Community Teaching Practice for Greater Learning

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Abstract

Field experience has been considered a vital part of teacher education. Universities have to search for ways for student teachers to gain experience in an authentic teaching environment. Several successful models incorporating service learning have been reported across fields (Brooks & Schramm, 2007; Nandan, 2010; Salas, Safaradan, & Ugarte, 2008), but there is still insufficient research found that combined English teacher preparation and service learning (Hsieh, 2002). Consequently, this researcher incorporated service learning into an English methodology course in Taiwan to engage students in higher learning experiences that take them beyond traditional teacher training. This paper describes a four-stage process of community service teaching, presenting its benefits and challenges. This study which incorporated quantitative and qualitative methodologies proved that teaching practices in collaboration with community libraries created three-way benefits: advancing the quality of college education and bringing valuable learning opportunities to the student teachers as well as the children who participated; and creating memorable experiences for the students and the communities that participated.

Keywords: service learning, teacher preparation, university partnership, higher education

1. Introduction

Traditional teacher preparation institutions usually require a teaching practicum as part of their training process. A teaching practicum requires a placement of student teachers from the teacher preparation institution into a school classroom with an experienced school teacher serving as a mentor. First, teacher trainers from the university provide training and guidance regarding teaching theories, pedagogy, and curriculum. Afterwards, the trainees undergo a practicum under the guidance of the school mentor to learn about and practice every day teaching, related duties, and responsibilities required of a classroom teacher. General universities in Taiwan, unlike traditional teacher-training institutions, may offer only teaching methodology courses without the comprehensive teacher-training program, thus are not obligated to include student teaching practice or a practicum. Thus, in these general universities, establishing this program with another institution or agency will increase the workload of faculty and administrators because it takes time to develop a working relationship and mutual trust between institutions and between the institution and teachers (Fisler & Firestone, 2006). Planning and communication for collaboration is extremely time consuming. When the program is initiated, the added burden may have an impact on time needed for instruction preparation as well as from the administration work that is expected of many university teachers.

1.1 Exploring the current teaching situation

The institution this researcher has worked for is a business-oriented college with a foreign language department. English teaching is illustrated as one of the core subjects for student development. Because the college does not have a formal full-sized teacher training program and has no connection with local public schools as traditional teacher institutions do, the researcher had to contemplate alternative possibilities for setting up student teaching in organizations in the community in accordance with academic curriculum.

1.2 Establishing a university-school partnership for teaching practice

Although successful service learning models have been reported across disciplines (Brooks & Schramm, 2007; Nandan, 2010; Salas, Safaradan, & Ugarte, 2008), there is still insufficient research found that combined English teacher preparation and service learning (Hsieh, 2002), particularly in the EFL (English as a foreign language) teaching context. This study intended to present a service learning model for EFL learners who had an interest in teaching children in the future. The model provided teaching practice for student teachers and offered a service that met the needs of the community. The model provided teaching practice for student teachers and offered a service that met the needs of the community. The establishment of a new partnership was not an easy process. Both parties had to have a similar vision to allow collaboration to proceed. After countless efforts, the researcher finally was able to establish a relationship with local libraries in the community. As a result, a teaching methodology course in combination with service learning began

to formulate. This report includes a college instructor's self-reflection that outlines a service-learning model for student teaching in a four-stage process and discusses the challenges and benefits for its implementation. The perceptions of students and parents obtained through a mixed-methods investigation reflect an overwhelmingly positive commentary on the effectiveness of the model.

1.3 Studies on Teaching practicum and educational collaboration

In teacher development, the knowledge and skills considered necessary to become a teacher have attracted many researchers' attention. However, teachers are required to master not only a set of teaching skills but also strategies for problem solving and for reacting to unexpected situations. It is deemed important to have methodology courses link with actual classroom practice (Al Jardani, 2012). Yaman and Özdemir (2012) pointed out the many dimensions of real life that teachers may expect to encounter the real classroom environment. Only the involvement of student teachers in the real classroom setting can increase their awareness of dynamic teaching circumstances. Williams (2009) agrees with the importance of a practicum provided that its authentic educational environment allows the application of knowledge and skills previously gained in course training. Most teacher education programs offer a balance of theory and pedagogical practices. In the United Kingdom, of around 700 intensive training programs, most incorporate teaching practice (Brandt, 2006). Directory of Professional Preparation Programs in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) in the United States and Canada reported by Christopher in 2005 reveals that more than 80 percent of TESOL MA programs offer or require some kind of practicum (cited by Williams, 2009). The most useful practicum will be creative and will include observation, tutoring, and service learning.

Collaboration between universities and schools or the community is a natural fit in teacher education. Universities and schools together can provide opportunities in setting and achieving common educational goals (Crawford, 2008/2009). The new collaborative practice among institutions supports teacher development most effectively. The TESOL program at the University of Illinois at Chicago initiated a successful teaching practice program in conjunction with the intensive English program already operating within its institution. Williams (2009) and her colleagues set up goals that can be taken under consideration if teacher educators would like to involve trainees in service work.

1.4 The Concept of Service

First, the program itself is goal oriented; second, it can be integrated with coursework; third, it adds value to the student teacher participants; fourth, it involves multiple experiences; fifth, the designed activities must create a successful experience for the students they serve. Their program expands the practical component of their English teacher-education program and allows pre-service teachers to interact with students prior to their teaching practicum. The experience gives them insights into the language used by second- or foreign-language learners. It also offers opportunities for trainees to hear the language in use and to create language activities and materials for a real audience. The collaboration bridges the gap between theoretical course work and real work in the profession and enhances both programs. Williams' establishment of student teaching prior to a practicum with a partner program puts teaching practice in a contextualized situation and encourages participants to learn together.

Lemieux and Allen (2007) indicate that a successful collaborative partnership between institutions will need criteria to guide its practice and to assure its effectiveness and substantiality. According to Williams, researchers have identified three characteristics of successful partnership in teacher education, which are:

1) it has to involve teachers in the development,

2) the goals should be clear and have to be agreed conjointly by all the parties involved, and

3) it has to provide benefits for all parties (2009, p. 69).

Partnership according to Merriam-Webster's definition means *a relationship usually involving close cooperation between parties having specific rights and responsibilities*. The definition makes it clear that all parties involved should work closely together and enjoy rights but have responsibilities for what's expected of them. Crawford and her colleagues argue that an authentic partnership within or between institutions needs to "consist of regular, frequent, and ongoing opportunities for genuine collaboration and learning for all involved parties" (2008/2009, p.92). If the interaction can assure that all parties accommodate needs from all stakeholders, and the relationship can benefit students, university, and the community, that combination is even more ideal. Therefore, this researcher proposes to modify the list as follows.

1) It has to involve teachers and staff from all parties in the development;

2) the goals should be clear and conjointly agreed upon all parties involved ;

3) the goals must be clearly understood by all participants in the project;

4) it has to provide benefits for all parties and create meaning for all parties.

Teacher education partnership often entails an educational aim for improving life or achievement of learners; as a consequence, the project initiated under the partnership may be more academically oriented. However, projects created through the partnership will concern all parties; hence, it should engage them in the development process as well. In addition, the enactment of the project may be executed by students who may be recruited after the design phase is complete and thus may have participated in the process design. They should also have a clear understanding of what's expected of them and what they are working toward to assure a smooth practice. Because partnership with teacher education is likely to involve teaching or mentoring, specific teaching objectives need to be taken into account.

Hrabowski, III., Lee, and Martello's (1999) research on educating 21st century teachers identifies the goals for student teaching as

1) developing teaching expertise;

2) providing prospective teachers with school-based preparation;

3) nurturing their decision-making, reasoning, problem-posing, problem-solving, and inquiry skills;

4) preparing them to work effectively both on behalf of and among diverse student populations;

5) fostering an ethic of social responsibility; and cultivating both habits and attitudes of reflective thought (p. 295).

The above training list goes beyond the development of teaching knowledge to include higher learning such as decision making and the cultivation of social responsibility. During the process of community work, student teachers will increase their self-realization and cultivate their pursuit of the common good.

1.5 Issues on Community Service Learning

If teacher education focuses only on the development of subject knowledge, it will fail to prepare pre-service teachers for the unpredictability and complexities of teaching in the real world. Many institutions have begun educational reform that incorporates community service learning as a means to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

According to Overall (2010), service learning is grounded in a theory-experiential learning. It provides a connection between cognition and action. Community service work provides experiential learning and helps students link course materials with real-world experience (Cook, 2008). The opportunity to work in the community extends their learning beyond classroom allowing them to expand their views of the community and to develop a sense of the real world. Community-based field work can provide extraordinary opportunities for future teachers to apply what they have learned in class, develop their ability to meet life challenges, and facilitate their professional growth prior to or during a practicum. Cone's study with 81 teachers found that a teaching program in combination with community-based service learning enabled teachers to be open to new ideas, to adopt a wider variety of pedagogical methods, and to better meet students' needs (2009).

Community service learning offers a variety of unique challenges and benefits. According to Clayton & Ash (2004), service learning encompasses the "'real world' messiness and unpredictability, complexities of social change processes, personal and intellectual risks inherent in reflection, and shared control and responsibility implicit in partnership" (p.59). Through service learning along with teaching experience, trainees will develop a new sense of worth as a role model for children and as contributors to the society (Clayton, & Ash, 2004). Service learning is increasingly being adopted because it literally entails service work as well as student learning, reflection, collaboration, and the empowerment of the students, university, and community (Lemieux, & Allen, 2007). In the process of preparation and execution of and reflection on service work, students will be engaged in higher learning including critical thinking, problem analysis, problem solving, personal and professional development, interpersonal communication, and leadership skills.

The previous section gives a brief overview on teacher development and addresses issues relevant to establishing university partnership with institutions and the community and the need to incorporate community service learning in teacher education for higher learning. For the next part of the paper, the researcher illustrates community teaching practice through a college-community partnership and discusses its procedures, benefits, and challenges. In an examination of research approaches investigating university-school collaboration, Rubin (2000) classifies this kind of report as a self-study account by a practitioner who serves as an organizer, decision-maker, and facilitator. Reflection on this kind of report as can allow us to document the evolution of the approach and include a systematic examination of partnerships. Documented self-study has produced results that stimulate universities "to rethink many of their motives, practices, and assumptions about what kind of activities and products would be of value" (pp.221-222).

2. The Model

2.1 What do we do?

The model for student teaching practice through service learning consisted of a series of stages. In this session, the researcher described the four stages: planning, preparation and training, implementation, and reflection.

2.1.1   The planning stage

The project was established by the researcher who was also the instructor of the teaching methods course. Planning was initiated by back and forth discussions with the college and the libraries. The discussion served the function as an informal needs assessment to identify their concerns and goals, and what they could offer. After mutual understanding, we agreed upon the time, place, format, and needed resources. Considering children's short attention span, the researcher and the partner libraries determined that one-hour English programs for community children would be optimal. The instructor then went ahead to design a program outline and wrote a proposal. Once granted approval, the project progressed to the design phase. Meetings between the instructor and students were set up and took place to begin contemplation and discussion on the program theme and design of the activities.

The participating students of the community-service project were English majors taking the English teaching methods course centering on children. Unfortunately, a majority of students took the class to fulfill school requirements, while

only a few actually had an interest in teaching English. But the field work involving community service caught more attention. At inception of the course, requirements of service learning were made clear to the participating students so that they knew what to expect and would not complain about additional work demanding their own time later on. The community-service work gave them chances to apply what they learned in class, and they had an opportunity to contribute their knowledge and skills to expose children to a foreign language. The service work required additional time for training and material preparation. In the planning phase, meetings with the instructor took place weekly about three months prior to the community program. Informal discussions often emerged and ideas sparked when the instructor and students ran into each other in the hallway or at the department office where students hang out.

The community-service work sponsored by libraries and involving the creation of an English activity program designed for the community children had been based on educational and TESL/TEFL theories such as noticing theory (Schmidt, 1999), input hypothesis (Krashen's, 2002, 2003), and multiple intelligence (Garner, 1983); teaching methods such as Total Physical Response (TPR) are widely incorporated. Other techniques incorporated include modeling, repetition, dynamic grouping, peripheral learning (such as poster, picture display), emotional involvement, songs/chants, games, and rewards (Larsen-Freemen, 2000).

2.1.2 The preparation and training stage

After the program was mapped out, the class of volunteers underwent preparation and training. Each program would require at least eight to ten rehearsal sessions with the instructor present most of the time. Sometimes the rehearsal was combined with a meeting because new ideas or situations had emerged. Students with better pronunciation and fluency would take less time because there was little need for pronunciation adjustment. The training also consisted of dramatic presentations. The community English program involved a presentation of a dialogue, a story, or a short play which would be enacted by the students. According to Scott and Ytreberg (1994), learning to teach is learning to act. Our students may have been excellent language learners, but most of them were not actors or actresses, neither was the instructor. But viewing plays and years of teaching have provided me with some drama experience. At rehearsals, I would help students with their vocal affect using various pitches, volumes, and sounds, smoothing out their gestures and body movements, as well as their expressions of emotions.

As the program's start date was approaching, both students and faculty felt increasing pressure. Some matters like the production of props were left until the last minute. It was hard for all members to find time to attend meetings, which sometimes resulted in a fragmented rehearsal, but everyone worked to bring loose ends together. A final check of materials and props had to be conducted at least a couple days prior just in case there was a problem, and there would still be time to amend the situation. Because of limited budgets, most volunteers had to take public transportation to the designated community library. The researcher had to transport those props and materials needed for the performance.

2.1.3 Implementation

On the program day, the participating students were required to arrive at least one hour prior to the program to ensure they had sufficient time to become familiarized with the environment and to prepare. Students arrived much earlier if the situation allowed for an on-site rehearsal. Prior to the program, it was important to assure that the physical setting and resources were intact and in working order. All materials and props were laid out and aligned according to the sequence of their appearance. In some situations, students had to clear up the space and sweep the floor before they could proceed with the program. Each member had his/her own duty, but during the program, members had to work closely together and be attentive even if they were not in the act so that the program would have a smooth flow.

Here's a bit of history about the first year of the program, and how matters improved after the first year. Originally it was the researcher who had to assist with the change of props, play music, take photos, and videotape the program. The instructor admits to "feeling like an octopus" because of attending to many duties, and admits to an occasional mishap in carrying them all out correctly. In the second year, the department assistant came out and helped with picture taking and video recording. Consequently, the instructor could focus more on the program procedure and provide better assistance to the students. Each year after the program, we make certain that the library properties are intact, and return them, and thank the staff for the collaboration opportunity.

2.1.4   The reflection stage

It is important that the new inclusion of service learning was assessed to examine its effectiveness and applicability. The researcher conducted an evaluation survey with parents and student teachers. The invitation for parents to participate in the evaluation of the program had a twofold purpose. First, many of the service recipients were children of ages three or younger. It would have been difficult for them to comprehend the survey questions or to express their opinions in written format. Second, it was almost impossible for staff to assist the children with the survey because of time constraints. The student survey took the form of a report asking open-ended questions. Feedback from library staff was also elicited for the program evaluation.

Our community-service program with a goal of fostering learning in student teachers and community children has been well-received. Word has spread. Since the first year of implementation, the attendance steadily increased. Recent programs all had high attendance with more than one hundred children and parents. As they were leaving the venue after the most recent program, many parents inquired about the next program. They wished this kind of activity was an on-going program in the library. Parents' frequent inquiry about future programs continues to be an indication of success.

3. Different Perspectives

3.1 Parents' Perspectives

Parents' and students' perspectives were collected to evaluate the effectiveness of the community service model. The parental data were collected from a questionnaire. Students' data were collected through their reflection reports.

Overall, parents and children alike have been satisfied with our English program. Based on the survey sent to the parents, we received a very positive response to the 2011 program. Of four hundred parent respondents, more than 93% of parents thought their children liked our program, and only one parent did not think their child liked it. When asked to rank our program with five stars, most parents gave us four stars out of five. More than 71% of parents gave us more than four stars. When asked if their children learned some English from the program, 84% agreed or strongly agreed, 14.5% thought their children more or less learned some English, and only 1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. A majority of the parents thought the program included dynamic activities (83%) and the program was highly interactive (81%). In terms of whether their children should learn more English after the program, 77% of parents agreed or strongly agreed whereas only 6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Among the parents, more than 50% of the parents demonstrated a very strong urge to attend the program in the future, and about 47% would take their children to attend the program if there were another program in the future.

As for what parents liked the most about the program, they thought the activities presented were fun and interesting. They agreed that the program contained a variety of activities that children enjoyed, and the activities were highly interactive. The program "let children learn from games and learn in a joyful environment." "Repeated practice in various activities made learning interactive." They also loved the fact that the use of language was about everyday life. Finally, they were surprised that the community had a free English program. Although it offered free admission, parents were very pleased that the program was well-planned and elaborate. They could tell that a great deal of time and effort went into its preparation.

3.2 Students' Perspectives

Students' data was collected through their reflection reports. Several themes emerged including connection between theory and practice, opportunities for hands-on experience and interaction with children, developing social skills, an increase of self-worth and confidence, and service learning as a rewarding experience.

3.2.1   Making connection between theory and practice

Students thought that the community service allowed students to apply what they learn in class. The community teaching work provided an opportunity for teachers and students to test and experiment with theories and methods. Students gained experience beyond the classroom and made connections between the classroom and the real world.

- "Theories are just methods on paper. They did not tell you how children would respond when you apply them."
- "In addition to the performance, the preparation and practices were ways to understand and become reacquainted with the teaching methods."
- "This community service program was an excellent way to learn about and experience teaching. This practice strengthened my understanding of the course content and real teaching practice. It would help with my teaching career in the future."
- "Participating in class is participating in community."

3.2.2   Having a first-hand experience teaching and interacting with children

Many students revealed that they had gained new insights into children's psychology and behaviors. They learned in class that children had a short attention span, but they didn't know that young children just got up to walk around or walk away if not interested. If children are curious, they will be attentive, but student teachers were not prepared to see children who came up to touch and play with the teaching props.

- "We witnessed how kids responded to our activities and stories, and how their reactions were different from what we had anticipated. After a couple of times, we learned to cope with the situation we didn't plan for."
- "When we were giving out materials for the artwork, all children crowded to the front. The teacher came to tell us to hand out materials from different sides of the room, which was helpful."
- "Getting the chance to watch and interact with children was the best part of the learning."
- "I've learned how to interact with children, how to make eye contact, and how to attract their attention through this practice."
- "I admire teachers a lot more. They have to do a lot."

3.2.3   Developing social skills for the real world

Community service learning emphasizes collaborative effort, which is different from individual learning (Lemieux & Allen, 2007). Service learning increases awareness of others instead of only self and provides an opportunity to observe and interact with others. In addition to a focus teaching skill, community work also helped develop social skills like communication, negotiation, and collaboration skills. Jobs are rarely isolated. Students will need to interact and work with other people in the future. Engagement in community work has broadened students' horizons of the real world and also developed their soft skills.

- "Even though it is challenging, I enjoy the way we work together as a team and we share a common goal that is to make children happy and help them learn."

- "I learned a lot from others during discussion. Discussion is actually a good way to stimulate new ideas and critical thinking."

- "During the process, we improved our oral skills through continuous practice. I am also more confident in expressing myself."

- "This program was achieved through a collaboration of a team of people and hard work."

3.2.4   Discovering self and enhancing self-worth and confidence

Involvement in community teaching practice helped students grow academically and personally as well. In the process of conducting community service, students participated in the developmental process and execution. During the process, their voices were heard, and their work was valued. They discovered themselves capable of many skills and, most importantly, capable of contribution to the larger society.

- "I didn't know I could act too."

- "After so much practice and after the performance, I've become more confident."

- "I am glad that I could bring joy and fun to children."

- "Children were very responsive which made me feel confidence and think that I was doing well."

- "Everybody knew I was a reserved and shy person. I was always nervous on the stage. I was delighted that I was able to overcome my fear and perform for children."

- "I didn't know that I could actually do something for the society."

- "Frankly I felt really good being able to use my skills to serve the community."

- "This experience gave me a sense of achievement and lit my enthusiasm in teaching. I was quite happy that children and parents said 'teacher, bye-bye' when they left."

3.2.5   Discover that serving others is rewarding

Students expressed excitement and joy from the enjoyment they saw in the children. They also felt that they could make a difference in society. Community service learning helped them realize giving was actually rewarding. The experience opened up potential opportunities for them to continue involvement in the society and to become responsible caring citizens.

- "When I see the kids having a good time listening to our stories, all hard work is worth it."

- "I just made a little effort but brought happiness to children."

- "I felt I had made an accomplishment."

- "This program has created multi-values and had a positive impact on children and the community. They also learned about our school and acknowledged our skills and what our students and teachers can offer."

4. Discussion

The praise from the library staff and positive feedback from both student participants and parents has proven this model to be effective. Students enjoyed the field experience tremendously. Some of them felt sad when the community work came to the end and expressed interest in offering continual community service. They thought participation in community work in fact helped them accumulate experience in teaching and provided them with an authentic opportunity to interact with children. Students were more engaged in both the course work and service work, feeling that this course helped them make progress into the real world, gaining additional skills such as communication and collaboration which will very likely be required in their future work. These results coincide with research that has been done on an economic course project in service learning by Brooks and Schramm (2007) citing students' tremendous gains in people and process skills. Community service learning emphasizes "students' contribution to the community and the development of students' civic responsibilities" (Lemieux & Allen, 2007, p. 310). Through collaboration with the community, universities not only cultivate intellectuals for society but also develop active participants who assume duties and respond to social needs.

Engagement with the community can deepen the tie between university and community. To establish or extend university-community collaboration requires commitment and effort of all parties. To provide involvement in community service, faculty and trainees will need to make a huge commitment of their skills. It is critical that the community service provided meets the needs of the people they serve and generates multi-experiences for all participants as Williams (2009) and her colleagues have achieved at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Resources and support are also essential in realization of a community service program. Physical resources that will be needed range from a venue to materials like scissors, color markers, and tapes. In addition, faculty, administrators, and leaders from both university and community need to share a vision and a belief in experiential learning and social service; otherwise, the collaboration will not be realized. Support of manpower from university and community will be required in so many ways. Take our program as an example. Our project was short of participants with only around seven or eight people for one program activity; consequently, every member has to assume more than one duty. It

would be very helpful if more people are involved to explain the seating arrangement, lead children and parents to their seats, and help restore equipment and venue after the event. To organize an effective community-service learning program, both tangible and intangible support and resources are critical.

5. Problems and Challenges in Community Service

Although the partnership with libraries was the first collaboration with the community at this institution, the English-teaching programs we organized and implemented through community service have generated positive outcomes and gained high praise from the department, the school, and the community partners. The process can still be improved, however. Practitioners or administrators who wish to adopt a similar model have to overcome several problems and challenges including loss of man power, time constraint, community demands, a strenuous training process, and having to deal with insufficient support.

The preparation and training process was strenuous and time consuming. College students today have a heavy course load and a variety of interests in life. It was often hard to gather students for meetings or preparation work. There were students who dropped out of the program because of work and time conflicts. Our program engaged in foreign language learning and development of teaching skills. Student volunteers had to act as a language model, which added another layer of difficulty and complexity to the training. Community service teaching in the first (native) language may require training on presentation skills, but will not require special attention on language skill improvement. In order to meet the request of our clients, our community work had to include a level of dramatic performance. While it is possible for students to conduct community teaching individually without any team work, dramatization requires cooperation among a group of people. Moreover, language-major students are good at language, but many of them do not know how to act. Training students for stage performance would be challenging. It would also take time and plenty of practices just for students to overcome fear and anxiety to perform in front of the public. Time spent on planning and preparation was very stressful for both faculty and students. So far, there is only one academic course combined with service learning/teaching in the department because this type of course is much more time- and labor-intensive than other courses. But after witnessing the growth in students and satisfaction in the children, the researcher concluded that it was definitely worth commitment.

Support from the university and education-related bureaus may be missing at the moment it is. Service learning is for the purpose of offering one's service to the greater good. To some extent, it include the connotation of sacrifice. Hence, lacking resources and support becomes a natural part of the process. Administrators and staff may think service learning as a good innovative pedagogical approach, and that is probably where their support ends. Our program did receive administrative attention and financial support to some extent, but the funding was rather limited. What we received merely covered student insurance and some teaching materials and props. We found recycling materials and reutilized them to reduce costs. In addition, the instructor had to be responsible for transporting the properties and often to pay for the parking herself. The department has many duties and programs, thus is already short of staff on a regular basis. The staff may not be available for assistance, which often left the instructor and students to handle such matters.

These challenges have become barriers that administrators and teachers have to overcome when they attempt to forge community service in teacher development programs (Kezar & Rhoads, 2001). Several evidence-based studies already demonstrated the success and impact of combined teaching and service learning. Hopefully more participation in this pedagogy will induce support from institutions, education agencies, and the community. Despite what seems a discouraging list of obstacles and difficulties that were met in putting together the program, its success and inherent value to all involved convince us that once the program gains wider support, the negative aspects will be minimized and the benefits increased.

As a result of the service teaching activity initiated by the researcher and the success of the programs presented at local libraries, we know that students, faculty, the university, and the community stakeholders (including libraries, parents, and children) have benefited. This community-service teaching practice has created a win-win situation for all parties. Harnish and Bridges conclude that university-community collaboration has a "mutually beneficial impact on the community, students, and faculty" (2004, p.108). This kind of practice may inspire universities and other institutions alike to build a relationship with community groups to create a wide range of community service activities because communities are likely to be short of expertise, resources, and manpower. However, it requires a strong commitment from all parties including students, faculty, universities, and the community to create successful collaboration. An institution-community partnership can promote language literacy and have a positive influence on children. It will also strengthen the tie between school and community, school and children, school and parents, and community and home.

6. Conclusion

The student teaching practice through community service learning created in collaboration with local libraries offered substantial benefits to the public, the institution, students, and faculty. Students, in particular, found the community experience rather unique and valuable due to the linkage with education and the outside world. As Overall (2010) proposed, service learning has an added value to education. Students develop a better understanding of the course materials and they are better prepared for the world. Muğaloğlu and Doğanca (2009) suggest strengthening the tie between university and school (community) to create opportunities for teaching practice. Key to the success of this kind of effort is that the community teaching practice provided the opportunity for skill application, confidence boosting, broader learning, connection to the real world, and contribution to society. To cope with the rapidly changing world, educators and universities need to strive to establish new relationships and situations which help students explore new

roles and new possibilities.

This paper has reviewed literature on teaching practices and service learning through university-community partnership. It also presents an evaluation report on a student-teacher training model through community service based on the perspectives of the instructor, parents, and participating students. The teaching practice through community service learning illustrated in this study contributed to learner-centered learning, gains in field experience, increased societal awareness and responsibility, and improved society learning. The conjunction of academic institutions and community agencies needs to be encouraged, but the collaboration requires deliberate and continuous effort.

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