Chapter 25
International Service-Learning in Practice

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ABSTRACT
This chapter explores key theoretical concepts relevant to the planning and implementation of international (and domestic) service-learning programs. This chapter explores the power dynamics of international service-learning through four key theoretical concepts: the politics of power, local knowledge, framing, and problem definition. While these ideas are particularly appropriate for international service-learning program, they are also relevant for domestic service-learning partnerships in nearby communities. In addition to providing theoretical frameworks, this chapter identifies recommendations for practice in order to address each of the four challenges identified. Universities must consider these factors if they wish to develop stronger programs with reciprocal benefits to communities and students. With stronger partnerships, better development will occur for both students and community members.

INTRODUCTION
The politics of power can be very complicated in any service-learning situation. Who has power? Who has the ability to make decisions? Who benefits from those decisions? The context of international service-learning is no exception to the complexities of power; in fact, working across differing cultures, national borders, and economic levels with university students only amplifies the dynamics of power (Ogden, 2007; Peet, 2007). International service-learning sits at the interdisciplinary intersection of education abroad and international development with university students engaging in communities in development capacities. International service-learning is connected to many positive outcomes for students such as the development of global citizenship (Hartman, 2014), enhanced intercultural tolerance and awareness (Kiely, 2004), the development of social capital (Lough & Matthews, 2013; Perold et al., 2012), workforce preparedness (Wells, 2006), and a critical examination of self-identity (Prins & Webster, 2010). However, it can also be a setting where local people may be exploited, degraded, or patronized in the interest of the learning of a student from the Global North (Ogden, 2007; Perold et al., 2012).

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The purpose of this chapter is to explore key theoretical concepts relevant to the planning and implementation of international (and domestic) service-learning programs. This chapter will explore the power dynamics of international service-learning, through four key theoretical concepts: problem definition, the politics of power, local knowledge, and framing. The concepts outlined in this chapter will be especially useful for university faculty members, program coordinators, and those organizing international service-learning programs for teacher education students. With a more rigorous understanding of the complexities and power dynamics of international service-learning programs, program coordinators will be able to design, implement, and evaluate better programs that have benefits for both visiting students and local community members.

The following conceptual framework outlines the concepts identified and discussed in this chapter (Figure 1).

This model identifies the many people who are involved in a service-learning partnership among both the university and local community. Each of these people may have varying degrees of power or influence in a relationship and may have varying insights into what makes an effective or detrimental service-learning program. The four concepts discussed throughout this chapter are identified in the center of the model: problem definition, politics of power, local knowledge, and framing. Each of these concepts is relevant for participants from both sides of the framework – both US universities and local community members.

There are many questions to be asked of a teacher education international service-learning program outlined in this chapter: Who gets to decide on what is a problem or challenge to be addressed in a community? Is it the local community members or the university participants from the outside? Who has the ability to make decisions about this partnership? Can local people make changes? Who has relevant knowledge to address challenges? Is the knowledge of local teachers, school administrators, and students deemed to have value? What about the students and professors from the university from the Global North? How are visiting university participants viewed by the local community members and vice versa? While these concepts are relevant for any service-learning partnerships, they are particularly appropriate for international service-learning programs.

**Figure 1. Conceptual framework of key theoretical considerations for international service-learning**

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