Arts-based critical service-learning experiences as transformative pedagogy

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Abstract: Initial teacher education programs regularly engage students in service-learning programs, providing an additional pathway to personal, professional and pedagogical transformation in their learning journey. One of those pathways is through service-learning placements in community arts projects. This paper reports on a study of arts-based service-learning programs at two universities. Eight initial teacher education (ITE) students were interviewed after their placements and a number of key themes emerged. These include the importance of productive discomfort as part of the service-learning experience and transformative pedagogy resulting from the art-based experience. This paper also explores some critiques of traditional service-learning models that have opened spaces for critical service-learning approaches. The analysis of ITE students' narratives led to findings about the path of transformation from traditional to critical service-learning approaches through arts-based projects, an area which has been largely unexplored in previous research. The paper concludes with discussion of future avenues for related research that orientate service-learning in the arts towards social and creative justice.

Key words: arts education, service learning, affect, transformative pedagogy, initial teacher education

Introduction

Service-learning in initial teacher education (ITE) courses is a widespread practice. Aiming to support theoretical knowledge, pedagogical development and community interests, service-learning in ITE fulfils multiple aims, some of which will be discussed in this paper. Service-learning models differ widely across institutions and there is a plethora of research (Salam, Awang

Iskandar, Ibrahim, et al., 2019; Molderez &Fonseca, 2018; Gelmon, Holland & Spring, 2018) that has evaluated a range of approaches. Similarly, research has been conducted on ITE students' path to personal, professional and pedagogical transformation as a result of service-learning programs (Mergler, Carrington, Boman et al., 2017; Mills & Ballantyne, 2016). This paper argues that one of those pathways is through arts-based project placements. The arts is celebrated for its ability to prompt social change and connect communities (Nosko, 2019; Strother, 2019; Dunphy, 2018, Walsh, Rutherfod & Crough, 2013), and creative projects are used widely to address social issues in marginalised and vulnerable communities. Arts researchers have evaluated and documented the benefits and challenges of such work (Redaelli, 2019; Coemans & Hannes, 2017; van der Vaart, van Hoven & Huigen, 2017). However, there are relatively few studies evaluating arts-based service-learning programs in ITE.

This paper reports on service-learning placements in community arts projects at two universities. Eight ITE students were interviewed after their arts-based placements and a number of key themes emerged. These include productive discomfort as necessary experience and transformative pedagogy resulting from the arts-based service-learning placement. This paper also explores critiques of traditional service-learning models that have opened spaces for critical service-learning approaches. An analysis of ITE students' narratives has led to findings about the critical factors that transform traditional service-learning programs into critical service-learning approaches through arts-based projects, which is an area largely unexplored in previous research. The paper concludes with a discussion of future avenues for related research that orientates service-learning in the arts towards social and creative justice.

Situated and Service-Learning

ITE administrators are continuously exploring ways to make ITE courses more effective in the development of teacher identity and the pathway to personal transformation. New approaches to service learning embrace this challenge through moving away from deductive and empirical approaches to learning. Instead, transformative learning in ITE can involve adjusting frames of reference that are problematic, based on a set of fixed assumptions and expectations about learners (Haber-Curran & Tillapaugh, 2015) with the aim of making learners more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change (Mezirow, 2003). One of the keys to transformative learning is to create a environment in which students can be

critically reflective and examine their own beliefs and dispositions. In ITE this can take place through diverse learning experiences, including field-based practicum and situated learning. Lave and Wenger's (1991) seminal work proposed the concept of learning as a social process. Rather than being a cognitive acquisition, they argue that learning occurs best in communities of practice whereby novices enter the community through a process known as legitimate peripheral participation. Learning is gained through immersion in an activity and a process of mentorship that moves the novice from observation to mastery (Brown, 1992). This process aligns with the work of sociocultural learning theorists such as Vygotsky (Daniels, 2016; Vygotsky, 1978), who believed that learning was constructed socially, with more experienced participants scaffolding learners through the Zone of Proximal Development – the point at which current skills or knowledge can be extended with the support of a more capable individual. Lave and Wenger also explore the notion that learning is grounded in the context in which it occurs. This grounding in context allows for a more fluid transfer of knowledge to other settings.

Over the past thirty years, researchers in education and other disciplines have studied a variety of applications of situated learning theory, typically finding that learning in context results in greater long-term retention and application of skills and knowledge (Hixon & Hyo-Jeong, 2009; Korthagen, 2010; Skinner, 2010). This is particularly applicable in ITE where students acquire much of their knowledge of education practice and skills within the comparatively sheltered environment of the university. Situated learning helps ITE students see practical reasons for their university experiences and to develop self-efficacy that contributes to job satisfaction, resilience, job commitment and student achievement (Bandura, 1977; Høigaard, Giske & Sundsli, 2012; Martins, Costa & Onofre, 2015). Situated learning can take place in a variety of settings; the case studies in this paper are based at two universities that value providing students' with diverse experiences outside of traditional classroom settings.

Service-learning within ITE programs is a model of situated learning that provides both a connection between educational institutions and civic organisations, and a pedagogical strategy whereby both parties benefit from reciprocal learning (Robinson, 2007; Sandaran, 2012). By combining field-work, teaching experience and community service, ITE students not only have an opportunity to transfer skills and knowledge to a practical setting outside of a formal practicum placement, they can also benefit from using their skills to make a difference in the community (Furco, 1996; Swick,

2001). Service-learning is grounded in experiential education, offering concrete experiences to bridge theory and practice. Dewey (1938) argued that the most effective learning connects intellectual processes with emotion, inspiring curiosity and exciting the learner. ITE students' responses to service-learning experiences include motivation to learn through the engagement in real-world challenges, questioning and curiosity that is stimulated by working in community projects, and a genuine drive to apply their knowledge for the benefit of others (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Tice & Nelson, 2013). The challenges presented in an authentic service-learning experience can also offer further educational opportunities beyond standard classroom fieldwork, allowing ITE students the chance to challenge prejudices, develop skills, and reconstruct preconceived ideas and knowledge (Beard, 2018; Boggs, 2013). Service-learning invites ITE students to be creative problem solvers and to reflect upon their application of theoretical knowledge in alternative environments (Sandaran, 2012; Swick, 2001).

Service-learning presents an opportunity for ITE students to be engaged in communities of practice, in which they are scaffolded and guided by both mentor teachers and other peers, and offered the chance to engage in learning that progresses from observation to the contribution stage of legitimate peripheral participation (Boggs, 2013; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Through service-learning, ITE students can be empowered by the collaborative support of a community of practice and develop confidence in their abilities as an educator. Studies show an increase in self-efficacy and commitment to teaching practice through service-learning experiences in which ITE students develop relationships, share responsibilities, take risks in adopting a variety of teaching strategies, and connect theoretical content with practical applications (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kaschak & Letwinsky, 2015; Wasserman, 2009).

Service-learning has been robustly critiqued (Terrance, Watkins & Jimerson, 2018; Marullo, Moayedi & Cooke, 2009; Tryon et al., 2008) and often criticised for placing the needs of students above the needs of communities. Its Band-Aid approach to deeply rooted problems has also attracted criticism, as has the limited length of the service-learning experiences, which create arguably limited benefits for ITE students and can arguably cause damage to service users who may be in vulnerable positions. A growing body of research prefers critical service-learning in ITE (Tinkler & Tinkler, 2016; Kajner, Chovanec, Underwood & Mian, 2013; Porfilio & Hickman, 2011) that frames the program around social justice and explorations of power and privilege.

Critical Service-Learning

According to Mitchell (2008) critical service-learning interrogates systems and structures of inequality; questions the distribution of power; and seeks to develop authentic relationships among students, faculty, and community partners. Critical service-learning deliberately integrates pedagogy that raises critical consciousness in order to prompt purposeful action in response to structural injustice or violence (Mitchell & Rost-Banik, 2016). Critical service-learning is not discipline specific, but the learning is intentional and explicit, moving towards teachable moments in communities through authentic interactions. Profound realisations and internal change can occur when students connect community members' lived experiences of marginalisation with course materials about hegemonic oppression on a systemic level (Warren-Gordon & Santamaria Graff, 2018). Warren-Gordon and Santamaria Graff specifically refer to white students confronting white hegemonic oppression in the context of education, but their theories can be applied to other community-based experiences where power inequalities are present. They explain that depth of understanding is the aim of critical service-learning, as is the sustainability of programs that can, over time, dismantle oppressive practices and promote transformative change.

Critical service-learning has the potential to create change by combining theories and knowledge about a social issue and its root causes with lived experiences, which helps to shape students' understandings. Many models of critical service-learning exist, but ideally service-learning practitioners should create spaces for students to explore the ways that personal identity interacts with systems of wealth distribution, gentrification, living wages, and government policy to privilege some and marginalise others (Donahue & Mitchell, 2010). This learning can be done in university classes prior to placements, with the practical placement allowing that learning to be placed into context. While learning about social issues is important, embedding experiences that allow ITE students to explore their own relationship to power and privilege is critically important. Additionally, critical service-learning works best when metacognitive reflection is used, in which students are challenged to see the service-learning placement as an opportunity to reframe themselves and their identities. It is also useful for ITE students to investigate the intersectionality at play in the service-learning environment to reduce the 'just like me' (Varlotta, 1997) thinking that, while well-intentioned, minimises the implications of systemic inequities.

There are numerous dangers if service-learning is undertaken without a critical approach, one of which is that students on placement may inadvertently draw the conclusion that individuals are to blame for their circumstances. They may see individuals as able to pull themselves out of marginalisation if they just try hard enough, or patronise individuals who are in vulnerable situations. Framing service-learning as an opportunity for reciprocal learning is more valuable and has less potential to bring harm to the community that one is trying to serve. Critical service-learning and related approaches are now well theorised inside and outside of education. Leading service-learning studies in health fields (Sprague Martinez, Reich, Flores et al, 2017; Saffran, 2013) concur that many of the complexities of service-learning can be counteracted by a greater focus on student education on matters of equity, universality and the social and economic reasons behind social issues (). It must be noted that many arts projects do not use the term 'critical service-learning', but they have similar guiding philosophies and practices. Over the last three decades, critial approaches have been documented in arts research (Gilchrist, Holmes, Lee et al., 2015), even though the term 'critical service-learning' is seldom used.

Service-Learning in Arts Education

Research on ITE in the arts has focussed on the challenges of arts education in education courses (Hipp & Dowell, 2019; Jacobs, 2008), ITE students' confidence and efficacy (Collins, 2016; Russell-Bowie, 2013; 2010; Jacobs, 2019), curriculum models and the structure of university based teaching and learning experiences (Cook, 2018; Asubonteng, 2015; Barton, Baguley & McDonald, 2013). There is some research on mentoring models in ITE in the arts (Hipp & Dowell, 2019). The integration of community development programs through the arts with student placements in university courses has given rise to more research, which has informed the study discussed in this paper. Arts projects have been found to be effective in creating cohesion in marginalised communities and addressing social issues using drama (Lee, Patall, Cawthon & Steingut, 2015; O'Toole & Burton, 2005; Belliveau, 2004), music (Pairon, 2020; Cahill, 1998), visual art (Hunter, Heise & Johns, 2018; McKay & Bradley, 2016), dance (Busuttil, 2021; Stephenson, 2015) and other creative endeavours (Stephenson, 2015; Fels, 2012; Fels & Belliveau, 2008).

Studies of ITE courses have documented the benefits of service-learning placements in community arts projects as enhancing personal growth, increasing civic engagement, and improved academic outcomes as a result of having to apply their knowledge to real world settings (Giffin, 2017). The

added benefits of arts pedagogies mean that participants have been able to enact their own solutions to problems through artistic strategies, for example, using drama (Gardner-Buckshaw & Giffin, 2015). Several of the studies cited offered ITE students opportunities to perform, plan, construct and co-facilitate community-based arts experiences, while "being a part of community, and stepping away from the familiar structures of lessons and unit plans into the world of creativity and imagination" (Hart & Carter, 2015, p. 119). Dance students in service-learning placements reported pedagogical gains in patience, flexibility in the moment, communication skills and confidence (Barry, 2017).

Successful models of service-learning in the arts found that students appreciated the 'authentic' practical experiences and opportunities to observe new teaching strategies that they would implement in the future. Meta-research by Rawlings (2020) identified that ITE music students experienced personal, intellectual and social growth as a result of participating in service-learning projects. Another study of a service-learning experience in music (Reynolds & Conway, 2003) also found that the ITE students filled a gap for the community organisation, as they were placed in an environment that rarely had trained musicians or artists, therefore the partnership was considered valuable. The benefits of strong partnerships with community organisations were cited as a strength of service-learning in the arts, especially when the partnerships were strategic, visionary and thoughtfully prepared (Forrester, 2019). However, research by Rawlings (2020) adds that external partnerships are sometimes difficult to establish due to logistical and pedagogical challenges.

Relevant to the study featured in this paper is a study by Raphael (2013) that documents the experience of ITE students who did not necessarily have an arts background and were placed in a theatre project working people with intellectual disabilities. Raphael's approach invited collaborative responses to developing pedagogical competencies with students who have special needs. The project was significant in that it positioned the participants with intellectual disabilities as the experts and centred their practice. The study also correlated previous studies' findings that ITE students appreciated the engagement with scaffolded practical activities. Raphael added to the body of research on service-learning in the arts, with findings that suggest that this model can improve ITE students' efficacy and commitment to inclusive teaching. These findings are significant since much of the early research on service-learning reported on the benefits for the individual students' pedagogical base or professional repertoire. Some studies even

mention benefits for ITE students' resumes or employment prospects (Giffin, 2017). These findings should not be discounted as the resilience, development of pedagogical skills and the employability of ITE students contributes to the robustness of the profession. However, Raphel's study is one example that orientates towards a critical service-learning and interrogates systems and structures of inequality, deconstructs the distribution of power, and develops authentic relationships. Rawlings' (2019) research similarly reports on service-learning approaches in the arts that centre the agency of service users over and above ITE students.

Case studies at Two Universities

Case studies of two service-learning environments were investigated over two years at two universities in Sydney, Australia, both of which offer service-learning experiences as part of primary teacher preparation courses. This research was governed by an ethics process at both universities. Participating students were informed about the research process and gave written and verbal consent to be interviewed at the conclusion of their placements. At both universities only a small number of placements were in arts-based environments and 8 out of 11 possible ITE students agreed to be volunteer participants in the study. The following table lists the participants (pseudonyms used for anonymity) and the service-learning experience in which they were engaged:

Name	Description of Service-Learning Site	Duration of the experience
Mona	Drama program in a centre for refugees and people seeking asylum	2 hours per week x 4 weeks
Brendan	Drama program in a centre for refugees and people seeking asylum	2 hours per week x 3 weeks plus additional volunteer hours
Saraya	Storytelling program for recently arrived migrant women	3 hours per week for 12 weeks
Neda	Storytelling program for recently arrived migrant women	3 hours week for 12 weeks plus additional volunteer hours
Li	Homework club for vulnerable youth (Visual Arts program)	2 hours per week for 12 weeks
Tania	Singing group for people in the early stages of dementia	2 hours per week for 12 weeks
Kelly	Music program for new mothers (single parents and vulnerable women)	2 hours per week for 12 weeks
Sujan	Dance program for senior citizens in aged care	75 minutes per week for 12 weeks

Those students were interviewed at the conclusion of their service-learning placements and asked critical questions that were created in response to the central research question: *How do service-learning experiences in the arts contribute to ITE students' personal and professional development?* Each participant was engaged in a face-to-face semi-structured interview lasting 45 – 95 mins. Participating students were asked questions about their experience in the service-learning environment; how prepared they felt for the service-learning experience and the arts learning environment; any pre or post-placement learning in their university studies that assisted their preparation or reflection; any transformative moments that took place during the placement; the ways they felt the placement contributed to their personal or professional development; what they learned from the overall experience; and any ongoing ponderings that may have stemmed from the placement.

Four participants (Mona, Brendan, Tiana and Sujan) were also observed by a researcher on two occasions during the service-learning experience, for additional context. The interviews were transcribed and de-identification of all data was undertaken, with any identifying information removed or edited. The data was coded using QSR NVivo10 (NVivo 10) qualitative analysis software. A thematic content analysis (Saldaña, 2016) using an iterative approach was developed, with initial analysis centred on identifying and coding participants' experiences of service-learning placement, followed by coding participants' reflections on the arts pedagogies and service users' responses to the program, engagement with social issues and professional or pedagogical growth. Three interconnecting themes were generated through the analysis: productive discomfort as a turning point for transformation, service-learning arts-based experiences as transformative pedagogy and elements of critical service-learning in arts projects. Additionally, some limitations of the service-learning program and strategies to address the complexities of service-learning emerged in the analysis. These findings are discussed in the following sections.

Findings/Discussion

Discomfort as transformation

Raphael (2013) discusses pedagogical theories of discomfort, disruption and disorientation as notions of learning, and begins her analysis with descriptions of a 'disorientating jolt of something new' (Bouge, 2004 in Raphael, p. 165). Similar experiences were discussed when ITE students described their first visit to the service-learning placements. Many of them were 'ex-

cited' and looked forward to the experience, while others admitted to nerves, confusion or even intimidation.

> Yeah, I was excited, but also had no idea what I was doing. I mean, we're trained to teach kids. (Sujan)

Others described feeling 'out of place' (Li) and one 'stood around not knowing what to do' (Tania), with Mona explicitly naming the reason she felt uncertain.

> It didn't look like any classroom I'd seen before. I mean, no tables, just circles of people with tea and lots of blank space.

The uncertainty arose from two main points of unfamiliarity. Firstly, the community organisation environment in which the service users were adults, brought together for a particular purpose. Secondly, the arts-based learning environment, which looked different to school or university classrooms. However, these unsettling experiences have the power to be positive or even necessary to promote growth in ITE students, who have learned in the comfort of the familiar university for some time. Dewey (1934) contends that learners are prompted to learn when they experience the disequilibrium of uncertainty. Boler (1999) discusses a pedagogy of discomfort as a necessary shifting force, which moves educators and students beyond their comfort zones in order to recognise and interrogate hegemonic assumptions, and hopefully towards transformation. Critical service-learning has similar aims. ITE student participants reflected that their experiences were structured in such a way that they didn't shut down, rather the discomfort became productive, encouraging critical inquiry at cognitive and emotional levels. One of the ITE student participants reflects on this emergence of productive discomfort.

> I felt really out of place and wondered if I had made the right decision. I didn't know anything about dance and I realised they had so many access and mobility needs, but I had no idea how to help. But, I guess, I couldn't leave. So, I stupidly started setting up chairs where the dance class would take place. One of the women laughed at me and came over to tell me how the class worked. It was nice. She was nice. (Sujan)

Sujan's anecdote was not a transformation, but reflects a small shift or turning point in which he was able to see the service user as a leader or

expert in the learning environment, allowing him time to process the new environment and the new order of things. One of the criticisms of service-learning is that it reinforces traditional hierarchies and can be paternalistic (Cooks, Scharrer & Paredes, 2004; McBride, Brav, Menon & Sherraden, 2006) or patronising (Pompa, 2002). Arts projects that give participants agency and dignity and invoke imagination may be helpful in dismantling some of those hierarchies and promoting co-leadership models where more power-sharing is possible. Some participants described the shift in perception of the service users' capabilities.

> I was really surprised by what they were able to do. Even if they had little knowledge of English. (Brendan)

> Honestly, for the first few sessions, they were like my teacher. Their imagination was already switched on. (Saraya)

The discomfort experienced by ITE students in their arts-based service-learning experiences was often related to the unfamiliarity with the settings and service users. However, discomfort and uncertainty were overcome through interactions with staff and service users that contributed to the ITE students' personal and professional development.

Transformative pedagogy

Transformation can occur through a culmination of these small turning points, often gradually over time. For example, some participants explained that their placement helped re-shape their own perceptions of social issues.

> I chose this project because I wanted to work with refugees all my life. But I really didn't know anything about them as a group. When I saw them acting I totally understood that they're not all poor, vulnerable or whatever. It's our society that kept them there. They just need to be given the rights to work or learn or whatever. It's us standing in their way. (Mona)

> The problem is not that they're in a decline. Well, of course it is, but it's actually that they aren't allowed a voice. Not, like singing, I mean in society. (Tania)

Listening to participants' impassioned advocacy, I saw elements of transformative pedagogy in play. Transformative pedagogy is underpinned by

constructivist and critical pedagogies that empower students to think critically about power structures, while developing an appreciation for multiple perspectives, critical consciousness and agency (Ukpokodu, 2009). Transformative pedagogy also enables students 'to relate curriculum content to their individual and collective experience and to analyse broader social issues relevant to their lives' (Cummins, 2000, p. 246). Service-learning aims to be a transformative pedagogy but is more likely to be achieved through critical service-learning models in which there is a critical pedagogy that deconstructs power structures and allows for deep ethical considerations. The pedagogy of discomfort (Nadan & Stark, 2016; Boler, 199) feeds into the transformation process, opening spaces for internal dialogue and new realisations.

The arts are often said to be an effective agent for social change and certainly have a rich history as reflectors of change through personal empowerment or through activism. However, like service-learning, the mere existence of arts practice isn't enough to make the change required to dismantle oppressive structures or address systemic inequities. In fact, some arts practices serve to replicate social norms and perpetuate inequality, often under the guise of personal liberation. To guard against this, the projects chosen for the service-learning placements all had philosophical orientations that allowed service users agency, operating within an ethical frame.

> This placement was hectic. They wouldn't let me participate until I was fully briefed and understood all the boundaries and requirements. The young people came first. Always. (Li)

Assisting on community arts projects, ITE student participants were able to draw together numerous experiences that moved towards transformation. All participants had completed arts education units as part of their degree. They had also completed the on-campus units of study that accompanied the service-learning placement. These units explicitly addressed power relationships in community learning environments and systemic inequalities, as well as their own positionality in society and the social system. These critical learning experiences clearly brought participants to a point of awareness where it was possible to open the door to a transformative pedagogy. Some reflected that their university studies were made more relevant through the practical experience provided by the service-learning placement.

> When we studied all that stuff about disadvantaged groups at university it was all on paper. It's totally different when you're with them,

and you have that theory background, but you're seeing in real life how they're able to overcome all that. (Kelly)

In the analysis, a strong intersection between the imaginative, creative and practical nature of arts learning and transformative experiences emerged, a phenomenon which has been established in previous research. Greene (1995) states that imagination builds our capacities to break through the inertia of habit, and several of the projects relied heavily on imagining new stories, possibilities and outcomes. Writing in drama, Stavrou, Charalambous and Macleroy (2021) have argued that the transformative orientation of the arts fosters possible re-workings of the power relations between facilitators and learners. When participants were asked about their role, some were surprised to find they were not expected to lead activities or organise service users' participation.

> I was originally worried because I don't have any experience in drama apart from a few tutes (sic) at university. But they actually led the drama themselves. We modelled new activities when they needed us, helped with English vocabulary and really just supported them to be very independent. (Brendan)

Recognising the agency of participants from refugee backgrounds was one element of Brendan's personal transformation. Other elements of transformation were evident in the participants' changes to their outlook on the profession and their place within it. Four participants reflected on the arts pedagogies alerting them to issues within the community they had not previously considered. The artistic engagement allowed them to see service users as empowered citizens whereas they may have previously seen them in a deficit model as vulnerable beings.

> When we began working on the story I started to understand they have so much imagination and life experience, honestly beyond what I did. The drama activities made it so they weren't lacking in any special ability. (Mona)

> The stories let them show their imagination and also confidence. I got a feeling it was like no other place in their life, where they got to be so good at something. They could really shine. (Neda)

> They were great, but they all told me they used to dance when they were younger. That's something I never had. (Sujan)

While time limitations restricted the potential for ITE students to personally and professionally, their understanding of the service users' capabilities informed their development as facilitators and teachers and led to a reconsideration of their own abilities.

Critical service-learning in arts-based environments

Elements of critical service-learning approaches were evident through the efforts made to create authentic partnerships (Mitchell, 2008). Bickford & Reynolds (2002) problematise traditional service-learning situations, which are by nature predicated on differences between the service-learning student and the community served. However, the participants in this study had to apply for their service-learning placement, with an explanation of the reasons why they wanted an arts-based placement. They also had to meet specific criteria for each site. For example, the drama and storytelling projects that Mona, Brendan, Saraya and Neda visited would only accept ITE students who were culturally and linguistically diverse, and where English was not their home language. In an observation of one of the drama sessions, Mona was noted entering the classroom for the first time. Mona is an Arabic speaking Muslim woman who wears an al-amira. As she entered an older woman motioned for her to sit next to her and they conversed in Arabic for some time before the session began. Mona later discussed the interaction.

> She asked me where I was from and what dialect I spoke. And she asked if I was from the centre. I said no, but we just kept talking about where we live and family and the weather. Even though I wasn't from the centre I was immediately just one of them, because, well, you know… (Mona)

Mona and the woman were observed working together throughout the session, and in the next week's session as well. The immediate familiarity of seeing a facilitator that reflected her life experience put the older woman at ease and enabled Mona's immediate integration in the learning environment. Mona later explained that she translated a lot of the activities into Arabic, facilitating greater participation in the session for the woman and others. Neda had a similar experience in the storytelling project.

> I felt useful. Like I had a reason to be there which was to assist the women I was translating for. Or to add to their ideas or support them. Or even just share their jokes. (Neda)

As a result of Mona and Neda's linguistic skills, they were able to decentre themselves in their service-learning experience and move beyond being outsiders (McBride, Brav, Menon & Sherraden, 2006). However, there were still benefits to each of them as bilingual or multilingual ITE students.

> I also got to teach in my language. I had never thought I was going to do that. My university is all like, 'English, English, English'. So, yeah, this was so good for me. (Neda)

Whilst not being a major theme that emerged in the analysis, this translanguaging (García, 2009) pedagogical experience for Neda was significant. ITE in Australia is notoriously monolingual with the supremacy of English language enforced through compulsory literacy tests, which new graduates must take before beginning work in some jurisdictions. As a result, ITE students are often reluctant to use their home languages in formal learning contexts, preferring to emphasise their English as a linguistic strength. This placement was a positive experience for the bilingual and multilingual ITE students in that it embraced the assumption that languages are not separated and isolated. Rather, languages complement each other in the learning environment and are critical for communication (Canagarajah, 2011).

Other elements of critical service-learning were evident when participants referenced their studies. In interviews, they referred to research projects that they had to complete before beginning their placement. These projects identified the root causes of the social issue that their placement organisation was seeking to address. As part of this assignment, they were also required to confront biases, unearned privileges and preconceptions. Participants' interview responses often showed a heightened awareness of the social issues, as well as realistic understandings of the limitations of their projects.

> It was great, but of course you can't expect one music program to be able to solve the monumental uphill battle these mums are up against. (Kelly)

Some participants even questioned the justice orientation of the project in which they were placed.

> I was initially sceptical because why would dementia patients need a singing group? It's a temporary feel good thing then they're back in their lives, right? (Tania)

> It's a good program, but it's not solving the problem that made these kids disaffected in the first place. Surely it's better to do the early intervention to make sure they never need this program. (Li)

Another of the concerns raised about traditional service-learning approaches is that novice ITE students work in the same capacity as experienced staff, often unsupervised or without adequate training. This might occur because their placement organisation is underfunded or under-resourced and an all-hands-on-deck approach is required. In contrast, all of the arts projects featured in this study were structured carefully so that students worked alongside experienced arts facilitators concurrently assisting and learning over the weeks. As a result, the participants developed pedagogical and philosophical knowledge.

> I had to be there for the debrief which took ages and I was surprised how much prep (sic) went into it, to be honest. I thought it might just be showing up to tell stories. But every week we debriefed for ages and chose every activity like, to the minute. I wasn't allowed to try anything unless they were sure it was in the women's best interest. (Neda)

Other elements of critical service-learning approaches were evident in the way that service users led the creative and imaginative direction of the projects.

> I thought we'd provide a script, but it was all their story and own decisions. (Brendan)

Participants were briefed extensively on the projects they would be working on in advance. They also engaged in reflection in the form of an analytical assignment at the conclusion of the placement. Barry (2017) states that intentional reflective activities are critical to students' growth in service-learning environments. However, the reflective assignment lacked the frequent, varied, ongoing and consistent approaches suggested by Barry for maximum impact. Even so, the transformative and critical nature of the service-learning experience was evident in the ways that participants spoke about the communities they worked with, particularly their desire to stay connected and remain advocates for those communities. Two of the students chose to continue working on the arts projects in a volunteer capacity, and one more hoped to do so in the future after the pressure of their exams and caring responsibilities had eased.

I feel weird just leaving. I felt so involved in the women's stories and development, it would be strange if I was just like 'bye'. I have to come back because I'm part of this now and I feel I'm needed. They expect to see me. And I kind of love it. (Neda)

One student also became a member of the organisation to stay connected to the program and give them continued financial support.

The arts is celebrated for its ability to prompt social change ractical understandings of theory, and a connection with diverse communities. These outcomes could be enhanced by intentional reflective activities throughout the service-learning experience to contribute to pre-service teachers' personal and professional development.

Limitations

This paper reports on a small-scale study with eight participants who volunteered to be interviewed and, overall, were enriched by their experiences. Other participants may have different stories and experiences and may not have arrived at the transformative and critical learnings suggested here. Similarly, participants had relatively limited time working in these placements, and this may limit the extent to which they were empowered to see themselves as change agents. Some of the participants recognised this limitation.

After 4 weeks, I was just getting into it, then I had to go. (Mona)

Honestly, an hour a week is kind of ridiculous. I mean, it's all that the older people can physically do, but I felt like we needed more time to achieve what we wanted to do. (Sujan)

Students' service learning placements appeared rich in affective moments that resulted in a sense of personal fulfilment for those on placement. There is a danger here. The placements were short and limited the depth of criticality that might be possible if placements were longer. Short placements may create danger of inducing what Forbes, Garber, Kensinger and Slagter (1999) call the "cultural safari" (p. 167) and that instead service-learning approaches should discuss and demonstrate the tools the students will require to pursue the objectives that were set within the parameters of their own diverse lives and concerns. The high levels of engagement and even joy in the arts-rich environment mean that it is open to exploitation by those look-

ing for the 'cultural safari'. I know this from personal experience. As a community artist working mostly with refugees and people seeking asylum, I am inundated with requests from teachers, researchers and philanthropists to come along to watch participants at work. While the service-learning placements featured in this study hoped to build enthusiasm in ITE students' engagement in the arts, we must ensure that it is always ethical and in the interest of those it seeks to serve.

Finally, this study has not yet enquired into the extent to which these service-learning placements translate into changes in classroom practice, teaching skill or teachers' long-term orientation as agents of social change. Raphael and Allard (2011) ask the critical question, 'Does a particular kind of intervention make a difference?'. Referring to a single intervention, they conclude that it does, as an awareness-raising and potentially skill-developing process. Similarly, for this study, further research is necessary to ascertain the long-term effects of such placements.

Continuing the Conversation

Although the study featured in this paper was small scale and involved a limited number of participants, engaged in service learning for a limited time, the experiences documented suggest that traditional service-learning models that use arts-based placements are able to move towards critical service-learning approaches if specific, intentional measures are taken. These measures include:

Embedding productive discomfort, disorientation and reflection as part of the service-learning program.

Engaging ITE students in university-based learning prior to the placement, with an emphasis on the root causes of the social issue and the biases, privileges and preconceptions at play. This helps to ensure that the discomfort is productive rather than paralysing.

Purposefully selecting participants for authentic partnerships, in an effort to move the program towards having reciprocal benefits for ITE students, the organisations and the service users.

The path towards transformation through critical service-learning approaches became more visible when the ITE student participants explained the interaction between their pedagogical development and their re-shaped

perception of social issues. Their transformative moments also appeared to be strengthened by the affective and creative nature of the arts programs, an area which requires more investigation. The extent to which affective moments can contribute to transformation in ITE has been explored by researchers, often with an emphasis on performance, motivation and achievement (Sutton and Wheatley, 2003; Linnebrink-Garcia et al., 2011) or learning strategies (Wittmann, 2011). However, these discussions have not considered the arts or aesthetic aspects of education, nor have they been intersected with service-learning.

Finally, this research contributes to the body of research that advocates for ITE's orientation towards social and creative justice. Social justice is ubiquitous through the arts and education, and both are celebrated for their ability to transform individuals and environments away from practices that sustain oppression, as well as make visible the stories, voices and experiences of those rendered invisible. Creative justice facilitates parity of participation that supports the cultural rights and statuses of persons (Banks, 2017). As an extension of social justice, creative justice allows inequality and injustice to be overcome through creative expression and creative pursuits. However, these can only come about through structured, organised experiences, such as critical service-learning, that work to undo the root cause of injustice and inequity. We cannot just happen upon a more just world by osmosis, if good people do well-intentioned work. The orientation towards justice must be direct and intentional. We must constantly work to revise, refine and readjust learning programs to undo systemic oppression, inequity and injustice.

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