Chapter 8

Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility in Physical Education Teacher Education: A Service-Learning Application

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ABSTRACT

Service-learning has gained popularity in physical education programs as a way to prepare pre-service teachers to work with culturally diverse students. The chapter contributes to this growing movement developing a conceptual framework for the development of a service-learning program fit to meet (a) the learning needs of low-income children and families; (b) the education, training, and socialization needs of preservice teachers; and (c) the design requirements of best practice interventions. A research- and theory-driven application of service-learning through the teaching personal and social responsibility pedagogical model is overviewed in reference to one physical education teacher education program. Lessons learned from the implementation of this model are discussed, as are implications for practice. Improvement science is offered a methodology that can help researchers develop the responsiveness of these initiatives while also furthering the research base of the field.

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INTRODUCTION

Service-learning (SL) initiatives have been defined as a “form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5). In the helping professions of education (Anderson, Swick, & Yff, 2001), and physical education (Carson & Raguse, 2014), SL has become a strategy for helping to address needs within community environments while also providing college students opportunities to practice using professional skills in real-world environments (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Further, SL helps to address the civic education mission espoused at many contemporary universities by helping students develop ethical leadership, cultural competence, and community engagement (Levesque-Bristol & Richards, 2014).

While many teacher education programs include field-based and experiential learning experiences to help students practice using teaching strategies and pedagogies in classroom environments, SL can be differentiated from these practices in that it places a particular focus on service-oriented outcomes such as volunteerism and community engagement (Carson & Raguse, 2014). Appropriately designed SL programs in teacher education, therefore, have the potential to address community needs through relevant and meaningful service while also helping preservice teachers develop contextualized, action-oriented theories for working with vulnerable youth, including those situated in communities characterized by poverty (Domangue & Carson, 2008).

With these key goals in mind, the authors designed a year-long SL initiative in a local elementary school with a diverse demographic and over 85% participation in the free and reduced lunch program. The SL program, referred to here as Teaching Opportunities to Promote Service (TOPS), includes inservice teachers, families and community members, school administrators, a local non-profit organization, and graduate students and faculty members from the College of Education and School of Social Work (see M. A. Lawson, Alameda-Lawson, & Richards, 2016 for a complete overview of the partnership). The primary purpose of the collaboration is to support children’s learning and development during out-of-school time.

Preservice physical education (PE) teachers participate in the program and are trained to deliver a best practice pedagogical model called Teacher Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR; Hellison, 2011). This particular model helps youth develop personal (e.g., participation, self-direction) and social (e.g., respect, leadership) skills that children from communities affected by poverty often need to cope with some of the challenges inherent to their daily lives (e.g., gang violence, fluid and unpredictable family structure). The authors saw the TPSR model as an opportunity to address two interrelated problems of practice. First, there is a shortage of professionals to address the needs of communities affected by poverty. Universities and their teacher education programs, therefore, have a social responsibility to support the needs of their surrounding schools and neighborhoods (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Second, there are needs for preservice teachers to develop pedagogical skills in diverse “real-world” practice settings.

The purpose of this chapter is to draw from our experiences with the TOPS program and the relevant SL literature to develop a conceptual framework for grounding SL initiatives in three primary practice priorities: (a) the learning needs of children and families situated in communities characterized by poverty; (b) the education, training, and socialization needs of preservice teachers; and (c) the design requirements of best practice interventions. The chapter opens with an overview of occupational socialization theory (H. A. Lawson, 1983a, 1983b; Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014). The authors employ this theory to describe relations between teacher development, practice, and SL, and to provide a heuristic...
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