The Influence of Service-Learning on the Civic Attitudes and Skills of Japanese Teacher Education Candidates

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Abstract

This study examined the effects of integrating a service-learning project into the curriculum of undergraduate education majors at an urban university in Japan. The teachers engaged in service-learning by supporting high school students in the development and implementation of social action projects. The central question of this study is the influence of their work with the high school students on the civic learning of the teacher candidates. The study employed pre and post seminar data from the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ) and student reflection papers to examine the effects of service-learning on the civic attitudes and skills of the teacher candidates. The study found that while the teacher candidates experienced benefits from their service-learning, including significant gains in their political awareness and commitment to civic action, their self-perception of leadership skills declined over the course of the seminar. Discussion centers on the complexity of the influence of service-learning on students, particularly the potential of a transformative service-learning experience to disorient and disrupt even as it builds political awareness and civic commitment. The discussion also raises the question of the cross-cultural validity of survey instruments such as the CASQ.

Keywords: teacher education; teacher candidates; service-learning; civic attitudes and skills; civic learning; CASQ; Japan; transformative learning; leadership

When teachers support their students in performing community service, how does the experience influence the civic engagement of the teachers themselves? This study explored outcomes related to the integration of a service-learning project into the undergraduate teacher education curriculum of an urban university in Japan. The teachers engaged in service-learning by supporting high school students in the development and implementation of social action projects. The social action projects included collaborating with local nursery schools to reduce litter in the community, advocating for a school lunch program in the Philippines, and working with the Japanese Red Cross to make a movie to promote blood donations. The question explored by this study is not the civic learning of the high school students, but the civic learning of the teacher candidates who guided and supported them in the development and implementation of their social action projects. To determine the effects of service-learning on the teacher candidates, the study administered the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ) at the beginning and the end of their year-long service-learning experience. In addition to the pre-seminar and post-seminar comparison of CASQ survey results, the study used the teacher candidates' reflection papers to ex-

plore the influence of service-learning on the teacher candidates' civic learning.

Service-learning pedagogy has significance in Japan in the larger context of an educational system that is increasingly committed to enhancing the civic engagement of students. In 2001, the Japanese central government instituted "The Educational Reform Plan for the Twenty-First Century," also known as "The Rainbow Plan." One of the plan's seven priorities was to teach youth to become "open and warm-hearted—through participating in community service" (Monbukagakusho, 2002). The plan recommended that all school students perform community service: two weeks of service for elementary and junior high school students, and one month of service for senior high school students. Miyazaki (2011) described how in 2007, high schools in the Tokyo public school system introduced service, *houshi* in Japanese, as a required subject. In 2009, the Japanese government reaffirmed its commitment to civic education by adopting high school curriculum standards that included social volunteer work activities (Miyazaki, 2012). Incorporating service-learning in the curriculum expresses the educational philosophy that education should have civic as well as academic and personal outcomes. As stated by Battisoni (2013), education should develop social responsibility in citizens and prepare them to be involved in a democratic society. A high level of civic engagement has been found to be associated with a number of beneficial social outcomes, including improved political performance, higher rates of economic growth, and even better health and longer life expectancy (Kage, 2011).

Service-learning is not only a means of building civic engagement, but also a high-impact instructional method. As a pedagogical strategy, service-learning blends service activities with academic curricula, allowing students to learn through a process of active engagement linked to critical reflection, while addressing real community needs. To the extent that Japanese teachers are willing and able to adopt service-learning as a teaching and learning strategy, the community service requirement in K-12 education could become a powerful learning opportunity for students. In Japan, some teachers have failed to realize the educational potential of the community service requirements, either because they did not see learning potential of service or because they did not have time to do the additional work required (Mi-

yazaki, 2011). Miyazaki (2012) reported that typical service projects have been uncomplicated or routine tasks, such as cleaning parks near schools, with little relevance for learning. Some Japanese educators, however, have welcomed community service requirements as an opportunity to adopt service-learning as a pedagogical strategy. The government mandate for community service in K-12 education has opened the door for widespread adoption of this powerful form of experiential learning and has provided a strong rationale for including service-learning pedagogy in Japanese teacher education.

Review of the Literature

Service-learning holds great potential for enhancing the civic learning of teacher candidates, and eventually, the K-12 students they teach. This review focuses on: 1) research on service-learning in teacher education, 2) research on the link between service-learning and civic learning, and 3) research conducted in Japan on service-learning in teacher education or service-learning and civic learning.

Marrero (2016) observed that service learning in teacher education serves multiple objectives. Participation in service-learning prepares teachers to implement the strategy in their own classrooms, enhances their ability to reflect on teaching methods, and develops a service-oriented disposition (Anderson, Swick, and Yiff, 2001; Eyler, Giles, Dwight, Stenson, and Gray, 2001). Much of the service learning that takes place within teacher education involves tutoring or mentoring students in disadvantaged schools or communities. Research has found that this type of service-learning can improve teachers' cultural competency and pedagogical skills (Anderson et al., 2001; Miyazaki, 2012). The findings summarized by Root and Anderson (2010) are consistent with these observations. Root and Anderson summarized the effects of service-learning on teacher candidates in over 25 studies in the United States. They organized these studies into five categories looking at impacts on: 1) fostering academic learning, 2) understanding of and care of students, 3) knowledge of the teaching profession and professional skills, 4) understanding and appreciation of diversity, and 5) motivation, knowledge and skills needed to implement service-learning as a teaching method. These studies reported benefits to teacher candidates related to all five of these categories.

In addition, numerous studies have indicated a positive connection between participation in service-learning and civic learning. Richard (2017) described the quantitative methods used to measure the effects of service-leaning on civic outcomes. Quantitative researchers have constructed scales such as the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ) and the Civic-Minded Graduate measure (CMG) to measure students' attitudes, skills, and motivation regarding civic engagement (both Moely, McFarland, Miron, Mercer, and Illustre, 2002; Steinberg, Hatcher and Bringle, 2011). Further research has addressed the reliability and validity of these measurement scales (Bringle and Hatcher, 2000; Bringle and Hahn, 2015). Using survey measures, Eyler, Giles, and Braxton (1997) reported improved civic attitudes and engagement in service-learning students, while Giles and Eyler (1994) connected commitment to civic action with a sense of social responsibility. Celio, Durlak, and Dymnicki (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of 62 quantitative studies on the impact of service-learning on students (not limited to civic outcomes) and concluded that compared to controls, service-learning students recorded greater gains in positive civic attitudes and leadership. Jones and Foste (2017) summarized qualitative methods used in research on service-learning and civic outcomes, finding that qualitative research offers unique and significant contributions to the understanding of service-learning and civic outcomes.

In Japan, a small but growing body of literature has explored the role of service-learning in teacher education or the link between service-learning and civic learning. Toda, Mimori, and Ninomiya (2010) studied teacher candidates who mentored or tutored at an orphanage a total of 20 times. These teacher candidates grew to have the capability of seeing children's individual personalities and fully recognized the importance of communication with them. Miyazaki (2011) found that introduction of service-learning in teacher education fosters teacher's abilities and teaching skills, and gives them a sense of personal growth. Miyazaki predicted that participation in service-learning increased the likelihood that the teacher candidates would implement service-learning with their future students. Kuramoto and Huong (2013) implemented service-learning in the Minamata community of Japan, and found that service-learning promoted self-esteem and civic responsibility for most students.

Theoretical Framework

We employed Howards's (2001, p.45) definition of civic learning; "the knowledge, skills, and values that make an explicitly direct and purposeful contribution to the preparation of students for active civic participation." We then hypothesized that participation in service-learning would enhance the education students' civic identity; their identity as a citizen working to address a public issue or produce positive change in the larger community (Battistoni, 2013). Civic identity, once stimulated, would motivate students to take action and must therefore include the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for these actions to be successful. (Boyte, 2008, Knefelkamp, 2008).

Research Questions

This study was conducted to provide empirical data useful for determining if the benefits from teacher candidates' participation in service-learning justify its incorporation into the teacher education curriculum in Japan. The following research questions guided our study:

1. What is the influence of participation in service-learning in an education seminar on the civic attitudes and skills (political awareness, civic action, diversity attitudes, social justice attitudes, leadership, and interpersonal and problem-solving skills) of teacher education students?

2. How did participation in the education seminar service-learning contribute to changes in teacher candidates' civic attitudes?

Methods

Context

This study took place during a year-long undergraduate service-learning seminar (April 2013 to March 2014) at a university located in the Tokyo metropolitan area. As a course requirement, all 14 education students helped plan and conduct projects designed to increase the civic action of high school students. The education students: 1) provided guidance to the high school students; 2) recruited and trained project supporters, 3) assisted the high school teams in creating and implementing plans for a social action project, and 4) organized and ran the final demonstration event at which the high school teams presented the results of their projects. The event

was held in March 2014, and ended in success, with several media representatives and approximately 100 people in the audience.

One example of the high school students' social action projects was a littering prevention initiative. In this project the high school students worked in collaboration with local nursery schools to organize an event where parents, children, and high school students picked up litter together. The project aimed to both reduce littering and also promote positive interaction among community residents. Each individual education student spent approximately 120-150 hours working on this project, spread over the course of year. Other projects included advocacy for a school lunch program in the Philippines and the creation of a movie to promote blood donation for the Japanese Red Cross.

Throughout the course of their work with the high school students, the education students engaged in reflection activities together in small groups and participated in written and oral reflections in class, led by their instructor.

Participants

The education students included 12 females and two males. Six were seniors and eight were juniors. About half of these seminar students became teachers at K-12 schools, and the other half found employment at businesses and went on to graduate schools.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study used a mixed-methods design, combining the results of pre and post seminar surveys with qualitative data from students' reflection papers. The Civic Skills and Attitudes Questionnaire (CASQ) was administered at the beginning and conclusion of the seminar. The CASQ includes 44 statements designed to evaluate six dimensions of civic skills and attitudes: political awareness, civic action, diversity attitudes, social justice attitudes, leadership, and interpersonal and problem-solving skills. Students respond to each statement on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) through 5 (strongly agree). Responses to the statements associated with each of the six dimensions of civic skills and attitudes are averaged to create a composite score for that dimension. We used change in the composite score from the pre to the post seminar survey to measure the extent of a student's growth

(or regression) in that dimension. We then conducted dependent t-tests to determine whether the mean differences between pre and post seminar composite scores differed significantly from zero.

The CASQ was translated from English into Japanese by one of the researchers and an associate, working independently. The two translations were then compared for content accuracy and minor revisions made. The CASQ area that posed the most challenge for the translators was diversity attitudes. Because Japan is less culturally diverse than the United States, the researchers expected students to have less direct experience with diversity. For this reason, CASQ items such as "It is hard for a group to function effectively when the people involved come from very diverse backgrounds" were translated to (the Japanese equivalent of) the conditional tense: "It would be hard for a group to function effectively when the people involved come from very diverse backgrounds." Likewise, the item "I find it difficult to relate to people from a different race or culture" became "I would find it difficult to relate to people from a different race or culture." By placing these items in the conditional tense, researchers intended to measure diversity attitudes while avoiding non-response or confusion on the part of students with little prior experience of diversity.

We also obtained qualitative data from all 14 education students' post-service-learning written reflection papers. Two readers conducted independent content analysis of the reflections and reached agreement on a set of overarching themes following procedures described by Creswell (2014).

Results

Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ)

All 14 education students completed the translated CASQ at the beginning and end of the service-learning seminar, although complete post data was only obtained from 11 of the 14. Table 1 presents the mean pre and post seminar scores for each of the six CASQ areas and the results of dependent t-tests for pre and post seminar differences in each CASQ area. Somewhat surprisingly, given the small sample size, three of the six CASQ constructs measured statistically significant change at conventional levels ($p < 0.05$). From pretest to posttest, students

showed the largest increases in their political awareness ($d = 0.55$, $p= 0.01$) and civic action ($d = 0.47$, $p=.02$) scores. They also showed a relatively large increase in their interpersonal and problem-solving skills ($d = .42$, $p=.06$), a change approaching statistically significance at conventional levels. There was a significant decrease in leadership skills ($d = -0.33$, $p=.001$) and little measured change in their social justice ($d = -0.11$, $p=0.40$) or diversity ($d = 0.09$, $p=.6237$) attitudes.

Reflection Papers

Three themes stood out in the students' final reflection papers. The first theme related to the importance of teamwork, cooperation, and shared leadership in completing the project. The second theme captured how students gained a sense of individual empowerment and civic involvement related to making positive changes in their community from their role in the project. The final theme addressed how students improved their teaching efficacy and developed a sense of pride in the growth experienced by the high school students.

Teamwork and cooperation, and shared leadership. Many students noted in their reflection paper that participation in the project had enhanced their ability to support a group of people rather than to lead a group, and that this stemmed from the fact that the project was put into practice with a sense of collegiality among participants. This can be understood by the words the students used, like "the importance of team work" and "the importance of cooperation." Their comments showed that students viewed themselves as a team and valued collaboration rather than individual leadership:

> *We always gathered to talk about the important things, and what was decided was assigned to certain people and groups. We also gathered to share and check up on each other's situations several times a week, and covered each other for those tasks that couldn't be done. It was a great place for me to learn the importance of cooperation and working together in a group. It was because of the other members of the seminar that I was able to do this project until the very end* (Sample 2).

> *When I come across some troubles, and when I forgot what my purpose was, I really felt the importance*

> *of communicating with the others in the group and making our thoughts and ideas something common between us* (Sample 6).

A strong leader did not emerge in the group; however, there was a strong and consistent collaborative effort.

More specifically, the students conducted their work on the basis of cooperation between each other while they were also able to be independent and self-motivated. In other words, the group engaged in a collaborative dynamic rather than being directed by a single leader. Further, they expressed it in their reflection papers insofar as they regularly used the pronoun "we" rather than "I" when referring to project activities. Students recognized that leading was not necessarily conducted by a leader, but that sharing all responsibilities in the group was crucial:

> *We were able to succeed because we had the community of college students, seminar mates, and teachers who were there for us when in need and most importantly, the high school students who dedicated their time and efforts towards this program* (Sample 2).

> *Also, the strong connection that we had between the project members was what backed me up when I needed support. The best part of this project was sharing the same aspiration with all the seminar members, who were our colleagues* (Sample 6).

Individual empowerment and enhanced commitment to civic action. In addition, the factors that helped education students achieve the goals of this project were the students' increased confidence in their own abilities (enhanced sense of self-efficacy) and their awareness of the value of the project to society. Three different students' reflections related to these themes are shared below:

> *Through this project, we were able to experience what we couldn't have if we lived a normal life as a college student. It's surprising that even me who was nervous to make just a single phone call to a public high school, I have grown to be able to have a conversation with teachers and business persons* (Sample 1).

> *Through this experience, I became a more active thinker. During various events or topics, I always question myself whether this is the best I can do, and what other things are possible for me to do. I also realized that recently, I started seeing the positive sides of the world, society, and myself. Believing that*

there are ways to make it better is the key to see the positive sides. I think I learned the important components of living life through the activities in the project (Sample 1).

Meeting people outside of my university such as a business men or high school teachers, was always tough, but it was a great opportunity for me to learn the importance and effects of every word, action and consideration of myself (Sample 6).

Through the project, the students gained consciousness of their responsibilities as citizens, and they came to have a will and a strong conviction to change society for the better. One student wrote:

Since it was a new project that was being run by a group of college students, society was strict towards us and nothing went smoothly. Although we were facing a lot of hardships, none of us mentioned quitting, and now that I think about it, I think it's because each one of us has found our own reason for doing this project (Sample 5).

The students came to realize the value of sharing and collaboration and its direct impact on the strength, development, and success of this project. In short, the project provided these students with an experience of individual empowerment. At the same time, they recognized cooperation as an important value with this project in particular and society in general.

Teaching efficacy and sense of pride.

The seminar students' role was to nurture and encourage capabilities of the high school students who partic-ipated in this project. In short, the seminar students saw themselves as facilitators or coaches. This attitude is reflected in the following quotations:

On the last day of the project, as I was watching the high school students make presentations, I couldn't help but start tearing up when I heard them say that we were able to change through this experience (Sample 4).

Things started getting busy around the end of summer vacation and numbers of great challenges came upon us. What can we do to have the high school students make independent actions? How can we support them? Up to what point can college students interfere with the high school students? (Sample 3).

When the college students pushed forward the project, they found for themselves the value and the importance of supporting the high school students.

Discussion

Overall Effectiveness

The main purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which participation in a service-learning project enhanced the civic attitudes and skills of Japanese education students. A related purpose was to examine the dynamics of this participation to determine the processes and experiences that helped facilitate growth in civic attitudes and skills. These questions are particularly important given the current lack of studies examining impacts and implementation of service-learning in Japanese universities and schools.

We anticipated that students would grow in their civic attitudes and skills and the CASQ results indicate that this was the case. We also suspected that much of this growth would be attributed by students to participating in an authentic, first-hand experience working with other people (high school students, teachers, business people, and other community members). Student comments in reflection papers also supported this hypothesis.

Results of this study demonstrate that students who participated in the service-learning experience:

- Reported large and statistically significant increases in their civic action and political awareness. Comments in students' reflection papers also indicate growth in civic action; although no comments were reported that suggested increased political awareness. Growth in civic action suggests that students are more likely to become involved with community service or action in the future.

- Self-evaluated a moderate and near-significant increase in their interpersonal and problem-solving skills. These skills include listening, working cooperatively, communicating, and thinking logically to solve problems. Many students' comments in their final reflection papers also support this growth, especially appreciating the power of working as a collaborative group.

- Reported a significant decrease in their leadership skills as measured by the CASQ. Reflection comments reveal that students did experience a collaborative form of group leadership and that they recognized the effectiveness of this leadership style.

- Reported no change in social justice and diversity attitudes and did not mention these aspects of service-learning in their written reflections. This may be due to the fact that all the teacher candidates and high school students involved in the service-learning were ethnically Japanese and of approximately equal socio-economic status, giving students limited opportunity to experience diversity. It may also be due to the fact that their measured social justice attitudes were already near the top of the scale in the pretest.

- Participation in service-learning contributed to education students' growth in civic attitudes and skills by providing them with a direct, authentic, first-hand experience of working with others to achieve a common goal.

- Students' increased their sense of self, or possibly group, efficacy by experiencing the successful results of their own actions and receiving validating comments from high school students who credited the service-learning for helping stimulate positive change.

- Education students' enhanced commitment to improving society was influenced by their first-hand experience of seeing positive changes occur coupled with improved ability to critically reflect on the project and their personal role in it.

Leadership, Transformative Learning, and Culture

One unanticipated finding was the decrease in the teacher candidates' leadership skills as measured by the CASQ. We did not necessarily anticipate an *increase* in the teacher candidates' leadership skills, for two reasons. First, the design of the service-learning project did not position them as leaders. Their role in the project was to nurture and encourage the high school students in the development and execution of their own projects. A successful project was one in which the high school students took the lead, with the teacher candidates in the role of facilitator and coach. Second, the service-learning project emphasized teamwork and collaboration among the teacher candidates. The teacher candidates' reflection papers a strong sense of collaboration. Rather than a single person "taking charge," the teacher candidates worked together for the collective good.

However, while we did not expect the service-learning experience to increase the teacher candidates' leadership skills, neither did we expect that the service-learning experience would decrease their leadership skills. According to the pre and post CASQ surveys, the teachers candidates leadership skills declined significantly over the course of the seminar. We offer two possible explanations. First, by placing the teacher candidates in an authentic position of leadership, some for the first time, the service-learning experience may have caused some students to reevaluate their initial opinion of their own leadership skills. In the language of transformative learning theory, service-learning may have been a disruptive and disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 2009). Some teacher candidates may have entered the seminar expecting to lead a class of high school students with ease. Service-learning may have forced them to confront the more complex reality of actually leading a group of high school students. In this way, the service-learning experience may have resulted in personal growth and a more realistic self-understanding even as it reduced self-reported leadership skills.

Second, cultural differences between the US and Japan in the understanding of civic leadership may explain the decrease in their measured leadership skills. Without wishing to caricature either culture, we note that in multiple international surveys, the US culture is found to be a more individualist culture in comparison to the more collectivist culture of Japan (Burns and Darling-Hammond, 2014; Hofstede, 2001; Uchida & Oishi, 2016). To the extent that civic leadership in Japan emphasizes collective work toward a common good, the CASQ leadership construct may not fully capture the form of civic leadership valued in Japan. It is worth noting that every CASQ statement counted toward the leadership construct contains the pronoun "I;" none contain the pronoun "we." It is possible that in this study, as the degree of cooperation and collaboration between the teacher candidates grew over the course of the seminar, their emphasis on their own individual contributions diminished. This could plausibly explain the decline in the CASQ measure of their leadership skills.

Strengths and Limitations

A number of strengths increase confidence in the results of this study. First, this is one of a very few studies to examine the use of service-learning in an education program in Japan that included

service-learning as a required component for all students. Second, the CASQ has established validity and reliability (although validity and reliability have only been tested in a US context, to our knowledge). Third, independent readers reached agreement on categories and themes for the qualitative data. Fourth, many of the CASQ results are congruent with the qualitative findings and reveal consistent patterns for some outcomes of the study.

This study has some important limitations, including: 1) the overall sample was relatively small, 2) it was conducted with students from one course at one university; 3) all data was collected with self-report instruments and no direct measures of change were obtained; 4) one of the researchers taught the course, administered the instruments, and was one of two analysts of the qualitative data; and 5) cultural differences between Japan and the U.S. call into question the validity of the CASQ as a measure of Japanese students civic attitudes and skills; especially in the area of leadership.

Directions for Future Research

Since there is a shortage of studies on the use of service-learning and community engagement in Japan, there are numerous opportunities for future research that can provide valuable insights regarding the implementation and impacts of these practices. We suggest researchers consider examining:

- Service-learning impacts on Japanese education students using a control group research design and direct measures of growth, such as exams, final project rubric scores, and behavioral observations.
- Outcomes of service-learning participation from several different courses at different universities.
- Specific moderators of success with service-learning to determine the relations between specific practices and outcomes.
- Impact of engagement in service-learning on community partners; especially their perceptions of the effectiveness of the partnership and its usefulness for advancing their missions.
- Development of measurement instruments that demonstrate validity and reliability when used with Japanese students and communities.
- Long-term impact on Japanese education students' civic participation.

Conclusion

This study provides new empirical evidence on the effectiveness of integrating service-learning into the education curriculum in Japan. This is important given the current lack of studies examining the impact of service-learning and community engagement in Japan. The results of this study can help inform future research and practice in this area, supporting Japanese educators in adopting, adapting, or creating or adapting models of service-learning that are effective and culturally relevant.

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Table 1

CASQ Pre-test – Post-test Comparison Results							
	Pre-test		Post-test		Change (Post-Pre)		
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*p-value*
Civic Action	3.59	0.73	4.06	0.30	0.47	0.53	0.0159*
Interpersonal & Problem-Solving Skills	3.87	0.38	4.14	0.43	0.27	0.42	0.0608
Political Awareness	2.35	0.70	2.89	0.53	0.55	0.67	0.0219*
Leadership Skill	2.85	0.30	2.53	0.46	-0.33	0.24	0.0011*
Social Justice Attitudes	4.39	0.43	4.27	0.47	-0.11	0.43	0.4024
Diversity Attitudes	3.44	0.56	3.53	0.47	0.09	0.60	0.6237

*statistically different from zero at a 0.05 significance level.