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International service learning in higher education: Contradictions of purpose

Sean Kearney

University of Notre Dame Australia, sean.kearney@nd.edu.au

Sagar Athota

University of Notre Dame Australia, sagar.athota@nd.edu.au

Sarah Bee

Australian Director of the Dayamani Foundation, sbec910@gmail.com

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Authors

Corresponding Author

Sean Kearney, University of Notre Dame Australia

Abstract

In the current context of globalization and the internationalization of many industries, universities are seeking to provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in various settings, including an increase in international opportunities and formal study abroad programs. This study examined an Australian university and non-governmental organization (NGO) co-sponsored, short-term, cross-cultural service-learning immersion program in India. Approximately 40 undergraduate students from various faculties have now undertaken the program over the past three years. The students travelled to a semi-remote part of India to work with underprivileged children at a children's home turned school in Southern India. The affiliation with the NGO has seen it evolve from an informal children's home with 10-15 rotating children to a residential and day school. The impact of the program has had a profound impact on the students' views about the importance of education to impoverished communities; however, close examination of the relationship between the host community and the institution reveals the complexities of the program are greater than expected. The current paper focuses on community perceptions of the service-learning immersion and brings to light contradictions inherent within the program. While the paper focuses solely on one program, the implications may be the same for other international service-oriented programs.

Keywords

internationalization; immersion; community service

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International Service Learning in Higher Education: Contradictions of Purpose

Sean Kearney¹, Sagar Athota², and Sarah Bee³

University of Notre Dame Australia, Sydney

¹sean.kearney@nd.edu.au

²sagar.athota@nd.edu.au

Australian Director of the Dayamani Foundation

³sbee910@gmail.com

Abstract

In the current context of globalization and the internationalization of many industries, universities are seeking to provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in various settings, including an increase in international opportunities and formal study abroad programs. This study examined an Australian university and non-governmental organization (NGO) co-sponsored, short-term, cross-cultural service-learning immersion program in India. Approximately 40 undergraduate students from various faculties have now undertaken the program over the past three years. The students travelled to a semi-remote part of India to work with underprivileged children at a children's home turned school in Southern India. The affiliation with the NGO has seen it evolve from an informal children's home with 10-15 rotating children to a residential and day school. The impact of the program has had a profound impact on the students' views about the importance of education to impoverished communities; however, close examination of the relationship between the host community and the institution reveals the complexities of the program are greater than expected. The current paper focuses on community perceptions of the service-learning immersion and brings to light contradictions inherent within the program. While the paper focuses solely on one program, the implications may be the same for other international service-oriented programs.

Keywords: internationalization; immersion; community service

Introduction

Service learning and the introduction of programs based on service to the community have become part of a growing movement in tertiary institutions globally (Boland, 2010). Service learning has been linked to various positive benefits for those who undertake such experiences: participants have been noted to have increased awareness of the world, personal value, personal efficacy, and increasing levels of academic engagement (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Lee, 2000). Personal leadership and communication skills have also been noted as positive effects of service-learning (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000; Wade & Yarborough, 1996); and although contentious in more recent literature (see Hurd, 2008), in the late 1990s higher levels of cognitive development were also reported as a result of service-learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Osborne, Hammerich, & Hensley, 1998). While the positive impacts of service learning are evident, there is a growing field of literature that has argued that the benefits to students may come at the detriment to those communities hosting the students. The current paper seeks to address this

concern by framing the impacts of a particular service-learning immersion program to India from the point of view of the host community.

This paper focuses on a particular service-learning immersion program that has been running for three years and has seen approximately 40 students participate. The service-learning immersion developed fairly organically after an informal visit by the authors in 2013. In 2013 the authors visited an informal children's home in India. Upon their return they envisaged bringing undergraduate students from their respective courses, education and psychology, to the home to volunteer and help to educate the children who were living there. The focal point of the immersion was for students to work with disadvantaged children, whose prospects for future education and employment were negligible for a variety of reasons. After this first trip the students and staff decided to partner with the local community and form an Australian-based charity to help fund the building of a formal school at the site of the children's home. The charity was later formalized and has built a small school for the children to provide a high quality education. This paper analyzes the impact of the immersion from the host community's perspective in term of the success and challenges of the program with regard to the institution's and the community's goals. The purpose of the analysis is to identify the opportunities and challenges of such an endeavor and to better maximize the reciprocal benefits of the program to the host community; the university students and their institution; and, most of all for the children who are the intended beneficiaries of the program.

Background

Service learning is an idea that has taken on multiple meanings in recent times and can be viewed through multiple lenses. In education it can be viewed as an idea to promote or encourage progressive, social and/or multicultural education (Butin, 2006) and also as an experiential pedagogy (Bringle, Hatcher, & Jones, 2011). Service learning can also be viewed as social justice, community research, and critical theory (Butin, 2006). The way in which service learning is used is dependent on the context in which the service and/or the learning occur. For this study, service learning is seen as both an experiential pedagogy and as a social justice endeavor and is best described as combining community-based service with deep reflection on that service, while also attending to specific learning outcomes and preparation for future community work (Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, & Kerrigan, 2001). Immersion programs are defined in different ways and this paper is not concerned with the definition of such programs. For the purpose of this article and the program more generally, the *immersion* aspect of the program is characterized by the students immersing themselves in the community and the school they visit. There are no other purposes nor reasons for their visit except to learn about and spend time with the children and staff at the school for the length of the in-country stay.

There were two main focal points of this immersion program: reflection and reciprocity. Reflection refers to the students reflecting on and learning from their experience of providing the service. Reciprocity, on the other hand, is the action as a result of that reflection. In other words, it is the relationships built between the servers and the served, based on mutual interests, whereby each learn from one another, thus eliminating the power dimensions usually associated with education, specifically in contexts between the *developed* and *developing* worlds (Buchanan, Major, Harbon, & Kearney, 2017). The ideas of reflection and reciprocity stem from Kaye's four interdependent components of service learning: preparation, action, reflection and demonstration

(2004). In this context, two of those components help to differentiate volunteering, or even voluntourism, from service learning: critical reflection and reciprocity. Student learning when combined with providing a needed and mutually agreed upon service to the community are the basic tenets of service learning. It is the critical reflection upon the experiential learning that then leads the student to assess their surroundings and to challenge their ideas and preconceived notions of the place and the people they are serving, which results in authentic learning (Kearney, 2013). In preparation for their immersion, students undertake two mandatory full-day workshops, which introduce them to the foundational ideas of service-learning and cross-cultural competence. Embedded in these workshops are basic language skills for the areas we are visiting, i.e. Hindi and Telugu and detailed information on the curriculum taught at the school, which is the Indian National Curriculum Framework for English medium schools. As pre-service teachers the students also develop their own curriculum to deliver whilst at the school, focusing on three main areas: English, art and sport.

Authentic learning is not always a direct result of experience, but rather a consequence of critical reflection, which needs to be explicit and designed to maximize the student experience and to encourage intellectual growth and development (Jacoby, 1996). Authentic reciprocity, on the other hand, requires that all stakeholders in the service learning: the institution, the host organization, the students, administrators, and the host community all view each other as equal and able to contribute to the mutual learning. The basis of the research on the program presented is to evaluate the extent to which this balance is achieved. The India immersion program will be critically analyzed from the perspective of the host community and their perceptions on the successes and limitation of the endeavor over the three years since its inception. The basis for understanding whether the intent and goals of reciprocity were met comes from observation of both participants and hosts, and extensive interviews with all members of the staff in India at the school. The research questions for this aspect of the study follow:

- Do host communities support the immersion program?
- How does the community view the immersion program?
- What are the expectations of the host community and how do they relate to the institutional goals?
- What is the relationship between all stakeholders' views of the immersion program?

Literature Review

The concepts of service-learning and civic engagement have been deliberated in the literature for over two generations (Butin, 2006). Apparent in those deliberations are the many manifestations of service learning, which makes it a difficult concept to define precisely; however, this difficulty has not deterred the masses in aptly defining it. One such definition is “[a] structured learning experience that combines community service with explicit learning objectives, preparation, and reflection” (Seifer, 1998, p. 274). As a concept though, it can be viewed in many different forms, anything from experiential education to community-based research to a philosophical worldview (Butin, 2006), and everything in between. More definitions are certainly not necessary, and is not debated here, rather, it will suffice to say that the program in question did not seek to define the endeavor prior to it taking place; instead, it sought to combine institutionalized academic learning with the complex social issues the students would face.

Service-learning and community engagement have the potential to influence students in multiple ways. When that service is linked to the profession or job for which students are studying, it can further enhance that impact. Service learning increases personal efficacy, awareness of personal value, and awareness of the world (Astin et al., 2000). There is evidence to suggest that students who partake in these programs show higher levels of cognitive development (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Osborne et al., 1998); see positive effects on personal leadership and communication skills (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000; Wade & Yarborough, 1996); increase levels of engagement (Astin et al., 2000); and, some programs have been found to encourage the “moral imagination” (Strain, 2005, p. 71). Therefore, while the literature is clear that service learning can have significant positive impacts for participants, the evidence is limited with regard to the benefits or otherwise for host organizations. Stoecker and Schmidt's (2017) report on the impacts of service learning found that the majority of research focuses on "the institutional side of the relationship, especially on how service learning impacts students" (p. 34). Although they also report that there are community satisfaction studies (see Ferrari & Worrall, 2000; Vernon & Ward, 1999), these are far fewer compared to the abundance of research that report on the impacts for participants.

Jacoby and others have argued that the host community should determine the terms of service provided. Specifically, Jacoby highlighted the importance of those being served controlling the service provided: “the needs of the community, as determined by its members, define what the service tasks will be” (1996, p. 7). Any one person or party should not dictate the specific objectives of any service learning experience, but rather all stakeholders should collaborate to ensure reciprocity in the relationship (Maakrun, 2016), to ensure that the needs of the participants do not outweigh the needs and wants of the hosts (Niblett, 2010). Without those collaborations and reciprocity, one party will benefit more than another and it is doubtful that the relationship will last (Kearney & Athota, in press); therefore, the creators and implementers of service-learning programs should design them in partnership with host communities to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are taken into account.

While the literature propounds the benefits of service learning, there has been a long-standing argument against these programs, which has been strengthening in recent years (see Butin, 2006; Cruz, 1990; Eby, 1998; Illich, 1968; Mathers, 2012; Morton, 1995; Winkler, 2016; Zakaria, 2014). Many international service-learning programs take place in developing countries (global South), which has a long history of paternalism in the form of colonialism. This undercurrent cannot be ignored in modern-day international service-oriented programs, including those discussed in this article. Stanton, Giles, and Cruz highlighted this over a decade ago when writing about the origins of service learning:

Early practitioners [of service learning] were . . . motivated by early family and community experience, by deep philosophical and spiritual values, and especially by political events and social movements of the 1960s. Although they articulate varying priorities in terms of seeking impact on students, communities, and postsecondary education missions and curricula, they share a deep commitment to connecting with the academy (especially students) with issues, people, and suffering in off-campus communities. (1999, p. 241)

Existing studies analyse a range of elements that can impact the effectiveness of service learning programs, which include: the type of program; length of stay; various opportunities afforded to participants; and, the amount of preparation students receive (Van 't Klooster, van Wijk, Go, &

van Rekom, 2008). This article will focus on one international service-learning immersion program at one Australian university that was developed and implemented in conjunction with the host organization, taking into account the associated benefits and cautions with regard to such programs.

Methodology

A qualitative ethnographic case-oriented approach (Schutt, 2009) was employed to explore the service-learning immersion experience on both the students and the host teachers, administrators and other staff. Although not a true ethnography, the approach had important aspects of the methodology. Specifically, the researchers were embedded in-country with the students to better understand the impact of the experience from their perspective and interpret that experience in the context of the aims of the research. Those students who participated in the immersion experience defined the case; however, the researchers cannot be separated from the experience as they lived and worked alongside the students, which affected the data. The data, as a whole, cannot be considered completely objective; rather, the researchers in the context of a shared experience interpret them. The students ($N = 22$) ranged from 18 to 25 years of age and all except two were undergraduate students in an initial teacher education degree: the other two were undergraduate students in a Bachelor of Arts degree. All of those partaking in the immersion agreed to take part in the research aligned to the experience. The students provided consent to be observed and recorded throughout the immersion.

A secondary part of this research, which is reported here was on the collective experience from the host organization's point of view, whilst taking into account both the positive and negative aspects of service learning as expressed in the literature review. Pre and post surveys were given to all staff in the host organization to ascertain their understanding of the purpose of the immersion experience and also to attempt to establish baseline expectations as to the outcome of the immersion, from their point of view. Post-trip interviews were held with all 15 members of the host organization staff, which included five teachers, three cooks, a watchman, a washer, two attendants, and one principal, who also acted as the head of the organization's operations in India. One of the researchers, who spoke the local dialect, conducted all interviews. Two researchers performed structured observations each day for the duration of the three-week immersion. Each evening the researchers would meet and share their notes on the observations. Any observation not shared by both researchers was disregarded.

The interviews were transcribed and coded by a third researcher into five categories that corresponded to the categories of questions in the survey, which represent the research questions that guided this phase of the study:

- Do host communities support the immersion program?
- How does the community view the immersion program?
- What are the expectations of the host community and how do they relate to the institutional goals?
- What is the relationship between all stakeholders' views of the immersion program?

The pre and post surveys sought to ascertain any changes in the understanding of the host community between the times the participants arrived and departed, with regard to the questions

above. The surveys, interviews, and the observations were then written as interpretive reports, separately by all three researchers for further independent analysis. The three reports were then written into one narrative interpretive report by a fourth research collaborator: it is that report that forms the basis for the data in this article.

The limitations of employing such a method are varied and complicated. The power dimension between the researcher and the host organization is complex and underpinned by white privilege, post-colonialism, and the financial support provided by this experience. However, despite the complexities of the relationships, the ethnographic aspect of the immersion and the multi-year relationship between the host organization and the institution aided in building trust between the researcher and the participants, which was noted in their candid responses. Another obvious limitation in the researchers' ability to be objective in their observations and conclusions was the long-standing relationship between the research and the host institution. While the researchers believe this relationship provided authentic data, it cannot be denied that bias exists in the findings; the bias was inherent in the study as we shared many of the same experiences as the students and the staff at the school. The researchers believe that the findings presented are an accurate portrayal of the opinions and experiences of the staff as interpreted by the researchers for the purpose of this research. In fact, we believe that the internal validity of the study, or the reliability of the results presented, were strengthened by the researchers' own experience of the immersion: the researchers' were not exempt from the impact of the immersion experience or the effect on the staff or students. We experienced it as well, and in self-reflection among the researchers, we were able to confer that the data collected was an accurate portrayal of the staff as a whole.

Any one international immersion experience cannot be generalized to others, instead this article seeks to deepen the understanding of the possible benefits and challenges of international service learning on host organizations and the possible fundamental discord between what we, as institutions, see and think and what hosts appreciate and feel. This article seeks to open a dialogue about the effects of service learning in light of concerns, hopes, and expectations of the receiving community and building lasting international relationships with reciprocal benefits.

Findings

The results of 15 respondents were not statistically significant; therefore, there was no statistical analysis of the results presented. As previously mentioned, the results from all forms of analysis were formed into one narrative report of the experience from the hosts' point of view. That report does not represent any one person's perspective, nor does it weigh perceptions according to any one person's standing in the organization, (i.e. the principal's ideas outweigh the cook's). Instead, all members of the host organization were considered equal, as all had something to gain, and possibly more to lose, if the immersion program fails. Given these factors, the authors felt that a discussion of the results, in light of the questions that guided the research, would create a better dialogue with regard to the multiple ways a service learning program can be experienced by the host institution. In this way, the results are quasi-phenomenographical, in that they represent the varying ways that the host community experienced the phenomenon of this particular service-learning program. The data also necessitated a non-traditional presentation of the results. It proved very difficult to provide definitive answers for the research questions without qualifying that answer with other questions; in other words, there were contradictions in the data. Those contradictions did not diminish the results, instead they further

reinforce the contradictions that exist in the literature with regard to the benefits, or lack thereof, of service learning endeavors. Therefore, what follows is a discussion of the contradictions of the results in light of the questions that guided this aspect of the research.

Contradiction 1: Support v. Burden

All 15 respondents answered in both surveys and in the interviews that they were fully-supportive of the immersion program. This was a positive result, but was contradicted in the observations by both researchers. Further confirmation of the contradiction was evident in the results for two other questions, namely: do the hosts understand the institutional goals of the immersion program; and, are the immersions a distraction or burden to the community? The data necessitated an interpretive response from the researchers because of the apparent contradictions. Ten of the 15 respondents answered that the immersion was a burden to the community and a distraction to the host children's usual course of study. The researchers had to interpret the answer to the question in a manner that would allow all answers to be reported accurately, but also make sense. The contradiction lies in the fact that all respondents supported the immersion, but also felt that it was not helpful for the children and were not certain why the participating institution was there.

This sentiment is not uncommon in service-oriented programs. These programs have received criticism for decades, due to their paternalistic stance towards developing countries (Cruz, 1990; Eby, 1998; Illich, 1968; Mathers, 2012). The benefit, as perceived by the host community, and apparent in the interviews, was in the jobs that were created as a result of the immersion program; however, the purpose of the immersion, from the institution's point of view is twofold: firstly, to provide educational benefits, in the form of English language instruction, to the children and educational resources to the staff; and secondly, to have a positive impact on the worldview of the future teachers who take part in the experience. These two items do not need to be mutually exclusive; rather the program was designed to do both; however, neither of these goals had to do with job creation in the host community. The host staff saw the benefit of the immersion as job creation and job security as long as the immersion program continues. One staff member articulated it this way, "we love having you here, it is great for the reputation of the school and the children," but then added, "the children do not learn much as their actual studies are interrupted." This is reminiscent of other comments, which indicated that in the minds of the hosts, the immersion was, in and of itself, more important than positive outcomes for the children, who were meant to be the benefactors of the program.

Contradiction 2: Expectations of Community v Institutional Goals

Similar to the first contradiction, the expectations of the community and the institutional goals do not need to be mutually exclusive, they can co-exist; however, the findings painted a grim picture, which seemingly put these two objectives at odds. The expectations from the community perspective were mainly concerned with job creation and security; however, when asked specifically about what the community expected, it was not solely jobs, but also economic growth. Although the term economic growth was not used, the sentiment was clear and unexpected. Eighty percent of respondents mentioned they expected the school to grow, solely through the financial support of the immersion, and that more jobs and salary increases would follow. One such comment was "we hope more and more students will come, so we can have more children at the school. Then we can hire more teachers, more cooks, more cleaners; there are a lot of people in

the community who need jobs.” The contradiction here, from the institution’s point of view, was that the program was intended, in the long term, to make the school more self-sufficient so financial support would decrease with time. There also was the sense, from the hosts, that the school would grow as more university students took part in the program. Again, the university had not intended to increase participants and expected that if the school grew it would do so organically, with the costs covered by the hosts, not the immersion program.

The community expectations in this case were at odds with that of the institution. Whereas the program was developed to provide education resources and programs, the hosts saw it much differently. Fourteen out of 15 of the respondents did not understand the goals of the institution, the exception was the school principal; however, there was still a contradiction in her way of thinking. While she understood why the immersion started and what the institutional goals were, hers were different. She saw our presence as essential to the community, not just the school. We saw our presence as being essential to the children, which was the opposite of how the community viewed it. We also saw our participation in the operation of the school as vital to its continuing success; however, our hosts saw our presence as a burden to the children’s schooling and as necessary for community prosperity.

Contradiction 3: Stakeholder Consultation v. Host’s Goals

The third contradiction started where the last one left off, which was at employment for the community. The host’s goals, collectively, but not individually, seemed to be employment opportunity. Interesting exceptions were three members of the host community who said they took the job so that their children could attend the school. This illustrated a lack of stakeholder consultation and proper communication, not only from the institution’s perspective, but also from local management. There are strict regulations for children who attend the school. The school was built and is operated for children who have lost one/both parents or whose parents are facing hardships such that the child would have to help support the family were they to stay at home (often this would be begging in the street). There were other criteria as well, but for the most part, children who attended and lived at the school were those most at risk of harm; harm being interpreted and applied by the school principal/head of India operations. The host’s goals are clear and written in the constitution that governs the organization. The constitution states the success of the school and the care for children at risk is its number one priority; however, as we have seen, from the community’s point of view, this was less important than job creation and the economic stimulation these immersions bring. The most noted goal in the interviews of the hosts was continuing to raise awareness of the school in Australia to garner more funding for the school so that it could continue to grow, which, as has previously been noted, was not in-line with the institution’s goals.

Returning to the three respondents who took the job at the school so their child could attend, this can be seen as a failure of proper stakeholder consultation. The fact that the parent/community member had a job and their child was already attending school meant that they were not eligible to live at and attend the host institution’s school. They could attend the school, at a cost, like other day students, but not live at the school. This misunderstanding or contradiction goes deeper than stakeholder consultation and host’s goals for the operation of the school, and lies in the paternalism, previously mentioned in contradiction one, that pervades many international service-

oriented programs. The immersion is seemingly seen as a means, not as an end, of raising the living standards in the community, without any foreseeable end.

Contradiction 4: Institutional Goals v. Burden

Contradiction four presents the most troubling from the institution's point of view. The institutional goals in setting up the program were altruistic in nature, while also recognizing the benefits these sorts of programs can have on students from the participating institution. The program was designed in consultation with the host organization to maximize the reciprocity of the relationship. The institution's goals have already been stated and are not repeated here, but the burden the community feels the immersion puts on the children makes it difficult to justify the continuation of the program, despite the benefits for the university students and the institution's altruistic intentions.

What was not as clear in the data was the degree to which this *burden* adversely affected the children. Facets of the burden were expressed in the interviews, such as: "their learning is slowing;" "they don't spend enough time in the classroom;" "they are over-tired;" "there are too many games;" "there are too many gifts," among others. However, when pressed about *how* this affected the children, the community could not express a degree to which the children were adversely affected. What was clear, at least from the host community's point of view, was that the immersion had an adverse affect on the children, both during and in the short-term after the immersion, which was the exact opposite of the institution's goals for the program.

Discussion

The support of the host community, if not the host organization itself, was seemingly based on the financial recompense it received as a result of the immersion program, rather than it being on the benefits to the children or the community more generally. The burden they felt this put on the children may be superficial or may be substantial; the data were unclear with regard to this facet. What was clear was that there were a number of contradictions present in the current program and many of these contradictions lay at the heart of criticism over service-oriented programs for the past half-century. Illich in his 1968 speech to American students about to undertake a service-oriented project in Mexico warned of the hypocrisy of the service they were to provide for which he called them "salesmen for the delusive ballet in the ideals of democracy, equal opportunity and free enterprise among people who haven't the possibility of profiting from these" (p. 3). While the speech must be taken in the context it was given almost a half-century ago, the researchers believe that the hypocrisy Illich spoke of then, still survives in the minds of those who the *service* is provided for. Despite the altruistic intentions of such programs there is potential for relationships to eschew towards the institution's goals. Said (1978) described the relationship between the *West* and the *East* as one, "of power, of domination, of varying degrees of complex hegemony" (p. 5). The *West* and *East* are represented in this case by the remnants of British colonialism between the global north, to which Australia belongs, despite being in the southern hemisphere and the global south, which despite having the third largest economy in the world, parts of India still belong to.

The relationships developed between host organizations and the institutions that run service-oriented program are often demarcated in unequal power dynamics. The students who participate

in these programs are associated with wealth and access to information, and, in some cases, white privilege (Solomon & Daniel, 2015). These contradictions of purpose and the apparent contention within these programs raise more questions than answers. The most important question as a result of the data is: how can the program continue knowing that the community sees it as a burden to the children? From the institutional point of view, the program is great for recruitment and marketing. The benefits to the participating students have been confirmed in the literature and in the research that accompanies this particular program; however, can these benefits outweigh the *burden* on the children the program is meant to benefit? Obviously, it is difficult to qualify the degree to which a group of children is affected by external stimuli, but this is an area that requires further research.

The other question raised as a result of the last one was that the existence of this particular school is completely reliant on the continuation of this particular immersion program; therefore, if the program is discontinued, the school will cease to exist unless it can become self-sufficient. Is a month of burden to the children worth the 11 months of education they would not otherwise receive? If we focus only on the principal's interview, her expectations and goals for the visit were accomplished. In her view, the purpose of the immersion was primarily to raise awareness for the school, and to that end it was a resounding success; she said, "it was a success the minute you walked through the gate." From her perspective, having a group of mostly white university students from Australia come to their children's home and work in the school was a success in and of itself. It raised awareness of the school in the host community and automatically, in her view, raised its stature in the community. If this is true, if our *whiteness* or our perceived northern affluence is enough to make the trip and the school a success, are we just perpetuating a post-colonial view of education?

Implications and Conclusions

The contradictions that underlie the results of this research only begin to scratch the surface of the complexities of service-oriented programs, which are growing in popularity at universities all over the world. The fundamental message garnered in this part of the research was that the host organization and the institutional goals of programs, such as the one illustrated here, were not always the same, despite how it appeared on the surface. The implications of such complexities cannot be overstated: post-colonial paternalism, white privilege, and the cultural competence of individuals who design and take part in such programs must be questioned. Almost two decades ago Stanton and colleagues (1999) reflected on the origins, practice and future of service learning. Borman (n.d.) reflected on the implications of their work in his review of the book:

The complexity of justice, economic and political realities demands the highest academic investigation and analysis. Such analysis cannot be complete or whole without relational contacts with the strengths and positive resources, on the one hand, and dysfunctions on the other, of impoverished communities. [online]

This same sentiment holds true today, and more specifically in the program reported on in this article. Maakrun (2016, p. 9) highlights that the community being *served* must have a "critical voice" in the service provided; that the needs of the community, determined by its members, should illustrate what the service will and should be and that a focus on relationship building is paramount. This does not suggest that the needs of the institution and its students should be ignored, but rather,

if programs are going to be truly reciprocal they should be eschewed to the hosts, not the participants.

To address the complexities of programs, service-learning partnerships must incorporate the perspectives of all stakeholders and those partnerships must be the focal point of continuous *investigation and analysis* to ensure that the needs of stakeholders are being met.

The implications are simply more research needs to be conducted with regard to understanding the complexities surrounding programs of this nature. While the existent literature expounds the benefits of these programs from an institutional point of view, especially for the students who participate, more research is necessary to ensure we are not continuing to propagate the post-colonial dimensions of power dynamics between the developed and developing worlds.

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