Educación para la transformación. Aprendizaje servicio y las 3 C: Carácter, Competencia y Contribución

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Resumen

Cada vez se reconoce más que la educación no tiene por qué apuntar a la producción de conocimiento por sí misma, sino a un aprendizaje aplicado que busca la transformación y la promoción del bienestar general de la sociedad. Además, dentro de esta visión amplia de la educación para la transformación, el aprendizaje servicio es reconocido como un método clave para avanzar en estas aspiraciones educativas. Pero aquí el acuerdo se detiene ¿Cuáles son las transformaciones o resultados que razonablemente podemos esperar de esta pedagogía? ¿Es el desarrollo de habilidades? ¿Son principalmente las disposiciones? ¿Es el cambio social? Este artículo demuestra que hay una complejidad mínima de los resultados interdependientes involucrados en la práctica de ApS y éstos pueden ser fácilmente entendidos como una teoría de resultados entendida como las 3C: Carácter, Competencia y Contribución. Cada una de éstas será examinada por su cuenta como dimensiones intrínsecamente deseables de la transformación, así como cómo son instrumentales a los otros. Este artículo también mostrará cómo el V en el KVA (Conocimiento, Valores, Capacidades) de competencia puede ser interpretado para evitar una comprensión tecnocrática moralmente estéril del desarrollo de competencias; y finalmente como el ApS puede operacionalizar una sólida noción de competencia.

Palabras clave

Education for Transformation. Service Learning and the 3C's: Character, Competence, and Contribution

Abstract

It is increasingly recognized that education need not aim at knowledge production for its own sake, but rather at an applied learning that seeks transformation and the promotion of overall societal well-being. Furthermore, within this broad vision of education for transformation, service learning is recognized as a key method in advancing these educational aspirations. But here the agreement comes to a halt. What are the transformations or outcomes that we can reasonably expect from this pedagogy? Is it skills development? Is it primarily dispositions? Is it social change? This article demonstrates that there is a minimal complexity of interdependent outcomes involved in the practice of SL, and these can be easily grasped as a theory of outcomes understood as the 3C's: Character, Competence, and Contribution. Each of these will be examined on their own as intrinsically desirable dimensions of transformation, as well as how they are instrumental to the others. This article will also show how the V in the KVA (Knowledge, Values, Abilities) of competency can be interpreted so as to avoid a morally sterile, technocratic understanding of competency development; and how SL can operationalize a robust notion of competency.

Keywords

1. Introduction

What is the purpose of education? Why do we send our children to school? Why do governments invest a sizable percentage (2.6 % for Romania in 2012; 7.4 % for Sweden[1]) towards education? For much of the West, the answer is clear: knowledge production. The purpose of learning is to increase the stock of knowledge simpliciter; whether the knowledge be scientific, geographical, or literary. This knowledge need not be socially useful; it does not matter whether or not the increase in knowledge benefits or harms society. Knowledge accumulation is self justifying. However, there is a different vision for education emanating from the works of educational philosophers such as John Dewey and Paulo Freire that views education as having a moral and social purpose. In this vision, education cannot rightly be detached from its role in building a better society. This view of education is what we at New Horizons[2] advocate and mean by our formula education for transformation.

Many adhere to this vision, but also believe experiential education, and in particular a pedagogy called service learning, is the most promising strategy for actualizing education as transformation. In this article, I would like to say a brief word about service learning as an educational philosophy, but then pass on to the main purpose of this piece which is to discuss a theory of outputs/outcomes for service learning. This is so that when we talk about service learning as a tool for education for transformation, we have a better grasp concerning the expectations and hopes and promise of this pedagogy.

2. Service Learning: What is it?

Service learning, whether it is called by its nom de guerre as action-research or participatory action research associated with Robert Chambers, or Freire's educating for critical consciousness (Freire 1998), is a key methodological move away from education conceived as the accumulation and production of knowledge for its own sake: it strives for social transformation—through socially transformative actions—. This vision of education sees the purpose of knowledge as empowering all stakeholders in society for, but also through, efforts towards positive social change. This move is important because even if social transformation is the goal in view of imparting information in a top-down manner, the knowledge leads to transformation assumption can be faulty. In the field of environmental activism, this has proven true. An important article on the question of educating for sustainability notes

Even programs whose primary goal is to promote responsible, pro-environmental behaviors have largely failed at creating change among students. The lack of efficacy in sustainability-related educational programs is at

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[1] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Main_indicators_for_public_expenditure_on_education_(excluding_early_childhood_educational_development),_2012_ET15.png.

[2] New Horizons Foundation pioneered both adventure education and service-learning in Romania (www.new-horizons.ro).

least partly due to faulty assumptions about knowledge automatically leading to action (Frisk and Larson 2011).

Just as trickle down does not work in economics, so epistemological trickle-down has not worked in education. The article cited above, however, goes on to cite service learning as among the most promising ways to instill environmental virtue —knowing, feeling, and action— and to transform behaviors. And indeed, SL is seen across the globe as a solution to myriad problems ranging from school absenteeism, teenage pregnancy reduction, and of course civic virtue and skills development (Billig 2010). Ivory tower understandings of the purpose of the academy are insufficient to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Many schools around the world have embraced service learning as a key part of their educational reform efforts, to promote education for transformation.

However, before examining the type or types of transformation that SL aims at —the primary purpose of this article—, it is important to articulate briefly what service learning both is and is not. Only in this way can a coherent theory of outcomes be suggested for this pedagogy.

First of all, and most basic, there is the need to distinguish between service learning and community service simpliciter. Community service can be an act, or series of charitable acts contributing to the common good. Volunteering at a soup-kitchen is a good example. The aim is to contribute in some way, to help others, even to improve society, but there is little or no

focus on learning outcomes. What differentiates service learning, however, is that the act of community service (solidarity) includes clearly defined learning objectives and has some form of curricular inclusion. Other dimensions are often included, such as reflection and a theoretical base for action. But most simply, and paraphrasing the summary of CLAYSS, authentic SL must contain these three dimensions: a) youth voice; b) clearly defined learning objectives (curricular integration) and c) an action for the common good (solidarity).

Here is a very standard definition from Learn and Serve America:

Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities[3].

One can see from this definition that SL is not merely a learn by doing pedagogy as is the case in project based learning[4] where learning objectives are linked to working on an actual project. SL is this but goes even further. SL is a learning by doing good pedagogy where the project aims at improving the common good in some tangible way and where educational learning objectives are

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[3] http://www.uncfsu.edu/civic-engagement/service-learning/definition-of-service-learning.

[4] Project Based Learning is a teaching method in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge. Clearly there is an overlap with SL, but Project Based Learning need not be linked with community service. See http://bie.org/about/what_pbl.

integrated with, and even flow out of this community service project. As Nieves Tapias, founder of CLAYSS (the SL leader in Latin America) puts the project creates the curricula (Tapia 2008; Tapia 2012).

In best practice service learning, besides learning objectives being connected to community service, youth voice is important, as is constant reflection on lessons learned, and the project meeting real community needs —and ideally in dialogue with the community to avoid paternalism—. These are the key ingredients of SL. There is strong evidence that this engaged learning, whatever else it does, improves even traditional academic outcomes (Billig 2010).

However, while most SL is practiced within the school context and thus can be linked with the formal curricula, this is not necessarily the case with NGOs who are increasingly employing service learning as an approach for youth development and social transformation. The section that follows illustrates how service learning can aid in global development challenges by developing a problem-solving mentality in the youth.

3. The upstream issue in sustainable development: Problem Solving

In service learning, the youth identify real issues in their community, work hard to implement their project and learn and grow in the process. But so what? Admittedly sometimes the community service projects are modest

and seem like a drop in the proverbial ocean of social change. But apart from the often modest service-projects, why might this process be vitally important, perhaps even the key, for sustainable development and community health?

First of all, it is well known that almost all international development strategies are either fundamentally disempowering[5], or focus on important but untimely or ultimately downstream issues: mosquito nets, wells, laptops, sponsor-a-child, wood burning stoves, etc. Even when well targeted, all of these may be very important, but often can create dependencies and will not touch the heart of truly moving societies towards sustainable development (Easterly 2006; Moyo 2009). The upstream parable can aid reflection on this dilemma.

A man saw a person drowning in a river and dove in to save him. The next day, another person was swept down the river, and once more the courageous bystander plunged into the waters to save the struggling victim.

The following day, there were three people drowning, and this time the bystanders had to seek help to make the rescues. The day after that, more people needed saving, and many citizens had to join the rescue effort. Soon the river was full of drowning people, and the entire community worked without end to save them.

Finally someone said, "We should go upriver to find out where all these drowning people are coming from." But others answered, "We can't, we're too busy saving lives down here".

What usually follows this parable is the

[5] A major exception is the works of Robert Chambers (Chambers, 2000) and the related Institute of Development Studies http://www.ids.ac.uk.

stock "Give a man a fish, feed him for a day; teach him to fish, feed him for a lifetime". This sounds wise, but what if there are no or few fish in your area? Or the fish are poisoned or people just don't like fish or fishing? Much of international development is providing tools and trainings, fishing poles and fishing lessons for situations where it is not appropriate. However, one development scholar (in an article ironically entitled "The Irrelevance of Development Studies") got it right:

In all sectors of development, the adoption of problem-solving approaches is much more important than communicating particular packages of technical information (Edwards 1989).

Every development situation is local and incredibly complex; there can be no recipe-book solutions. So instead of providing ready-made technical solutions, what is needed is rather the disposition towards being problem-solvers, agents of change. But this begs the question: how is this problem-solving mentality cultivated, especially when many underdeveloped situations[6] are characterized by the lack of this very capacity? Does this render the search for an upstream approach to community or international development futile? Is there any way to truly help others in needy situations? Is there no way to care for our neighbor that is not disempowering and addresses these upstream issues?

This is where service learning as a tool for sustainable development can make

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[6] The case of post-communist societies and the learned helplessness that the State inculcated is illustrative (Klicperova, Feierabend et al, 1997).

a real difference. Service learning, incorporated into youth development models, can be a highly replicable space for learning by doing and developing the problem-solving mentality. Outside of the formal school system, the youth are given the tools and the motivation to address real local challenges, but also learn important life and employability skills in the process. Even though such instantiations of service learning are not formally linked to a school curricula, robust learning objectives such as project management and communication competencies can be developed and monitored, as well as non-cognitive (character) skills which have been shown to produce substantial returns on investments (Kautz, 2014). Real learning and growth occurs simultaneously with the actions of social solidarity.

The argument in this section is this. Sustainable development —if it is to be more than a slogan— cannot be addressed by employing the intelligence and implementation energy of elite policymakers in Brussels or Washington DC, but rather thousands and hundreds of thousands and millions of persons working for the common good. The challenges of global development and sustainability are just too complex and there are just too many issues and situations to rely on any outside or top-down solution, except one that unlocks the power of the inside and empowers local actors to find local solutions for local problems, and service learning can aid this. Here is an alternative maxim to that of the "teach a man to fish": *We will never solve the problem of development without the development*

of more problems solvers.

This accords with Nobel Economist Amartya Sen's Capability Approach whereby the essence of development and the fight for justice is the removal of what he calls unfreedoms or remediable burdens, —or what we are here— with Dewey, calling problem-solving. But if developing these attitudes, developing change agents to address these issues is to be more than wishful thinking, this process must start with the youth. As Aristotle long ago wisely said *It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference* (Aristotle 2004, 32).

The point of this section is that service learning is being utilized beyond the traditional school context. Indeed, for major development organizations like World Vision, service learning is appreciated as an approach with multiple well-being outcomes. Thus, whether it be in-school, or extra, service learning is increasingly utilized as a powerful instrument for transformation. Now we must examine in more detail the nature of this transformation.

4. Service learning and the 3C's

If SL education aims at transformation, what then is the nature of the transformation that SL aims toward? Despite the definition given above, there is, in fact, little agreement. By way of example, in a 2012 article titled "Why We Use Service Learning" it was argued that there is much confusion within the SL community of practice as SL is put to very different uses. These different" outcomes are a) developing civic dispositions; b) skill set practice; and c) social justice activism (Britt 2012). The author argues that these separate aims must be made explicit, and disentangled, so that the rationales of these rather distinctive approaches can be made clear. While this is helpful to make explicit the variety of uses to which SL can be put, a different and more integrative stance perhaps should be taken. We argue that far from being rather distinctive approaches and rationales in the practice of SL, these three outcomes can be, and even must be, seen as mutually implicative and interdependent, meaning that you can't have one without the others. Using slightly different wording but with the same underlying sense as the definition above, we argue that there are three irreducible but necessarily interdependent levels of Education for Transformation in SL. These outcomes are, presented as an easy mnemonic device, the 3C's: Character, Contribution and Competency

Character corresponds to the civic dispositions direction; contribution is the service-project itself and is an expression of social justice activism and lastly, competency parallels the skill set practice category. However, far from being separate and distinct outcomes with different rationales, the reality is one cannot coherently examine or describe the functioning of any one of these outcomes without quickly drawing in and upon and demanding the others. For example, character is a learn by

doing enterprise, which requires practice, or activism (contribution in the 3C language). This activism, if it truly aims to be transformative in concrete cases, demands the exercise of specific skills and knowledges and abilities — which is competency— and so on. While one should not reduce these concepts one to the other, at the same time one cannot coherently discuss one without reference to the other.

Let's now look at each of these outcomes implicit in SL in a bit more depth, but also the necessary interdependence of the 3C's.

4.1. Character

The word character comes directly from the Greek and means to engrave, to mark permanently, as on stone. The great sculptor Michaelangelo explained one of his greatest sculptures thuswise "I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free". Service learning can be a chisel for carving and shaping young people's life through, and for, beautiful actions of serving one's community. Character development is synonymous with developing what are called virtues, or human strengths. It is an approach to morality or ethics that is not a list of do's and don't's, but more about developing one's God-given potentials through active contribution.

This approach has a long tradition going back to Plato and Aristotle. Plato, for example, has Socrates saying:

For I go around doing nothing but persuading both young and old among you not to care for your body or your wealth in preference to or as

strongly as for the best possible state of your soul, as I say to you: Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence brings about wealth and all other public and private blessings for men (Grube 1981, 35).

Aristotle, commenting further on what excellence means, says "those states that are praiseworthy [in a wise man] we call virtues." So virtues are acts, attitudes, feelings, dispositions, that are admirable or praiseworthy. And Aristotle further notes about virtues "we are not studying what goodness is, but how to become good men", noting that the study of virtues is a "practical science" and cannot have the same epistemological precision (akribia) as the physical sciences. And finally, from Aristotle, "Virtues consist more in doing good than in receiving it, and more in doing fine actions than in [merely] refraining from disgraceful ones" (Aristotle 2004). So virtues are not about don't do this, or don't do that but in becoming good by doing good. Fine actions form fine characters.

Character thus involves more than theoretical knowledge and is the realm of conduct and works closely with putting knowledge into practice or applied learning[7]. Aristotle notes:

The correct view is that…in the case of conduct the end consists not in gaining theoretical knowledge of the several points at issue, but rather in putting our knowledge into practice (Aristotle 2004, 277).

Character, while shaped by actions, generates virtues or character strengths that are widely considered desirable,

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[7] The relationship between virtues and practical reason (*phronesis*) will be discussed more fully below.

such as honesty, responsibility, courage, and so on. One becomes responsible or courageous by being actively responsible, or doing brave deeds. Currently in the literature, these are called non-cognitive skills (Kautz, 2014) or also soft skills. These character skills are widely recognized in the literature as key for lifetime success in the employability and overall well-being (Wade 1997; Kielsmeier 2004; Billig 2010; Furco 2010; Kielsmeier 2011).

We argue that any meaningful notion of Education for transformation, with service learning as a primary strategy, can and should have character development as one of its primary outcomes. This claim is uncontroversial. Whether this is lumped under the place marker civic responsibility (see above), being active citizens, socio-emotional intelligence, or non-cognitive skills (Heckman and Rubenstein 2001)[8]. it is this certain type of character that holds firmly to certain values and especially aims at working, and working together, for the common good. Interestingly, Aristotle called justice the greatest virtue (character trait) because it aims at the good not only of the self, but also of another.

4.2 VIA: Values in Action approach of Positive Psychology

Problems lurk, however, in this domain of character. It is well known that

virtue, or excellence was for the ancients a male quality. Virtue was an exclusively manly quality focused largely on being a warrior, being brave in battle. Indeed, virtue comes from the Greek word arete, which meant manly and was a specifically male trait linked to courage on the battlefield. Greek moms would say to their children before going off to battle "come back with your shield or on it" —meaning, it's better to die than to suffer the shame of retreat in battle. Within this framework of virtue, however, women could not be properly virtuous in the Greek heroic concept[9].

Centuries later, William James reflected on this problematic in his classic essay "The Moral Equivalent of War". In it, he explained how the efforts of war trained for a certain strength of character and heroism that the modern, soft world has lost. James recommended even in his day, as a sort of precursor to the Peace Corps, mandatory conscripted international service as a substitute for the discipline that battle preparation engenders (James 1962). However, even James' approach, while an advance on the Greek position, was sullied by an understanding of the virtues as too manly to be of universal relevance.

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[8] This study of the negative lifetime effects of a lack of non-cognitive skills in GED test takers, who have the same cognitive abilities as traditional schoolers, uses non-cognitive skills in ways generally overlapping with the VIA character strengths framework to be discussed.

[9] Pericles in his funeral oration waxes poetic about the male virtues, but about female virtue: *On the other hand, if I must say anything on the subject of female excellence to those of you who will now be in widowhood, it will be all comprised in this brief exhortation. Great will be your glory in not falling short of your natural character; and greatest will be hers who is least talked of among the men, whether for good or for bad* (Thucydides 460-399 BCE).

For these and many other reasons, the virtue tradition is controversial (Nussbaum 1999; Nussbaum 2001). Is a more inclusive and appropriate version or understanding of virtues or human excellences available? Fortunately, there is, and a list of human excellences that approaches being truly universal. Out of the positive psychology movement late in the 20th century emerged an approach called VIA, or Values in Action. It is based on cross-cultural research and claims that the following qualities or virtues are universally desirable or praiseworthy. These are features of a good life, lived anywhere. The list is 24 distinct character strengths, clustered into 6 broad types of virtues. Here is the list:

Virtue	Wisdom	Courage	Humanity	Justice	Temperance	Transcendence
	Creativity	Bravery	Love	Teamwork	Forgiveness	Wonder
	Curiosity	Perseverance	Kindness	Fairness	Humility	Gratitude
Related Character	Judgment	Honesty	Social Intelligence	Leadership	Prudence	Hope
Strengths	Love of learning	Zest			Self-regulation	Humor
	Perspective					Spirituality

Each of these items is correlated with an exemplar such as Martin Luther King for hope.

This VIA list is important because not all moral theories fit well with the experiential learning methods in service learning. With this basic recognition, we will offer several further reasons for embracing the VIA approach in the context of SL. First, (and to repeat a point made above) morality is not best understood as specifying the rules of right conduct and obeying them (deontological approach). SL leans more toward the developing of strengths of character in the Aristotelian vision of moral goodness

(Peterson and Seligman 2004). The VIA sides firmly with the latter, as does the Deweyan vision embedded in SL (Dewey 1957; Dewey 1961; Dewey 1963). Second, it is desirable to give the youth and leaders a snapshot of an overall good life, even if all values are not equally relevant for service learning. Third, this last statement must be qualified because this list addresses many blind spots in previous approaches to character and the character traits that may be considered to be involved in SL. For example, in SL projects, intense group work can be involved. Mistakes are made; tempers flare; words fly. The virtue of forgiveness can be vital to the success of a service project and the groupwork required. Fourth, there is a lot of important social science behind this approach. It has been tested in around 80 different countries. It is the closest thing humanity has to a widely accepted list of universally desirable qualities. In other words, this VIA approach puts character development on a firmer scientific foundation. Fifth, as mentioned above, each strength is correlated with an exemplar, a role model of that quality, such as Martin Luther King for hope. Sixth, there are many practical tools related with this approach that allow it to be easily incorporated into service learning. For example, there is a free online strengths profile that allows one to discover one's signature strengths as well as weak areas[10]. Seventh, it is simply a great debriefing and evaluation

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[10] See http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths/VIA-Classification.

and reflection tool. For example, you can examine yourself, your group or classroom experience in community service learning in light of these values. What virtues/strengths allowed you to complete this activity? What strengths were required that you did not expect to draw upon? And so on.

It is here too in the domain of character that the role of story can help frame and inspire meaning and motivate the entire quest for positive character through service. Howard Gardner noted that stories are the single most powerful weapon in a leader's arsenal (Gardner, 1995). Neuroscience has shown that humans are hard-wired for story; we are born story-tellers and live in and through stories (Gottschall, 2012). Service, to be properly motivated, needs to be framed through narrative in order to render it meaningful. Imagine how different service may feel after a group of students read and reflect upon this story:

The great gift of service is that it also helps the one who serves. Once when travelling in Tibet, I was crossing a high mountain pass with my Tibetan guide. The weather had suddenly turned bitterly cold, and my companion and I feared that we might not make it to the next village — still several miles away— before succumbing to the frost. Suddenly, we stumbled upon a man who had slipped from the path and was lying in the snow. Looking more closely, I discovered that the man was still alive, though barely. "Come" I said to my companion, "help me try to bring this unfortunate man to safety". But my companion was upset and frightened for his life. He answered, "If we try to carry that man, none of us will ever reach our village. We will all freeze. Our only hope is to go on as quickly as possible, and that is what I intend to do. You will come with me if you value your life". Without another word and without looking back, he set off down the path.

I could not bring myself to abandon the helpless traveller while life remained in him, so I lifted him on my back and threw my blanket around us both as best I could. Slowly and painstakingly, I picked my way along the steep, slippery path with my heavy load. Soon it began to snow, and I could make out the way foward only with great difficulty. How we made it, I do not know. But just as daylight was beginning to fade, the snow cleared and I could see houses a few hundred ahead. Near me, on the ground, I saw the frozen body of my guide. Nearly within shouting distance of the village, he had succumbed to the cold and died, while the unfortunate traveller and I made it to safety. The exertion of carrying him and the contact of our bodies had created enough heat to save us both. This is the way of service. No one can live without the help of others, and in helping others, we receive help ourselves (Singh 2011).

For many involved in service learning, it is a calling, a vocare. The very point of life is learning to serve others and especially the needy, to work and strive for the common good, and stories can ground and reinforce this, as can exemplars or role models (themselves a form of story).

In service learning, the whole process presupposes an understanding of the good life, a better way of being and doing and becoming that is characterized by growing in love and mutual service. Meaning is found here, in developing oneself to be the best one can, but for the purpose of giving it away for others. And indeed, far from being a burdened vision of life, there is widespread scientific evidence that giving leads to happiness, even in young children (Aknin, Hamlin et al, 2012) confirming the Biblical maxim, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20).

The main point here, though, is that if it is reckoned that service learning develops character, and it is almost universally considered to do so, the VIA approach can put character on a more secure scientific foundation. As Seligman writes in his Handbook of the Virtues: "This handbook focuses on what is right[11] about people and specifically about the strengths of character that make the good life possible" and "The virtues and strengths on which we focus in this book are close to universally valued" (Peterson and Seligman 2004, 58). This universal validity means it is much more of a scientific approach, for, as noted Aristotle, science aims at the universal (Aristotle, 2004). There are other ways that VIA can help as well, as will be seen in the discussion on competence that follows the second "C", contribution, to which we now turn.

4.3. Contribution

So character is widely considered as an outcome of service learning. But how is character formed? This brings us to the second C: contribution. It is obvious how a service learning project can be an example of contribution, and contribution or social improvements are intrinsically desirable as outcomes for SL. However, what we are trying to show here is the necessary connection between character and contribution. This connection or interdependence is well articulated by educational philosopher Thomas Lickona:

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[11] The VIA approach is also an expression of both Positive Youth Development (PYD), and an Asset Based approach to youth development.

To develop responsibility, young people need to have responsibility; to learn to care, they need to perform caring acts; and to learn to care about the common good, they need to contribute to it (Lickona 1991, 312).

One simply cannot develop positive character without active contribution. Acts form habits and habits form character, who one is, and is becoming. Contribution, then, represents these concrete acts of service for the community that are themselves proper outcomes or goals of education for transformation, but also are the means or the instrument to character growth. As Dewey writes "A virtue of honesty, or chastity, or benevolence which lives upon itself apart from definite results [i.e. contribution] consumes itself and goes up in smoke" (Dewey 1957, 44). And, "virtues are ends [goals] because they are such important means" (Dewey 1957, 56) to social contribution. Contribution serves the purpose of character development, but the inverse is also true, character development serves the purpose of contribution or societal improvements.

Here, as a case study, is one sample service project of the NGO based IMPACT service learning clubs in Romania.

Constanta, a busy seaside port on the Black Sea, long known for its lasciviousness, was dotted with spice shops. These set up near schools and sold drugs that weren't yet technically illegal, but were nevertheless dangerous and thousands of youth were addicted and lives and families were being destroyed. The Constanta IMPACT Club decided that these spice shops must be shut down. They wrote a project, and first approached the Mayor who was known to be incredibly corrupt. He ignored their request. They were undaunted and then canvassed the city and collected over 1000 signatures, which

the mayor also ignored. They then organized a city-wide march that attracted 1000's of marchers, rallying around the theme: "Don't throw your life away for 10 lei ($3). The Mayor was there. At the end of the march, a young teenage woman in an IMPACT club came to the microphone to speak to the crowd. She spoke of the awful things about these spice shops, and then divulged that she too was addicted, and she begged and pleaded for help. The mayor relented, and city-wide these drug dens were closed and thousands of lives transformed.

This is an example of the amazing social change that the youth can generate if given the space and encouragement.

Contribution in SL, however, is best thought of, as Dewey emphasized, as the resolution of problems, or problem-solving, a complex task that aims to work for the common good. It is not at all associated with seeing the youth as problems but rather as assets[12]. John Dewey, the modern father of experiential education, writes: "Problems are the stimulus to thinking...growth depends upon the presence of a difficulty to be overcome by the exercise of intelligence" and, about the nature of these problems that are pedagogically useful Dewey notes:

First, that the problem grows out of the conditions of the experience being had in the present, and that it is within the range of the capacity of students; and, secondly, that it is such that it arouses in the learner the active quest for information and for production of new ideas (Dewey 1963, 79).

The youth in the above project learned, inter alia, project management skills,

communication skills, advocacy skills, and more. The example here, the mention of skills development, coupled with Dewey's description here of the active quest for new information leads inevitably towards the third indispensable component of Education for Transformation and that is competence.

Before turning to examine competence, the third C, we offer this remarkable quote that combines all three C's and shows their organic nature. The quote is by virtue philosopher Linda Zagzebski.

A kind, compassionate, generous, courageous or just person aims at making the world a certain way, and reliable success in making it that way is a condition for having the virtue in question. For this reason virtue requires knowledge, or at least awareness, of certain nonmoral facts about the world. The nature of morality involves not only wanting things, but being reliable agents for bringing those things about (Zagzebski 1996, 136).

The bringing those things about is contribution, while virtue must clothe itself, as it were, with knowledge and skills to be effective. Even though the author did not use the term, virtuous intentions must transform themselves into competence.

4.4. Competency

In the SL field, we understand the community service as contribution, and the interconnected character development dimension, but what precisely is it that we are learning in this learning by doing pedagogy? Is it only character issues such as honesty and perseverance? No. In fact, SL

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[12] This problem-solving is related to Nobel Economist Amartya Sen's notion of removing unfreedoms (Sen 1999).

implies not just doing, but doing well, doing effectively —becoming the reliable agents of change in the above quote—. This demands not just the general character traits of integrity and courage, but domain specific knowledges and abilities or skills to be effective. Unlike character, which is termed non-cognitive, competencies are skills and knowledges that are applied to meet complex demands. There is a real knowledge and skill component to be developed and this in relation to the successful implementation of the concrete community service learning project.

Why is this important? Why do we need the notion of competency to supplement character and contribution in SL and our vision of education as transformation? There are several reasons. Firstly, good intentions (character) are never enough. A headless heart will not bring about real change. In addition to virtues such as perseverance and courage, real community transformation involves knowledge production. Learning about specific areas such as water pollution, policy issues, learning new skills, or whatever is required for the successful implementation of the community service projects. These can be thought of in the context of SL as the knowledge, values, and abilities (KVA) that are used for, but also developed through, socially transformative projects.

Secondly, competency, and especially for EU contexts, is the domain of rigorous educational objectives. Competency is an appropriate

conceptual vehicle for service learning as the notion of competency requires applied learning, a point which is not adequately clear in the Serve and Learn definition above. It includes but goes beyond knowledge production and character. This influential definition of Weinert asserts as much:

Competence as referring to combinations of those cognitive, motivational, moral, and social skills available to (or potentially learnable by) a person that underlie the successful mastery through appropriate understanding and actions of a range of demands, tasks, problems, and goals(Weinert 2001, 2433).

Another important definition of competency by Weinert (the full definition is below) emphasizes that "Competencies are the learnable cognitive dispositions and skills which are needed for solving problems", and problem-solving is the heart and lifeblood of SL. Indeed, problem-solving is a competency that is oft cited in the research (Billig 2000) and there is even evidence that an ill-defined problem or SL project can actually increase student learning (relative to a clearly defined project) due to the extra research and creative energy that the cognitive dissonance of an unclear project requires of students (Guo, Yao et al. 2016). Specific competences targeted often vary, but often include project management, communication, socio-emotional intelligence, and leadership, all of these put in service of the common good in SL.

We thus argue that competency development is an appropriate outcome for service learning because it can maintain the education for

transformation practical (applied) perspective that mere knowledge production/accumulation cannot. Through this approach, by including the notion of competency in the educational outcomes of SL, SL can be true to itself, but also evidence the academic and cognitive rigor to obtain wide educational buy-in (Steinke and Buresh, 2002). In other words, if SL only focuses on character development and contribution (service), and neglects the domain specific knowledge base that competency includes, its promise as a tool for education for transformation will remain unfulfilled[13].

The following section will elaborate further on the role of values or virtues in competency development, which in turn will prepare the way for showing how the moral vision implied in SL can enhance competency development in educational processes.

4.4. Clarifying the V in the KVA of Competency

As mentioned above, competencies are beginning to be among the most important educational aims in EU countries (Rychen and Salganik, 2003).

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[13] At least in EU contexts, education is beginning to move not just at knowledge acquisition, but applied knowledge, or competence, which is KVA (Knowledge, Values, Abilities). See http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/competences_en.htm These key competences include traditional skills such as communication in one's mother tongue, foreign languages, digital skills, literacy, and basic skills in maths and science, as well as horizontal skills such as learning to learn, social and civic responsibility, initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness, and creativity.

But what precisely is a competence? Is it merely a technical skill? Or, does it grasp what Aristotle allegedly argued long ago: "Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all."[14]

As seen already, there is a role for values in competencies in the KVA. But how can the role of values in competency be interpreted and clarified? This section will address these and other questions, first by describing in a very precise way what a competency is, including what the difference and overlap between competency and character/virtue is, and the role of contribution in developing and operationalizing the notion of competence. Thus, the aim of this section is to further tighten the links between the three main aims (outcomes) of SL: Character, Contribution and Competences.

So first of all, what is the difference between character and competence? That they are very close in nature is reflected in the fact that Aristotle used the term virtue (arete) to describe both of the modern understandings. Aristotle would say a virtuous person with universally desirable traits such as courage and honesty and justice, but also a virtuous horseman, which is clearly not universal. But the modern way competency is interpreted, and how the term virtue is used today and as the VIA framework shows, there is a useful distinction between character

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[14] There is considerable debate, even doubt, about whether Aristotle said these exact words. But they do grasp much of his discussion of both virtue and *phronesis*.

and competence, even if there is some overlap. Character is something you are and are becoming (being-doing-becoming), and carry into every situation. We say "he is a person of character" meaning he has integrity, and displays moral virtue or excellence pretty much in every situation. However, competencies are more context or domain specific. One can have overall good character (i.e. strong moral values), but not be competent in a certain domain. One can have character, and not be, for example, a competent horseman, or musician.

One of the core assumptions of the competence literature is that competence develops through learning situations and can be distinguished from stable, trait-like characteristics, such as cognitive ability or personality (Kunter, Klusmann et al. 2013).

Another way of looking at competencies is that they are domain specific applied skills and knowledge that enable persons to successfully perform their work. For example, we say of a person: "he is a competent electrician" meaning he knows how to exercise this skill and knowledge in the right way for the specific situation, which is to say wiring houses safely and efficiently. Competencies are not only related to work, though, but can be understood as concepts, abilities and attitudes to understand and resolve increasingly complex social problems. Here is an influential but more technically precise definition:

Competencies are the learnable cognitive dispositions and skills which are needed for solving problems as well as the associated

motivational, volitional and social capabilities and skills which are required for successful and responsible problem solving in variable situations (Weinert 2001, 27-28).

In the literature, the acronym most commonly used for the constituent elements of a competence is the aforementioned KVA. KVA signals that a competence involves all three dimensions: knowledge, abilities, and values (or virtues). But competence also requires applied learning, learning that puts into concrete practice the various dimensions of KVA and involves performance. Put differently, competencies cannot be developed without real work contexts, or applied learning and there is evidence that SL contributes to the development of Key Competencies[15] (Gregorová, Heinzová

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[15] The five outcome areas [of the meta analysis]: attitudes toward self, attitudes toward school and learning, civic engagement, social skills, and academic performance. There are myriad other studies demonstrating life-skill development as well, which overlaps with the competency. Unfortunately, terminology is not consistent and some use life-skills, some competencies, some abilities, etc (Stafford, Boyd et al. 2003). One study, while not using the terminology of competence, notes these Principal Findings:
-Service participation shows significant positive effects on all 11 outcome measures: academic performance (GPA, writing skills, critical thinking skills), values (commitment to activism and to promoting racial understanding), self-efficacy, leadership (leadership activities, self-rated leadership ability, interpersonal skills), choice of a service career, and plans to participate in service after college. These findings directly replicate a number of recent studies using different samples and methodologies.
-Performing service as part of a course (service learning) adds significantly to the benefits associated with community service for all outcomes except interpersonal skills, self-efficacy and leadership (Astin, Vogelgesang et

et al., 2016).

An example here of the interdependences between, and the applied nature of, the K, V, and A can help. A very clear example is the competency of driving. Driving requires the combined use of Knowledge (rules of the road), Abilities (how to shift gears and steer and brake, all simultaneously and fluidly), and Values. One might ask "How does driving require values?" Driving a car (at least for longer than a few hours!) requires one to be responsible, attentive, to respect others, to exercise good judgment, and so on. One can only truly have the competency of driving if this ability is exercised morally. One cannot exercise the competency of driving morally without having internalized the knowledge, and abilities required. The dimensions are interconnected.

There is more to be said about the moral nature of a competence though, the V in KVA. The full, comprehensive notion of competence can help show that almost all knowledge or abilities imply a moral usage or goal, and multiple levels of this. Aristotle uses the example of the horseman, who has to exercise certain values internal to this craft. But this, to be truly moral/competent, must relate to its overall or external purpose, which is citizenship and serving the art of battle involving the protection of the polis, the Greek city/state.

This line of argument shows why a

al., 2000).

terrorist driving a car with a bomb inside to be detonated and kill innocent bystanders, while technically or functionally expert as a driver (exercising the values internal to the practice, shifting gears correctly and so on), cannot rightly be considered a competent driver. Similarly, this is also why one who exercises technically expert computer skills, but uses these to hack or create destructive viruses, cannot rightly be considered competent. At the other end of the spectrum, however, the competency of driving can be used to pick up and help elderly go safely to church, or the grocery store. Here in this case, one is not only exercising the values internal to driving competently, but exercising the competency in a way that is clearly helping another and contributing to the common good[16].

We can abstract from these examples and say that in relation to competencies, values function at two levels:

1. Values strictly intrinsic (internal) to the practice (i.e. good judgment in driving) and not having to do with the ends to which these

[16] We would not go so far as to say that unless the competency is directly helping someone, it is not truly a competence. But what can be asserted is that if the competency in the sense of a skill is exercised contrary to the common good, it violates the V in competency. But we can posit a rough spectrum of values exercised in competency, from being a decent citizen, holding a good job, etc to more heroic and praiseworthy actions. It is not necessary or desirable to map this with precision, but it is also true that those who sacrifice for the common good are, and should be, held in special honor.

competencies or practices are put;

2. Extrinsic (external) values concerning how and for what purpose the practice/competency is used overall, whether for the common good, for evil, or neutrally etc.

This structure is reflected in Aristotle's discussion of virtue —which provides the moral ends, in relation to what he calls phronesis or practical reason— the working out the means to these ends. While Aristotle does not use the language of competency, phronesis or practical reason is where virtue enters into the specifics of a situation, and practical reasoning about strategy and tactics enter. In a certain sense, moral virtue decides what problems are worth solving, while phronesis or competence is the tactics and knowledge and abilities used to bring about the solution.

Aristotle in fact believed that virtue was impossible without phronesis, and the inverse as well. One commentator notes:

Moral virtue, as Aristotle says is what makes us aim at the right mark, practical intelligence is what makes us take the right steps to achieve the right end. The relationship between the two excellences is a close one: indeed he suggests that the two are inseparable. One may distinguish logically between the two elements, (1) deliberation about means, and (2) desire for ends, but Aristotle believes that in practice it is impossible to have the one excellence without the other (Lloyd 1968, 225-226).

But the main idea is that virtue or character provides the broad moral aims, and practical reason, or in our

case competence, provides the right means, the knowledge, skills, abilities, to work out in concrete reality those ends given by moral virtue.

More examples will be given further down to clarify the moral nature of competencies, but it is important to note that this teleological notion of competence is often overlooked in favor of mere technical abilities, which Aristotle believed would degenerate into mere cunning. This warning is stated precisely by Weinert in one of the most influential articles on competency in the field of education:

A related but independent issue is the frame of reference within which key competencies [key competencies will be defined further below] are defined. Competencies and key competencies may be identified from philosophical ideas about the nature of humankind, ideas about the good life and a desirable society, or even expectancies about present human life and social demands. There is a strong danger that the necessary skills for successful everyday life, for social and personal effectiveness, or for professional success will be trivialized when compared with normatively anchored universal competencies. Nonetheless, if one wants to go beyond an individual's adaptation level to the world of today with its limited possibilities of further development, and change the world by equipping people with the appropriate competencies, it is necessary to choose a normative starting point when defining key competencies rather than an empirical one (Weinert 2001, 2435).

This warning has not been unheeded. The DeSeCo project (the OECD project Definition and Selection of Competencies) notes: "Defining and selecting key competencies is not a neutral exercise. Thus, the underlying vision of society and the societal objectives need to be made explicit".

DeSeCo has placed the topic of key competencies in a normative framework provided by a number of international conventions and agreements (such as The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Rio Declaration on Environment, the World Declaration on Education for All) that put forth desirable goals for social reform (Rychen and Salganik 2003).

Besides these normative frameworks, we argue that the VIA approach can inspire and give concrete content to the V in the KVA of competency. It provides a normative starting point of moral virtue, a picture of the good life, and how values can function within competencies and provide them with a moral telos[17]. All competences can be exercised, or at least conceived, within the normative virtue framework of wisdom, justice, humanity, temperance, courage, and transcendence[18].

While above it was mentioned that competencies are more context dependent than character strengths (virtues), there are key competencies, but also subject specific competencies. Key competencies are critical as these are competencies that can be expected to be used in almost any life situation:

The notion of key competencies is used as a synonym for critical or important competencies that contribute to a successful life and a well functioning society, are relevant across different spheres of life, and are important for all individuals (Rychen and Salganik 2003, 54).

The different spheres of life mentioned in the EU framework for Key Competencies are "personal fulfilment, social inclusion, active citizenship and employability in a knowledge-based society" a very comprehensive and morally rich view of the role of competency indeed! The main idea here though is that key competencies are universally relevant. You can't imagine a person really getting along well in today's society without them. Think of a person who lacks basic linguistic or even digital competence. But besides key competencies[19], there are subject specific competencies. These are competencies that are less universal and require greater knowledge and skill in a specific sphere of activity such as social work[20].

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[17] The VIA is part of an Aristotelian *eudaimonistic* approach whereby happiness is the highest goal. But Aristotle, as with VIA, believes that happiness is a state of the soul in accordance with virtue (Aristotle 2004). For Aristotle, while happiness is the goal of life, there are defective forms of happiness rooted in sensuality, and love of honor.

[18] Transcendence need not be specifically religious. This category includes appreciation of beauty, hope, etc.

[19] Weinert doubts that Key Competencies, as universal or transversal abilities, can be directly taught without going into the specifics of a situation. This means that a key competency such as Project Management can only be learned by doing a concrete project that will take one beyond key competencies into domain specific competencies. For example, project management can be thought of as a key competency; however, any real-world project, such as an advocacy project to save a particular species of endangered animals, necessarily requires subject specific knowledges and ceases to be universal (Weinert 2001). The implications of this are that Key Competencies cannot be directly taught apart from context specific projects that go beyond Key Competencies.

[20] How moral virtue can function in relation to competency can be seen in the moral virtue of reverence for life (Woodruff 2001). Reverence for life is a virtue; the ability to test water

In a section above, the argument was offered that the notion of competence as an educational outcome can help raise the profile of SL in the academy. But is the reverse also the case? Can service learning help operationalize the lofty moral ambitions that are so clearly revealed in the notion of competence? This is an important question because education for competencies is no easy task. Consider the following quote by Weinert:

Key competencies not only have to be acquired in a way that makes them a domain-specific expertise, but they also have to be trained through forms of situational learning to make them adaptable to fit different occasions. Viewed from the standpoint of the psychology of learning, this can be attained only when methodological key competencies are acquired systematically, but their application is subject to permanent training in variable contexts (Weinart 2001, 2436).

We argue that SL is uniquely positioned to operationalize the ambitious educational and moral notions embedded in the concept of competence, and a meta-analysis involving sixty-two separate studies bears this out (Celio, Durlak et al., 2011) as well as a specific study on how SL develops the EU Key Competencies (Gregorová, Heinzová et al., 2016). Not only does SL provide the situational learning and permanent training, what Weinart called above responsible problem solving, in variable contexts, but it also enacts an educational process that applies rigorous learning objectives to the resolution of community burdens, and

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samples to gauge the health of a river is a competency.

through this achieves community and personal transformation. SL gives a home as it were to both the technical and teleological (morally rich) notion of competency. This is why one writer aptly calls competencies skills for transformation (Frisk and Larson, 2011).

But to return to the overall argument, everything we are presenting parallels but expands upon what Aristotle argued: "the good man must have both the character to desire the right things and the practical intelligence to work out the right means to those ends, and the two excellences are in fact inseparable" (Lloyd 1968, 244). The exercise of these two excellences, character and competence, require but are also the means to contribution, the building of a better world through intelligent service. Service learning embraces and operationalizes this rich vision of education for, and through, transformation.

5. Conclusions

If Education should be for Transformation and Service Learning is perhaps the most promising way to operationalize this vision, what is the nature of this transformation? We have argued that SL's outcomes are not one or two, but three necessarily and logically interdependent realms of character, contribution, and competence. In line with the overall argument about the necessity of each of these three: one cannot meaningful talk about character without actual contribution, and contribution for specific cases and contexts; and one

cannot meaningfully talk about contribution without the notion of competence, the abilities and knowledge and values required to implement a service-learning project. Each C is both an end in itself but simultaneously a means to the other two. All three of these working together define the ultimate goal of education as transformation. This 3C approach, besides being memorable, satisfies the Goldilocks principle[21]: it is not too much, or too little, but it is just right; simple but not simplistic. It makes explicit and gives precision to the necessarily interdependent outcomes of service learning and gives concrete content to the vision of education for transformation.

The 3C approach can provide guidance for practitioners and researchers. It can answer the question definitively of what the SL community of practice can expect to show of this approach. It can inform research agendas on service learning, showing how an integrative and ambitious approach is possible as the three C's actually presuppose one another and are co-constitutive.

Besides the 3C approach, this article also argued for the Values In Action

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[21] This 3C approach was inspired by, but also an appreciative critique of, the 5C approach of Lerner and Positive Youth Development (Lerner, Lerner et al. 2013). Lerner argues that the 5C's (character, confidence, competence, connection, and caring) lead to contribution. It can be argued though that caring and confidence are subcomponents of character, but also that character and competence are best developed through contribution, and is not best conceived as the result of character/competence. These are not substantial differences though.

(VIA) character strengths approach of Positive Psychology as a way of thinking about character that advances its scientific standing. We also offered a framework for how values function in the concept of competency; namely, that there are the values intrinsic to the exercise of a competence, and those extrinsic, the moral universe which guides the ends towards which competencies are exercised. Furthermore, we showed how competence as an outcome can help raise the educational profile of SL in the academy, but also how SL can help operationalize competence, both in terms of the diverse problem-solving learning contexts, but also the noble moral ends that service learning inculcates.

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