data" is a book, but an analysis of the recordings of students' book club discussions shows that the book is one of many sources drawn on to inform their developing conceptions of an equitable education.

The book club structure and procedures follow a simple pattern. The course is divided into three identical cycles. The first night of the course is devoted to orientation: students examine the syllabus (online at <http://www.petersmagorinsky.net/SL/index.html>), a visitor from the alternative school gives an introduction to the site and its particulars, and the class reviews

the course process. After the first night, when the instructor does a lot of talking, the students run the class; thereafter the instructor does a lot of listening and provides occasional coaching about how to lead discussions.

At this initial meeting, students learn about the book club format. The class, which enrolls 20-25 students in a typical year, will break up into 4-6 book clubs. Before students leave class that first night, they will have formed their clubs, selected their first book from the menu of diversity-related volumes at <http://www.petersmagorinsky.net/SL/SLBookClubs.html>, and ordered the books online.

Each of the three cycles includes four class meetings. The first meeting is devoted to a general discussion of the book, conducted however the students choose to proceed. These discussions, as I know from analyzing discussions from one semester's enrollment, are far-ranging and include references to their own school and university experiences with teachers and other students, to family members who teach, to other reading and cultural texts they are familiar with, to the alternative school students and teachers, and many other sources. They also involve projecting what they think they will do as teachers, based on what they know at that point in their development. Nothing is specified about what they should talk about beyond using the book as a primary stimulus; nor is their approach to discussion guided in any way. Rather, using "data" from the source text to their history of experiences and knowledge from elsewhere, they explore human diversity and its role in educational quality and equality.

The second book club discussion is more pointed. The third and fourth weeks of each cycle involve each group leading the class in a discussion of their book. The second meeting needs to continue with a discussion of the book's contents, but to do so with the goal of identifying its most salient points and making them the feature of the discussion the group will

lead. They thus must narrow their discussion from very general to what they believe their classmates need to think about in relation to its content and ideas.

They also need to begin thinking more like teachers than like students. Here I help them consider how to teach the class for an hour or so about their book. Their own socialization to classrooms tends to position the teacher as authority and students as subordinate. In the context of the class, they shift their role to leader of exploratory thinking and further inquiry. PowerPoint presentations have structured a lot of classrooms in which they have been students, leading them to view them as essential teaching tools. Typically these slide shows, at the beginning of the semester, are informational. The main intervention during their presentations is designed to help them become discussion leaders: never leave a slide without questions, which is something many of them appear not to have considered before, which is telling about their acculturation to schooling and what they are likely to learn through conventional field experiences. Over the course of the three cycles, their use of PowerPoint shifts from providing information to providing stimulus for discussion.

The third and fourth meetings are dedicated to these group-led discussions. Students have access to a related resource from the instructor's teaching website, http://www.petersmagorinsky.net/TEBD/UnitLibrary/Activities_that_Promote_Discussion.htm, which helps them conceive of teaching as activity-based and engaging. Over the course of the semester, as students increasingly get exposed to activity-based pedagogies and understand that a glorious failure is preferable to a safe-but-boring presentation, discussions become increasingly provocative and interesting. Although each club reads only three books, they do so in considerable depth; and assuming that four book clubs each read three books, they get exposed to and engage with the ideas of 12 books, or more when the class is larger. The only restriction is

that the books need to come from the menu on the syllabus, which is always under construction, and that no book may be selected by more than one group. The group's selections may be related to their alternative school tutoring experiences—e.g., picking a book on immigration when working with immigrant students—but may simply fill niches in their worldly knowledge. They may focus on a single area, such as gender, or read more broadly across the many diversity topics on the menu.

One facet of the course that bears mentioning is the instructor's own acknowledgement on the first night that technically, he is mentally ill, taking medications for severe chronic anxiety and obsessive-compulsive thinking, and high-functioning on the Asperger's spectrum. This introduction is accompanied by the assurance that it's OK to be neuro-atypical in this class. Annually, students choose books on neurodiversity for their discussions, and this interest likely follows from opening the floor to the possibility that people can still become teachers in spite of being classified with what are commonly believed to be disorders and disabilities, assuming some measure of control over them. When the instructor is honest about his own divergences from presumed norms, the class becomes more open to both their own and other people's diversity across the spectrum of human possibilities.

This openness is also manifested in the imperative to be open-minded in their thinking about diversity through their service-learning experiences. If we're all OK here, maybe they're all OK in the alternative school, too. This notion of inquiry is quite different from Hillocks's more restricted, pedagogical meaning, and the course easily accommodates both.

Conclusion

This service-learning course provides a means through which TCs construct personal conceptions of diversity education. Many students across the country, and the college of

education that houses this course, have complained quite bitterly about diversity education in which professors, as they say, “shove diversity down their throats.” The inquiry-based, inductive approach enables students to construct their own conception of diversity education through personal experiences reflected on in light of formal readings of their own choice and those of their classmates. Their course projects are usually blogs that allow them to reflect weekly on their growing conceptions of who their students are as people and whom they hope to become as teachers. Not all students enter the course fully open to ideas of racial inclusiveness, gender equity, immigration rights, and other issues championed in colleges of education, and not all emerge with radically altered visions of equity. But it’s their choice how to orchestrate their course experiences into a personal conception that itself evolves through continual experience and knowledge.

Students in the service-learning course often experience transformations based on their inquiries into topics that broaden their understanding of humanity and how to teach pluralistic classrooms. The course continues to evolve, based on each year’s enrollment and the students’ experiences, making it a vehicle for inquiry for the instructor as well. The instructor’s role with the course is primarily to design and structure a set of activities and turn the teacher candidates loose to make of them what they will. The inquiries they undertake serve their own interests in becoming teachers, which is as much as one could hope for in a teacher education course.

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