Service in a Cultural Immersion Setting: Student Teachers Evaluate "A Sense of Community"

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Abstract
Classroom demographics in K-12 schools in the U.S. show that students of color represent an increased percentage of those enrolled, and that the number of students whose families are in poverty is on the rise. Yet teaching is a profession long dominated by middle-class individuals of European ancestry. The recruitment of teachers from diverse backgrounds is paramount, but teacher education must also prepare new professionals to meet the needs of students whose backgrounds might be different from their own. Cultural immersion and community-based service learning are two strategies for enhancing multicultural education for preservice teachers.

This is a qualitative case study of three Indiana University student teachers in a cultural immersion project on the Navajo Indian Reservation. The study focuses on the student teachers' experiences of community life in their Dine host towns and of a service-learning component required in the American Indian Reservation Project (AIRP). Through interviews, observation, facilitated group discussion, and academic reports, the researcher explores a range of motivations, aspirations, assumptions, and concerns Project participants have in regard to living and working in a culture different from their own. Specific attention is given to the student teachers' community service work and the sense each participant makes of local activities, public interactions, and the dynamics of a service relationship.

This study analyzes the objectives of cultural immersion and community service learning and proposes structures for thematic inquiry in the AIRP. The researcher builds on the work of Boyle-Baise and Sleeter (2000), applying their model of community-based service learning to a setting of cultural immersion. It concludes that a curriculum of inquiry and reflection surrounding participation in public life supports the goals of multicultural teacher education and facilitates increased personal, cultural, and professional competence among preservice teachers.

Comments
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However, the constructivist principle of the higher mental functions lies outside the individual—in psychological tools (such as Cultural immersion and community-based service learning) are two strategies for enhancing multicultural education for preservice teachers. This is a qualitative case study of three Indiana University student teachers in a cultural immersion project on the Navajo Indian Reservation. Attention is given to the student teachers' community service work and the sense each participant makes of local activities, public interactions, and the dynamics of a service relationship. This study analyzes the objectives of cultural immersion and community service learning and proposes structures for thematic inquiry in the AIRP. Community-based Service Learning in Cultural Immersion. 144. Contextualizing the Study.