

Service-Learning Methodology As A Tool Of Ethical Development: Reflections From The University Experience^{1*}

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Abstract

This paper examines Service-Learning as a tool for improving the education of student teachers. The characteristics and dimensions of the service learning methodology in higher education make it an appropriate sphere for teaching ethics, favoring the social commitment of the student teachers and the improvement of the teaching profession, but always taking into consideration the varied elements that constitute and shape experience.

By presenting some key concepts we introduce a synthesis of elements related to service-learning and invite the reader to take ethical duties as a moral and professional commitment for the improvement of social justice in our communities and university classrooms.

The paper is written in the context of higher education in Spain, at a time of great complexity in the relationships between the government and education communities from which teacher education programs are not exempt.

Keywords: service-learning, ethical education, higher education.

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Introduction

Spain is in the midst of a delicate moment in higher education¹. The complexity of the relationship between the government and education communities is creating a space of conflict and precariousness that affects and influences every social sphere. Teacher education programs are not exempt from this phenomenon, however many college students are oblivious to the changes.

On a daily basis, in Spanish universities and their schools of education, unique personal biographies are being nurtured which constitute an additional element to the development of the so-called *teaching profession*. These schools provide the only existing professional training and exposure of student teachers to their future practice as educators. These undergraduate and graduate level education programs are configuring extended periods of exposure in student teaching that leads to the development of mental patterns, knowledge, and beliefs about teaching based on student teachers' personal experiences.

Understanding that teaching is directly linked to human and social development, caring about the ethical aspects is a top priority for the development of the service-learning (S-L henceforth) methodology, but we must acknowledge that despite the enormous amount of literature and research on the mechanics of service-learning, there is a paucity of literature on the ethical challenges involved in this educational task, especially at the higher educational levels (Chapdelaine, Ruiz, Warchal, & Wells, 2005).

1 When comparing data from Spain and the OECD, it is clear that Spain is in a less favorable situation, nearly tripling the average unemployment rate of the OECD. Regarding the university population, the Spanish unemployment rate is twice that of the OECD. Taking into account the age range of higher education graduates that are unemployed, it is noticed that the population between 25 and 64 years, has an unemployment rate of 11.6%, while the OECD average is 4.8%. With regard to the younger population, between 25 and 34 years, the average is 6.8% in the OCDE and 16.2% in Spain, which highlights the deterioration of the employment situation of young Spaniards when compared to the OECD. From "*Basic data of the Spanish higher education system; 2013-2014*" [Datos básicos del sistema universitario español. Curso 2013-2014]. Technical General Secretariat [Secretaría General Técnica], Documentation and Publications Section [Subdirección General de Documentación y Publicaciones], p. 96. Copyright 2013 by Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports [Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte].

Ethics in S-L has to be linked with the concern about the consequences and effects of our own personal and professional actions with other people. That is why encouraging ethical concerns in our students must lead them to see the other as a legitimate other in coexistence with me.

Teacher training is a field in which the S-L methodology is an important pedagogical resource. There is considerable evidence indicating that S-L has a positive impact on the development of skilled professionals who are committed to improving their profession and the communities in which they operate (Aramburuzabala & García-Peinado, 2012; Bates, Drits, Allen, & McCandless, 2009; Bell, Horn, & Roxas, 2007; Buchanan, Baldwin, & Rudisill, 2002; Carrington & Saggars, 2008; Root, 2005).

Teachers will only contribute to the ethical education of their students if they live their educational task from within their own ability to do, and their freedom to reflect on, their work on the basis of respect for themselves and practicing what they teach. S-L is not only an innovative methodology in teacher training, but it is a methodology that can serve goal of preserving social stability and group cohesion, posing as a "last network" or "safety net" for citizens in a more precarious condition (Moreno, 2000). This net should be based on the idea that social welfare and human capacities must be established as the moral basis of life satisfaction (Doyal & Gough, 1991; Sen, 2010).

1. Service-Learning, dimensions and its relationship to ethics

It is not possible to start the work of adapting innovative methodologies without acknowledging, as in other disciplinary fields, that the development of S-L in Spain confronts the laborious task of adapting ideas and definitions from the English language (*lingua franca* of academic research). We must recognize that the morphological conciseness of the English language offers advantages for carrying on tasks of lexicological synthesis, but the notions that are formulated with a remarkable economy of words in this language require the use of a plurality of words in the Spanish language, therefore forcing a complex interpretive task.

The S-L methodology is affected by the specific cultural patterns and institutional dynamics of every sphere of society, which will cause their designs and materials to be diverse depending on the different levels of the methodology's development and the group or institution where it is implemented. The real test of its legitimacy as an educational strategy is based on ensuring the effective basic welfare for all citizens.

Service-Learning is a teaching-learning technique that integrates community service with instruction and reflection to enrich learning experiences, teach social responsibility and strengthen communities (Jacoby, 1996). It was initially developed in the United States, with roots tied to progressive movements in politics, education and social rights in the 1910s-1920s. During the following decades, the phenomena of the Great Depression, the Civil Rights movement and the fight against poverty helped shape the ideological framework of S-L (Jagla, Lukenchuk, & Price, 2010), which is related to the American pragmatism and the intellectual influence of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey. These scholars fostered the conviction that we essentially learn from experience and that education must meet the needs of society and be especially sensitive to the needs of modern life.

Lake and Jones (2008, 2012) point out that S-L can be divided into four different approaches: [1] Direct Service, person to person or face to face interaction, [2] Indirect Service, a service that is not offered directly to an individual but to the community; [3] Advocacy Service aims to raise awareness on issues of public interest, and finally [4] Research Service focuses its action in the search, collection and presentation of data, but S-L should always seek complementarity and expanding the academic content.

In this regard, the educational innovation and the social-scientific heritage of service-learning lies in the integration of two elements: [1] community service and [2] significant learning in a single coherent and well-articulated project, which promotes the educational capacity of both aspects, since the development of a service action transforms and gives meaning to learning, while the development of an active and meaningful learning improves solidarity action (Puig, Gijón, Martín, & Rubio, 2011). For both, students and teachers, it is necessary to maintain a position that allows them to consider their personal and professional identities, as well as their

previous experiences and preferences (Hopkins, 2007), while analyzing their positive and negative interferences in the work and research processes. This will extend the debate on ethics at higher levels, with the intention of achieving an improvement of our methods and the public impact, thus promoting moral progress and aid in fighting some complex human problems (Benatar, 2002).

S-L is not a spectator of these ebbs and flows. Aramburuzabala and García-Peinado (2012) emphasize the urgency of correcting some aspects of the educational experience of the methodology in the Spanish case. They suggest that students should be clear from the beginning that this activity is voluntary and is not a mandatory requirement of a subject, which will allow the generation of true volunteer experiences that can be the basis of training competent and committed professionals and citizens.

The existing literature shows that participation in S-L activities positively affects cognitive and intellectual development of the young participants (Billig & Klute, 2003) and their sense of commitment and civic responsibility (Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000). It improves self-esteem and tolerance toward others (Morgan & Streb, 2001), develops leadership skills (Billig, 2002), has a clear influence on moral development (Conrad & Hedin, 1991) and the sense of ethics (Furco, 2002), and contributes to the acquisition of moral and ethical values and, by extension, to the students' capacity of moral judgment (Gil, Chiva, & Marti, 2013).

The evidence on the positive influence of the S-L programs in moral reasoning skills of students (Boss, 1994) indicates the contribution of the experiential methodology to the development of a high sense of the professional ethics of teachers, that stimulates a willingness to stand and do the right thing (Furco, 2002) with greater social responsibility on the part of students (Rosenberg, McKeon, & Dinero, 1999). In this way, they become more inclined to help others in developing their well-being (Billig, Meyer, & Hofschire, 2003) while promoting the development of social support networks, by increasing the cooperative social contact and stimulating social skills that promote the quantity and quality of social contact (Lorenzo & Matellanes, 2013).

S-L offers multiple opportunities for participants to develop and maintain close relationships with others by assisting their needs while developing an *ethics of care* (Smith, 2008). The methodology differs substantially from other educational experiences because it integrates the community partner as an equal. This entails a change in values, beliefs and practices that forces us to consider a number of elements of care towards the communities that are benefiting from the service. It, then, becomes necessary to establish appropriate relationship frameworks, taking into account that if we want to find a way to live well with others and improve their quality of life, we must have a strong commitment to the public good, strengthening civic policy initiatives, civic capacity, civil society itself and civic culture (Gish & Markham, 2013).

College students participating in S-L experiences have a relative freedom in their interactions with the community, which are based on the desire for improvement and the principles of good practice. Therefore, the relations have few restrictions (Wendler, 2012). The nature of these dimensions should be elements for the students and their teachers' reflections, as the S-L characteristics raise a number of peculiarities that cannot be avoided.

For that, we must clearly recognize the different aspects of the S-L methodology, Smith (2008) argues that there are four remarkable dimensions of the methodology, which are directly related to adult development and therefore should be thought out within the ethical considerations of the activity:

1. **DURATION:** refers to the length of time in which students participate in the service; the time spent on the task in a brief form (hours) or prolonged form (hours accumulated over weeks).
2. **SCOPE:** refers to the breadth of opportunities to act according to the participant in the service-learning activity. In some actions the relationship is narrow, while in others it is broad, depending on the service offered.
3. **INTENSITY:** refers to the affective responses that students present. They can have a low or a high emotional intensity (e.g. working in the school of the hospital), which directly affect their learning and their work with the community.

4. **REFLECTION:** refers to the process of review of the connections between actions and their effects according to the requirements of the course. Some reflections are at a superficial level (e.g. service-learning logs), while others are at a thorough and systematic level (e.g. diaries).

Of the four dimensions involved, just the reflection dimension has been widely studied, but the dimensions of duration, scope and intensity do not have depth studies and should be taken into account (Smith, 2008). While reflection has positioned itself as the main element for students to benefit from S-L through critical analysis of practice, there are less known underlying mechanisms for determining what types of activities work best to influence the students' epistemological change.

With regard to ethics education in the United States of America, Winston (2007) mentions the existence of problems related to the design and implementation of curricula that truly reflect the importance of ethics in both leadership and decision making. Hence the need to include ethics in the training of future teachers is mandatory, but it is a highly complex issue, since ethics is not a content that develops by itself only from the rhetoric, but it evolves largely from experience and the quality the experiences.

2. Ethics, educational practice and development of the teacher's knowledge

In order to understand what makes S-L different from other community services we must start from the elements that come together in this teaching methodology. We can say that S-L has a holistic approach and a student-centered pedagogy, and it aims to create an engaged and participatory environment, rooted in dialogue and collaboration (Eyler & Giles, 1999) and tied closely to the teacher knowledge.

The teacher's knowledge has a heterogeneous character; it is composed of knowledge that is subject-related, curricular and experiential; and it is acquired in the context of a personal life history and a professional career, moving between plurality and temporality in its development

(Tardif, 2004). Plurality is explained by the diversity of the origin of the knowledge acquired from the family, peer groups, educational institutions (primary, secondary, tertiary). Temporality is represented in the gradual learning of teaching, which involves immersion training that leads future teachers to acquire beliefs, representations and assurances on the practice of their job.

Experiential knowledge is defined as that "knowledge that is updated, acquired and necessary in the scope of practice of the profession and does not come from the training institutions and curricula" (Tardif, 2004, p. 37). It presents the following intrinsic characteristics:

- It is linked to the educational functions; through them it is mobilized and it acquires the routines and the importance that is attached to experience.
- It is practical knowledge; its use will depend on the functions, problems and peculiarities of the work.
- It is an interactive knowledge; mobilized and shaped by the interactions between the teacher and other agents. It is imbued with norms and emotions, and it uses complex procedures for interpreting situations.
- It is a syncretic and pluralistic knowledge; it rests on multiple repertoires of knowledge that are mobilized around variable and contingent contexts of professional practice.
- It is a heterogeneous knowledge; acquired from various sources.
- It is a complex knowledge, not analytic; it instills behavior, rules, habits and discursive consciousness.
- It is an open knowledge; it integrates new experiences to previous knowledge.
- It is a personalized knowledge; it carries the attributes of the person and it is closest to the knowledge of the artist or craftsman.
- It is an existential knowledge, linked to experience and life history.
- It is a temporary, developmental and dynamic knowledge; it changes and it is built in the context of a career and a professional history.

- It is a social knowledge, constructed by the participant in interaction with diverse sources (university, school organization, etc.).

Teaching ethics is a support vehicle for students in their approach to morality and values of the teaching profession, but it also helps them to look critically at their own points of view and personal practices.

Empirical evidence suggests that interventions and training can enhance the ability of student teachers to discuss issues of moral reasoning (Cummings, Maddux, Maples, & Torres-Rivera, 2004) and their self-efficacy to teach values.

It is necessary that attempts to improve the process of teaching and the development of ethics training proposals consider the following aspects (Opazo, García-Peinado, & Martínez-Garrido, 2011):

1. The narrow focus on professional ethics from research and politics can hinder efforts to develop a strong professional identity of student teachers.
2. The training of teachers in the essential values and principles of their profession, along with their own beliefs and ideals and morals of their professional community form the basis for future ethical decisions.
3. Education must be understood as a commitment to the liberation and understanding of people as conscious individuals.
4. Ethical training should follow from the fact that students are people with standards: with abilities to recognize the key aspects to be considered when facing ethical problems, distinguishing between right and wrong, in line with their conscience and the principles of truth, freedom and justice.
5. Contemporary university education should enable the construction of personal projects, not exclusively individual, that do not imply a lack of willingness to participate in collective projects.

S-L can develop multiple competences since it can encourage an imaginative and creative exploration of individuals. It improves the attention of teachers and students and provides evidence that all things are possible (Eyler & Giles, 1999) through the contact between different groups of people who would not normally have the opportunity to share time, thoughts and feelings. It humanizes through practice (Godfrey, 2000).

This is why the best S-L experiences have to help students and the community in the development of a commitment, in a reciprocal relationship that allows both parties to teach and learn from each other (Jacoby, 1996) working with the community and not for the community (Neururer & Rhoads, 1998).

This philosophy has a set of goals that will develop and enhance the experiences and reflection of the two parties involved: the community as the recipient and the students as providers of the service. Learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection when students work with others and through the process of applying what they are learning about the problems of the community (Eyler & Giles, 1999). These significant interactions lead to many positive outcomes for students participating in S-L (Brody & Wright, 2004).

However, we must recognize that despite their experience, students enter college with a variety of preconceived notions about the world (Dziech, 2004). Some have had no direct relationship with poverty, marginalization, and discrimination, and their interaction with diversity (e.g. gender, functional, cultural, etc.), is scarce or absent.

S-L can offer opportunities to detect and recognize social problems and real needs of others, which is an incentive for social engagement. In view of this, it is possible to identify some starting points:

- **KEY STARTING POINT.** Service-Learning involves three key elements: a classroom element (based on theories of learning), a service element (community work) and a process of reflection that connects all aspects together.

- **ETHICS AS CENTER AND PURPOSE.** Ethics is part of our life as a mediator of our relationship with other human beings. In this intersection emerge all learned theories as elements connected to real life experiences. This aspect is important in learning, since only as ethical individuals we will be able to deal with real life issues in a responsible and committed way.

Ethical awareness and social responsibility are especially important for college students in light of the effect that major meltdowns in the economic and business world have on them (Lefkowitz, 2004). The social aspect of organization of classroom life experienced by students is critical to their results and depends on the management of the commitment, characterized by the individual patterns of behavior based on beliefs and professional ethics, which develops the so-called teachers' knowledge.

Although it is difficult to assess empirically the impact of beliefs and values on education, several researchers have identified a significant relationship between the teacher, the beliefs, the teaching practices and learning experiences of students in the context of teaching (Bryan & Atwater, 2002). The most valuable lessons of S-L emerge in controversial situations produced during the development of the experience.

3. Teaching ethics of S-L at the university

Universities are aware of their responsibility to educate future generations about ethical issues. This leads to teacher training programs undergoing transformation processes due to the implementation of new professional teaching standards, imposed by the contemporary social realities in which modern education moves. It is not enough to recognize that society changes and evolves: the task of preparing future teachers must force us to mobilize. We are aware that the purpose and ultimate goal of education is to deliver complex knowledge to students together with practical skills and to encourage commitment to the purposes set forth by their own communities (Sullivan, 2011).

There is an urgent need to increase the experiences in the field work that will enable students to actively apply all newly acquired knowledge and skills, and progress in their learning. We must consider the nature of the S-L experiences and the changes that are associated with the use of this methodology.

In response to this, student teachers who participated in S-L at college are better prepared to advocate effectively for the academic and social needs of their students. They develop a greater sensitivity to individual learning needs, interact with the families and show a deeper commitment to working collaboratively with other professionals to meet the needs of all children (Miller, Dunlap, & Gonzalez, 2007). S-L experiences sensitize teachers about meeting the needs of each student and help develop their understanding of mutual learning in the classroom (Root, Callahan, & Sepanski, 2002).

Miller et al. (2007) argue that S-L experiences that have clear aims and objectives, provide multiple opportunities for guided reflection and improve content knowledge. In addition, S-L supports critical reflection about the skills and content knowledge when students reflect on what they know or do not know: they strive to learn and improve their own knowledge base.

The connection of academic studies with community service through structured reflection is widely recognized as contributing to learning in a way that is deeper and easier to apply to new situations and circumstances that occur in everyday life, since learning from experience is an ideal method for the development and training of citizens and productive and committed individuals, as well as for the improvement of leadership skills (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009). This allows education schools to take advantage of opportunities to add value to the experiences during the training of future teachers, and at the same time improves the professionals' understanding of various emerging issues of ethics.

Regarding teaching ethics in the curricula, we must recognize that much of the literature is still markedly academic, which may give an inadequate treatment to the context of service-learning.

Traditionally, the university classroom has remained separate from the real world and, considering that by definition S-L programs are focused on direct interaction with the community, the development of ethical competence should occur before putting into practice the S-L activity.

On the face of this, and according to Gichure (1995), any action aimed at the ethical development of students should be based on three factors:

1. Providing the students with their own essential ethical criteria from the professional field of education.
2. Raising the moral consciousness in all education professionals.
3. Creating an ethos or professional culture, along with a concrete and specific moral physiognomy.

Traditionally ethics was not considered a priority in education and this is reflected in how teachers present it. Teachers lack effective strategies and resources to educate students in exploring ethical issues. However, university teachers using S-L programs have the great responsibility of showing their students how to act "correctly", as it is urgent to teach ethics and make real the effectiveness of this instruction.

The aim must be directed towards helping students to learn skills that enable them to work and make decisions on their own when faced with ethical dilemmas in the practice of their profession. The advantage of S-L is evident, as it does not present a traditional classroom structure, but it allows student teachers to obtain valuable lessons from experience.

Having units of ethics education within the curriculum for teachers in training can empower values education in the classroom as the student teachers reflect it in their practice as educators. For that reason, the methodology of case-based studies is an element of effective instruction (Thomas et al., 2001) over conventional approaches such as content delivery (Kim

et al., 2006).

By providing students with cases for analysis, they are helped better to interpret the current situation, allowing them to develop multiple solutions to problems. This is particularly valuable in the development of cognitive schemes (Gick & Holyoak, 1983), critical thinking and decision making skills (Kim et al., 2006). MacDougall et al. (2013) suggest that case-based reasoning has been used to facilitate the effectiveness of instruction in ethics topics; but there is still much to be learned about the most beneficial ways to present cases, although the actual utility is developed by simplified delivery of the cases, more than in complex studies.

Developing activities that allow construction of an ethical framework for student teachers, promotes the critical analysis of various points of view and their personal practices. The reflective practice of teachers moderates and improves their pedagogical skills to meet the needs of their students. We can agree that problems arise when professional behavior codes have been simply memorized, and not analyzed, discussed and thoroughly examined from an ethical perspective.

To provide future teachers with tools that can be used to address ethical issues and to facilitate students, an ethical framework that can be transferred to the solution of other dilemmas that they face for the development of the service, a model to be followed has been generated, based on the following principles (Wendler, 2012):

- **RESPECT FOR PEOPLE:** Offer the stakeholders a service that is culturally sensitive to their needs and reviewable by explaining the project, without coercion. Consent is negotiated through respectful relationships.
- **BENEFICENCE:** The projects benefit the community, the student and the university. Any potential harm should be rigorously considered and minimized, including potential damages related to collecting personal data.
- **JUSTICE:** Show constant attention to the dynamics and power relations that may occur, and trying to equalize them, starting from the micro-dynamics of fellowship oriented towards macrodynamic social transformations.

- **REFLECTION:** Teachers and students critically understand the effects of S-L and their perceptions, including as a starting point that there are no absolute points of view about them.
- **CARE:** Corresponds to the interdependence of all people, considering that in every society there are those who are more vulnerable than others, who should be given further consideration.
- **DIGNITY AND PERSONAL UNIQUENESS:** No restrictions related to social, economic or personal considerations.
- **SUSTAINABILITY:** There is a need to promote actions that are sustainable in the long term, even without the student figure once the experience has finished.
- **BALANCE AND RECIPROCITY:** There must be two-way learning and collaboration in these service projects for the community, the students as well as the university.
- **MOTIVATION:** Participation must be requested by the community where the service will be provided and the faculty has to enhance motivation.
- **ONGOING TRAINING:** Meets the need to build a guide for conduct between students, teachers and communities, constantly updating it based on experience, in order to better respond to constant changes.
- **AVOID INJURY AND CHARITY:** Requires the intention to avoid unnecessary damage or injury that can occur through acts of commission or omission. If a careless or unreasonable risk of harm to others is imposed, it can be considered "negligence".
- **EQUAL RIGHTS AND LEGAL PROTECTION:** Recognize the principle that all are equal before the law, and have equal rights.

Discussion

The current complex social situation in Spain (e.g. high unemployment, increasing tuition fees, decreased scholarships and state aid) requires teacher education program to be in a position of absolute intolerance of ethical faults, and strongly encourage students to participate in experiences that allow them to act with honesty, responsibility and integrity. Following Saltmarsh and Hartley (2011), we must consider that the weakness of higher education is based on its segmented focus on a specific population (e.g. young adults who were successful in school and can afford the tuition) who live in a highly competitive market, with universities that must withstand the pressure for educating students for their personal and professional career development and not for social responsibility. In order to encourage students to become both professionals and critical citizens, it is essential to offer real opportunities for participating in the analysis and solution of immediate problems, not only in the local community, but nationally and globally (Naval, Garcia, Puig, & Santos, 2011). Service learning offers just such opportunities.

Institutions, such as the University, can play an important role in facilitating the ability to examine values. However, this can only be done on the basis of public discussion, considering as a point of departure the individuals, their lives and personal freedom (Sen, 2010). Also, taking into account the ease with which students access their experiences (Wendler, 2012), it is urgent that the institution accepts its responsibility in the preparation of the student for the S-L experience, since the experience takes place outside the traditionally protected space of the campus.

Whereas Bryan and Atwater (2002) mention the relationships between beliefs, practices and learning experiences of students in learning contexts, and their influence on the construction of professional identity. In line with this, it is necessary to be aware that some of the most valuable lessons of S-L emerge in controversial situations arising during the development of the experience. To this it can be added that:

- There is an inseparable relationship between knowing and doing, because learning is a continuous process of action and reflection.

- Quality education is directly linked to the values, beliefs and professional ethics of teachers; this improves teacher quality.
- Ethical concerns have an emerging space when S-L students come to or approach the communities.

Considering the four dimensions outlined by Smith (2008) - duration, scope, intensity and reflection - only the reflection dimension has been widely studied. The others have not yet been deeply studied. Rigorous studies will allow us to guide decision making in both the content and teaching methodologies about ethics to be used with college students participating in S-L activities.

S-L projects can be complemented with these issues, giving students the opportunity to practice specific skills that are related to the response to changes, flexibility and adaptability in the way they deal with problems and changing priorities.

If we consider that ethics are closely linked to the development of teacher knowledge (Tardif, 2004), training for developing skills that elicit good practices should ally with values education in order to avoid poorly reflective activities and a hidden curriculum.

It is necessary to avoid focusing the work on codes or standards of behavior management without making deep critical reflection on whether the knowledge of these ethical codes and norms will result in good professional conduct, since there is evidence of guidelines for action (e.g. ideological and religious precepts) which themselves have been powerful guides for good personal conduct but do not necessarily end up causing good practice (Opazo, 2011).

At this point we must recognize that most of the ethical considerations are related to professional activities, usually designed from functionalist approaches and idealized. These activities are often associated with simple catalogs of principles and imperatives formulated as a guide or guidance of what professionals must do in their particular activities (e.g. professional ethics).

Cummings et al. (2004) suggest that interventions and training will enhance the ability of student teachers to discuss issues of moral reasoning, but these connections are to guide students in their own emotional and intellectual growth and stimulate their ethical awareness.

The evidence presented by the Case-Based Ethics Training (MacDougall et al., 2013) suggest that the real utility of the methodology will be developed through simplified delivery of the cases rather than studies that are difficult to learn (memorization of codes, etc.). Therefore, it is desirable to construct a series of materials with students, based on their own experiences in the field.

S-L has to position itself as a real alternative for the revitalization of teacher education programs and improvement of teaching ethics, enabling future teachers and school leaders to access transformational experiences that will have an impact on the improvement of the educational and social systems.

As a corollary, following Robinson (2012), if one of the goals of higher education in a democratic system of government is to help students play their roles as active citizens, S-L can not go far enough, because "historically, community service has not been thought of as political" (p.20) and it would not be proper for students to see their service as an alternative to politics and negotiation. This suggests that the service experience without an ethical and civic perspective could undermine the meaning of civic and ethical agency for the students.

Conclusion

It is important to seek opportunities within university classrooms, to convey the importance of ethics, the principles of justice, equity and participation for social change, as well as to have educational objectives that are aimed at developing skills for implementing these values. We must always consider that the knowledge of the standards of ethical behavior in no way guarantees the adherence to them, but this requires the teacher to provide students with the skills necessary for moving beyond the simple theory, to where our primary objective is directed towards facilitating the work for the community.

It is our understanding that through reflection, debate and discussion on all matters arising from ethical practices of S-L activities, students will engage more with the course content. At the same time, by improving the service-learning activity, they will gain practical experience to accompany their knowledge and beliefs about how to develop the power of ethical thinking.

Further S-L research is essential, focussing on how the methodology can promote individual development and moral reasoning of the students, despite the difficulty of using experimental designs in which students are randomly assigned.

Trainers at the university should also try to determine whether S-L experiences foster an ethic of care among participants, and observe if the services provided meet the wishes of students and communities. Since in Spain the courses are limited to four-month or eight-month terms subjects quarterly and / or annual, attention should also be paid to the four dimensions of S-L in order to see how they are affecting the development of the courses. Our approach needs to have reliable data, and the extent of actions should not be an impediment for studying changes in the students.

As socially responsible educators, we must help our students recognize where and when it is urgent to act ethically and not just teach moral codes and laws, but also promote care and concern for others. The ethical and social development of students is our responsibility as members of a university community and we must take a position when faced with collective aggregation of the defense of public interests, which today are far from the citizen's domain.

Finally, we believe that the ability to cooperate between future teachers and members of their learning communities depends largely on four elements that we have to consider:

1. **SOCIAL JUSTICE:** Sustaining the legitimacy and social stability of the community, which implies a moral and economic allocation of benefits and costs in the development of life with dignity and respect.
2. **MUTUAL TRUST:** Enables spontaneous sociability among community members, strengthening cooperative behavior among citizens as subjects and objects of social life.
3. **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:** Stimulating co-responsibility of all individuals for the improvement of the standard of living and supervising public interests. This will allow for greater involvement of citizens in the common well-being with a more fruitful social cooperation.
4. **TOLERANCE WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION:** Articulation and integration with regard to the collective efforts of different groups (e.g., biological and cultural characteristics, capabilities and genders).

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