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JESUIT CHARITY SERVICE IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPULSORY SERVICE LEARNING

Theses of Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

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Introduction

Since the school year 2002-2003, each 9th-form student of Fényi Gyula Jesuit Secondary Grammar School participates in months-long service learning with a social focus. The main objective of Arrupe Charity Service Program is to help students in becoming individuals who “live for others,” adults who take an active role in promoting social justice with their openness, critical stance and tolerance.

From January 2013 to June 2014 I conducted an empirical research using multiple methods and mainly participant observation. The aim of my research was to investigate the charity service program from multiple angles (principally revealing the cultural embeddedness and operational mechanism of the program, as well as the attitudes and motivations of the participants) and to present it as a complex, descriptive case study. The case study involves mapping the topic in the context of the Jesuit order and its history and theory of education with the help of Hungarian and international theoretical literature, relevant documents of the order, as well as other written and audio-visual resources.

My chosen topic has been made highly relevant by the nation-wide introduction of compulsory service learning in 2012-2013, which has been the prerequisite of the matriculation (school-leaving) exam since 2016. My dissertation offers a detailed discussion of the legal background of service learning, its links to the National Core Curriculum, and its goals, underlying principles and methodology as communicated through the formal assistance provided.

In order to investigate what ground relevant changes in legislative provisions “landed on,” from May 2012 to March 2013 I carried a mixed-method crosscutting research in all secondary schools in Miskolc holding a matriculation exam. The research covered 28 schools, and involved a questionnaire filled by 651 students as well as structured interviews with 28 principals/vice principals and 10 teachers providing key data. In communicating the research data I primarily focused on the students’ service motivation and attitudes to volunteering and service learning, as well as the school management’s and teachers’ opinion on and approach to service learning.

While synthesising the outcomes of my crosscutting research and “deep excavation” case study, I examined if the Jesuit charity service program may be considered a “good practice” for Hungarian public education, and if so, how it can be adapted more widely.
Finally, I offered proposals for educational policies in Hungary.

**Motivation and Research Objectives**

Since 2010 I have been an active volunteer and organising volunteering activities in *Csatárlánc* [Skirmish-line] (http://csatarlanc.com) voluntary group, which I have founded and coordinated myself. From the same year, I have also done research and development activities in the field of voluntary work in primary and secondary school, as well as of service learning. With Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education making service learning compulsory, a requirement for the matriculation exam, my field of research has become particularly relevant.

My dissertation addresses the following goals and issues:

1) Clarifying the theoretical framework of service learning. Inserting the Hungarian concept of service learning called IKSz – as specified in a legal act – into international service learning terminology.

2) Investigating and describing the content and methodology of 50-hour service learning (IKSz), stipulated by Act CXC of 2011 as a prerequisite of the matriculation exam. Comparing the basic criteria of IKSz (as a kind of service learning program) with the typical practice in Hungarian public education.

3) Thoroughly examining what ground relevant changes in legislative provisions “landed on” in my hometown, Miskolc. Conducting a mixed-method crosscutting research for the purpose of investigating and describing the experiences, motivations and attitudes of both the school management (and other teachers providing key data) and the volunteering students to service learning.

4) Exploring the cultural embeddedness and operational mechanism of Arrupe Charity Service Program, based on long traditions and operating for more than ten years in Fényi Gyula Jesuit Secondary Grammar School in Miskolc. Revealing the attitudes and motivations of the participants, mapping the topic in the context of the Jesuit order and its history and theory of education, and, finally, presenting all these in the form of a complex, descriptive cultural anthropological/ethnographic case study.

5) Investigating the extent to which the Jesuits’ service program is concordant with the guidelines, methodological and content aspects of service learning as defined
in international standards. Examining whether, and on what conditions, the charity service program may be considered a relevant “good practice” for Hungarian public education.

6) Facilitating the work in schools with the results and findings of my research (not directly with my dissertation but more so with minor publications, new contents into further teacher training and other in-person professional interactions).

7) Offering proposals for educational policies in Hungary.

**Methodological Framework and Research**

The main methodological features of my research are as follows:

- At the core of my research there is a mixed-method, crosscutting and “deep excavation” cultural anthropological (ethnographic) case study.

- I basically interpret service learning and charity service as cultural formations, and examine them in the cultural context of public education and Jesuit education.

- My research is mixed-method, but it is also fundamentally qualitative. With the use of questionnaires I do not wish to draw general conclusions (although I do not exclude them from my objectives) but aim at putting the case into context and complementing, nuancing the information gathered by using qualitative methods.

- The primary method of my investigation is participant observation involving long-term commitment. This choice of method derives from my qualifications as an anthropologist, my experiences of volunteering, as well as my affinity.

- As the main part of my dissertation, the case study is descriptive in nature; yet my description is only one among the many possible descriptions, since my entire research – from posing questions to writing and rewriting the dissertation – is necessarily an interpretation at some level.

- The rest of my dissertation is narrative in style.

- In the course of research and writing I was intent on achieving “disciplined subjectivity.”

- The principle of triangulation was a prevailing feature of my research.

- I labelled my research as “pedagogical” (deriving from educational ethnography and pedagogical anthropology). This broadly interpreted marker refers to the field
of the research on one hand (with the school being part of this field), and the subject of my research (in this case, volunteering, service learning, social participation as pedagogical phenomena) on the other. Thirdly, “pedagogical” indicates that research itself is a pedagogical process (as the dissemination of results is consciously generative and formative in nature).

The crosscutting research

Through a mixed-method crosscutting research, I intend to form a comprehensive view of what ground the legislative provisions stipulating service learning “landed on” in 2012-2013. Table 1 shows the major parameters of the research conducted between May 2012 and March 2013.

Table 1. The procedure and main features of the crosscutting research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of examination</th>
<th>Unit of examination</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May – December 2012</td>
<td>11th-grade students</td>
<td>questionnaire</td>
<td>651 person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May – December 2012</td>
<td>11th-grade students</td>
<td>sociometry</td>
<td>28 sociometric tests with 651 persons (included in each classroom questioned)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2012– January 2013</td>
<td>school management</td>
<td>structured interview</td>
<td>28 persons (principals or vice principals)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The case study

From January 2013 to June 2014 I conducted a mixed-method empirical research using mainly participant observation, in the course of which I aimed at investigating the charity service program at Fényi Gyula Jesuit Secondary Grammar School in Miskolc (and principally revealing the cultural embeddedness and operational mechanism of the program, as well as the attitudes and motivations of the participants) from multiple angles.

The most intensive period of participant observation was between March 2013 and June 2013. With the help of a student of mine studying cultural anthropology, Jenifer Reif, we accompanied students doing charity service work to 15 locations (all in all, on 17 occasions). We were present at these locations as researchers (we observed, recorded audio materials and took photos), tried to identify with the role of the student (we arrived with them at the locations and took on their role of helpers) and acted as helpers, too (this is basically equivalent to the role of student-helper, since we were actually doing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>October 2012 – January 2013</th>
<th>providers of key data</th>
<th>structured interview</th>
<th>10 persons (who could participate in organising a voluntary or compulsory “service-like” activity in their school)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2013</td>
<td>students of Waldorf Primary and Secondary School in Hámor</td>
<td>group interview</td>
<td>7 persons and 1 teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2012–March 2013</td>
<td>documents</td>
<td>document analysis</td>
<td>pedagogical programs, year-books, newspaper articles etc. (only in the three schools which had some kind of a compulsory service program before the school-year 2012-2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the same “service,” although our role at times pointed beyond this, when we took on the role of the more experienced and practiced voluntary helper). Before and after the charity service activities we made an interview with each student (which I refer to as a “sandwich-interview”), and recorded audio notes right after these occasions. The parameters of carrying out the case study are compiled in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The procedure and main features of the case study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of examination</th>
<th>Unit of examination</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2012</td>
<td>11th-grade students</td>
<td><em>crosscutting questionnaire</em></td>
<td>20 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2013 – June 2014</td>
<td>organisers of the charity service</td>
<td>participant observations, semi-structured (iterative) interviews</td>
<td>2 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2013 – June 2013</td>
<td>students (while doing service work)</td>
<td>participant observations, semi-structured “sandwich-interviews”</td>
<td>31 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2014 – April 2014</td>
<td>teachers connected to the service</td>
<td>semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>2 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2013 – November 2013</td>
<td>participants of the school programs</td>
<td>participant observations</td>
<td>90-480 persons (varying according to programs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2013 – June 2013</td>
<td>contact persons of the host institutions</td>
<td>participant observations, unstructured interviews</td>
<td>5 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2013 – November 2013</td>
<td>former students of the school</td>
<td>participant observations, unstructured interviews</td>
<td>2 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2013</td>
<td>volunteers from abroad</td>
<td>participant observations, unstructured interviews</td>
<td>1 person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Range</td>
<td>Participants/Methods</td>
<td>Data Collection Method</td>
<td>Participants/Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2013 – June 2013</td>
<td>those helped by the service</td>
<td>participant observations, at times unstructured interviews</td>
<td>8 persons and 8 groups (of 4-20 persons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2014 – June 2014</td>
<td>students doing service work between 2002 and 2014</td>
<td>online questionnaire (a research carried out in cooperation with the coordinator of the charity service, Balázs Velkey)</td>
<td>290 persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2013 – June 2014</td>
<td>written documents</td>
<td>document analysis (pedagogical program, school year-books and newspapers; newspaper articles; students’ essays; school leaflets; written documents of the charity service; “self-assessment questionnaires” of the charity service; scripts; documents of the order; websites)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2013 – June 2014</td>
<td>audio-visual documents</td>
<td>analysing audio-visual documents (my own photodocumentation; photos from the school’s archive; audio materials – apart from interviews – I recorded; audio materials recorded by the students; documentaries; websites)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2013 – January 2015</td>
<td>theoretical literature and relevant documents of the order</td>
<td>analysing the theoretical literature (publications on the charity service, studies on the Jesuit order, and its history and theory of education)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continual</td>
<td>researcher’s self-reflection; discussion and thinking together with primary providers of key data; discussion and thinking together with other researchers and experts; discussing parts (e.g. aspects of the Jesuit order and the operational mechanism of the charity service) of the dissertation in the making with those concerned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results, Findings and Proposals**

1. **Reconsidering the theoretical framework**

In the theoretical chapter of my dissertation I introduce the Hungarian definition of service learning (IKSz) as used within the legal framework, and highlight its insertion into the English terminology of service learning. Then I enumerate the various Hungarian
forms of the term and investigate their relevance (in my dissertation I use the term “community service learning” for the more generally used “service learning”). In the same chapter I thoroughly assess current international definitions and standards of service learning, and define the concept of charity service as the established practice of Fényi Gyula Jesuit Secondary Grammar School.

2. IK Sz and the world of the school

In the chapter entitled “Today’s Youth and Social Solidarity” I call attention to the fact that in the context of Hungarian public education the goals of education for democratic citizenship will remain illusory until fundamental changes take place in the world of the school. In the light of the international standards and practices of service learning I claim that all these basic conditions are also essential for the successful realisation of compulsory service learning as specified in the act on national public education. Furthermore, in the chapter “Synthesis” I compare the basic conditions of community service learning with the relevant features of Hungarian public education.

3. A snapshot of the introduction of IKSz

My dissertation reveals the legal framework of service learning, introduced nationwide in 2012-2013 (and the prerequisite of the matriculation exam from 2016), its (potential) link to the current National Core Curriculum in Hungary, and – among other things – its goals, principles and methodology as communicated in official assistance documents. In chapter “The Beginnings of IKSz in Miskolc – on the Basis of the Experiences of a Crosscutting Research” I search for answers to the question of what ground relevant changes in legislative provisions “landed on.” My research has confirmed the general opinion of the scientific community: secondary schools were unprepared to react to the new regulation. The first class already started their studies when the management of 14 schools out of the 28 delivering a matriculation exam has not even included the issue on the agenda. At the time of the interviews, the school managements were not yet fully aware of the goals and implementation frameworks of the regulation, and viewed service learning more as a problem than as an advantage.
4. Exploring and presenting a practice with long traditions

The main aim of my dissertation is to investigate Arrupe Charity Service Program at Fényi Gyula Jesuit Secondary Grammar School in Miskolc from multiple angles (principally revealing the cultural embeddedness and operational mechanism of the program, as well as the attitudes and motivations of the participants) and to present it as a complex, descriptive case study. The case study involves mapping the topic in the context of the Jesuit order and its history and theory of education with the help of Hungarian and international theoretical literature, relevant documents of the order, as well as other written and audio-visual resources. My field research, building primarily on methods of cultural anthropology, is fundamentally linked to mapping the topic in the context of the Jesuit order and its history and theory of education with the help of Hungarian and international theoretical literature, relevant documents of the order, as well as other written and audio-visual resources.

The case study presents itself as a coherent unit within the dissertation, thus it may also be read and used per se.

5. The adaptability of the charity service program

Hungarian educational policy refers to the charity service program of the Jesuit Grammar School, with its decade-long tradition, as a “good practice” of service learning. In my dissertation I investigate whether the Jesuit charity service program may actually be considered a “good practice” for Hungarian public education.

Through my research I have found that the charity service program is fully concordant with the guidelines, methodological and content aspects of service learning as defined in international standards. Yet, in terms of its implementation, if IKSz is to become a useful model for any Hungarian public education institution, we need to “strip” it of the unique factors and features of its institutional practice (which is obviously relevant only in the case of faith schools) – this is one of the things I endeavoured in my dissertation. Some of the chapters – “The Relationship of the Charity Service and IKSz,” “The Methodology and Operational Mechanism of the Charity Service” and “The Locations and Activities of the Charity Service” – may provide useful, joint help in organising service learning for public education institutions in Hungary.
6. Proposals for educational policies in Hungary

I agree with international and Hungarian experts on the fact that service learning is an excellent way of education for social responsibility; therefore I strongly believe that Hungarian educational governance should make the systemic encouragement and assistance of realising service learning one of their top priorities.

What is first and foremost needed for successful and effective realisation is to raise awareness of the basic features that are likely to cancel one another out (which I listed in the subchapter, “IKSz and the world of the school,” above) and to make them subject to reflection (at the level of educational policies, school maintenance and school management).

The crosscutting research highlights the attitudes and opinions of the school managements, the convincing international experiences and results of voluntary service learning, the scientific opinion of significant experts and civil organisations in Hungary, as well as my own professional and personal experiences of compulsory service learning. In light of all these, I propose considering a switch from compulsory to voluntary service learning in Hungary. I wish to emphasise that this would not mean the elimination of the systemic program of service learning but rather an expansion: turning it into a voluntary service opportunity for students. In my view each public education institution (regardless of its level or type) and each higher education institution (not necessarily only of teacher training) should establish the content and technical conditions necessary for service learning and ensure its sustainability.

According to international standards and research, one of the main factors of the efficiency of service learning programs is forming an integral part of the curriculum. In light of this fact I see it quite problematic that the formerly autonomous subject of Social Studies has ceased to exist or have been contracted with the subject History. In order to achieve the goals of substantive education for democratic citizenship and social responsibility, it would be worth considering the introduction of an autonomous, compulsory subject in public education that would focus on this issue. In such a subject we could practically integrate theoretical and practical contents connected to service learning, as well as the voluntary service learning experiences of individual students and student groups.

I find it highly important to develop our own standard of service learning in Hungary.
which could provide the basis of establishing the strategies and guidelines of individual institutions (in line with local demands and opportunities). In order to achieve this, we have not only international but also Hungarian “good practices” available, such as the social practice of Waldorf schools in Hungary, the CAS program at Karinthy Frigyes Secondary Grammar School and charity service program at Fényi Gyula Jesuit Secondary Grammar School. When developing (or transforming) the Hungarian framework for service learning, the following aspects require special attention:

- firstly, the unique characteristics of some “good practices” that are hard to or cannot be adapted should feature in general content and methodological notes only reflectively;
- secondly, the efficiency criteria established by international studies should be brought into focus declaredly (e.g. more intensive and longer-term activities and tasks, much greater autonomy and more choices for students, a direct personal relationship with those helped and substantive reflection throughout the entire process).

It is quite possible that several schools – including the Jesuit grammar school in Miskolc – would decide to keep service learning compulsory, even if the relevant legislation was repealed. I find it highly important that the individual schools should make an autonomous decision about this issue.

Furthermore, I believe it is essential that teachers (at the level of the teaching staff, if possible) take part in targeted and goal-oriented further training, provided for by the central state budget or a tender covering a substantive number of teachers. In connection with this (or irrespectively of this) it would be worth considering the introduction of programs developed for teachers that could enable experience-based sensitisation and development.

Empirical research of this issue should be started in Hungary right now, at the beginning of the advent of service learning at a systems level so that we could get a clearer and more relevant picture of the programs’ success, social and pedagogical results and possible dysfunctional factors of their operation.

Finally, I believe it is indispensable that I call attention to the importance of service learning in higher education – for this reason, the appendix of my dissertation includes a short discussion of “good practices” at two universities.
Major Works Cited and Consulted


Publications of the Author within the Theme of the Dissertation


Conference Papers of the Author within the Theme of the Dissertation

Karlowits-Juhász Orchidea: Önkéntesség és felelősségvállalás. Együttműködés a pedagógusképzés megújításában, Oktatáskutató és Fejlesztő Intézet, MTA, Budapest, 2015


