# Mandatory Community and Public Services in Schools

America has a long history of volunteering and participation in community work. Consequently, the culture of community service has become so entrenched among Americans that it has become a requirement in schools. Integration of community and public services in the education system has become an issue of charged debate. Some commenters agree with the new approach of integrating and making communal service a prerequisite for valediction in high school diploma while others oppose the move. Most of the supporters of mandatory community service in the education system claim that the services enable the students to help each other and improve their talents and skills before their full induction into the community after finishing school (Bangser 2). It is important for students to be required to do community service and monthly public service projects since they are vital in development and preparation of students for the future life.

Learning within the confine of the school has long affected students to have a taste of how life outside the books feels like. Consequently, most students lose touch with the reality when they remain confined in the books without participating directly in the community (Andersen 6). Community services improve student’s awareness not only of their community but also of their future. Through community and public services, students access a direct touch with the community and understand the kind of problems that the people in the community are going through and the possible solutions that they can offer in a bid to solve the problems (Pancer 5). Therefore, students became mentally and psychologically prepared and informed of the issues that they are likely to face when they complete their studies. Consequently, students develop a sense of civic duty by the learning what is going on in the world around them. The sense of civic duty imparts students with hands-on skills that are vital in solving real life problems that the communities are facing (Spring et al. 7).

According to Bangser (3), community service assists in preparing students for a smooth transition from secondary education to employment. The community service becomes an important conduit through which students gain important skills that mirror requirements for college courses and employment. Most of the students have faced substantial barriers to act effectively in the job market due to lack of essential skills such as teamwork, collaboration, and attendance, which are taught through coursework but through practical hands-on skills. Moreover, according to Sundeen and Raskoff (75), community services equip students with vital academic skills, career occupational direction, improved self-esteem, and confidence important in personal development. Consequently, the society sets a platform for producing a generation of young people with great civic and philanthropic duty in the society (Sundeen, and Raskoff 75).

Students need to be predisposed to the reality in the community by exposing them to the problems that afflict the society in a bid to set their mind for future civic duty. According to research, students from families whose parents volunteered when they were young are more likely to participate in civic duty and voluntary work than students from parents who did not participate in voluntary work when they were young (Meinhard et al. 10). Evidently, incorporation of compulsory community work in the education curriculum helps students to become philanthropic-oriented in the future. Moreover, giving credit for participation in voluntary activities increases the willingness and commitment of students, which aid in shaping voluntary behavior.

Additionally, studies have proved that students who participate in community services acquire a high level of personal and social development than students who do not participate. Personal development is vital in improving certain individual characteristics such as self-esteem, self-identity, confidence, and career direction through socialization with the members of the community and fellow students (Spring et al. 9). Therefore, students become more socially responsible in the society through participation in social affairs in the community. Students who participate in voluntary work have reduced levels of behavior problems since they are equipped with valuable social interaction capabilities, which are vital in establishing healthy relationships with other people in the society. Students drop most of the anti-social and negative behaviors in the society hence reducing trouble with the law (Markus et al. 413). Lack of early orientation into the community and the problems affecting the community is one of the factors that have led to increased negative behaviors in the society. Consequently, participation in community services assists in eliminating behavioral problems such as smoking, drug abuse, crime, and teen pregnancy among students.

Participation in community services equips students with important cognitive and academic skills vital for personal development. According to Markus et al., students learn important life skills such as high-order thinking, knowledge about real life problems, high academic performance, and improved attendance in classes (415). Students become aware of the effects of behaviors such as smoking, drug abuse, and others when they get in touch and socialize with individuals who are victims of drug abuse. When confined in the schoolwork alone, students cannot understand the effects of such problems that are part of the society (Conrad 8). When students become part of solving such issues, they become better placed in avoiding and fighting the problems in the future. Consequently, students gain a moral judgment against certain unproductive behaviors in the society. According to Camara (4), a community service is a form of active and experiential learning that equips students with skills vital when applied in their life and career. Additionally, the community is involved in the learning process of an individual hence complementing the skills learned in class. For instance, learning about poverty in class can be complemented by participating in poverty eradication programs in through community services (Markus et al. 413). Therefore, students understand how academic work translates into the world situation. Moreover, through community services, students are exposed to different professions hence choosing a career becomes an easy job for most of the students. In most cases, schools prepare students for jobs without imparting them with necessary hands-on skills. The best place to acquire the skills is by actively participating in the community through voluntary work.

Political and civic efficacy is another important element that students achieve through participation in community services. Through the services, students are oriented into a civic engagement that enhances their political knowledge. The student has become aware of the societies political organization and moral organization. According to a report by Niemi et al. (416), increased participation of students in community services increases their knowledge about political affairs in the society. Consequently, students can learn about how their activities in the societies can be influenced politics. Moreover, it has been found that political knowledge enables students to achieve improved civic responsibility in the society. Improved civic skills enhance students’ commitment to future volunteering (Epstein 13). Moreover, improved civic knowledge enhances student’s attitudes towards personal and social responsibilities in the society (Markus et al. 416). The enhanced responsiveness to social issues enables students develops modest perceptions towards voluntary work. However, some commenters argue that the perception of choice and the likelihood of subsequent volunteering are affected by the mandatory participation. However, increased participation through mandatory volunteering has the capacity-changing attitude and perception towards community service (Andersen 7). Despite the long time spent in changing attitude and perceptions, mandatory participation has the capability of installing a different approach in the society.

Moreover, students can establish an important network that is vital in securing a job. The new ties will help the students to establish themselves in the society and act in a concerted effort towards solving most of the problems afflicting the society. Through community services, students establish relationships with new people, companies, and organization that help them to secure jobs in the future (Kahne 609). Students acquire a sense of self-efficacy through relationships with new people, organizations, and companies.

Other benefiting the students, community services plays a vital role in improving the life of the community. The problems afflicting the community are solved and prevented through a concerted effort with the community. The community may be lacking skills, ideas, and resources required in solving most of the problems afflicting them but through students contribution, it is possible to find amicable solutions (Conrad 14). Environmental, poverty, hygiene and cultural constraints are some of the common issues afflicting most communities. The contribution of students assists in dealing with most of them since students are more informed about some matters than some members of the community. Therefore, students can assist the community in implementing community policies since they are easy to implement. Moreover, the services are vital in meeting and reducing the needs of the community.

On the other hand, mandatory integration of community services in the curriculum of students has been meeting with a lot of resistance from some quarters in the society. Most of those who are against the incorporation of voluntary services in curriculum make different arguments to support their stance. Some of the stances are valid since forced voluntary participation is against the will of most of the participants in the society.

One of the major claims against mandatory community services in school is that it is against the spirit of volunteering. Forced voluntary creates a negative impression in the society since most people prefer being served by people who are willing to provide the services voluntarily rather than through force (Pancer 24). Forced participation prompts the students to devalue the exercise since they were required to participate rather than to participate through personal inspiration or willingness to participate. The likelihood of future or subsequent participation is reduced since students’ participation is not inclined to the free will.

Moreover, mandatory community services fail to achieve any impact all. The services advanced to the community do not impact positively on the community since most of the students do not give their best during service delivery. According to Markus et al. (417), studies show that schools with community service requirements do not achieve significantly greater levels of student volunteering. According to studies, most students complain that limited periods in the execution of services deny them ample time to participate effectively and gain efficient experience. Contrary, according to Nieme, students who participate voluntarily in community services and their own free time contend with the level of experience they gain in the process. Undeniably, when students are forced to participate in forced community services, they start with a negative attitude and perception that affect the effectiveness of the services and the experience gained. Moreover, forced services serve, as involuntary servitude, which is a violation of people’s right to serve.

Moreover, some argue that forced extracurricular activities try to impose certain values or systems that do not appeal to all people. Certain forced services contravene the religious rights of some members of the society, which is against the First Amendment right to freedom of religion (Kahne 603). Therefore, the participation of students who do not conform to the values being advocated by certain types of community undermines the impact of the community services on the community. Forced participation undermines the sincerity of students in offering services to the community. Therefore, community service should be a student’s personal choice to enable the student to fulfill his/her service desired. The school administration determines Contrary, the choice of the community service that students participate in. Some choices deny student’s access to real life experience due to the nature of services that they indulge. Moreover, some argue that certain types of community services can open the door for discrimination. For instance, the needs of a community are many and supporting a single group over other make one feel left out and discriminated. Most students enjoy giving services that offer direct help the community in a bid to deliver personal satisfaction (Pancer 87). Activities that do not impact positively on students’ satisfaction undermine the morale of the student’s to participate.

There is a great connection between the willingness to participate in a service and learning. Therefore, when students have no willingness to participate in the forced activities, they will also have little to learn from the activity. Personal motivation is vital in helping a student to learn from the activities they participate in. Additionally, most of the schools do not articulate the choice of the community services with the educational mission. Therefore, most students are not able to integrate what they learn in the process of service delivery with the classroom work. Failures to choose service activities that are consistent with the learning mission of the students render mandatory voluntary services useless. Students end wasting their time on services that do not complement their classroom learning. Most of the people who are against mandatory voluntary services argue that students should focus more on subjects such as mathematics and reading in a bid to improve their grades instead of wasting time on voluntary services.

## Summary

Community services play a vital role in improving hands-on skills, cognitive skills, personal development, and moral judgment on students. Whereas some analysts argue that making, mandatory voluntary services would not improve all students’ socialization and cognitive skills, most of the students who have participated in the services have benefited significantly. When the credibility of mandatory services is questionable, its appeal to the community is undermined. However, the sample size used in conducting the research is always small and cannot be used as a representative of the whole students’ fraternity. Therefore, the study used to discredit the results is based on the unreliable size of the research elements. Despite being discredited by many in the society, making community service mandatory in schools will impact positively on students. Community services provide students with a rare opportunity to get in touch with the problems afflicting the society. Community services equip students with socialization skills, which are vital in establishing healthy relationships with fellow students and other people in the community. Therefore, community service is an important element that should be integrated into the learning process of the students.

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