More than just another course: Service learning as antidote to cultural bias

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The social influence role of teachers and their awareness of their responsibilities towards society are as important as their subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. As a multi-level learning environment, teacher colleges should place significant emphasis on enhancing teacher candidates' social responsibility attitudes, knowledge, and skills. To explore how this might be accomplished, a community-service course was implemented through three semesters at two teacher colleges in Northern Cyprus. Changes in thoughts and feelings of 198 Turkish teacher candidates about their attitudes and expectations of the people and culture of North Cyprus are analysed through narrative letters and reflective assignments. Initial predominately negative attitudes towards the culture and people of North Cyprus changed to predominately positive attitudes by the end of service learning projects.

Introduction

In recent years, student volunteering and service learning have received increased attention from sociologists and teacher educators (Bringle, Clayton & Hatcher, 2013; Mooney & Edwards, 2001). Service-learning is one of the powerful community engagement pedagogies that enhance both student growth and the common good (Bandy, 2016). According to Sobel (2005), if we want children to understand the importance of rainforest presentation, for example, we need to make them first understand the ecology of their own backyard. When a significant change occurs on a local level, people can realise their power on a global level (Ramey, 2013). Studies show that through active involvement in community service projects in one's neighborhood, primary and college students learn civic engagement, develop community engagement, feel a part of a community and comprehend a civic duty to solve social problems (Furco & Root, 2012; McKibben, 2007). Therefore, these skills and experiences are needed both by young students and by the teachers who will raise and guide the children in engaging their civic responsibilities and community awareness.

Today, many of the problems that teachers are being asked to solve in the classroom are more and more complex, requiring cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural interactions, with the potential for having lasting impacts on society for many generations (Oakes, Lipton, Anderson & Stillman, 2015). The research reported here has a complementary goal. The present study was designed to document the impact of an extended service-learning experience in transforming thoughts, attitudes and feelings towards joining a new cultural and social community.

Experiential learning and teachers of future

Worldwide discussions provide support for the common understanding that teacher candidates should be developed as highly skilled professionals with high moral and ethical values, democratic attitudes, and willingness to be held responsible and accountable for their actions. Even our hopes for world peace rest in teachers' hands. With this in mind, teacher educators seek to design and enact curricula that foster the development of more holistic teachers. Ideally, holistic teachers help students to learn more than traditional core subject matter knowledge (i.e. math, science, social studies, etc.), by providing opportunities to learn how to understand and influence ethical and social values, environmental and global problems, and the broad impacts of teaching on social and environmental problems (Nolet, 2009; Patel, 2003). In educating holistic teachers, a Gestalt perspective requires bringing knowledge, skills, and attitudes together in a richly interconnected concept of teaching and learning (Fowler, 2008; Hutchison & Bosacki, 2000). From a pragmatic perspective, theoretical learning combined with service-learning experiences in authentic field learning courses can promote powerful, potentially transformative experiential learning (Jarvis, 2004; Joplin, 1981; Lindsay & Ewert, 1999; Quay, 2003).

Vygotsky (1978) established a foundation for social constructivism by confirming that much transformative learning occurs during social activities. In social constructivism, knowledge is constructed socially and culturally, and it becomes especially meaningful when learners actively engage in social experiences (Ernest, 1998; Gredler, 1997). Dewey also stated that "Experience is better than a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance" (1916, p. 144). Following Dewey's approach and rooted in social constructivism, the concept of experiential learning includes numerous methods and strategies for embedding real-life experiences in teacher education programs. Among these strategies, service-learning is one of the most successful and authentic (Coffey, 2010). Scholars have also acknowledged the powerful effects of community-based field experiences in teacher education programs to help teacher candidates disrupt their own biases and to understand better a community's history, culture, and traditions (Anderson & Ericson, 2003; Sleeter, 2008). They benefit from the way of linking campus-based curriculum to experiential learning experiences in communities beyond the campus in developing social awareness, engagement and ethics (Cho, 2006) which will later help future teachers in raising young students as engaged citizens with high moral standards.

Student volunteering as a method for bringing classroom and real life together has a long and honored history (Mooney & Edwards, 2001). For many years, service-learning has been included as either a substantial part of foundations and pedagogy courses, or as a graduation project in teacher education programs. In a course, service-learning can help student teachers connect theory with practice by producing solutions to real social problems, using theoretical background gained in colleges (Speck & Hoppe, 2004). Service-learning and community engagements are designed to reach some desired outcomes like social and political involvement, well-being, and post-graduation employment (Kearney, Perkins & Maakrun, 2014; Kilgo, Pasquesi, Sheets & Pascarella,

2014; Matthews, Dorfman & Wu, 2015; Nicotera, Brewer & Veeh, 2015). These real world learning experiences also help to improve students' academic performance and improve their social, personal and moral development (Boss, 1995). Furthermore, Coffey (2010) who explored pre-service teachers' narratives, indicated that the experiences gained through service-learning embedded in a teacher education course offered powerful opportunities, like engaging with diverse communities and helping beginners to be prepared better for real classroom settings. Selmo (2015) found that two clusters of important topics developed through service-learning: "(1) awareness of social issues, awareness of others, self-awareness, and self-esteem; (2) participation and engagement in the community" (p.2). Therefore, the preponderance of literature supports the idea that the most important outcomes of service-learning are its contributions to developing a sense of identity, gaining social recognition, cultivating a sense of community, increasing active citizenship, and civic participation (Pritchard & Whitehead, 2004; Rocheleau, 2004; Speck & Hoppe, 2004; Waterman, 1997).

Service learning in Turkey

A mandatory two-credit course consisting of one hour seminar and two hours of community service-learning practicum was offered for the first time in 2006 at all the faculties of education in all universities in Turkey and in Northern Cyprus. All students in all faculties of education must take it as a required course. Most of the teacher educators prefer to design service-learning courses with a project-based approach (Ugurlu & Kiral, 2012). Usually, activities in this course are held in primary schools in Turkey and others are accomplished by cooperation with non-government organisations (Cansaran, Orbay & Kalkan, 2010). Teachers in Turkey are hired after taking the government selection examination which is composed of a content area, pedagogical content area, general mathematics, history, history of Turkish Revolution, Turkish language and literacy, and general culture questions. Depending on their ranking in the exam, teachers are assigned to a public school.

Although international literature implies that service-learning has some impact on finding a better job (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009), teachers do not need to reflect such strengths in their CV to be able teach in public schools in Turkey. However, the situation may differ in private schools, some of which seek qualified, presentable, and visionary teachers who can make a positive influence on parents as prospective customers. The Turkish Higher Education Council centralised teacher education programs of Turkish and Northern Cypriot universities. While offering community-service courses in each education faculty now mandatory, in pedagogical formation programs, which are alternative teacher education programs served also by the Higher Education Council, a community-service course is not required. Thus, not all Turkish teachers graduating from teacher education programs gain a service-learning experience.

Although the story of service-learning in teacher education started almost a century ago, Turkish experience is young and somewhat under-developed (Küçükoğlu, 2012). The bulk of the literature in Turkey has been devoted to determining teacher candidates' opinions about the service-learning course and evaluating teaching strategies of instructors (e.g.

Gökçe, 2011; Kesten, 2012; Pirpir, et.al, 2014). The related literature showed that there are some problems in different components of the course in Turkey. The most important barrier in accomplishing service projects is the reluctance of institutions-partners in hosting teacher candidates (Ugurlu & Kiral, 2012). Other problems reported included financial problems, finding sponsors, transportation, inefficient support of university members and society (Kesten, 2012; Pirpir et.al, 2014).

Although there are some obstacles while carrying out the course, there are also benefits reported by teacher candidates and instructors. The course evaluation studies mostly showed that the course made significant contributions to teacher candidates' personal and professional development with respect to developing communication skills, self-efficacy, working with group skills, teaching skills and field experience (Arkun & Seferoglu, 2010; Kesten, 2012). Although the international literature clearly highlights the importance of developing the sense of belonging and being a part of a community (McKibben, 2007), the existing studies in Turkish context lack evidence showing fully the effect of this course in cultivating teacher candidates' community engagement, thoughts on diversity and adaptation to a different culture.

Within the light of this theoretical framework, the purpose of the present study is to explore the extent of the effect of service-learning course on teacher candidates' sense of belonging and the feeling of adaptation to the new community.

Method

Design

The research presented in this paper used a narrative inquiry. Teacher education students enrolled in a one-semester service-learning course engaged in course-related written and oral reflection activities. As a pedagogical methodology, narrative inquiry is used record stories of service-learners in order to understand how their experiences construct the reality and form of learners' in an authentic social context. Narrative inquiry is a method of making sense of individual's experiences in story form. The method is greatly influenced by both Dewey's (1938) theory of experience in social context and Bruner's (1983) focus on language development. Bruner (1991) described narratives as "about people acting in particular settings, and the happenings that befall them must be relevant to their intentional states while so engaged to their beliefs, desires, theories, values, and so on." (p.7). Auto-ethnography is an alternative method of qualitative narrative design, which defined as "an autobiographical genre of writing and research" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). It refers to a specific method of writing that seeks to bond ethnographic and autobiographical intentions, which aim to get striking stories to picture and awaken rather than remark or argue (Schwandt, 2014).

Thus, using auto-ethnography, the researcher of this study invites the reader into the experiences of service-learning rather than interpreting or analysing them. In the literature, narratives are used broadly in exploring service-learning experiences (e.g. Coffey, 2010; Furco, 1996; Selmo, 2015). Through this approach, researchers gain a vibrant picture of

the relationships between time, space, and connections within service experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narrative methodology requires students to reflect on their lives simply by writing. Thus, writing about their experiences, contributions, feelings, and thoughts on service-learning, teacher candidates are led to describe and interpret what they did and learned in a broader way by integrating their thoughts and experiences with their academic background (Selmo, 2015). In other words, this method helps teacher candidates connect what they learned in faculty courses with what they experienced in real life settings by incorporating new learning in coherent story forms.

Participants

The Northern Cyprus Ministry of Education protects the rights of the "Ataturk Teacher Academy", specifying that Turkish Cypriot teachers must be graduates from the teachers' academy otherwise they cannot be hired as teachers in public schools in North Cyprus. As they prefer to not enroll universities, the teacher education students enrolled in Northern Cyprus universities are mostly coming from Turkey. The participants in this study were 198 students from Turkey enrolled in faculties of education at one private and one public university located in Northern Cyprus. Of the 198 full-time students who participated the study, 135 were females and 63 were males. The participants were from three departments: psychological guidance and counselling, early childhood development, and special education. 62.6% (N=124) of the participants reported that they had not participated in any social responsibility projects before taking the service-learning course.

Data collection and analysis

Before collecting the data, students were informed about the data collection procedure conducted for research purposes. Further information was provided to students about the course evaluation motivation of the study to get feedback for the next semesters. To explore how teacher candidates experienced the community and how their perspectives changed after service-learning, a narrative research method was employed, taking notes, getting weekly debriefs, and analysing narrative letters and reflective journal entries completed by teacher candidates about their experiences during the service-learning course.

The data presented was aggregated over three semesters and two universities. The course was opened by the same instructor in the 2014-2015 fall, and 2015-2016 spring and fall semesters, in one public and one private university. The data of the present study was collected by the same instructor with the same syllabus and data collection instruments. At the first meeting of the course, teacher candidates were asked to respond to an entry-characteristics reflection paper. It contained six questions on demographic information, their feelings and experiences toward the Cyprus community and Cypriot life, and their social responsibility experiences, if any, before taking the course.

The course was designed as a two-credit course with one theoretical and two practical lessons, which constituted almost 10% of the semester among other courses. Students met with the instructor 50 minutes every week in the theoretical portion of the course,

and the instructor presented the theoretical and philosophical background of service-learning and discussed chaos theory, butterfly effect, and important quotations like "I have a dream", and why teacher candidates should engage in service-learning activities. Furthermore, students were presented with significant social events or projects around the world like Bob Geldof's "Live Aid", Betty William's "Community of Peace People" and Turkan Saylan's "Snowdrops - educating the girls in Turkey".

Teacher candidates searched for a social responsibility project topic during the first two weeks of the semester. The students who were influenced by these people's or organisations' projects, tried to identify a project that would meet the needs of the community where they were living. They went out into streets, schools, playgrounds, libraries, and even cafes and restaurants to try to get to know the community. They took notes and submitted the project proposal with an additional plan B. After getting project approval from the course instructor, faculty dean, instructor, and students started to complete paper work and bureaucratic procedures as needed. In most cases, as Northern Cyprus is a very small place and everybody knows one another, and the European University of Lefke has some prestige in the region, a phone call from the university was enough to get an acceptance and permission to start. The projects in the field lasted between four and six weeks depending on the scope and workload of the project. During the process, teacher candidates submitted weekly progress reports. Each week, the instructor visited the project field sites, held semi-structured interviews with students and took field notes. At the end of the semester, the students were required to complete a reflection paper synthesising their experiences, reactions, and emotions during the service-learning. The guiding questions were parallel to those they responded to at the beginning of the semester. In addition, they narrated their own stories as a final assignment.

Content analysis was employed as a means of organising and understanding the qualitative data. The participants' stories and thoughts on their experiences were determined based on the procedures of content analysis; the data were first coded regarding "varying-sized words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs" (Basit, 2003; p.144) and then categorised into meaningful units (Miles & Huberman, 1994), after reading each narrative paper and transcribed interview data three times and applying an inductive and deductive analytical approach. All data were gathered in Turkish. The findings of the study are presented as codes, categories and direct quotations from students, translated from Turkish to English.

Projects

Projects were designed by collaboration between faculty and community partners like public schools, municipalities, and NGOs. 15 projects were completed by 26 groups (Table 1).

Table 1: Service learning course projects

Project name	Activity
Redesigning facilities for pediatric oncology	Redesigning an empty room with just white walls as a play and breakfast room decorating with colourful furniture, toys, and wall art.
Planting tree festival	In total 1255 trees were planted and irrigation supply was established in three different parts of North Cyprus.
Dental health awareness project in primary schools	Brushing techniques taught by use of materials, songs and dance in six schools.
Introducing children to musical instruments	In cooperation with a professional classical music orchestra, introduced classical music instruments to children of four schools.
Clean up the world projects	Cleaning and trash removal Gemikonağı coast and Kyrenia forest.
My playground is sooo beautiful	Redesign, decoration, and renewal of three playgrounds.
Establishing school libraries	Book donation campaign for two primary schools.
My fabulous school *	Redesign, decoration and renewal of five primary school buildings and developing instructional materials.
Audiobooks of Turkish Cypriot literature	860 works of Cypriot literature was audio recorded for visually handicapped Cypriots.
Special education special production	Serving a vocational course of traditional Cypriot handcrafts in ceramic, felt, and bead productions for mentally handicapped people.
Children's festival	Design and implement children plays to make them happy on children's day.
Science festival	Made 20 different fun science experiments on university campus to make children of five primary schools love science.
Kite festival	Teach how to design and fly kites to children.
Family participation with Saturday art	Introducing children to different types of art – marbling, ceramic, and mosaic-integrated with family participation activities.
Cyprus music culture inventory	Documentation of Turkish Cypriot folk music.

* This project received an award as the *Best Community-Service Project* from the Turkish Community Service Foundation in 2016.

Findings

Initial thoughts and feelings

At the beginning of the semester, teacher candidates were asked to write down their initial thoughts and feelings about engaging with Northern Cyprus and Cypriot community. They were given a sheet of paper with three open-ended questions described above. While most of the students completed the whole sheet, a few of them write only 150-200 words. According to their reports, there were two categories, positive and negative thoughts and feelings, which both have three themes titled as people, location/place, and lifestyle. The number of observations is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of observations on the initial thoughts and feelings

Categories	Themes	Codes	Observations
Positive thoughts and feelings	People	Warm, sincere	63
		Respectful	27
		Good	27
		Hospitable	27
		Unprejudiced	9
	Location/place	Peaceful	90
		Heaven	54
		No traffic jams	16
		Safe	18
	Life style	Easy to live life	47
		Freedom	9
		Modern	9
	Total		441
Negative thoughts and feelings	People	Stiff	54
		Seeing Turkish students as money	54
		No food culture	29
		Not helpful	27
		Do not like Turks coming from Turkey	26
		Lower standard of hygiene	16
	Location/place	Underdeveloped	63
		Transportation problems	37
		Expensive	36
		Neglected	18
		Accommodation problem	17
	Lifestyle	Boring	108
		No social activities	91
		Slow pace of life	8
	Total		674

Analysis of the first written service-learning reflection indicated that Turkish teacher candidates had both positive and negative thoughts towards Northern Cyprus. However, as summarised in Table 1, the negative thoughts and feelings towards Cypriots, the place they live in and the lifestyle in Cyprus were stated more frequently than positive thoughts and feelings. According to the data, teacher candidates thought that Cypriots are warm, good, hospitable, unprejudiced, and respectful to others. However, students reported more often that Cypriots are stiff, consider Turkish students as 'walking Euros', have no food culture, have a different (lesser) sense of hygiene, are not helpful, and do not like Turks [Turks that come from Turkey]. One female student noted that "Yes, they are helpful and warm but I know they are helpful as long as they make money from us." Another student continued to explain "I think that if they do not make money from us, they will not behave in a similar manner, be never ever helpful again."

As a second theme, teacher candidates reported their thoughts and feelings on the locations where they live. Their positive feelings about living in Northern Cyprus were that it was peaceful, a kind of heaven, there were no traffic jams and it was safe. One

female expressed her feelings as "I feel myself in a heaven; it is quiet, peaceful and safe. I never need to close my window, I feel comfortable when I go to coast at nights in late hours." However, there were more negative thoughts describing Northern Cyprus as underdeveloped when compared with Turkey, with accommodation and transportation problems, it was expensive, and neglected. One male student answered the prompt by noting that:

> The life in Cyprus is interesting. When talking about 'life', it is not only eating, drinking, and sleeping but many other things it includes. Life should provide opportunities of self-actualisation psychologically, physically, and spiritually. Unfortunately, Cyprus is far from this picture, it is just a small, underdeveloped village.

As the last theme, participants stated the positive sides of lifestyle in Cyprus as "It is easy to live in here"; "We have more freedom when compared with Turkey"; and "It is more modern". However, a significant number of participants complained about its boring life, its slowness in many parts of life, and the small number of social activities. Although some of the students found the silence of island as a positive side some of them did not: "Only you can do here is to study your lessons, it's too small, too silent."

Theory into practice

During the service-learning projects, as an instructor for the course, the researcher had a chance to observe and take notes on the field experiences of the teacher candidates. The researcher's notes record that in 15 projects, teacher candidates completed more than the required work that was specified in their approved project proposals. While carrying out extra work, teacher candidates responded to questions asked by the instructor such as "How is it going on with the sponsors and local people?" The instructor received positive feedback from each project group. One female student responded:

> Teacher! I am in a shock! People, here, are surprisingly helpful; they adopted our homework as their own project, and they work really hard to complete it!

The instructor asked another prompt question: "What did they do to help you?" One male student from the Planting Tree Festival Project answered:

> Villagers donated some money so that we could arrange our festival offerings; they came to the hill where we will arrange the festival, helped in digging the holes, carrying 1000 saplings up above the hill, and used their own cars to solve our transportation problem for three days.

In another site visit the instructor asked, "What stage have we reached now?" This question was answered by all the project groups in the same manner about their progress, except for three teams who reported that they were working on the new projects as volunteer members after completing their own course-generated projects. To illustrate, three students from Kite Festival team commented that:

Teacher, as we had so much fun and gained experience during our own project, to be able to come together with children again, we get some responsibility in Science Festival. Thus, we came to help to our friends.

Final narratives

After completing their projects, teacher candidates were asked to complete an end-of-course narrative set of reflection questions that paralleled the survey of initial impressions and feelings about Northern Cyprus. The end-of-course narrative form additionally included a narrative writing exercise recounting their whole service-learning journey in which they acted as a hero of the story. As the final reflection of the fourteen-week course, teacher candidates revisited their initial understanding of service-learning and Cypriots, and Northern Cyprus life. Content analysis yielded two categories: unchanging positive thoughts and feelings and changing thoughts and feelings from negative to positive. 32.8% (N=65) of the participants declared that their minds were not changed since they had already positive feelings and thoughts towards Cypriots and life in Northern Cyprus. One female student from Cyprus Music Culture Inventory Project stated that "At the beginning, I loved Cyprus and its people; and now I love them more and more." The rest of the participants (N=133) stated that they had mostly negative feelings initially and these had been changed after carrying out the service-learning project. In the final narratives, the codes on the people theme were determined as helpful (N=133), unprejudiced (N=128), sensitive (N=98), effective communication (N=32), and like Turks (N=28). A student from the My Fabulous School project concluded that "I will never forget the help of Cypriots in completing my homework; they amazingly worked hard together with us; all parents, teachers, café workers, and other tradesmen in Lefke." Similarly, another student from the My Playground is Sooo Beautiful project stated that

> During the fourteen-week study, I surprisingly watch[ed] the change in my thoughts about Cypriots. Firstly, I thought that they [are] never like Turkish people, and would never help us during the projects; then I realised that it was just my bias towards Cypriots. I am ashamed of myself.

In the initial thoughts and feelings analysis, it was found that 27.7% of the students described Cypriots as *"stiff"*. However, their mind changed after the service-learning experience. A student from My Fabulous School Project wrote*:*

> At first, my opinion was 'Cypriots are too stiff.' However, after working together in decorating and renewal of the Village Women School, Cypriots' help made me think that I had to change my biased thoughts.

A student from Clean up the World project reported his changing idea on Cypriots' helpfulness and their communication:

> Actually, at first, although I realised the importance of our project, I thought that no one will care what we would do, and our project will not affect the people. However, I experienced the opposite. While we were cleaning the coast, truck, bus, and automobile drivers crossing the highway congratulated us by using their horns, shaking their hands, and applauding. I was surprised and happy. An old woman stopped her car and started

to help us in cleaning. A very old man parked his car on the coast and came to us just to congratulate. That day, for the first time, I thought to myself that 'What beautiful people you have, Lefke'.

Another student who worked on the Audiobooks of Cypriot Literature project for visually handicapped Cypriots drew attention to his changed mind on the idea of "Turkish Cypriots do not like Turks" by concluding that

I had always thought that they hate us Turks. However, after I took this course, I had to revise my thoughts, and rethink what others told me about Turkish Cypriots' behaviours; it was a big lie and it was a fusty bias! All of the Cypriots that we met or had to communicate with during the project behaved toward us as if we were their own children. That was a huge shock for me.

Teacher candidates mentioned fewer negatives on the second theme of place/location. The surviving negative codes were explored as transportation problems (N=13) and neglected (N=12). A male student from the My Fabulous School project narrated his story as

While carrying on our project, the biggest problem was the transportation since our project school was 10 km away from our dormitories; we did not have our own cars; and the school service buses' schedules did not fit to our working hours. To complete all the decoration and renewal process in the school, we needed to go to the place at least 8 times. At first, we took the cab - it was really expensive - and shared the fee among the group members. When we called the taxi cab for the third time, the taxi driver did not take any money. It was really surprising, but we were very happy since we had not found any sponsor for the transportation expenses yet. By the way, we painted all the exterior walls of the school just in three days. School director appreciated our good job and decided to help us more. She made the school service car available to take us from campus and bring us to the project school. Our hardworking style and quality work changed people's point of view of us and solved our transportation problem.

At first, 6.1% of the students thought that Cyprus was neglected by Cypriots. However, after completing their projects, their thoughts were changed. A female student from the Dental Health Awareness project described her changing opinion by stating:

This project introduced me to primary schools, teachers, and parents in Cyprus. My belief was 'they neglect primary schools.' Thus, at first, I thought that they would never spend the effort to make their school 'fabulous'. However, with this project, I witnessed their effort, they never neglected their schools, and they only waited for the hero that would take the first step. And that step was our project. I am proud of myself.

Under the North Cypriot lifestyle theme, two codes described the students' end-of-course narratives, the pace of life (N=28) and boring (N=18). In the initial thoughts and feelings section, teacher candidates found the pace of life in Cyprus was slow. However, at the end of the semester, students thought differently. One male student from the Planting Tree Festival project noted that:

> Before starting the project, we needed to complete many paper and bureaucratic works. To me, it was impossible in Cyprus. I thought that we could not achieve any of the projects on time since the pace of life in Cyprus was too slow. We got a very quick appointment from the mayor! In my hometown in Turkey, it was nearly impossible to contact with the mayor as a university student. He helped us a lot; completed all the paperwork in just a week and we could start our project quickly.

Finally, 9.1% of the students changed their point of view with respect to social life in Cyprus. Initially, they thought that the life in Cyprus was too boring. However, at the end of the semester, they thought the opposite. One student from the Family Participation with Saturday Art project wrote that:

> I learned that life in Cyprus actually was not that boring. The boring thing was only in our minds. If we wanted not to be bored, we could find a way. However, it was too late for me to realise this. I wish I had taken this course three years ago, then I would have learned how to entertain myself and develop my skills. This project taught me how to find a way of reaching art or explore different types of activities. Additionally, I admitted that there were lots of opportunities to entertain yourself on such a small island if you knew how to search for them.

In addition, a member of the Cyprus Music Culture Inventory project team shared her changing thoughts as follows:

> I wish I would have taken this course before. Thanks to the course, we entered the archive of Bayrak Radio and Television, visited many libraries - I did not know there were many public libraries in Cyprus. Furthermore, we interviewed some musicians and important bands. We visited museums with music group Kıbrıs Müzik Yolcuları. I had never been in Cyprus that much before. I think our project was the longest one. Thanks to the project, we had been in a different part of Cyprus in each week. I saw a lot of new places. It was so much fun for me. There were many places to see and many cultural things to do in Cyprus. Unfortunately, I realised this in the last semester of my Cyprus life."

Discussion

A community can be defined as a body of people sharing life in the same place under the same rules and regulations (Merriam-Webster, 2016). Thus, it includes the local government units, civic and non-government organisations, and all the residents. It is a teachers' responsibility to communicate with parents and other members of the community in raising teaching standards (UNICEF, 1999). Therefore, they need to develop communication and adaptation skills to get on well with the new community where they teach. Furthermore, learning how to utilise the facilities of a municipality and local organisations helps teachers to enrich the students' experiences. To develop these skills, a community-service is required as a must course for the benefits of teacher candidates in Turkey. The present study analysed the key role and importance of service-learning for teacher candidates in engaging positively with a new community. The findings indicated that, initially, teacher candidates had mostly negative feelings and thoughts towards where they live and whom they live with in Northern Cyprus. They carried out

social responsibility projects and at the end of the projects, their thoughts were mostly changed from negative to positive. Before the service-learning course they were comfortable with and felt justified in their biased thoughts and criticisms of the North Cyprus community.

This research explores how service learning activities led teacher candidates into more positive and more participatory views about a community new to their experiences. Teacher candidates also reported that they learned that the best way to thrash out causes and come up with solutions is to conduct dialogue and cooperate with the members of the community. During the projects, teacher candidates experienced how community and especially municipal officials were ready to provide help not only in improving the physical facilities of the schools (e.g., My Fabulous School project, My Playground is Sooo Beautiful project) but also in helping children themselves in developing new learning and values (e.g. Children's Festival, Science Festival, Kite Festival, Planting Tree Festival, Dental Health Awareness project in primary schools, Introducing Children to Musical Instruments project, Clean Up the World project).

Teacher educators should often question their effectiveness in cultivating socially intelligent teachers. This paper also attempts to open a discussion of an essential goal of effective teacher education: cultivating social responsibility (UNESCO, 1998). The community-service course helped students connect what they learned in theoretical courses with what they faced in real settings. In this 'learning-by-doing' approach, students socially constructed their own knowledge and excitement for service-learning. At the same time they connected with a new community, its problems and possible solutions, by "drawing lessons from the experience of performing service work" (Campus Compact, 2003, p. 7).

Implications for practice and policy

First, at the program level, regarding the benefits of service-learning discussed in this paper and related literature, the Turkish Higher Education Council and teacher educators should make efforts to create more opportunities for teacher candidates to be involved in conceptualising, planning, implementing, and evaluating social responsibility projects. A core message of this study and of many national and international reports on the strengths and shortcomings of teacher education programs is that having teacher candidates learn by doing is the most generally effective path to improving the quality of teacher education (e.g. Chubb, 2012; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013; Zeichner, Payne & Brayko, 2014).

Second, alternative teacher certification programs (pedagogical formation programs) do not offer a service-learning course in Turkey and Northern Cyprus. Considering the findings of the study, it is beneficial for teacher candidates to take and experience such kinds of course before being assigned as a teacher. Since faculties be unable to readily add or drop any courses from pedagogical formation programs, teacher educators may adopt service-learning to as a supplement to their current pedagogy. Service-learning can make students "aware of issues and problems of equity, equality, power, voice, and resources in

education" (Carter-Andrews, 2009, p. 274). It is recommended that instructors require teacher candidates to attend and carry out service-learning projects in practicum courses to help prepare them as more qualified and socially engaged teachers and role models.

Third, at the course level, learning experiences are most effective when students reflect systematically on their own learning. In this study, by narrating their service-learning stories, teacher candidates drew new learning, consciousness, and values from their experiences. Therefore, teacher educators are encouraged to build reflective methods into field-based learning opportunities such as narratives in service-learning courses, as they help teacher candidates in meaning-making about the community and its multiple textualities (Kirkland, 2014). Furthermore, as happens in many contemporary teacher education programs, service-learning courses are typically led by instructors who expend effort to make connections between universities, schools and communities through which academic subjects, skills, and values are taught (Selmo, 2015). Organising a service-learning course can become a powerful professional development experience for instructors as well.

In summary, the present study contributes to our understanding of service-learning in teacher education in several ways. The paper enriches the service-learning literature by adding new methodology and understanding through student narratives and reflections. It also contributes by exploring an experiential learning example for adapting to a new community, which is reported in the literature as a significant challenge for new teachers. For the international reader, this research has another lesson. In this global era, many institutions offer programs for international students. Service-learning courses and community engagement activities could be used to help cultural newcomers to adapt and adopt the new life and to make friends in a new cultural setting which will help reduce homesickness and thus, increase success (Swenson Goguen, Hiester & Nordstrom, 2010; Knutson Miller & Gonzalez, 2016).

Further research

While the present study contributes to the service-learning literature, it also has suggestions for further studies. Students participating in future studies of service-learning can be asked to keep a journal about their service experiences so that researcher may obtain in-depth data. Regular practice in reflective writing could enhance student learning and enrich the portrait of the process of attitude change and values development. In addition, including data collection on community attitudes, toward teacher candidates and university partnerships could provide rich information about the perceived value of service-learning course in the eyes of the community.

Conclusion

Although an extensive body of literature on what has become known as service-learning has been published in the last two decades (Holsapple, 2012; Speck & Hoppe, 2004), the literature produced in Turkey seems sparse and is still focused on the design and development of service-learning courses. The present study opens a different discussion

on service-learning by looking the impact of the course on students' sense of belonging and adaptation to a new community. McKibben (2007) highlighted the point that humans have a deep-rooted need to be part of a community. A sense of belonging to a community and participation make humans feel happiness, satisfaction, comfort, and security. Therefore, the present study demonstrates that these teacher candidates, who were originally raised in Turkey, became involved in a Cypriot community in a way that they feel a stronger bound to Cypriot society. Through their attempts to contribute to Cypriot culture and education, they began to use and appreciate local facilities in Cyprus and they increased their social interaction with their Cypriot neighborhood. One can only hope that the lessons of service learning in Northern Cyprus will serve this generation of young novice teachers well as they prepare themselves to enter new communities to influence and inspire rising generations of children eager to learn.

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