The Mwanje project: engaging preservice teachers in global service learning

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Abstract: This article reports the findings of a study that engaged preservice social studies teachers at two institutions of higher education in Ohio and West Virginia in a service learning to benefit the Mwanje school in Malawi. The findings suggest that despite some initial levels of apprehension the project enhanced the student teachers' global awareness and kindled their predisposition to engage their future students in service learning beyond their own region to include a global perspective as well.

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Background

Social studies methods courses offer a unique opportunity for preservice teachers to learn and serve in a global context. As the world is rapidly becoming a smaller place, a global project offers many opportunities to help students think beyond their local community by becoming globally engaged, and develop a deeper understanding of global issues and the interconnectedness of humankind (Friedman, 2007; H2O for Life, 2012). This article's purpose is to present the findings of a study that sought to identify the successes and challenges of a global service learning experience of preservice social studies teachers at two mid-western institutions of higher education, Ohio University and Davis & Elkins College, both located in Appalachia.

Ohio University is located in Southeast Ohio in Athens County, one of the 32 counties that together make up the Appalachian region in the state (see http://www.arc.gov/counties). Nearly two thirds of the preservice teachers at Ohio University come from urban and suburban communities near Cincinnati, Columbus and Cleveland. Before coming to Athens, most have grown up in white middle class neighborhoods and had very little experience with diversity.

Davis & Elkins College is a small private liberal arts college affiliated with the Presbytery church, located in rural Elkins, West Virginia. Surrounded by the Monongahela National Forest, "You can stand on any street in Elkins and turn in all directions and see forest covered mountains rimming the city. It is unbelievable" (Crampton, 1995). While the community is surrounded by beauty, Randolph County, the county in which Davis & Elkins College is located, and its six contiguous counties illustrate many of the challenges facing significant portions of the Appalachian region. The seven-county region covers 4,343 square miles, a region larger than the states of Delaware and Rhode Island combined; however, Randolph County and its contiguous counties are among the poorest and most economically disadvantaged in the state of West Virginia.

Nearly half of the preservice teachers at Davis & Elkins College are comprised of first-generation students, many of whom come from the region itself. The other half of preservice teachers are comprised of middle and upper class students from West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey, many of whom are on academic or athletic

scholarships. While diversity at Davis & Elkins College is not readily observable, much of it is economic and cultural.

It is against this background that the Ohio University College of Education and Davis & Elkins College Department of Teacher Education have sought to make their preservice teachers aware of the influence of context and culture. There is not a great deal of racial diversity in Southeast Ohio and eastern West Virginia. According to local school report cards published annually by the Ohio Department of Education (see http://ilrc.ode.state.oh.us/) and the West Virginia Department of Education (see http://wveis.k12.wv.us/nclb/pub/) Caucasian students typically make up close to 100% of each Appalachian school district. However, diversity is noticeable with respect to differing levels of socioeconomic status and the number of students with disabilities. The Appalachian school districts, in which Ohio University and Davis & Elkins College preservice teachers participate in field experiences and clinical practice, typically have a population in which one-third to two-thirds of all students are considered economically disadvantaged and about one fifth to one fourth have been identified with learning disabilities.

The findings in this study are based on a qualitative analysis of an initial and ongoing weekly map quiz, a pre-test, informal in-class discussions and a final reflective essay completed by preservice teachers at both universities, who as part of their social studies methods courses participated in the Mwanje project. Before starting the project our preservice teachers were asked to complete a blank map of Africa as well as take a pre-test that asked them a series of basic factual questions about Malawi, including such statistics as population size, birth, death, and fertility rate (see Appendix A). The initial map quiz and pre-test results at both our institutions typically were abysmal as evidenced by a "grading" of the completed work the preservice teachers submitted as well as by their own admission during in-class reviews. While data gathering throughout the project was mostly informal, upon completion of the project all preservice teachers were asked to complete an essay in which they were asked to reflect upon what they had learned about Malawi and the Mwanje school, service learning, and what connections they had discovered between their own world and that of the Mwanje school (see Appendix B). To analyze the essays we each separately read our students' essays to determine emerging themes. Next we compared and discussed our analysis to reach a consensus on common themes across our institutions.

In Ohio Middle Childhood preservice teachers are being prepared to teach in two content areas in grades 4-9. At Davis & Elkins College preservice teachers are being prepared to teach social studies in a K-6 setting. Since 2008 the Mwanje project has been part of the Ohio University's Middle Childhood social studies methods course in which a total of 87 preservice teachers have participated. At Davis & Elkins College the Mwanje project was first introduced in the spring of 2011 as part of a social studies methods course for elementary education students in which seven preservice teachers participated.

In response to an original idea developed by Drs. Toni Fuss Kirkwood-Tucker and Gloria Alter to provide students at the Mwanje school with backpacks, and most notably in response the efforts of Dr. Josiah Tlou, professor emeritus at Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, VA, who in 2007 made a plea on behalf of the school at the annual conference of the International Assembly, we decided to further develop the Mwanje project. The Mwanje Primary School, named after a

nearby stream, is located in Mututa, a village in the Zomba district. Mwanje became a service learning project to benefit a globally distant school lacking in basic educational needs such as student supplies, textbooks, tables, chairs and desks. Unfortunately, the preservice teachers' self-selected activities met with mixed results as, for example, sending student supplies turned out to be prohibitively expensive. As a result of further communications with Dr. Tlou and Mrs. Memory Makiyi, the school's principal, we decided Mwanje's most pressing need was to have a source of safe drinking water. As a result, while International Assembly continued the backpack project, our Mwanje project became the Adopt-A-Well project, an ongoing social action project to raise funds for drilling a borehole.

Service learning

Definition

Unfortunately, service learning means a lot of different things to different people. The terms "service learning" and "community service" are often used interchangeably, yet they have a different meaning. According Eyler and Giles (1999) service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities around the world. Through service learning projects students use what they learn in the classroom to solve real-life problems. Community service projects also provide donated services or activities but they usually lack instruction and student reflection. Service learning is a dynamic process in which students' personal and social growth is tightly interwoven with their academic and cognitive development.

In a globally connected society, service learning can take on a whole new meaning as students expand their service learning projects beyond the local community to a global community. According to Braskamp and Engberg (2011) when students participate in service learning projects that benefit those living in another country global perspective taking involves three critical, developmentally based questions: "How do I know; who am I; and, how do I relate to others in a globally connected society?" As students engage in these types of projects they grapple with these three questions in order to develop a global perspective as they increase their intercultural knowledge and broaden their notion of civic responsibility to include an appreciation of global differences as well as a motivation to behave in a socially and globally responsible way.

In 2000, the National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS] issued a position statement defining service-learning as "an essential component of citizenship education" (p. 240). According to NCSS, service learning differs from community service in that the service is integrated with academic skills and content as well as engages students in reflection activities. Effective service learning activities not only use the community as a learning laboratory but also seek to "solve community problems, meet human needs and environmental needs, and advocate for changes in laws to promote the common good" (NCSS, 2000, p. 240). Effective service learning projects teach students that "they can make a difference" (NCSS, 2000, p. 240).

According to Saltmarsh (2005) service learning is one of many avenues to promote civic engagement, as are democratic education, political engagement, citizenship education and moral education. Arguing that historical knowledge contextualizes community-based problem solving, he emphasizes the important role of community in shaping student learning (pp. 52-54).

K-12 schools

In K-12 schools service learning has increased student motivation by establishing meaningful links between their service and academic learning (Krebs, 2008; Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000). Service learning is a "method in which children can learn through active participation in organized service experiences to meet the needs of a certain population and/or environment" (Fox, 2010, p. 1-2). It has resonated among teachers who believe in the importance of teaching today's youth that they can make a difference in the world (Krebs, 2008; Metz, McLellan, & Youniss, 2003).

Guided by supportive mentors, service learning, even when mandatory, has been found to be an effective tool in preparing high school students for civic engagement (Bennett, 2009; Wade & Yarborough, 2007). Westheimer and Kahne (2000) have observed, however, that while many high schools offer service learning opportunities, few ask students to analyze the cause of social problems and generate possible solutions. In order for service learning to be effective, allowing students to develop their sense of caring for others, service-learning projects should provide a structured time for students to explore issues through talk, journaling, and expressions of art in order to truly reflect on the experience (Fox, 2010).

In Ohio, according to the Ohio Department of Education [ODE] (2010), the Community Service Learning Program helps "schools plan creative classroom projects that teach students to apply creativity, leadership, problem-solving and subject knowledge they gain in the classroom to community needs and problems." ODE posits that, "community service learning projects are in place all over Ohio and are targeted to every grade level and subject [and that] schools that have added community service learning to classroom teaching find their students are better able to connect their academic subjects, develop leadership and decision-making skills, explore careers and grow their potential as contributing community members."

In 2005, West Virginia became the second state in the nation to join The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21). P21, an advocacy organization that includes members from the business community, education leaders, and policymakers, was developed to "define a powerful vision for 21st century education to ensure every child's success as citizens and workers in the 21st century" (P21, 2004). In joining P21, the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) collaborates with leaders and stakeholders in the state who have committed "themselves to systemic change that will prepare the youth of West Virginia to be productive and successful citizens globally, both now and in the future"(WVDE, 2011, p. iv). WVDE believes that in order for students to be productive and successful citizens they must be provided with time for exploration and preparation for careers; "therefore, work-based learning, introduction to

majors, and community service opportunities are offered at the middle and high school level to assist students in making decisions about the future" (p. 8).

Higher education

Building upon the foundation laid in K-12 schools, support in higher education for service learning has gained much momentum in recent years. In 2008 President McDavis of Ohio University suggested that what makes the Bobcat spirit unique is its emphasis on not only serving the nation and state but the region as well. This spirit is expressed by formally introducing all freshmen to a core set of values: community, citizenship, civility, character and commitment. According to McDavis, each of these qualities affirms "the value of citizenship as expressed through political engagement and public service" (p. 2).

In 2009 the Davis & Elkins College Board of Trustees unanimously approved its new mission documents which refer to the value of diversity multiple times. In the Davis & Elkins College statement of identity the College welcomes diversity by noting that it "provides a friendly and supportive environment for curious, engaged, and freethinking students of diverse backgrounds." Its statement of values notes that the College "value[s]….the importance of other countries, cultures, and regions." And, in its vision statement Davis & Elkins College notes that students are challenged to "act responsibly as citizens of multiple communities" (Davis & Elkins College, 2010, p.16). Furthermore, in its identity statement Davis & Elkins College emphasizes "hands-on," experiential learning through internships, practicums, service projects, field research, travel and study abroad programs.

Research at the college level has found that having volunteered, for whatever reason, is a behavior that is sustained over time. Through service learning students take away experiences that last a lifetime as service-learning is a self-contesting experience that provides a context for exploring deeply important questions about oneself in relationship to the world (Butin, 2005). Batchelder and Root (1994) found that college students who had engaged in service learning made greater gains than students in traditional classes in their thinking about social problems and prosocial decision-making, while Strage (2004) found modest long-term academic benefits. Hammond (1994) found that faculty members in higher education who engage in service learning are predominantly driven by curricular concerns and derive satisfaction from service learning activities as well as the students because they provide a sense of meaning and purpose, as well as generate positive feedback not only from students but colleagues as well. However, although service learning often advances teaching effectiveness, barriers include tenure and promotion policies that emphasize research at the expense of teaching and a lack of institutional support (McKay & Rozee, 2004). While similar objections have been raised against the lack of attention to issues of social justice in higher education, others have argued that service learning can serve to empower marginalized students by involving them in communities from which they are often excluded (Barclay-McLaughlin, Kershaw, & Roberts, 2007; Ransom, 2009 , 2009; Zimmerman, Krafchick, & Aberle, 2009).

In her discussion of Colorado State University's involvement with the Soweto Music Project, which provides instrumental and music literacy instruction to approximately 100 children from

14 primary and high schools in Soweto, Cook (2008), adding a global dimension, argues that, "a distinguishing feature of service learning is its reciprocal and balanced emphasis on both student learning and community service. Objectives [should be] co-determined with community partners and … linked to meaningful and needed outcomes for both students and communities" (p. 6).

Prentice (2007) studied eight community colleges beginning to integrate service learning into their courses. Her study found there are few experiences in college that provide students with the opportunity to move beyond textbook discussions of injustices such as poverty, racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, and ageism. Service learning, as experiential education, provides an opportunity for students to link academics with social change. For community college students, many of whom are currently living the "isms,'' the connection between academic concepts and community experiences may be what allows them to become aware of how social structures have been set up to privilege some and marginalize others. Service learning then can be the vehicle through which students learn the specific skills they need to become committed justice-oriented citizens (see Westheimer and Kahne, 2000).

Preservice teachers

Preservice teachers often live in a bubble because they "just go to school [and] then plan to leave" (Boyle-Baise, 2005). As a result they are often completely alienated from the local communities that surround their college towns. As they first venture out into a local community they often find themselves in unfamiliar culturally mixed or low-income settings in which they are forced to confront their own stereotypes (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007; Boyle-Baise, 1997). However, as they become increasingly familiar with the surrounding communities they learn to appreciate the importance of building reciprocal partnerships based on trust, mutual understanding and shared values, inspiring them to become potential advocates for social justice and agents of change (Boyle-Baise, Bridgwaters, Brinson, Hielstand, Johnson, & Wilson, 2007; Carrington & Saggers, 2008; Chen, 2004; Ethridge, 2006, McKay & Rozee, 2004; Perry & Katula, 2001; Swick, 2001; Wade & Yarborough, 1997). As these partnerships help students and faculty to break down the perception of the university as an ivory tower, they meet community needs while simultaneously empowering communities as a resource for learning (Boyle et al., 2007; McKay & Rozee, 2004).

Another goal of teacher preparation is to prepare culturally relevant, asset-based, rather than deficiency-driven, community-centered teachers (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004; Boyle-Baise, 1998, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Furthermore, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) requires that teacher preparation programs provide experiences for candidates to work with diverse populations (see http://www.ncate.org/Standards/NCATEUnitStandards/tabid/123/Default.aspx). Therefore, culturally responsive teacher preparation programs should include confronting stereotypes and enhancing communication skills by helping preservice teachers understand how variables such as race and ethnicity, social class, and region strongly influence student behavior (Banks, 1998; Banks, Cookson, Gay, Hawley, Irvine, Nieto, Schofield, & Stephan, 2005; McIntosh, 1990).

Furthermore, they should include moving preservice teachers along on the continuum from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism, which has local as well as global dimensions (Bennett, 1993; Trifonovitch, 1977).

A special goal of teacher preparation programs is also to help preservice teachers, especially those who hope to teach social studies, gain an appreciation of service learning as an enriching method for democratic place-based education in their own future classrooms (Dinkelman, 2001; Swick, 2001). According to Smith (2002) place-based education reveals five thematic patterns as students study local culture, study local nature, identify and solve local problems, help the local community through internships and creating entrepreneurial opportunities, and become engaged in the community decision-making process.

As it uses the "community as text," place-based education often allows students to discover they have a rich family history (Blank, Johnson, & Shah, 2003; Beccaris & Woshner, 2007). In addition, Cook (2008), reminds us that "advances in digital communication [have brought us] the capacity to enlarge the scope of service learning opportunities for students from local communities to the global arena [and that] linkages with international community partners allow [students] to see the possibilities for contribution beyond their local community and connect … with their roles as global citizens" (p. 7). While Gruenewald (2005) advocates for a critical "place-conscious education," Nespor (2008) warns against creating "separatist dichotomies" that focus, for example, on urban versus rural or local versus global (p. 489). Finally, Keith (2005) suggests that service learning activities in the face of increased globalization, rather than based on reciprocity and meeting community needs, should be based on interdependence and citizenship action through the lens of social justice.

Mwanje Primary School

In our courses at Ohio University and Davis & Elkins College the typical first encounter for the social studies methods students with the Mwanje Primary School was a "pop quiz" in which they were asked to label a blank map of African countries. For nearly all students this "pop quiz" typically proved to be a revealing experience which they accompanied with comments such as, "Are you serious?", "I don't know any of these!", and "Were we supposed to know this?" After the quiz we typically asked the students how many countries they were able to label successfully. Most reported less than five countries, with Egypt and South Africa being the most well known. Typically after having been informed the "pop quiz" did not count for a grade there was great relief as evidenced by such comments as, "I have no idea of the names of those countries" or "My geography knowledge of Africa is very poor."

Each time after the map quiz, we followed up introducing the Mwanje project with a review of basic historic, geographical, socioeconomic and political information about Malawi and a review of the annual Mwanje school report which informed the preservice teachers about the school's history, its student and faculty demographics, its curriculum and examination system, as well as about some of the successes and challenges the school has faced since it was first established in 1997 to provide local children with a free education (see Appendix B).

When available, a native guest speaker has helped to make Malawi "real" to these preservice teachers. As Sherry and Anita commented, it allowed them to "put a face with the nation" and dispel "stereotypes of jungles [and] wilderness." Finally, despite the lack of Internet capabilities and intermittent phone connections, the preservice teachers were able to speak directly with Mrs. Makiyi, the school's principal, during telephone conferences which, according to Allison, "made it that much more real," as they "could hear the excitement and enthusiasm in her voice as the class was speaking to her." Furthermore, as Lisa wrote, it was "interesting to hear about the similarities and differences between her school and the schools we have here," which made her feel like she "was helping make a difference." Thus, as Tim suggested, these "personal connections help[ed] put a face" on the project.

The typical next step was to enhance the students' general knowledge of Malawi by assigning them to research information about Malawi through such websites as those hosted by the United Nations, the CIA World Fact Book, and the government of Malawi. In a typical comment on this assignment, Allyson wrote, "At first I was just going to do a quick Google search to find out information on Malawi. I was just going to read and print off the first websites that appeared from my Google search and be done. But once I started reading about the country I became so interested in this small little African country that I found myself wanting to know more!" Another student, Tim, a military veteran who had spent time in Africa, stated, "I had been stationed in Africa but when I was there I didn't take the time to learn about where I was living…I can't believe that I was living so close to this country [Malawi] and didn't even know it existed." Following a sharing of information about facts related to such issues as HIV, birth and death rates, poverty, irrigation, and education, we used a PowerPoint presentation to present additional information on Malawi and the Mwanje school.

Learn and serve

One of the main objectives of the Mwanje project was to help preservice social studies teachers make global connections and engage in civic action (NCSS, 2010). Global service learning projects often differ from what many people consider a "typical" service-learning project. Typically a service-learning project entails students studying a local group/community, understanding its needs, raising awareness about its needs, and then applying concepts and knowledge learned in class in order to work as a group to raise funds and/or build something to meet the needs of the group/community. However, since Malawi is located thousands of miles from Athens, Ohio and Elkins, West Virginia, our students were not able to meet in person with the local school community to discuss its needs. However, after each PowerPoint presentation our preservice teachers generally agreed that raising funds towards a borehole constituted a worthy endeavor. They then used concepts and information they had learned in the social studies methods course to raise funds by educating others about their project. It was through their fund raising efforts that many of our preservice teachers began to develop a global perspective while reconsidering their knowledge base and how to relate to a globally distant school community (Braskamp and Engberg, 2011).

The preservice teachers at Ohio University and Davis & Elkins College who participated in the Mwanje project report having learned a great deal about Malawi. Admitting their prior ignorance, in a typical response at Ohio University, Rebecca wrote that she "had never heard of Malawi," while Grant admitted, "I knew Malawi was located in Africa, but that's about it. I wasn't even aware that it was a *country* in Africa." Similarly, Eric at Davis & Elkins College admitted that he "was ignorant of the world's second largest continent [and that] like many people in the United States [he] had a very limited view of Africa," while Jesse confessed that her 'prior knowledge of Malawi was zero."

After completing the orientation on Malawi and the Mwanje School, we typically organized the preservice teachers into groups to develop their own service learning projects by brainstorming ideas on how to raise funds. Although they were weekly allotted some time in class to discuss the service-learning project, most of the planning and meetings was done outside of class time. Typically some students were assigned or chose to become self-elected "team leaders" to set up meeting times, create contact lists of phone numbers and assign various tasks on and off campus, including locating facilities to host an event, approaching local community members and businesses to donate goods, money, services or even their talent, as well as developing strategies for advertising.

When the Mwanje project was first initiated at Ohio University the students were allowed to develop their own service learning projects, which in Sheri's words gave them "a sense of ownership" instead of "hardly ever ha[ving] a say in what [they] did" in service learning projects while in high school. As a result, since the beginning of the project, these preservice teachers organized a variety of events to raise funds. Since Athens is a college town, they tended to focus on its student population. Creating brochures and informational displays as well as using Facebook to mobilize their social networks proved to be effective strategies for organizing successful events at local establishments. Soliciting donations from local businesses to organize hot dog sales on the main street in town was another popular activity whose success often depended on the weather. Bake sales in the College of Education and at the university's food court was another, although less successful, popular activity. Some students chose to go "their own way" by engaging customers at their place of employment, going door-to-door in residential neighborhoods, or making a presentation during a church service. Still others used their field placement in local schools to teach their students about the Mwanje School and successfully organized "Pennies for Mwanje" competitions between different grade levels.

Despite these successes there the project also faced some challenges. Originally one group decided to collect and send school supplies. This ended up becoming an important learning experience as, after a successful collection, they discovered to their dismay that the cost of shipping the school supplies would be prohibitive. An additional challenge was that some students questioned the purpose of a global project when in fact there is "so much need in Appalachia and "right here in [our] county" as Deidra and Jocelyn wrote. Despite these challenges, however, in general the preservice teachers at Ohio University have unanimously expressed that they value the project. As a result of the failed school supplies effort, however, the Mwanje project service learning activities became focused on raising funds for a borehole.

When first introduced at Davis & Elkins College, the Mwanje project also met with apprehension. The course instructor was concerned about how the preservice teachers would respond to the project. However, after introducing the assignment, they launched into a barrage of questions about the students at the Mwanje School. The first time the service-learning project was introduced students decided to organize a "Mwanje Aid Benefit Concert." Three local bands agreed to perform for free and all money raised through admission tickets to the concert would go towards the Mwanje project. Several businesses donated items that were raffled off during the concert, other businesses agreed to provide free advertising, and two local distributors agreed to donate food and beverages. In addition to creating a Facebook page, the preservice teachers created fliers and posters that provided information about Malawi and the Mwanje school that were distributed across campus and in local businesses. The local and campus newspapers even featured interviews with the students a few days before the benefit concert. Their efforts resulted in a highly successful concert.

The second time the service-learning project was introduce, the students decided to sell Davis & Elkins "Teacher Education" t-shirts. The students did everything from designing the t-shirts, to having them printed, to selling over a 100 t-shirts.

From apprehension to exhilaration

The Mwanje project has provided a unique learning opportunity to enhance our preservice teachers' knowledge of Africa while simultaneously involving them in a global service learning project. While at first many of these preservice teachers were apprehensive of the project, once engaged they became enthusiastic, exhilarated participants. Typical of the students' initial apprehension, Miranda commented, "When we were assigned the service project, I have to admit my initial reaction was that of concern. I have done service projects before, and I do not enjoy asking people for money. What would we be doing? Who would we be doing the service project for? These were just a few of the questions that quickly ran through my mind. My worries were soon put to rest when we were introduced to the Mwanje Primary School. As education students the class had an immediate connection with the cause."

Since Fox (2010) has found in her research on service learning projects that "poverty, hunger, and homelessness are most often discussed in terms of a canned food drive during a holiday season, but a deeper level of understanding is generally avoided in the classroom" (p. 1), there is a need for more explicit teaching of global connections. The Mwanje project taught our preservice teachers several valuable lessons about how to collaborate with others and, as Bryn put it, "build camaraderie and community," how to raise funds, and how to create and reach a public forum. And as Miranda stated, "The service project gave seven students from the small town of Elkins, WV, the opportunity to connect with children half way around the world. Children of another ethnicity and culture, who most likely valued education more than we could even fathom. We learned that even though we may be miles apart on a map, we have a lot more in common than we expected." In addition, in a typical evaluative comment, Andrea wrote, "I wish we had more projects like this in my other classes," while Janice and Joseph both wrote that it "was one of [the] favorite projects [they] completed in [their] college career." Sam

and Chelsea wrote that they were "excited to use a service-learning project in [their] future classroom" because "it is important to show and teach students about the importance of giving back to the community and world."

Thus for many the Mwanje project became a journey of self-discovery. Paul learned that "studying other cultures helps you make connections with your own culture and understand yourself better," which is "crucial for teachers to learn." Brianna wrote, "I learned about myself. I learned I enjoy helping others" and that "it's important as a teacher to instill in future generations love, compassion and the act of giving." Frances stated that he had "to rethink and re-evaluate [his] own world," whereas Marlene thought that "this was a great project that allowed our class to become more global thinkers," which she hoped "everyone takes with them in their teaching careers." Andrew stated, "our small contribution is not enough for a borehole, yet we left the venue … knowing that we had done our best to eliminate one more obstacle standing between a student and his/her education." Finally, Charlene realized that "it is our responsibility as educators to help students, not only in and around our community, but all around the world."

Thus, the Mwanje project became "an eye-opening experience" for Emily and many others that allowed them to make global connections. Suggestive of the power of learning by "doing," the Mwanje project affirmed Courtney's belief that, "getting students involved in global problems and offering small solutions can create a genuine interest in the subject," and validated Luke's conviction that "more education is one of the best ways to improve the world and stop conflicts."

Conclusion

According to NCSS (2000), effective service learning activities teach students that "they can make a difference" and increase their "awareness of the community and world around them." In addition, it offers an opportunity to provide them with "a variety of strategies that they can use to create a better world [and] connect with real individuals and institutions working against injustice (p. 240).

Our findings suggest that these preservice teachers valued the Mwanje project as they learned and served simultaneously. While Cook (2008) and Freire (2002) caution us against a "feel good," neocolonial pedagogy, we have sought to develop the Mwanje project in collaboration with local, national and global partners to meet the needs of one small school community. The Mwanje project has enhanced these preservice teachers' global knowledge and increased their awareness of the importance of serving global community needs, as well as inspired them to implement service learning in their own future classrooms.

Unfortunately, the time constraints of modeling service learning in a single methods course will continue and the engendered enthusiasm among these preservice teachers to implement service learning in their own future classrooms may well dissipate. Future research to determine to what extent these preservice teachers have indeed engaged their own students in service learning will be necessary.

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