

FOSTERING TRANSFORMATIONAL THINKING IN YEAR 11 BOYS

THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING

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Abstract

In July 2017, twenty-seven Year 11 boys undertook a service-learning trip to Cambodia, partnering with *Habitat for Humanity*, constructing houses for impoverished families. While the school had engaged in this service work in previous years, I was concerned that boys may have developed a patronising view of those living in poverty.

To redress this potentially problematic world-view, boys took part in eleven 75-minute pre-service learning sessions with the aim of deepening their critical engagement with ideas of poverty and helping. I wanted to explore the extent to which a service-learning program for Year 11 boys might foster transformational learning. The sessions included lessons on the core values of service-learning. During the trip, boys were guided through formal reflection activities, linking their experiences with the pre-taught values.

Upon reflecting with the participants, the boys seemed significantly impacted by the program. Boys shared increased insights and a sophisticated appreciation of cultural differences and poverty. The intervention seemed to help increase boys' confidence and improve their communication skills. They were particularly conscious of travelling through Cambodia as "guest" and respecting the "innate dignity" of others. The experience impacted the boys' self-awareness, emotional literacy, and seemed to deepen boys' relationships with others.

The project revolutionised my pedagogical approach to service-learning and helped me to shape the school's service-learning program. Having shared my findings with my colleagues in a professional development session at the beginning of 2018, the action trialled in 2017 now informs the delivery of service-learning curriculum throughout our emerging Year 11 Immersion Program.

Introduction

The 2017/18 IBSC topic on adaptability allowed me to research the restructuring of our school's Services program. As teacher in charge of this change project, I worked with my school community to develop transformative thinking about issues of social equity. My initial investigation led me to the wisdom of Aboriginal activist Lilla Watson (as cited in Edmund Rice Centre, n.d.):

If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time.

But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together. (para.

1)

Watson's provocation underpinned my investigation and became my moral compass.

My research question was: *To what extent does a service-learning program for Year 11 boys foster transformational learning?*

Adopting the community-empowering action research methodology, I engaged with students, staff, and community partners to design a service-learning program for Year 11 boys. My research focus was a partnership with *Habitat for Humanity*, where boys worked on house construction projects in Cambodia. I investigated pre-service pedagogy and reflection strategies aimed at deepening boys' critical engagement with ideas of poverty and helping. In particular, my focus was on disrupting binary notions of power, where boys may have perceived themselves as powerful and charitable, while conceiving the Khmer "other" as powerless and needy. I engaged boys and staff in the consultation processes. The action was trialled from February to July 2017.

Literature Review

My investigation was informed by the literature on service-learning, boys' education, and transformational learning. These are predominantly constructivist traditions, focusing on the co-construction of self and other (Price, 2008, p. 107).

Service-learning refers to "a teaching method that involves students performing community service in order to learn knowledge and skills" (Billig, 2002, p. 184). Key phases of boys' service-learning are "Expectations, Exposure, Reframing, Disillusionment, Awareness and Agency" (Price, 2008, p. v). Over time, thoughtful service-learning pedagogy might scaffold boys' surface understanding of self and other through to "existential change" (Price, 2008, p. 85). I was inspired by Price's ideological approach, facilitating boys' critical analysis and self-reflection. His transformational service-learning program is the type of experience I aimed to create for our boys.

Service-learners require "purposeful self-reflection" (Bamber & Pike, 2013, p. 545) at each phase of their experience. These reflective thinking processes hinge on unpacking participants' emotional responses to service-learning encounters (Larsen, 2017). I hoped that this emotionally-supportive and critically-reflective pedagogy might nurture our boys' emotional intelligence (McWilliam & Brannock, 2001).

Successful service-learning programs celebrate the "reciprocity of the experience" (Tinkler, Tinkler, Ethan, & Strouse, 2014, p. 138) or "mutuality" (King, 2004, p. 123), avoiding the type of rhetoric where boys are sent over as "providers" of service for those "less fortunate" (King, p. 124). Respectful partnerships occur when the community partner's mission, vision, and resources are carefully considered in project work (Tinkler et al, 2014). I am convinced by the notion that in authentic partnerships the provider and recipient of the service are equal beneficiaries.

Service-learning strives for "a more just and sustainable society" (Bamber & Pike, 2013, p. 535), nurturing "feelings of autonomy, competence and relatedness" (Kackar-Cam & Schmidt, 2014, p. 83). This resonates with my ontological position as an educator. Celio, Durlack, and Dymnicki (2011) write that service-learning promotes positive "attitudes toward self, attitudes toward school and learning, civic engagement, social skills, and academic achievement" (p. 165). I want service-learning to position boys as capable of effecting positive

community change, developing self-esteem and dynamic higher-order thinking skills, equipping them for unpredictable life challenges (Newman, Dantzler, & Coleman, 2015).

Service-learning celebrates skills “not usually valued in academic settings” (King, 2004, p. 122) and builds analysis and problem-solving capacity (Bamber & Pike, 2013). It may also prepare boys with the “requisite skills (of social service) in order to have jobs in the future” (McWilliam & Brannock, 2001, p. 7).

While some have reported a societal perception that “service is sissy” (McWilliam & Brannock, 2001, p. 15), others argue that “authentic international service is dirty, hot, inglorious work” (Klein, 2012, p. 73), celebrating stoicism and aiming to “broaden students’ sense of what they’re capable not just of surviving, but even of enjoying” (Klein, 2013, p. 73) in a masochistic test of endurance and strength. For me, this approach reconceptualises living conditions of majority world partners as a testing ground for the leadership skills of morally, economically, and physically privileged international visitors. I believe that this way of seeing is problematic, because it may not foster boys’ humility and respect for majority world partners.

Schools might lack certainty about essential aspects of service-learning pedagogy (Billig, 2002), operating on a continuum between “‘charity’ at one pole and ... ‘true service’ at another” (King, 2014, p. 135); genuine service may be unlikely and charity may disempower others. This convinced me to tread gently in shaping the service-learning program, cautious of the “potential to perpetuate the same neo-colonial practices they seek to overcome” (Pluim & Jorgensen, 2012, p. 1), guarding against misappropriation and cultural stereotyping lest the good intention of service-learning be subverted by hegemonic, insensitive or disrespectful actions that perpetuate Western dominance and conceive majority world partners as undignified dependents.

I heeded Price’s (2012) cautions of the “danger that prejudice could be reinforced, false conclusions come to and stereotypes enhanced as a result of the service experience” (p. 1). Postcolonial analysis understands service-learning as constructed by the “center” where schools’ perceptions are distorted by ethnocentrism, unable to hear the voices of the “periphery” (Pluim & Jorgensen, 2012, pp. 6-7). There is a worry that the boys and I might consider community partners as powerless through ingrained orientalist rhetoric underpinning service-learning transactions (Said, 2001; Ngo, 2013). Furthermore, there is a risk of reinforcing boys’ “dominant values and a superiority-inferiority binary” (Pluim & Jorgensen, p. 8).

Transitive factors enhancing boys’ service-learning engagement include the creation of “products” (Reichert & Hawley, 2010, p. 17) and learning activities where boys “discover and innovate” (Reichert & Hawley, p. 35). I aimed for a service-learning project that allowed boys to use their motor skills and take on a real-world role (Reichert & Hawley, 2010). Exercises involving role play and drama might enable boys to “assess their own values in critical personal matters” (Reichert & Hawley, p. 90) during preparation and reflection.

I am convinced that boys tend to engage when they are “responsible for the learning of others” (Reichert & Hawley, 2010, p. 96) and thrive in activities characterised by teamwork where they experience “pleasure in ‘helping’” (Reichert & Hawley, p. 134). Service-learning literature problematises helping (Pluim & Jorgensen, 2012); while *helping* motivates our boys, it might conceptually frame the community partner as *helpless*.

Mezirow’s Transformational Learning or the “process of effecting change in a frame of reference” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5) informs my understanding of how adaptability might be fostered for boys in a service-learning

program. Transformation occurs when students change how they “see themselves and the world in which they live” (Pluim & Jorgensen, 2012, p. 5). Service-learning might challenge participants’ “ethnocentrism, the predisposition to regard others outside one’s own group as inferior” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6).

Transformational learning is cultivated when we “question or at least perceive our own “bias” and way of seeing the world and our assumptions.” (Bamber & Pike, 2013, p. 541). Informed by Price’s (2008; 2012), pedagogical approach, I aimed to provide adequate preparation and debriefing, critically reflecting on social inequities and ethnocentric conceptions of the “other.” I hoped that this might create a “broader framework to interpret the social world” (Pluim & Jorgensen, 2012, p. 14).

Perhaps learners can be transformed when they are made “aware and critically reflective of our generalized bias in the way we view” others (Mezirow, 1997, p. 7). New meanings and practices could be built through “disorientation and reflection” (Nohl, 2015 p. 36) — reflections that are “open reflectively to the new and... reflectively loyal to the known” (Hansen, 2011, p. 36). King (2004) refers to this as “defamiliarization” (p. 121), where students adapt conceptions of privilege and equity, casting aside the familiar in order to gain new critical understandings of themselves and the world. While some assumptions and opinions persist (King, 2004) and there is potential of “slipping back into old habits” (King, p. 132) of thinking and acting, careful reflection might support boys in the interplay between the familiar and the strange, where their control, comfort and security are destabilised (King, 2004).

Research Context

Scotch College Melbourne is an Australian Presbyterian boys’ boarding and day school, of 1868 P-12 (5- to 18-year-old) student enrolments. The Principal’s vision is to develop boys’ “values of integrity, tolerance, and service” (Tom Batty, 2017). Scotch, established in 1851, is the oldest Victorian school with strong academic, sporting, artistic, and religious traditions (see Appendix 1). Boys are predominantly from high socio-economic backgrounds. While Year 12 boys’ mean Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is in the state’s top 10%, the school is non-academically selective and the cohort represents a broad range of skills, interests and backgrounds.

Prior to 2017, boys in Year 11 and 12 were involved in a Services program, attending a community partnership organisation and participating in charitable service. As their service commitment, some boys opted to travel to Cambodia, partnering with *Habitat for Humanity* to assist in the construction of houses for impoverished families. In 2017, this action research project was the pilot for a new service-learning structure, referred to as “Year 11 Immersion.”

The research participants in this project were twenty-seven boys, 10% of the Year 11 (17-year-old) cohort who self-elected to participate in the Cambodia trip. Factors preventing others participating include financial barriers (trip costs were A\$3500 and there was no financial assistance for boys who could not afford the fare) and time limitations (travel occurred during two weeks of the mid-year break).

The Action

Step 1: Pre-service Learning and Staff Engagement

During eleven 75-minute pre-service-learning sessions, boys undertook writing tasks, role-play and group activities, group discussions, and lectures with guest speakers. Lessons explored the core values of service-learning, including humility, integrity, awareness and solidarity, and concepts such as “coming as a guest” and “respecting the innate dignity of others.” In addition, boys completed occupational, health and safety training, and were provided with background in various aspects of Cambodian life. The pre-service program, detailed in the facilitator’s manual (Appendix 2), was informed by Price’s practice wisdom (2008, 2012).

I engaged Brother Price to provide professional development for Scotch staff, striving for a whole school understanding of service-learning principles and to build school culture. He provided a master class for those involved in facilitating the service-learning program in 2017.

Step 2: Coaching and Reflection During the Service-learning Experience

Boys toured Cambodia for a fortnight. During that time, they:

- Participated in a house build project with *Habitat for Humanity*;
- Toured community organisations and cultural sites, including Angkor Children’s Hospital, the Killing Fields, S21, the Angkor Temple complex, a floating village, and a variety of markets.

During the trip, boys were guided through formal reflection activities, linking their experiences in Cambodia with the pre-taught values.

Data Collection

As I was interested in how boys’ thinking might be transformed through service-learning, I collected qualitative data which could best explore the depth of boys’ experiences (Creswell,1998; Freebody, 2003). I gathered data through a reflective-practitioner journal, photography, audio recordings, written student reflections and semi-structured interviews. My aim was to ensure “triangulation” (Stringer, 2014, p. 92) through multiple data sources.

I used “purposeful sampling” (Stringer, 2014, p. 77), selecting eight participants for a series of semi-structured formal interviews. The sample aimed to capture a diverse range of boys’ experiences before, during, and after the service-learning encounter. I employed “social mapping” (Stringer, 2014, p. 79) to ensure that boys from a range of social groups were represented in my interview data. Interview data were collected to develop a longitudinal picture:

1. At the beginning of the service-learning experience to gauge boys’ expectations;
2. At the end of the Cambodia trip to capture their immediate impressions; and
3. Eight weeks post-trip to measure the residual impact of the service-learning experience.

Boys and their families provided informed written consent for participation in the action research project. Pseudonyms were used to protect boys’ anonymity in the reporting of the study’s findings.

I kept a reflective-practitioner journal (O'Toole, 2006) during the fortnight in Cambodia, using this tool to theorise and formally reflect on my teaching practice. I applied the "verbatim principle" (Stringer, 2014, p. 140), using much of the boys' own terminology. To support these observations, I kept audio recordings of group discussions and photographic data of the boys' experiences.

All participants wrote two personal reflections, capturing responses at different stages of the Cambodia trip. Nightly, I informally interviewed a different group of eight boys about their personal reflections and I took records of their thoughts in my journal.

Data Analysis

I used Stringer's process of reviewing, unitising, categorising, coding, identifying themes, organising categories, and developing a report (Stringer, 2014). I aimed for "enriching the analysis" (Stringer, p. 147), by including my colleagues from the trip in the process through discussions and reflections about the data. I included students in "participant checking" (Wicks, 2004, p. 13). These perspectives helped me to gain different readings of the data.

I adopted the role of constructivist investigator aiming "to reveal the different truths and realities — construction—held by different individuals" (Stringer, 2014, p. 75). To this end, I coded data for divergent viewpoints and points of consensus. I used thematic analysis to distil the data through "categorising and coding" (Stringer, p. 139). Where possible, I coded the data with "participant terms" (Stringer, p. 140) to support "referential adequacy" (Stringer, p. 93). For example, I asked, "How might I measure what you (and the other boys) learned in Cambodia?" The boys' responses informed my analysis.

Discussion of Results

Throughout this report, I quoted directly from the eight semi-structured formal interviews, reflections in my journal and other data, referring to boys by the pseudonyms: Andrew, Chris, Elliot, James, Louis, Lucas, Neil, Rob, Sean and Wes.

Key themes that emerged from the data included:

1. Boys' awareness and appreciation of cultural difference and poverty;
2. Boys' communication skills and their ability to forge connections with people from a different culture;
3. Boys' understanding of the core values of service;
4. Boys' self-awareness;
5. Boys' deepening interpersonal connections with other boys; and
6. Boys' understanding of helping and participating in service-learning.

Boys' Awareness and Appreciation of Cultural Difference and Poverty

Boys reported developing an appreciation of cultural differences and gaining a more sophisticated understanding of the poverty cycle. For James, this exploration was about understanding "what goes on beyond our borders and ... our enclosed life at Scotch."

Initially, Neil, Andrew, Rob, Sean and Chris' impressions of Cambodia consisted of visiting "the temples" and "the Russian Market," and having exotic conversations with "tuk tuk drivers," while surrounded by tropes of cultural difference. Equally, the boys quickly noticed the impact of poverty. Rob noted, "You see lots of rubbish around or the conditions that aren't the most sanitary... there was some bugs everywhere."

Prior to the trip, Rob believed that people living in poverty were somewhat responsible for how they lived. He thought that "everyone could at least try to get out of" the poverty cycle. However, by the end of the trip he had changed his mind, asserting, "It's just not a situation that you've put yourself into. Being poor is something that is really hard to get out of and some people are just put in there 'cause they can't do anything else."

As mentioned by Rob, the reflective interventions allowed the boys to experience confronting scenes in the Cambodian markets without "pointing out things that seem kind of normal to" the Khmer locals. Sam noted that the overarching message boys took from the pre-service lessons was "the inclusive nature that we had to have when going in there," and Elliot felt that he learned "how you should act in another person's culture."

The boys' understanding of poverty evolved through the trip. Rob and Sean reflected especially on the difference between life of relative wealth in Australia, beginning to notice "food wastage" and the size of their bedroom comparative to living conditions in Cambodia. James was particularly moved by the impact of "mass genocide" on successive generations.

Boys seemed most affected by the impact of poverty on young people, particularly when visiting tourist destinations such as the Angkor Wat Temple where James noticed that "a lot of tourism is sort of like a cancer." At the Angkor temples, James was struck by the overcrowding and the way in which young people were exploited in these environments, positioned as beggars or souvenir hawkers. In saying this, James also demonstrated an awareness that his presence in the country was complex; he was contributing to the income of some families but also inadvertently exploiting vulnerable people.

Boys were especially affected after visiting a floating village, where ferry loads of tourists were shipped through an impoverished community and invited to photograph people living in small boats. As Rob said, "seeing the boats was a lot of people's lowlight." Chris felt that his perceptions about the injustice of this were informed by the pre-service program, allowing him to better distinguish how the floating village community was disrespected: "That riverside thing. Like, I probably always would have felt that shame about looking into somebody else's home, but I identified it easier."

Despite an emphasis during the program on ignoring labels and understanding the complexity of contributing factors to the poverty cycle, one of the most recurrent themes through the data was boys' insistence that all Cambodian's were happy. From Rob's perspective:

I knew it was a poorer country but it's very different from just being like poor, like the poor people in Melbourne. It's very different, 'cause they're not upset. They're still happy and they enjoy their lives. They just don't have as much.

Though these generalisations were frequently challenged by staff, the persistent myth that benign Khmer children were happy existing in inadequate nutritional, health, and living circumstances dominated boys' impressions of the country.

Other boys were a little more critical. Neil reflected that "(m)any people are happy here. They may show it to the tourists, but I don't think they actually are. I think they'd rather be in our position, but they can't do much to get out of this trouble that they're in." This critical thinking seemed to have been fostered by the pre-service lessons and ongoing reflections with staff, and Neil's thoughts were reiterated in comments by Chris, Neil, and Rob.

Boys' Communication Skills and Their Ability to Forge Connections with People from a Different Culture

Throughout the program, boys felt that they developed communication capacity and reflected on the importance of pre-service sessions where they could practice skills in a variety of role-plays. For example, Neil noted, "Although there was a language barrier I still was able to communicate. They were from a completely different background to me but I felt that we could have a decent chat." Louis discovered that these new-found skills enhanced his interactions with teachers and family in Australia, saying, "I can hold up conversation a lot better. Like that was a big thing."

In contrast, others experienced challenge. Rob's response to delays on the *Habitat for Humanity* build site was, "If you're not doing work, then you're talking. And I'm not much of a talker. I don't share my thoughts much. I keep them to myself ... I don't know about my thoughts and whether they're good or not ... so I just keep quiet and listen to other people."

A theme in the data was the joy of forming connections with Khmer people. Boys reflected on our hosts' language acquisition proficiency and, inversely, the difficulty that they experienced when trying to learn Khmer. Given that we were often met by Khmer people with strong English language skills, the program helped boys appreciate the strengths of those that we met. Rather than perpetuating the binary notion of a Khmer person as "victim" or "helpless," boys' started to notice Khmer peoples' capacity underpinning even the simplest of exchanges.

Boys' Understanding of the Core Values of Service

In their reflections, the boys referred to the core values of service as a framework for transforming their actions and perceptions. A common theme was the notion of "coming as a guest." When asked about the most important value on the trip, Louis reflected:

We were guests in these peoples' houses and these peoples' country... Usually you'd be tourists and you'd be taking photos of people in vulnerable positions. Whereas, now we're guests. And we understand that it's invading people's privacy – and how would we like it if we were in that position and we had all those people taking photos of us? ...it's respecting people's privacy and the vulnerability that they're in.

Boys directly linked this sensitivity to how they were prepared for the experience because, as Sean said, "those sessions helped us to learn how to tread lightly."

This ethical framework also guided boys' interactions on the worksite. Sean and Elliot tried "working with ... and working alongside" Khmer communities, rather than "taking over." They felt that modifying their behaviour in this way redressed power inequities perpetuated through charity models of majority world support.

Most commonly, boys discussed the concept of "innate dignity" as a core value. Wes would daily greet me by calling out, "Innate dignity, mate!" with a thumbs-up sign. In particular, James felt that the experience taught him "about being humble and ... being more aware of others' dignity." Unfortunately, it became clear that not all boys understood this concept. When Andrew was asked about the most important values on the trip, he responded:

I'm going to say "innate dignity" but I kind of don't really know what that is. Still. ... (I)t was the most popular from the boys... I don't think absolutely everyone knew what it was. So, I guess maybe it's a way to get out of doing reflection. ...

Andrew's cynicism wasn't explicitly shared in the data by other students, though it is possible that this concept needed to be more clearly taught to the boys.

Boys' Self-Awareness

Boys also commented on gaining self-awareness through frequent reflections. In particular, Louis felt that the experience made him more "grounded" and "mature."

Some boys loved the self-reflection process. Chris told me that:

Sometimes we did a bit of that reflective stuff not prompted by teachers... we exchanged views on stuff and what we saw... we'd had so many reflections – we were kind of in this routine of just like saying what we felt... we probably wouldn't have had that if we hadn't been doing reflections every day.

However, for others, the idea of reflecting, especially with other boys, was daunting, compounded by the complexity of volatile interpersonal relationships. For Andrew,

Getting up in front of people sucked. Cause it's like your raw emotion and it's like on the spot so you have to think of something that's going to be good and isn't going to make you seem dumb.

Despite these challenges, the reflections helped Andrew realise that he felt negative because he held "unrealistic expectations."

Boys' Deepening Interpersonal Connections with Other Boys

The strongest and most surprising theme through the data was how the experience transformed boys' interpersonal relationships. I expected that the action would focus boys on the broader world. However, all of the boys, except for Andrew, talked about forging deeper connections with other boys on the trip, including with boys already considered close friends. Louis had a particularly transformational experience, reflecting, "I don't think I was a very emotional person before the trip. Whereas, I feel that now... I know a better way to show my emotion and portray that to other people."

A recurrent theme was how boys "have good hearts" and how the program facilitated some challenging of gender stereotypes. As Louis noticed:

The other boys are really compassionate... you got to really see a soft side... I probably learned as well that there's another level to my emotions. That I can show a lot more compassion... I've found a new part of myself in a lot of the things that we did... Probably this idea in my head that, like, especially with Aussie males, that like we all have to act tough and we're all so masculine and we can't like show a lot of emotions. But this trip has really flipped it on its head.

Boys' Understanding of Helping and Participating in Service-learning

The action allowed boys to transform their understanding of helping. In an especially challenging moment on the build site, boys were made to work on menial and uncomfortable tasks for two days. Lucas said to the group "I'm not here for me, I'm here for somebody else." Lucas' words became somewhat of a mantra for the boys on the build site. Rob added later, "'Cause it's for them, it's not for us. We'll just do it."

The boys felt a great sense of accomplishment from the hands-on nature of the building work, resonating with ideas from Reichert and Hawley (2010) about the transitive power of physical labour. For some, it was a chance to feel powerful, strong and resilient. Chris, James, Sean, Andrew, and Rob all discussed the physically arduous working conditions as a personal endurance test that they anticipated with a combination of trepidation and exhilaration in the lead up to the trip. Rob described himself as having "been brought up to do the hard work and just "take it"." However, the converse side of this was that some boys found it difficult to adapt when the work did not go to plan. When Rob was asked how it felt during the period of inactivity caused by unplanned build site disruptions, he responded:

I think I just kept getting worked up until I could hammer something or shave something... If I'm just sitting there, then I don't know what else I'm good for. I'm just kind of in the way.

Some boys were unable to articulate how they might contribute to community development projects after their time in Cambodia. As Louis said, "I don't really know how I'd provide service moving forward." This lack of direction was echoed in comments from Rob, Sean, Chris and Neil.

Conclusions

Engaging in pre-service learning and reflection enhanced boys' awareness of the complexity of poverty. They gained greater awareness of cultural differences and maintained a particularly sensitive approach to learning about the world through partnership with Khmer people. However, boys remained convinced that people in Cambodia were happy living in poverty. Further research might explore how to debunk this myth.

The teaching interventions supported boys' confidence in developing communication skills. They increased their emotional literacy and gained new ways of expressing themselves. Though some were challenged, the boys saw value in the reflection process and some began to engage in musings with others outside of the teacher-led ruminations. Conducting longitudinal studies into the boys' self-reflections might measure how these skills evolve over time. While the action initiated deep thinking, it remains to be seen whether this continued after the intervention.

The program's emphasis on teaching core values supported boys' understanding of how to "tread lightly," respect the "innate dignity" of others, and "come as a guest". Future action and research could investigate how these values are demonstrated outside of the scope of this project. For instance, I am interested in whether this program inadvertently supported single-issuing, whereby the boys might only extend respect to those experiencing poverty in Cambodia. Further action might be needed to reinforce concepts such as "innate dignity" and explore how it might be more effectively taught in future.

Boys developed greater self-awareness through the project. Some reflected on changing their self-concept and perceptions of their peers. The net effect was a deepening of relationships between the boys on the trip. Further study would be needed to understand the longevity of these relationships.

Despite the positive aspects of the program, it was disappointing that some did not gain a great sense of how to continue service beyond the program. While the aim was to provide a transformational experience, perhaps boys were not necessarily empowered to see their capacity beyond this singular project. Further action arising from this research includes the need for work post-service to help boys plan future pathways.

Reflection

Participation in this action research project changed how I teach service-learning teaching to boys. The pre-service learning activities and reflection activities allowed me to gain a much greater insight into the boys' experiences of their time in Cambodia. It also allowed me to develop more productive working relationships with the boys. I found it personally rewarding completing the house build project and I also found it valuable being able to talk with boys on a much deeper level about their thoughts and feelings; they were challenged by many of the experiences that we faced as a team in Cambodia and we could reflect together about this experience. I believe that this made me a more effective teacher with these boys, building relationships based on mutual respect and trust, forged by a memorable shared experience.

I felt that the action research process allowed me to critically reflect on my own practice in an empowering way. I was able to explore problems or challenges in my teaching in a proactive manner. The project's outcomes, especially in terms of my working relationships with the boys, were very positive. I also felt that this project allowed me to develop much greater connections with my colleagues. We became united in the delivery of this program and were able to reflect together about changes that we noticed in individual boys. We became conscious of boys' changing world-views and it became exciting for my colleagues to notice the impact of our teaching. They, too, experienced better working relationships with students.

The program piloted through this action research project was refined and repackaged to guide eight immersion programs at Scotch College in 2018. At the beginning of the year, the boys' voices were used as part of a professional development session that I led with the twenty-nine teachers involved in delivering the 2018 service-learning program. My colleagues later reflected on the power of having boys' voices as a key part of their reflection and training for the delivery of the new program.

This action research has life beyond this report. In April 2018, I delivered aspects of this report at the "Transforming Learning Conference" to service-learning educators across Australia. Within my school, I'm also

proud that the impact of these boys' stories will continue to live through ongoing iterations of our service-learning curriculum.

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Appendix 1: 2016 Scotch College Annual Report

Founded in 1851, Scotch College is the oldest continuing secondary school in Victoria. Situated on 27 hectares beside the Yarra River in Hawthorn, the School seeks to develop boys individually to their full potential across a broadly-based liberal curriculum.

Scotch is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church of Victoria and embraces the egalitarianism of its Scottish heritage. Whilst welcoming students of all faiths, Christian teachings underpin Scotch's philosophy and practices.

Enrolment at the main entry levels is largely non-selective. Boys are offered a rich diversity of experiences, including exceptional opportunities in music and drama, an extensive sporting programme, and numerous outdoor activities. Scotch is proud of the achievements of its Old Boys, many of whom have played a major part in shaping the development of the nation.

Pastoral and academic care are provided through cross-age tutoring, peer support activities, house groupings, specialist support staff and, for Years 7 - 8, a team teaching approach. Three boarding houses provide a home away from home at the heart of the school community.

Amidst this caring environment, emphasis is placed on finding, for each boy, interests which can become passions, whilst improving outcomes. Boys are encouraged to engage with humour and compassion, to be curious, and to reflect upon how the world has evolved and how it might be made to evolve. The School seeks to empower each boy to challenge those things which need challenging and support those which need supporting.

Appendix 2: Facilitator's Manual

The Facilitator's Manual is accessible at: <https://goo.gl/sMzUJc>

The manual contains:

- Details of the core values of service taught through the program
- Lesson plans for each of the pre-Immersion lessons conducted in the lead up to the trip to Cambodia
- Detailed description of the reflection activities conducted in Cambodia
- A description of the post-Immersion reflection activities conducted after the trip to Cambodia