CSL, Citizenry as Part of Teacher Education: An action-informed empirical narrative study

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Abstract

In this study the goal of the research was to determine whether the inclusion of Community Service Learning (CSL) would enhance the professional development (citizenry) of pre-service teachers. The literature reviewed for this study created the backdrop for this paper. The literature reviewed also evidenced my worldview presented in this action-infomed narrative empirical study. The emprical research was conducted using bachelor of education students participating in Community Service Learning (CSL) in the courses I teach.

Key Words: Community Service Learning, CSL, citizenry, professional development, bachelor of education, unschooling

1. Introduction

"Service Learning is coming into its own. Teacher Education programs traditionally have been slow to adopt and maintain teaching methodologies that take the learning process outside the walls of schools. Service Learning connects classroom learning with real life experiences" (Weatherford and Owens in Madden, 2000, p. 125). In this paper I want to start by stating that I am not the type of person who covets the limelight, my preference since I was a child is to be solitary. As a university professor, I have had the privilege to have taught some of the greatest students and worked with some of the finest faculty. When I ask myself what led me to this point in time, I think back to my time as a classroom teacher hosting student-teachers during their lengthy practice teaching placements. I remember having some outstanding future teachers and I also recall having some rather shaky ones as well, although they all earned the same credentials on graduation day. This paper is a hybrid of my own personal narrative and empirical inquiry into citizenry and Community Service Learning (CSL) in teacher education. I must also start by stating that you cannot truly measure CSL with traditional research methodologies, as Illich reminds us:

People who have been schooled down to size let unmeasured experience slip out of their hands. To them, what cannot be measured becomes secondary, threatening. They do not have to be robbed of their creativity. Under instruction, they have unlearned to "do" their thing or "be" themselves, and value only what has been made or could be made (Illich, 1971 p. 40). This paper also begins with what some may consider a rather unwelcoming or gloomy paradigm, however, I believe it is important to address the important issues facing our contemporary society. If we are to improve our citizenry one cannot present information that is mid-way moderate if you want to challenge the status quo, as Ricci suggests:

…think about what the purpose of education is? Do we work for IBM, Walmart, and other big corporations? Are we willing to reduce our jobs to teaching out students how to become better workers, thereby replacing the nation state with the corporate state? Or should education be about something more? Once again, my political bias is as a critical pedagogue and a holistic educator. This means that I believe in democracy…We cannot reduce human beings to a limited set of skills that they can be tested on…cutting out the arts and, in the process, our soul in favour of the corporate nation (Ricci, C., in Richardson, W., & Richardson, C. (Eds), 2008, p. 145-146).

In addition, when information is presented in a nondescript fashion most people will revert into a process of filtering and only listen to the parts that align with their existing worldview. Present-day education policies such as *No Child Left Behind*, Combined Grades (aka Split-Grades), Balanced Day Schedule, all sound nice, but that is where it ends. We cannot change the world, but if we want to make a difference for those we are in contact with, we must endeavour to reach the critical mass necessary for change. My life experience is eclectic, I have mingled with some of the most affluent people and also been to some of the most unpleasant crime (e.g. rape) infested shanty towns in Africa and the most horrible cities where street children prostitute themselves for food in Canada and the United States.

Additionally, I believe that narrative writing is important to the study of educational issues:

Narrative is a form of communication that, if written well, allows readers to view the lived experience as the writer does. Narrative writing includes the life stories found in both biographies and autobiographies…Narrative is most often built upon some type of organized deliberation. Narrative is about positioning what we reckon to be the most significant features of our thoughts within or upon a particular shape (linear or otherwise) and we are usually able to suspend the proof upon the sides of such a shape (Ryan, 2004, p. 1).

I first became an advocate of narrative inquiry as a M.Ed. graduate student at Nipissing University, and published my voice in *"Many Voices, Many Journeys" An Anthology of Stories by Aboriginal Teachers* by the Canadian Teachers Federation Press:

Dr. Carmen Shields at Nipissing University advised me about the power of narrative and that "a voice not heard is a voice lost"…As a beginning teacher, I was filled with the dilemma of taking action to ensure that others did not have the same stressful experiences I did, or to take the easy road and ignore the situation and change nothing. I felt something I had not felt for many years. The emotions resulting from the childhood experiences that forged who I am came rushing over me like a tidal wave, breaking down the barriers that I had spent so many years constructing (Pitt, 2007, p. 69). One question, we must always ask is, how do we define something given our present place and time, as this will be different from one context (location) to another. When considering "what" a university is, I searched the Webster's dictionary online, which defines a university as:

An institution organized and incorporated for the purpose of imparting instruction, examining students, and otherwise promoting education in the higher branches of literature, science, art, etc., empowered to confer degrees in the several arts and faculties, as in theology, law, medicine, music, etc… In addition, a modern university typically also supports research by its faculty. This notion of "what" a university is (worldwide) is the definition used for this paper. This paper also examines the inclusion of CSL; regarded as:

"Service-learning can be designed to take place in community and work settings where students are already engaged. Options for involvement in service-learning can be created to accommodate a variety of student lifestyles and schedules" (Jacoby, 1996, p. 321).

The students in the courses I teach who have engaged in Community Service Learning, have done so outside of their coursework hours, on their own time through the university's *Biidaaban Community Service-Learning (CSL) program* often working with school age children to assist with matters such as homework help afterschool without any financial remuneration.

2. Background

The question: *How can I improve pre-service teacher development through community service-learning?* Is an issue that I have grappled with as a university professor and has brought into being this action-informed empirical narrative study regarding the role of citizenry as part of teacher education. Prior to teaching at the university level, I was employed as a mainstream elementary schoolteacher and nobody listened to what I had to say then. Many of my elementary teacher colleagues (for the most part) truly believed in a mainstream schooling system; as Ricci indicates:

…the standardized curriculum we have in Ontario is undemocratic…consider the undemocratic nature of creating a curriculum that is standardized in a democratic society that should make difference its goal, not standardization. Put it another way, if we value democracy, we need to value difference, and not standardization (Ricci, C., in Richardson, W., & Richardson, C. (Eds), 2008, p. 144).

As an elementary schoolteacher, I often struggled with the pressure placed on me to conform to the narrow view of education presented to teachers in the government's teacher manuals (i.e. standardized testing & provincial curriculum documents), as Gatto suggests:
Mass abstract testing, anonymously scored, is the torture centrifuge whirling away precious resources of time and money from productive use and routing it into the hands of testing magicians. It only happens because the tormented allow it. Here is the divide and conquer mechanism *par excellence*, the wizard-wand which establishes the bogus rank and order among the schooled…Testing can't predict who will become the best surgeon, college professor, or taxicab driver; it predicts nothing which would impel any sane human being to inquire after these scores. Standardized testing is very good evidence our national leadership is bankrupt and has been for a very long time (Gatto, 2009, p. 204). In our contemporary world, some people also confuse education with training, however, the terms signify different objectives.

Côté and Allahar (2011, p. 14) remind us that:

…it is thus pedagogically crucial to distinguish education from training. On the one hand, education is more general and envisages as an end product more cultured, open-minded, and civic-minded citizenry. On the other hand, training is more given to specialization and the acquisition of a narrow range of skills and information associated with a discrete or specific task, challenge, or problem.

As I stated, I am employed as a university professor in a one-year pre-service teacher education program and people now listen to what I have to say and pay money to do so. I must precede my comments by saying that a professor should not always be considered a reliable source of information on every subject. I would not be surprised to learn that most future and current teachers think of schools as great places for children, as most students in teacher education programs are from middle-class backgrounds and traditionally most are white women. I am not being misogynistic, as Sax also suggests (2007, p. 169): I'm not talking about teaching reading, writing, social studies, math, or science. Women can teach these subjects to boys effectively and well (just as men can teach these subjects to girls). I've visited boys' schools where some of the best and most beloved teachers are women, just as I've visited girls' schools where some of the most effective teachers are men. But when it comes to showing boys how a gentleman behaves - how a gentleman interacts with women, how he responds to adversity, how he serves his community – then there is no substitute for having a male role model…who's a regular guy – not a saint, not Rambo, not John Wayne. Just somebody real.

Mainstream schools are not enjoyable places for many children, although I have a sneaking suspicion that most teachers enjoyed school and as such, yearn for a lifetime in the schoolhouse. This trend is not a new phenomenon, although there have been significant societal changes over the past thirty-years which have had a direct impact on the schooling system, such as what is considered cool by today's yardstick, as Sax (2005, pp. 240-241) highlights: But the formal structures of our society – schools in particular – no longer offer any answers to that question. So the market steps into the vacuum. Not long ago I saw an ad for a video game magazine trumpeting that a particular video game is "real man stuff." The ad depicts a fantasy female – long legs, tiny waist, large breasts – astride a motorcycle. The ad is telling teenage boys that being a man means playing a video game with a two-dimensional Barbie doll in a virtual world, a world where girls never talk back, never have an agenda of their own

Being a member of the *millennia generation* is both a blessing and a challenge, as I have the luxury of considering the *generation-me* spectacle as an outsider (professor) and from within. On the surface, I personally don't like the generation criticism that is occurring, however, deep-down I know it is accurate. I can see the sense of entitlement in my generation (those born approx 1983 to present) and I feel that it is spreading (or already has) to our society as a whole. For example, in the 1990's we had dial-up Internet and it was common for a web site to take time (several minutes) to load on a 36 or 56 kps connection. Today, I'm sure that users of high-speed Internet or 3G/4G networks would not be able to cope with moving back to dial-up, not also unlike asking people to make do with the four or five television channels that I had as child (e.g. MCTV, Global, CBC, TVO, TVFO) depending on which way the rabbit ears slanted. For all the advancements we've made in twenty years technologically, it has come at a cost. People are less patient and the loss of family time has been *'going for a song'* as a consequence of our tech tools and toys.

For instance, now equipped with an iPhone, I am in constant contact with the workplace. I answer emails dutifully at all hours of the day/night, weekends, holidays, and so on - and this type of behaviour pattern has triggered a glut of trouble for families. It is not uncommon to see people sitting together while individually linked to an iPhone, iPad, or laptop physically together, but mentally (& emotionally) somewhere else. It has also created a twenty-four hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week work environment and the weekend is essentially now time to cram-in more work. The term cyborg (joining humans with technology) or robot applies in our contemporary society, the word robot comes*: "from the Czechoslovakian word robota or robotnik meaning slave, servant, or forced labour"* (2008, *PC in Control* web site).

I often hear people say sound bites such as, that we need to integrate technology in our teaching practice in order to *engage* students as they have grown up with technology. I disagree, I think we should use technology, but only as a tool, and not as the cornerstone of our craft. When the overhead projector, TV, VCR, and so on came into the mainstream classroom, people claimed that it was going to revolutionize teaching. I think those previous low-tech examples have many parallels with the *spring/summer fling* we have with today's technology. Our society has termed elementary/secondary (and post-secondary) students today to be digital learners and I dispute this based on my own lived experience. Many students can use Facebook, MSN, Twitter, however, some cannot do something as simplistic as inserting an image or diagram into a paper/report, or finding a basic answer by searching on Google. My children are presently two and seven years of age, my eldest can navigate the Internet, use Facebook, play video games and so on. My youngest can use an iPod, iPad, and turn-on my laptop and login without difficulty to access *YouTube* and *NetFlix* movies.

The point is this; that being able to do these one-dimensional tasks that a two-year old can accomplish does not suggest that someone is a digital-learner. It purely indicates that they have learned by rote to complete unsophisticated tasks. The pop-culture argument that students are effective at multi-tasking has clearly been discredited by the contemporary research, as evidenced in the Frontline (PBS) documentary entitled: *Digital Nation* (2010). I completed high school in 1997, and finished my first university degree in 2000, seven years later, I began my doctoral study and teaching in a bachelor of education program at a university. It was traditionally accepted that an average student was a "C" student, while earning a "B" was excellent and earning an "A" was outstanding.

Figure 1. Changes in subjective definitions of grades among university students (1985-2005). Côté, J., & Allahar, A. (2011, p. 71):

Changes in subjective definitions of grades among university students

1985	2005
A = excellent	A+ = excellent
B = respectable	A = respectable
C = satisfactory	A–
D = scraping through	B+ = satisfactory
F = failure	B
	B– = scraping through
	C+ = failure

I can remember using encyclopaedias and writing my essays by hand and then typing them without an electric typewriter in secondary school. When I first attended university I had to conduct all of my literature review for essays in the library, as access to books and journals was not widespread on the Internet. My professors did not provide lecture notes (I had to create my own) and the process forced me to be accountable to attend classes and to generate good lecture notes or pay attention to construct my understanding during the class.

According to Twenge (2006, p. 11), author of *Generation Me*, who's *"thirteen years of research and twelve publications in prestigious scientific journals form the basis…"* for the book's perspective; the Baby Boomer's (who were raised in the 1950's and 1960's) walked in group protests, and Baby Boomer's were also:

…taught by stern, gray-suit wearing teachers and raised by parents who didn't take any lip and thought that *Father Knows Best*. Most of the Boomers were well into adolescence or adulthood by the time the focus on self became trendy in the 1970s. And when Linda and her friends sought self-knowledge, they took the ironic step of doing so en masse – for all the railing against conformity, Boomers did just about everything in groups…(Twenge, 2006, p. 1). The above quote is noteworthy, since most millennia kids today prefer to do things individually (I stated previously that I also prefer being solitary), and today's youth also have technology which in addition to their radically different experiences with parents, the Boomer's did not have. Figure 2 below draws attention to some of the differences between the Boomer and Millennia generations:

Figure 2. The Self Across The Generations in Twenge, J., (2006, p. 51)

THE SELF ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

Baby Boomers	Generation Me
Self-fulfillment	Fun
Journey, potentials, searching	Already there
Change the world	Follow your dreams
Protests and group sessions	Watching TV and surfing the Web
Abstraction	Practicality
Spirituality	Things
Philosophy of life	Feeling good about yourself

Millennia's were raised by the Boomer's on the *self-esteem curriculum* and that *"children should always feel good about themselves."*

Twenge also asserts that research focused on boosting self-esteem made a quantum leap during the 1980s, journal article publications on self-esteem doubled between the 1970's-1980s, and increased again by 52% in the 1990s (Twenge, 2006, p. 53). The *curriculum of self-esteem* is further emphasized by Côté and Allahar (2007, p. 139): Unlike their own parents, who likely did not attend university, many engaged in involved parenting that included reading to children – some while they were still in the womb – teaching them how to eat healthily, and enrolling them in all sorts of healthy physical activities like Little League sports and dance classes. These are famous soccer moms and hockey coach dads, who would street proof their children even as they drove them to games, to the movies, and to school, and who were even there before the final bell rang to pick them up. On the way home, they would interrogate them about all the new things they had learned that day, about new friends they had made, and even about those children they had met who were not 'nice.'

But one thing my own parents (Baby Boomers) did that I think was different than this behaviour pattern was they gave me a strong sense of family and that the needs of the individual should be sacrificed for the needs of the many (or family), as Twenge (2006, p. 1-4) suggests a present-day difference: *"Jessica scribbled in a colouring book called We Are All Special, got a sticker on her worksheet just for filling it out, and did a sixth-grade project called "All About Me."...GenMe is not self-absorbed; we're self-important.* Today's mobile or cellular phones also allow parents to shelter their multi-thousand dollar investments by providing post-secondary students wake-up calls (or text messages) and also often completing the initial post-secondary application forms, protesting grades for adult-students, even writing essays for their children and ultimately fulfilling the stereotype of the *'helicopter parent'*.

According to DeVise (September 2010), *"Of the colleges (386) surveyed by Kaplan Test Prep and Admissions…77 percent reported that parental involvement is increasing. As a result, 61 percent reported they were developing new programs for parents – special Internet sites, seminars and tours. Other schools "are cutting parents out of the admission process entirely…"*

Presently, the bachelor of education program that I teach in is a laptop-based technology program and there are many positive characteristics of using technology in the classroom (or in online *(distance)* courses using web-based platforms; podcasts), however, integrating technology is clearly '*contested country'* that also creates epidemic distraction and disengagement and influences some faculty to ban the use of laptops and text messaging devices. Audience response systems (e.g. Clickers) are now perceived as replacing the raising of one's hand in the classroom.

I truly enjoy working in a university and I am grateful for the opportunities I have had in my lifetime; this narrative should not be confused with someone whining or complaining. The advent or intensification of the *'me-ism'* that I have experienced has provided the motivation for this research and compelled me to question whether or not I am doing all that I can to prepare future teachers for the rigorous environment of the mainstream classroom. When I ask people when the largest mass arrest in Canadian history was, most people often respond with answers such as *"was it during the FLQ crisis or something"* openly unaware that this incident occurred in July 2010 of last year during the G20 in Toronto. The use of a police force to suppress a protest, demonstration, or objection, on its own population is not uncommon in North America or Canada. For example, historically, Métis leader Louis Riel was written off as a traitor by the Canadian government, only later to be considered one the greatest Canadians, but not until after the North-West Mounted Police (now the RCMP) were sent to deal with Riel and he was later executed. The League of Indian Nations, which first met circa 1920, was also 'homed in on' by the Canadian government with the RCMP:

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) attempted numerous times to disrupt the organization because the Canadian government had laws in place that made it a crime for Native people to organize politics and conduct political activities. According to local elders, the RCMP came to disrupt the meeting, but arrived the day after the meeting concluded and all the delegates had already left (LINNA web site). Many more examples continue to this day, for instance, recently the Ontario Métis Aboriginal Association (OMAA), (which the Powley's were members in 1993). *The Powley Case* was a Supreme Court Decision (1998, 2003) that gave Métis their hunting and fishing rights. OMAA was shut-down temporary in 2007: *"After the investigation was concluded, the RCMP's finding was that there was no wrong-doing, but regrettably the damage had already been done"* (OMAA web site). The central theme is that historically North American governments' have targeted aboriginal peoples with the use of law enforcement, policies (i.e. *Indian Act*), and corporate-government controlled media to punish and now we see these practices being used on any assemblage or crowd who voice their disapproval, regardless of race. The probability of a population marching in opposition to any issue or concern; an indispensable element of a democracy is unlikely now given the contemporary undemocratic conditions (Chris Hedges interview on CBC's George Stroumboulopoulos *Tonight*).

We have become distracted by the *'cult of self'* or *'all about me'* mentality and people often forget what democracy really means, as Battistoni states: Moreover, the fact that many schools give grades for "citizenship" based on a student's neatness, politeness, submission of homework on time, and passive obedience to school rules suggests that our educators have forgotten what it means to be a democratic citizen (Battistoni, 1985, p. 5).

3. Literature Review

This study on pre-service teacher development is founded on the worldview that mainstream schools are failing our children. There are three dominant reasons in the popular literature why this failure is occurring: corporate controlled governments, societal chimera, and the crisis of the university system. The following quote emphasizes the need to put more compassion into mainstream schools: *"Teachers must be educated to take a leadership role in improving and restructuring those schools. Service-learning has considerable potential as a method to achieve both these goals"* (Anderson, Swick, & YFF, 2001, p. IX).

Corporate Controlled Governments

Corporate universities or for-profit universities such as the University of Phoenix (a subsidiary of a corporation) spend more on advertising than on faculty wages (*College Inc.* 2010, documentary). The surge of corporate universities in the United States has not flooded Canada, although more and more Canadian governments are defunding universities from the access to *"taxes levied on citizens"* (Côté & Allahar, 2011, p. 16).

According to Côté and Allahar (2007), the government has transferred the cost associated with attending university to parents and university administrators on limited budgets have attempted to meet the requirements of more students attending post-secondary. Additionally:

Only about 46 per cent of jobs in the Canadian labour force required *all* forms of post-secondary education in 2000. An almost equivalent number (43 per cent of existing jobs) required just high school or less, down from only 45 per cent in 1991. Clearly we are *not* in a position where almost half (45%) of jobs require a bachelor's degree, as the Statistics Canada prediction of 1994 implied…Canada actually graduated twice as many university students in the 1990's as the number of jobs created during that period that required a university credential. Moreover, over four times more community college graduates were produced than could be absorbed in new jobs" (Côté & Allahar, 2007, p. 5).

The saying that *'Get as much education as you can, and it will pay off for you'* (Côté & Allahar, 2007, p. 18) doesn't truly apply. The Canadian (& American) media coverage is quick to identify the shortcomings in elementary and secondary schools, however, very little in-depth assessment of post-secondary institutions occurs by the media, as Côté and Allahar (2007, p.6) state, *"Higher education is Teflon-coated, remarkably immune to criticism from the media."* It is accepted that this phenomenon occurs due to the corporate control of the media. For example, *Quebecor Inc.,* is a broadcasting corporate company in Canada, based out of Montreal which owns television and newspapers such as Sun Media, Osprey Media. Former Prime Minister of Canada Brian Mulroney sits on the board of directors for Quebecor Inc., and other corporations. The link between governments, corporations, and the media is also prevalent in the United States of America, as Hedges (2010, p. 146) states: It purports to cherish democracy, patriotism, and the Constitution while manipulating internal levers to subvert and thwart democratic institutions. Political candidates must raise staggering amounts of corporate funds to compete. They are beholden to armies of corporate lobbyists in Washington or state capitalists who author the legislation and get the legislators to pass it. Corporate media control nearly everything we read, watch, or hear. They impose a bland uniformity of opinion. It diverts us with trivia and celebrity gossip.

Meanwhile corporations also frequently function as the advisors to the governmental policy makers and sit on the board of governors at universities. Governments and corporations create *'shadow research communities'* that perform internal research (e.g. on the use of technology) that often leads to policy formation (or to support existing policy), or tender for-profit research out often in the form of grants. This type of mercenary research is often not based on valid and reliable empirical findings and is then 'spun' by the media (Côté & Allahar, 2011, p. 54).

Similarly, in 2010 an RCMP officer warned Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, that it would take away funding if its criminologist did not refrain from criticizing the RCMP (DeRosa, Sept. 4, 2010). *'Shadow research communities'* also will frequently by-pass the process known as peer-reviewed (refereed) by academic expertise. *"In this way, they play a public relations role of instilling public confidence in the government initiatives that have been paid to 'research'"* (Côté & Allahar, 2011, p. 55).

4. Societal Chimera

Côté and Allahar (2007, p. 7) suggest that the fantasy that most parents hold for their university-bound children is that their children will do the following:

- Begin university well-prepared by their high school education
- Fully apply themselves to their courses
- Find interesting and rewarding employment after they graduate

These three aspirations are not the reality according to Côté and Allahar (2007, p. 7-8) who assert that most students are hindered by one of these factors:

- Not being prepared by their high school education for the rigours of university learning
- Not earnestly applying themselves in their courses while at university so that they can fully benefit
- Not finding employment that is interesting or rewarding as they were led to expect before they began the prolonged process of acquiring university credentials

Another societal quandary is the notion of rewards for completing regular tasks and thereby temporarily improving self-esteem. In schools, this occurs through grade inflation and in our larger society we all desire to become part of the cult of celebrity culture. It is not uncommon today for people to believe that they to, can become a celebrity if they just try hard enough (e.g. *Survivor, America's Next Top Model, America's Got Talent*). Côté and Allahar suggest that *"The most obvious problem with feeding everyone's self-esteem regardless of whether or not it's deserved is that people come to expect praise and rewards for everything they do – regardless of their motivation or ability"* (2007, p. 69). Our society has become preoccupied with celebrity culture to an extent where this obsession has reduced people's participation in community and civic responsibilities. The individualization of our lives through the use of iPods (MP3 players), Personal Video Recorders (PVRs), iPhones and other forms of cheap pervasive technology creates a twenty-four seven on-demand environment that is harmful to families and communities. Côté and Allahar (2007, p. 116) bring together the link between grade inflation as dangerous towards a democratic society:

Tying education inflation to the new campus culture of democratization and political correctness, one could identify some major strains with serious implications for the wider society. For while university degrees were once the sole property of elites, the process of democratization and political correctness have witnessed the wide conferring of college and university credentials on increasingly large numbers of individuals, who are not necessarily academically or intellectually inclined. And this is directly tied back into the problem of educational inflation in both its manifestations: credential inflation and grade inflation. I imagine that as a result of the millennia generation attending post-secondary as the new commonplace cultural norm that the value of university degrees will diminish as the BA becomes a *BA-lite (*Côté & Allahar, 2011, p. 85) or the extension of secondary school.

5. Crisis of the University System

The understood post-secondary crisis in the popular literature does not suggest an exposé (or attack) on universities; rather it indicates a need for improvement in the appreciation of liberal arts degree programs. According to Côté and Allahar (2007), professors at the University of Western Ontario and authors of *Ivory Tower Blues, A University System in Crisis*, post-secondary institutions of higher learning are in a state of crisis as a result of increases to university class size, decreases in governmental funding (triggering higher tuition costs), and a lack of rigour and preparedness of mainstream high school graduates. The landscape of the university crisis is contested territory, however, Côté and Allahar assert that when students are insufficiently prepared (& disillusioned) in mainstream secondary schools and universities that they will be frustrated when they graduate and enter the workplace.

Côté and Allahar (2007, pp. 3-4) remind us that traditionally university education was only available to the upper class and that *"Just three decades ago, only about 10 percent of the baby boom generation attended; today, 40 percent of their children do so…Canada tops countries…with 41 per cent of its labour force twenty-five years or older having either a post-secondary degree or diploma."* This statistic is not surprising as the contemporary stigma associated with not attending university coerces students (& their parents' bank accounts) to attend university as a form of vocational school for white-collar workers, instead of concentrating on the intended purpose of university; that being for higher learning. As Hedges suggests: Any form of learning not strictly vocational has at best been marginalized and in many schools (universities) abolished. Students are steered away from asking the broad, disturbing questions that challenge the assumptions of the power elite. They do not know how to interrogate or examine an economic system that serves the corporate state. This has let many bright graduates directly into the arms of corporate entities (Hedges, 2010, p. 108-109).

The current literature on universities suggests that more students are disengaged now than ever before (Côté & Allahar, 2007 & 2011, Twenge 2006, Twenge & Campbell 2009). At most large universities, tenured professors are researchers in their chosen field. In order to earn a doctoral degree, most professors had to complete research (and publish several articles for tenure), and outside of the education discipline, most faculty do not consider themselves teachers (Côté & Allahar, 2007, pp. 16-17). Presently, professors will highlight that their role is superficially regarded as that of a high school teacher or community college instructor, which leads one to question whether or not researchers who complete a Ph.D. will enter the ranks of university faculty or opt for more rewarding scientific research opportunities. Unprepared students entering universities that are familiar with '*helicopter parents*' and undemanding high school teachers will have a difficult transition to large research-universities where professors will not spoon-feed and hold the hand of students to accomplish conventional student responsibilities as many high school teachers do (Côté & Allahar, 2007, p. 17). Furthermore, Côté and Allahar (2007, pp. 17-19) also state:

In addition, students now flooding into universities – the so-called millennial generation – are also different. Compared to past generations, millennials were given higher grades in high school for less effort…As a result, they are more likely to expect things to be done for them by their professors – as if professors were like high school teachers – rather than taking the initiative to do certain things for themselves, like reading and thinking about course material in preparation for classes…Canadian high school students have been given increasingly inflated grades, and these students have come to universities with higher expectations about the grades to which they feel entitled…As more and more students with inflated grades, but lower levels of academic ability, have entered Canadian universities year after year, many professors have given in by watering down their courses and inflating grades.

From a professor's point of view, I recognize that when faced with a high proportion of students who are ill-prepared (even after completing an initial bachelor's degree) that grading assignments to a high standard would result in a high proportion of student failure and job-loss for the non-tenured professor. *"Most professors can relate stories about indignant students who complain about a low mark, claiming either that they always 'did it this way' and had no problems before, or that they are A or 'honours' students, so there must be a problem with the way the professor grades"* (Côté & Allahar, 2007, p. 28). Professors work hours on average surpass those that I worked as a classroom teacher, as evidenced by Côté and Allahar (2011, p. 100): *"The literature from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia is consistent in the finding that professors work between 50 and 60 hours per week. Workload varies over the course of the year, with extremes during the fall/winter semesters, especially during exam periods."* From my own experience, I am conscious of grade inflation and credentialism, however, I also know I must be cautious when assigning Cs (or even Bs) instead of As because of a lack of job security for untenured faculty (i.e. passive-aggressive student course evaluations) "*...if it were not for student evaluations of professors, those 'satisfaction surveys' that most universities employ in the name of 'accountability'* (Côté and Allahar, 2007, p. 71) and students become accustom to receiving inflated grades in high school/bachelor's degrees and also because:

They are likely to say, 'But I worked so hard on that,' when awarded a grade of anything less than an A or B. The truth is likely that they worked hard the night before, cramming to study or pulling an all-nighter both to research and write the essay that was supposed to involve intensive study, forethought, library time, and at least several weeks of preparation. (Côté & Allahar, 2007, p. 29). Serious academic work (B.A., M.A., or Ph.D.) should require elevated cognitive skills and it requires a mammoth commitment that cannot be balanced (multi-tasked) with watching *America's Next Top Model, American Idol,* or each and every NHL hockey playoff game.

Côté and Allahar (2007, p. 86) further summarize the chief reasons for variation in evaluations of university professors; that they are affected by:

- How affable or charismatic they are,
- How easy their courses are,
- How high their grades are,
- How many tests or assignments are part of the course, and
- How little outside reading they require.

Côté and Allahar (2007, p. 87) surveyed university professors regarding their sentiments of course evaluations and one professor said:

Often, questions are asked that aren't relevant to the course, which makes me wonder about the validity of the process; also, the comments are often of a personal nature (e.g. comments about my attire or hairstyle or worse!) and not relevant to my effectiveness as a teacher…

Another professor surveyed by Côté and Allahar (2007, p. 87) stated:

Well, even though they are satisfactory evaluations, they don't provide any information on how a course can be improved, other than the odd time a student will suggest that there is too much material covered, and they'd like to see the course be easier, which is not helpful at all…

As an untenured professor, there is a great amount of pressure on faculty to inflate grades, entertain students (*happy customers*) in lectures and to lower one's opinion of self-reverence. As evidenced by the following graduate student's comment: *"…I sadly couldn't agree more. I've seen many faculty dumbing down lectures and handing out undeserved passing grades…"* (Côté & Allahar, 2011, p. 37).

The role of the university professor also is not that of a high school teacher as Côté and Allahar (2007, p. 90) point out:

At most Canadian universities, professors' jobs have three components weighted in relation to the amount of time they should spend on them:

- Research and publication (40%),
- Teaching and teaching-related activities (40%), and
- Contributions to the wider community, such as committee work (20%).

In my own previous experience on this phenomenon, I know that as a university student I did not consider the obligations of my professors outside their face-to-face lectures with me. This trend is common as most university students expect professors to be waiting for them in their office or to respond to emails instantaneously.

6. Empirical Research Methodology

The hypothesis that I assumed is that this (hybrid of narrative and empirical) research would accomplish that the inclusion of CSL will enhance the professional development of pre-service teachers. The literature reviewed for this study created the backdrop against which the empirical research was conducted. The literature reviewed also evidenced my worldview presented in this action-infomed narrative empirical study. The emprical research was conducted using bachelor of education students participating in CSL in the courses I teach.

7. *Research Design*

The purpose of the research was to determine if CSL would enhance the professional development of pre-service teachers. The empirical research data would then be applicable and trustworthy data to answer the hypothesis or research problem. For this study, an open-ended questionnaire or survey was chosen. The structured questionnaire was designed to determine respondent's opinions regarding whether the inclusion of CSL will enhance the professional development of pre-service teachers. The questionnaire encompassed fifteen open-ended questions developed from the literature reviewed for this study. The questions were clustered based on the literature review themes or topics.

8. *Sampling*

The sample of students surveyed in this study comprised the six bachelor of education students participating in CSL within the courses I teach. The same questionnaire was disstributed to each student during the month of March 2011 and returned by April 29, 2011.

9. *Ethical Considerations*

Before this study was underway I was required to seek the permission and approval of the institution and persons in-charge of the organization (Sowell, 2001, p. 143). I submitted my application for ethical approval in early October of 2010. When permission was secured from the Nipissing University Research Ethics Board on March 2, 2011, the questionnaires were then distributed. It is important to inform each respondent of the purpose of the research study (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 205). For this study, I made every effort to put the respondents at ease by stating that any private data would be changed to ensure confidentiality.

This study followed ethical measures in the course of data collection. In order to manage the power imbalance (Professor-student) I did the following:

1. I contacted the research assistant and asked the research assistant to take 6 questionnaires to the B.Ed. section mailboxes (in the school of education office) for the 6 B.Ed. students who are participating in Community Service Learning (CSL).
2. The research assistant distributed the 6 questionnaires in the B.Ed. section mailboxes for the 6 B.Ed. students who were participating in Community Service Learning (CSL).
3. The respondents from the 6 canvassed B.Ed. students participating in Community Service Learning (CSL) who complete the questionnaire sent it back to the research assistant by April 29, 2011 in the

postage-paid envelope. The research assistant kept the completed questionnaires until the final marks are submitted by the researcher for the course that he instructs the 6 canvassed B.Ed. students. I did not see the questionnaires until after the grades were submitted.

4. If I found any identifying information in the questionnaire, I would remove it from the data.

5. I distributed the findings of the research to the 6 B.Ed. students canvassed via their Nipissing University student email account. The participants were anonymous as the researcher will not know which canvassed students completed the questionnaire and which did not.

10. Research Findings

As previously stated the goal of the research was to determine respondent's opinions regarding whether the inclusion of CSL would enhance the professional development of pre-service teachers. From the questionnaire, the responses were organized accordingly to answer the research problem or hypothesis.

When queried as to what their expectations of their role as a future educator would be one respondent said: *"I have few expectations really, especially being so new to this whole experience. I do expect my first few years to be tough ones and I expect there to be almost as many setbacks as rewards. I also expect to rely on my community (friends, colleagues, etc.) for help throughout my career."* This was also answered by another student who said: *"Help students learn how to prepare themselves for life."*

When asked why they would be interested in participating in CSL, one respondent stated: *"I wanted the opportunity to both serve my community and to gain valuable experience along the way. I feel it's my duty – like I owe a debt – for the position I am in and this was going to be one step towards a lifetime repaying that."* The following quote emphasizes the importance of gaining the perspective of teachers regarding CSL:

"Given the significance of the teacher's role in service-learning activities, it is important to understand what factors motivate teachers to begin and continue their service-learning efforts." (Wade, R., in Waterman, 1997, p. 77).

When posed the question of whether they thought students (B.Ed.) would participate in CSL without recognition, respondents agreed that students would participate without reward. This was evidenced by one respondent who said: *"Yes – I didn't even realize there was to be recognition. We are teachers, we are used to working without a lot of recognition."*

This statement is significant, in the previous year integrating CSL within the courses I teach, I had given bachelor of education students the option of completing the final exam or participating in a CSL placement and submitting a final reflective paper. In the year previous, I had an overwhelming student response when offering CSL as an option to writing the final exam. However, when not offering CSL as an option to completing the final exam, I had substantially less student interest (85% less) in completing a CSL placement this year.

Students were also surveyed regarding the notion of the current emphasis on functionalism (preparing students to be workers in the economy) in education, how could CSL help teacher-candidates in a more holistic development, and one student stated: *"We need to be able to see students as people, not numbers or pieces on an assembly line…"*

When asked if universities (higher education) should include CSL in courses to reinforce public service in graduates, one respondent commented as follows: *"If community needs can be met through such a process and students are willing."*

When queried as to if CSL improved their development as a teacher-candidate, respondents were of the same opinion that CSL did improve their development. This was confirmed by one student who said: *"Of course – any and all experience is valuable."* It was additionally confirmed by all respondents when queried if they felt there is lasting or sustained learning resulting from participating in CSL, one respondent suggested: *"Yes, becoming a deeper part of the community and assisting to lifting it up, being someone who contributes. That is invaluable."*

When asked to describe the benefits to the community from CSL, one respondent said: *"We all have valuable insights to offer as pre-service teachers – experiences and dreams to help others…"* One participant also stated that: *"Helping serve the needs of the community"* is paramount.

When queried as to what could make their CSL experience better, one student responded with: *"Better scheduling of our classes and practicum. I know it is a lot to ask but I know we have a lot to offer."*

One student identified time and the fear of *"screwing up somehow"* as two of the biggest barriers to students participating in CSL, while another student stated that *"Attitude and perspective in life"* would limit student participation in CSL.

When asked if CSL plays a role in promoting democracy and citizenry toward a civil society, one respondent asserted: *"Anytime a teacher can get out into the world and assist we are making society better."*

Conclusion

In conclusion, the hypothesis that I assumed was that the inclusion of CSL would enhance the professional development (citizenry) of pre-service teachers. Based on the evidence in this hybrid study of narrative and empirical inquiry, I believe that CSL is necessary for universities to function as a type of *Kantian Moral Imperative* or pure reason from within the university at a time when it is vulnerable to corporations (state capitalism), society's narcissistic (consumerist) sense of entitlement, degree-mart universities, and economic/market uncertainty. It is up to universities and faculty to make CSL a priority for students and it also does not mean that service-learning must occur the same way for all faculty and students. Think of CSL as the '*Alamo*' or last stand for universities and faculty to preserve (or salvage) the liberal arts higher education from the contemporary crisis outlined in this paper. CSL can assist in re-engaging universities in the true sense of "what" a university should be and keeping the social responsibility of the liberal arts degree alive, as Eyler and Giles (1999) suggest: *"Feeling a sense of social responsibility is the first step in participatory citisenship. Engagement, or feeling connected to the community, provides a powerful motivation for involvement"* (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 157).

There are several barriers to integrating CSL in universities. For instance, the scheduling of CSL is challenging and cannot be solved by faculty as more often than not professors do not have the power to create their teaching schedules. Contingent (limited-term contract) and tenure-track faculty may not be keen on integrating CSL, for fear of hostile response from students in course evaluations and ultimately from university administrators; as most administrators are driven by data. *"Teacher education programs are beginning to embrace service-learning, though research by Furco and Ammon (2000) showed that the number of teacher educators who understand this approach is limited"* (Welch and Billig, 2004, p. 227).

CSL also requires a substantial amount of time devoted to coordinating and dealing with students, such as their concerns or the concerns of the service-learning placement provider. Service-learning is about service to others without any expectation of personal gain, however, it is not uncommon for present-day students and faculty to ask the question *"what's in it for me?"* when considering participation in such a valuable citizenry pursuit. Technology can play a positive role in universities and CSL, although it cannot be at the expense of "real" learning. The relevant use of technology must be considered at all times, (e.g. not coddling students). If you don't believe me, just take yourself to your nearest post-secondary institution and watch-out for *texting-walkers* in the hallways on their hazardous passage to graduation.

Figure 3. The higher education forum. Côté, J., & Allahar, A. (2011, p. 29)
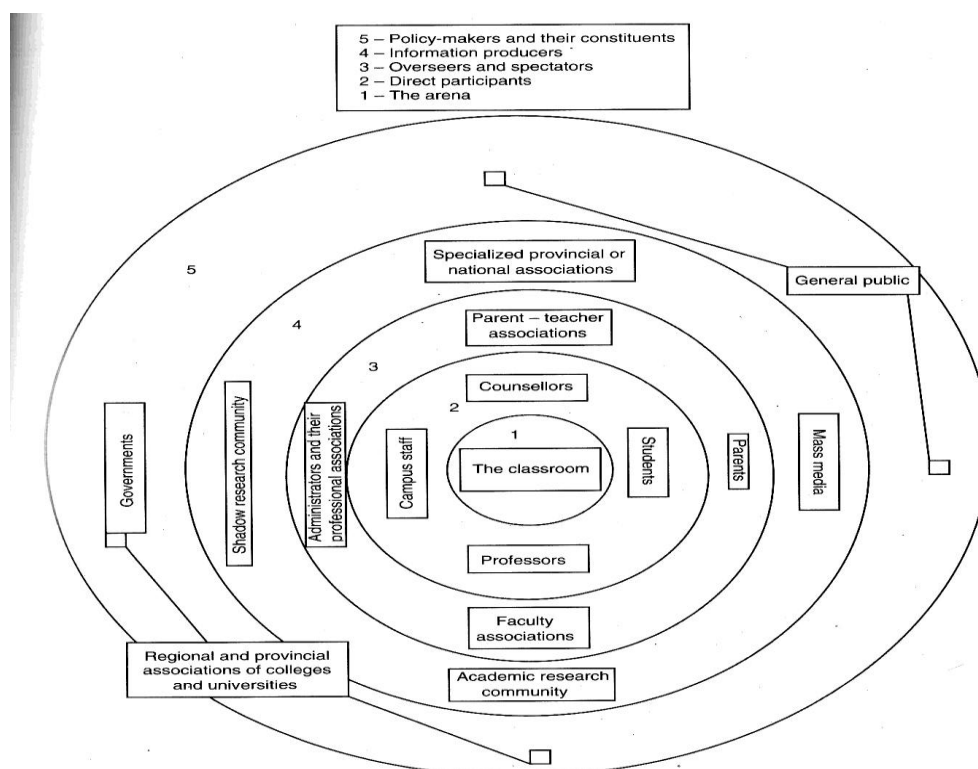
In short, this study has highlighted some of the wider issues and challenges facing perplexed universities (& faculty) as well as the drawing attention to the fact that the stakeholders (as shown in figure 3) don't have a solid handle on the problems facing higher learning: *"Telling people they are good at something when they are not does not increase their ability level…"* (Côté & Allahar, 2011, p. 44).

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