SERVICE-LEARNING – A USEFUL TOOL FOR THE 21ST CENTURY SCHOOL-COUNSELORS

Anișoara Pavelea [1]

"Babeș-Bolyai" University
Romania

Abstract
Service-learning is an extremely versatile experiential pedagogical method, implemented worldwide in a wide array of academic disciplines, from kindergartens and schools to universities. Suitable for both online and offline settings, service-learning has been used in teacher training, as well as psychology and counseling students' curricula. Previous research has highlighted the positive impact of SL on graduate counselor students' development. Once familiar with the multiple benefits of service-learning for students, teachers, institutions and communities, future school counselors see this method as a useful tool for working with challenging gen Z and Alpha students, teaming up with colleagues, parents, and other community members, aiming to promote school inclusiveness and belonging, and thus becoming an invaluable nexus in this significant network. Still, given the current situation of school counselling in Romania nowadays, some challenges for debutant school counselors planning to implement SL projects in their schools are addressed in the final section of this article.

Keywords: service-learning; school counselors; generations; belonging; school inclusiveness

What is service-learning?

Service-learning (SL) is an experiential pedagogical method, that involves students in the real-life settings of communities where they can connect theory with practice. SL differs from volunteering or internship (Furco, 1996), in that it requires structured activities, based on an appropriate theory learned in class, preset learning objectives and integration of a critical reflective component (Kenworthy-U'Ren & Peterson, 2005, as cited in Ballard, 2013). It is defined as "a credit-bearing, educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a

---

[1] Lecturer, PhD, Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babes-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Romania; E-mail: pavelea@fspac.ro

broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995, p. 112).

SL can be placement-based or project-based. The first one requires students to spend a certain number of hours in a community organization fulfilling a predefined task or activity (Parker-Gwin & Mabry, 1998), while the second one involves a project developed within small groups of students asked to collaborate with a community partner to solve a specific identified need of the community (Hugg & Wurdinger, 2007). Four possible combinations of service and learning emerge (Sigmon, 1994, Tapia, 2006):

1) service-LEARNING, where the focus is especially on the learning objectives and curricula, similar to the traditional internships, visits to school counselors' offices and school counseling practicum;

2) SERVICE-learning, with an emphasis on service to the community, as in the examples of volunteering to offer career guidance services to high-school students or organizing events for school meetings with the parents or other specialists, with the aim of obtaining college credit;

3) service-learning with two distinct activities, each having a different goal, for example learning about social psychology and implementing a service component based on the needs of the community partners;

4) SERVICE-LEARNING, where both components are equally valuable and help enhance each other through critical reflection and presenting mutual benefits to students and communities (Eyler, 2002). For instance, planning an awareness campaign for school counselors regarding gender inequality based on the content of a career guidance class.

In the 2022 European conference on SL, Robert Bringle, one of the most cited authors covering SL pedagogy, proposed a new definition of SL, based on Kniffin's work (2022, as cited in Bringle & Clayton, 2022), arguing that "SL is both a pedagogy and a change strategy", having the potential to positively impact students, institutions, and communities (Saltmarsh et al., 2009). The American Psychological Association (APA Guide to college teaching, 2020) recommends SL as one of the high impact educational practices, endorsed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) along with writing-based assignments, internships, global learning/study away, and collaborative learning projects. It is both a pedagogical tool and a learning strategy (Meidl et al., 2018). SL is not charity, though sometimes it is driven by a culture of care, but it strives for systemic changes within communities, congruent to the views and goals of counseling education.

Multiple benefits have been documented for students, teachers, schools, and communities (Culic & Pavelea, 2022). SL helps students build

competency in four domains: academic/professional (career interests, critical thinking, problem-solving, motivation to learn), social (teamwork, conflict management, communication, leadership, network building), personal (self-awareness, self-efficacy, grit, values), and civic (civic knowledge, responsibility, identity, and mindedness) (Celio et al., 2011; Compare & Albanesi, 2022; Conway et al., 2009; Yorio & Ye, 2012). For teachers, SL brings networking and mentoring opportunities, increased job satisfaction, and recognition of efforts. For schools, it can be translated into increased visibility, reputation, partnerships and collaborations, retention rates for both students and teachers. For communities, SL brings reduced stereotypes and positive relations, expertise, and useful service.

SL is easily adaptable to many situations and areas. It can be implemented both on site and online, and the recent pandemic has shown the potential of adapting the SL methodology to the online environment, thus transcending the geographical constraints. E-SL could be either fully online (also called extreme SL, with both service and learning conducted online), or a combination of either online service, and on-site learning, or the other way around – online learning and on-site service (Waldner, et al., 2012). At the same time, SL has been used in a wide array of disciplines, ranging from engineering to arts, from mathematics to health sciences, from geography to social sciences (Salam et al., 2019).

Three requirements are indicated by CLAYSS (The Latin-American Center for Service-Learning) for SL projects: the active involvement of students in all areas of the project, a service developed within a community of place, identity, or interest, with real needs addressed, and the link between learning contents and service. Every SL project follows a sequence of phases, starting with the motivation and identification, continuing with diagnosis, project design, planning, implementation, and ending with closure, celebration, and multiplication (Sosa Rolon, 2020). To be considered successful SL projects, all these initiatives must take into consideration three cross-cutting processes: critical reflection, ongoing record, systematization and communication, and evaluation.

SL in the initial training of school counsellors

Previous research has highlighted the impact of SL on graduate counselor students' development. SL offers students the opportunity to apply in real-life settings the knowledge and skills they acquire in school, enabling personal awareness and long-term identity construction (Jones & Abes, 2004), challenging beliefs, preconceived ideas (Keller-Dupree et al, 2014), and cultural biases (Burnett et al., 2004), allowing students to better understand their professional counseling roles and environments (Jett &

Delgado-Romero, 2009), promoting social justice (Petersen et al., 2008), and preparing students to work in multicultural settings (Lee & Kelley-Petersen, 2018). Other studies have proven that SL indeed challenges assumptions, supports knowledge acquisition, resource-building, and networking, while encouraging self-reflection. Most of the studies mention that SL is usually regarded as a positive, impactful experience, or as one of Burnett et al. (2004, p. 187) study's participants put it: "one of the best experiences from the graduate counseling program". We know from Furr & Carol (2003, p. 4) that in graduate counselor development "experiential learning activities have a greater emotional impact than courses based on cognitive learning strategies", therefore SL projects can be seen as an extremely important instructional tool for educational enhancement. Counselor students are required to fulfil a compulsory self-awareness component by the end of their studies, to apply for a counselor or psychotherapist certificate, and SL projects can be a perfect start for this process.

By going out into the communities they are about to serve, the service in SL requires school counselors-in-training to meet with "strangers who might become familiar" (Sheffield, 2005, p. 51). To be able to serve diverse populations, in terms of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and experience (ASCA, 2012), school counselors are encouraged to develop a wide array of skills. Also, to support students and their families, school counselors need to develop in time a rich network of people and organizations outside schools, an aim fully congruent with the design, planning and implementation of SL projects. They identify meaningful and valuable resources, community leaders, NGOs and other institutions providing valuable services to students, teachers, and families, and connect with them.

During their studies, counselors-in-training are invited to define their personal and professional values, to choose their instruments and theories, their perspective of the counselling process, to keep an open-mind to theories and innovations from other fields of study, to choose the age categories they will serve and the professional contexts they feel more comfortable to implement their activities in, therefore it is of utmost importance to immerse as often as possible in real-life settings to find answers to personal and professional questions (Keller-Dupree, 2014). SL provides such opportunities under the guidance and careful supervision of an instructor. Also, as Lee & Kelley-Petersen (2018) signal, there is a stringent need for counselors to be aware of their own privilege when planning to work with marginalized populations, and SL projects could bridge the gap between students' subjective views of the counselling profession and the realities of everyday life. Being exposed to diverse counseling environments makes students "aware of what counseling is, as

opposed to what they imagined it to be" (Jett & Delgado-Romero, 2009, in Lee & Kelley-Peterson, 2018, p. 148).

SL – a useful tool for enhancing school counselors' work

Once familiar during their initial training with the multiple benefits of service-learning for students, teachers, institutions and communities, future school counselors perceive this method as a useful tool for working with challenging gen Z and Alpha students, teaming up with colleagues, parents, and other community members, aiming to promote school inclusiveness and belonging, and thus becoming an invaluable nexus in this significant network.

Why are gen Z and Alpha students challenging? First af all, because they have unique generational characteristics, which are important in the counseling process. It is not a matter of a one-size-fits them-all approach, but being aware of the generational profile, the school counselor will be able to wisely assess typical and atypical behaviours, motivations, cognitions etc.

Gen Alpha students are born entirely in the 21st century. Also called screenagers (Ziatdinov & Cilliers, 2021), or screamagers (Drugaș, 2022), they poses greater digital literacy and adaptability, but have shorter attention spans and sometimes delayed social development. Impacted by the increased screen time and the recent pandemic, gen Alpha is also marked by obesity, allergies and other health problems. We know that excessive screen time is associated with sleep deprivation, impaired language development, behavioral problems, attention and cognitive deficits, damaged executive functions, and poor eating habits (Hutton et al. 2020). Growing up using tablets and smartphones, either for educational or entertainment, is extremely common for gen Alpha, as they are tech heavy. Technology per se is not good or bad, but the way we instrumentalize it matters. Being raised by Millennial heavy social media users, the Alphas have had adults modelling ICT use early in their life. Spending more time in front of mobile devices, they are having fewer opportunities for unstructured play outside. A study conducted in Britain shows that nowadays parents are more protective of their children and provide less freedom for them to play outside unsupervised (Dodd et al., 2021). As the author of the study suggests, this is important because children have fewer opportunities to develop risk management independently, and this may impact their wellbeing and health. The situation has also changed in Romania, where shopping malls' playgrounds were full before the pandemic, and indoor recreational spaces tended to be preferred in the urban areas. Helicopter overprotective parenting is increasing in Romania and the challenges associated to permissive and authoritarian parenting are on the public agenda. Bullying strategies are enforced in schools and psychological services are recommended and provided to parents.

According to Mark McCrindle, the author who coined the term, we are talking about "the most formally educated generation ever, the most

technology-supplied generation ever, and globally the wealthiest generation ever" (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009, p. 27). On the long run, the Alpha Generation is probably going to delay marriage, childbirth and retirement, due to prolonged educational attainment. As one in two will graduate university, the Alphas will be an entrepreneurial generation, developing career in sectors like cyber-security, artificial intelligence, blockchain technology, and other digital areas. On the job market, they are expected to provide more feminine leaders, to look for innovative companies, having high expectations and being extremely demanding to employers. They are asking for training and personal growth opportunities, valuing skills, instead of job titles. They are expected to be the most democratic generation as they are aware of globalization, climate change and social, political and economic changes throughout the world. Still, they tend to be vulnerable to mis- and disinformation, burnout and influencer marketing to a higher degree than previous generations.

Born between 1995 and 2009, also called screenagers, Zoomers, iGen or digital integrators, the Zees are described as mobile, social, global, visual and digital. Growing in rapidly changing times, they are the students of today and the employees of tomorrow. They are "the most materially endowed, technological saturated, globally connected, formally educated generation our world has ever seen" (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2009, p. 15). Globalization has impacted their lives in multiple dimensions, influencing the music they listen to, the food they eat, the places they travel to, their social and communication trends. With the information overload, they tend to become visually engaged, preferring to watch videos in the detriment of reading books and larger pieces of information, sharing memes, pictures, and videos. They are more focused on how they learn than on the content of their learning, preferring engaging, interactive content, having lower tolerance to frustration, and thus getting bored easily. This could explain their heavy social media use, with both positive and negative consequences, such as large network of online friends, 24/7 connectivity, but low self-esteem, increased cyberbullying, and fear of missing out. In the workplace they prefer the empowering leadership style and value collaboration, multi-modality learning environments and forums of deliberation as decision-making contexts. They live their life according to the YOLO (You only live once!) motto, and are expected to change on average 18 jobs, 6 careers and 15 homes in a lifetime.

Therefore, these are the two generational cohorts that today's school counselors are working with. Given the age gap and the different training background, the challenges are multiple. First, in terms of communication patterns. Second, related to preferences, needs and desires, expectations, and values. Third, in terms of social support and social interactions. And last, but not least, in terms of lifestyles. And school counselors must keep up the pace, be knowledgeable about the changes, understand the characteristics of

Zees and Alphas, the challenges they face and at the same time, being aware of their potential.

The school counselor – an expert bridging the school nexus – students, parents and teachers

School counselors are in direct contact with and at the intersection of teacher-family relationships. They hold a privileged position in the school setting, as they are often seen as needed consultants for students, parents, and teachers. Scholl counselors offer a diverse range of services (psychological evaluation, counselling, consultancy, teaching, and training etc.). In Romania, in the educational system, they activate within the CJRAE (Centre Judetene de Resurse și Asistență Educațională), "offering, coordinating and monitoring the specific educational services provided to students, parents, teachers and community members, to ensure everyone's access to a quality education, as well as the necessary assistance in this regard" (OM5555/2011, art. 2). They work in school psycho-pedagogical offices, in career guidance centers, or offer teaching services to students, in a safe and controlled environment. The main attribution of school counselors refers to preventing emotional and behavioral problems (Băban, 2009), along with collaborating with "parents, legal guardians and other educational specialists (teachers, school psychologist) in order to adapt the curricula to student's needs, as well as to solve the student's academic, behavioral or other kind of issues" (ANC, 2010, p. 3, as cited in Enea, 2019, p.61). School counselors are able to design individual and group interventions for a vast array of problems related to school adjustment, absenteeism, dropout, abuse, violence, neglect, divorce, addiction, academic difficulties etc.; they can offer counselling services, consultancy for parents and teachers, oftentimes mediate conflicts, present information and action strategies to school commissions and committees, design school prevention and intervention projects, involve specialists from outside schools and facilitate students access to a diverse network of community resources. Therefore, we tend to agree with Enea (2019, p. 21) that "the variety of activities that a school counselor must carry out highlights the special complexity that the practice of this profession entails". He/she thus becomes a nexus for community projects.

The school counselors can act as a binder between the school system, parents, and communities. Being aware of the most significant problems students and their communities face, of their diverse needs and backgrounds, they can facilitate teamwork and collective projects, involving parents, students, teachers, and other community members. By connecting actors from this network of people having common objectives, the school counselor's role becomes even more significant.

Withal, school counselors work with a diverse population, in terms of age, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religion, ethnicity,

education etc. and are continually challenged to take full advantage of personal resources, interpersonal abilities, professional experience and expertise to the better of the student population. Apart from the work school counselors do in their office, they can start service-learning projects, developed in multiple teams, involving other colleagues from the same schools, students, and parents, along with community partners. Service-learning activities can be combined with the consultancy services, very much differing from counselling. While school counseling refers to promoting students' academic, social, and emotional development through individual or small-group counseling sessions, consultancy describes the relationship between the counselor and another adult, in this case either parents, or school auxiliary personnel, teachers or school administration (Lee, 2005). School counselors can provide valuable information regarding the service-learning methodology, can start SL clubs, involving students from different grade levels, can connect community members and target community needs at a larger scale. Their work within the school office can step outside into the real-life of the community and make things happen.

SL as an instrument for developing students career interest and facilitating career decision-making

SL projects can support the counselling services offered by school counsellors, providing the optimal context for career interest identification, values' crystallization, and career-decision implementation. SL projects are starting from the curriculum and the learning objectives of the course, but it is recommended to build upon students' own interests, values, and preferences (Moely et al., 2008). Previous studies have shown that because SL projects involve students' choices and interests, they may influence to a higher degree students' motivation to develop their skills, to set personal learning objectives, and thus reduce or reverse underachievement (Bruce-Davies & Chancey, 2012; Hébert & Schreiber, 2010), encourage expression of giftedness, provide students a sense of ownership (Larson et al., 2005), and empower them to fulfill the designated tasks. Through interest-based SL projects, students can connect with peers sharing the same interests (Baum et al., 1995), and develop strong teamwork relationships (Dawes & Larson, 2011; Smith et al., 2010). In some cases, SL projects have been proven to lead students to change their peer group and based on similar interests with other students to increase their level of school engagement (Baum et al., 1995).

Nevertheless, students come to develop long-term goals and get involved in career decisions based on the skills they have developed or on course topics (Smith et al., 2010). SL not only strengthens career interests' crystallization, but also facilitates the transition into the workforce for college students, and due to the hands-on experiences, it provides a higher probability of employment after graduation (Miller et al., 2018), and

increased employability, as defined by Bennett (2019, p. 32), designating "the ability to create and sustain work over time".

By combining the positive effects of SL projects with the counselling curricula, school counselors can manage their own career guidance process through college, but also after graduation, in their service, they will be able to support counselled students in making career decisions, by providing valuable academic, cultural, and social support that parents alone are not able to (Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018). After completing a SL project, school counselors can implement similar projects with students from the communities they reside and work in.

Implemented under the careful supervision of a team joining school counselors and other teachers, SL projects can be used as mentoring programs, where younger students can benefit from the experience of an older or peer mentor with the aim of positively influencing students` growth, development, and academic performance at different ages (Pavelea & Culic, 2022). Mentoring programs are extremely suitable for at-risk youth, empowering them and providing opportunities for increased academic engagement and retention, social support, connectedness, belonging and persistence, especially for minority and first-generation students (Kupersmidt et al., 2020). Even though mentoring programs in SL are quite rare, they hold great potential (Weiler et al., 2013).

SL as a means of encouraging school inclusiveness and belonging

SL methodology can be used with students of different ages, as long as we have clear learning goals and accurately identified community needs. It has been proven that SL offers students opportunities of setting personal learning objectives and empowers them to accept the responsibility for their own learning (McKay & Rozee, 2004). Previous studies show that SL facilitates safe spaces for communication with instructors (McKay & Estrella, 2008), which are extremely important for school counselors who intend to implement prevention programs, volunteering, or SL projects with students from the entire educational institution they serve.

Especially for graduate counselor students and school counselors in service, SL becomes a useful strategy for advocating on behalf of marginalized communities, unheard voices, and those in need (Lee & Kelley-Petersen, 2018), for inclusiveness and integration. SL curriculum has the potential to enhance the interaction between faculty and students, by fostering a strong sense of community and belonging (He, 2019, Pak, 2018, York & Fernandez, 2018).

Belonging in schools is defined as experiencing a deep sense of acceptance, and safety, being valued and feeling that you can contribute to an environment (Turner-Essel, 2022). Belonging can be intentionally facilitated by school counselors, as it is usually associated with increased overall sense of health and wellness, longevity, immunity, increased

productivity and work satisfaction, interest in day-to-day tasks, large collective goals in a work team or community, better academic performance, and long-term success outcome.

Belonging involves both place-belongingness (the personal, intimate feeling of being at home in a place) and the policy of belonging (through discourses and practices as forms of socio-spacial inclusion and exclusion), according to Antonsich (2010). With the chronic spread of bullying in the Romanian schools and the focus on anti-bullying laws and regulations, a focus on the sense of belonging could help students understand and mitigate the perceived differences between them, could help them reevaluate the boundaries separating the multidimensional school communities into 'us' and 'them' (Yuval-Davis, 2006). In SL, all ideas are valuable, and participants are encouraged to contribute with their own ideas, skills, resources, and networks. Active learning and participation are expected. Democratic decision-making is supported, and specific roles are assigned to each participant. Self-awareness and self-knowledge exercises are implemented, and critical reflection is highly utilized.

SL facilitates all six dimensions of positive youth development: competence, confidence, connection, caring, character, and contribution (Pavelea et al., 2022). Especially for the Romanian schools, SL projects have been proven to pave the way for decreased school dropout, increased school engagement and performance, networking opportunities and long-term partnerships with local administration, economic agents, and NGOs, promote school inclusiveness, reduce discrimination, and cultivate a culture of belonging.

Challenges for school counselors aiming to implement SL projects

We have argued so far that SL is a useful tool not only during school counselors initial training in college, but also during their service in schools, as it presents a rich collection of advantages not only for school counselor, but also for their students, schools, and communities at large. Still, given the current situation of school counselling in Romania nowadays, some challenges for school counselors planning to implement SL projects in their schools, especially for debutants must be taken into consideration.

First, school counselors are expected to provide support for the career, academic, personal, and social growth of students. However, due to the large number of students and educational units served (Rodideal, 2018), they often get to manage diverse duties outside the realm of the counselling role, such as: standardized tests application, covering classes when colleagues are missing, addressing discipline, registration, and scheduling (Cinotti, 2014), providing mental health services to both students and teachers (Hann-Morrison, 2011), and the list goes on. We know that in Romania, school counselors work with up to 1200 students, oftentimes

located in different school units, offer consultancy to colleagues and parents, fulfill administrative tasks, and face multiple difficulties. Therefore, embarking on the SL journey can seem overwhelming at the beginning. In the incipient phase, SL involves a significant amount of work, and given the huge workload of school counselors, it would be a good idea to team up with colleagues who have already implemented SL projects. Good organizational and time-management skills are also required. The alternative of e-SL projects is to be considered. Serious training on SL and mentoring opportunities from other colleagues could be of help to overcome this challenge, and there are some organizations already providing this kind of services to teachers, for example The New Horizon Foundation in collaboration with CLAYSS (https://www.noi-orizonturi.ro/resurse/service-learning-in-clasa/).

Second, school administration support is crucial. Many principals do not understand the role of school counselors and the challenges they face (Leuwerke et al., 2009; Curry et al, 2019). The school principal must understand first what a school counselor does, which is his role in the school ecosystem, what skill one possesses, and how can his experience and expertise be harnessed. Then, oftentimes, while the counselor focuses on the individual student, the school principal is focused on the school unit as a whole. Therefore, the school counselor needs to decide from the start whom he serves, who is the primary client, what set of services does he provide, to whom, with what objectives. Also, if the school principal is not familiarized with the SL methodology and its benefits, it might be difficult to gather agreement and support from the outset. Similar examples of SL projects, excerpts from the media, prizes, and public recognition of the projects on local and regional level (Sustainable Development Gala, Merito Network, Regional SL awards), can be a good incentive for school principals to approve the initiative. During the implementation of the SL projects, the role of the school principal is also important. Especially for debutant school counselors, school administration and teaching staff can act as supporters or opponents. They can act as driving forces or contribute to the complete shutdown of the projects. School principals can budget counselling costs (for example for acquiring psychological assessment platforms and training), can designate decent counselling offices, can influence school scheduling and administrative tasks assignment, can attract sponsors for school activities and projects, and grant permission to pursue economic partners' support. Last, but not least, proper recognition for the work of all members of school initiatives can be reinforced by school administration, and sometimes, even the simple verbal recognition and acknowledgment of effort in front of the colleagues is an excellent motivator for school counselors. Especially for more experienced school counselors, who lack motivation after years of increased workload, multiple educational reforms, trending chronic burnout, and lack of resources, SL projects have been

proven to be seen as an accomplishment and an important source of satisfaction (Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008; Pavelea et al., 2022).

Third, for school counselors at the beginning of a career, finding colleagues with an interest in engaged learning can be somehow difficult. But for those with a growth mindset, SL projects can provide the opportunity to seek capacity building. They can provide school counselors the occasion to approach more experienced colleagues and school administration, to identify mentoring golden opportunities, to look for other key members of the local community and join forces in different projects that can bring for both the school, the teachers, the counselors, and community partners increased satisfaction, increased awareness of social responsibility, tangible outcomes, and last, but not least, recognition of efforts and visibility in the local or national media.

Conclusions

Service-learning is an innovative pedagogical methodology, extremely versatile and full of benefits for all the actors involved. It is not a panacea, but it can be a useful tool for 21st century school counselors. To ensure that quality projects are being implemented, school counselors need to be trained on SL ideally during their initial graduate training. Incorporating SL in teacher and counselor education contributes to the up skilling of both categories. Romania is not the only country where SL is used in small degree. Even in the US, where state policies are enforcing the implementation of SL (for example in the state of Louisiana), school counselors may not be aware of the existence of such acts (Curry et al., 2019), and if the initial training does not cover the SL methodology and the counselors do not participate in individual training on SL, the massive potential of SL is lost.

Excellent initial training is just one requirement for becoming a "reflective practitioner" (Schön, 1983). Becoming an excellent teacher and an experienced school counselor is the result of 'deliberate practice' (Ericsson, 2006), involving multiple pedagogies, methods, instruments, and approaches. Even though different, both roles - teacher, and counselor - are relationship focused. A fortiori, school counselors must advocate by default for the wellbeing of the different (the poor, the weak, the gifted, the immigrant etc.). Serving diverse populations, they are aware of the disparate needs of the student populations and have the privileged position of interacting not only with students, but also with their teachers, families, and other community members. They are a part of the systemic change within communities, being entrusted to uphold social justice, leadership, advocacy, and multiculturalism (Luke & Godrich, 2015).

But to work with the best instruments and counseling techniques, school counselors must continuously invest in their personal development, seize training opportunities, find financial resources for testing licenses,

projects, and other initiatives, such as SL projects. Job satisfaction is significantly influenced, by intrinsic motivation, but also by extrinsic factors, such as: pay and rewards, working conditions, growth opportunities, and principal's support, among others. Previous research shows that in the educational system, teachers' experience and turnover follows a U-shape distribution. While debutants and more-experienced teachers are the most inclined to depart from the profession (Guarino et al., 2006), the same can be expected of school counselors. SL projects could become an additional incentive for individuals thinking twice about leaving the school system for a higher salary. The first five years in service are extremely important for teachers' and counselors' attrition rates (Ingersoll, 2017). Discovering the potential of SL projects for themselves, for the students and communities they serve, school counselors can hold increased job satisfaction levels, can contribute to the change of whole communities, and fulfill their mission.

Systemic changes can be implemented if we focus on the Romanian educational system. Helicopter overprotective parenting can be mitigated through SL projects, as school counselors can create a safe space for Alphas to experiment, to find a voice and build competency while proving parents they can do more. Overinvolved parents will accept easier their children's openness to experiences, if it is carried on under the careful supervision of a school counselor, and based on school curricula. Students will be able to connect with diverse colleagues, build independence and autonomy, along with teamwork and conflict management skills.

As for generation Z, the most materially endowed and globally connected generation so far, they become good candidates for E-SL, as they are aware of international issues, are formally educated and travel more compared to their predecessors, are aware of the differences between people, countries, and societies, and strive for a healthier planet. It is expected of Alphas and Zees to participate more in the circular economy, encouraging social entrepreneurship, due to their openness to understand the truth of different kinds of people. They are more inclined to dialogue and live life pragmatically, therefore SL could be an adequate methodology for satisfying their need to connect theory with practice. The sooner they start, the more prepared they will be for the real world of work.

Displaying a lower tolerance towards frustration, gen Z and Alphas demand more engaging materials, heavily relying on video content, podcasts and YouTube shorts, Instagram reels, TikTok, and SL projects provide a rich collection of these kind of resources. By focusing on their needs and identifying these two generational profiles in terms of learning styles, preferences, motivations, cognitive resources and behaviors, school counselors can help them overcome challenges and find adequate means of expression after implementing SL projects based on their own interests and satisfying the needs of their communities, thus combining service with learning in real-life settings.

Experiencing the large number of benefits SL brings to the school system during the initial training in college and continuing implementing SL projects while in service, school counselors contribute to students' personal growth, to school success and community well-being. They can identify various needs, connect community members, involve students in all areas of the SL projects, address individual and collective needs, encourage diversity and a sense of belonging, facilitate school inclusion, and contribute to the education and development of future engaged citizens.

References

Akosah-Twumasi, P., Emeto, T. I., Lindsay, D., Tsey, K., & Malau-Aduli, B. S. (2018, July). A systematic review of factors that influence youths career choices—the role of culture. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 3, p. 58). Frontiers Media SA.

American Psychological Association (2020). *The APA Guide to College Teaching: Essential Tools and Techniques Based on Psychological Science*. https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/undergrad.

American School Counselor Association (2012). *The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.

Antonsich, M. (2010). Searching for belonging: An analytical framework. *Geography Compass*, *4*(6), 644–659.

Ballard, A. (2013). Reducing the Boundaries Between the Community and the Academy with a Full-Time Service-Learning Capstone. *Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching*, *6*, 48-53.

Baum, S. M., Renzulli, J. S., & Hébert, T. P. (1995). Reversing underachievement: Creative productivity as a systematic intervention. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, *39*(4), 224-235.

Băban, A. (2009). *Consiliere educaţională–ghid metodologic pentru orele de dirigenţie și consiliere.* ASCR.

Bennett, D. (2019). Graduate employability and higher education: Past, present and future. *HERDSA Review of Higher Education*, *5*, 31-61.

Bringle, R. G & Clayton, P. H. (2022, October 6-7). Designing critical reflection for SDGs [Conference session], 5th European Conference on Service-learning in Higher Education, Rotterdam School of Management Erasmus University. https://www.easlhe.eu/conference/.

Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (1995). A service-learning curriculum for faculty. *The Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning, 2*(1), 112-122.

Bruce-Davis, M. N., & Chancey, J. M. (2012). Connecting students to the real world: Developing gifted behaviors through service learning. *Psychology in the Schools*, *49*(7), 716-723.

Burnett, J. A., Hamel, D., & Long, L. L. (2004). Service learning in graduate counselor education: Developing multicultural counseling competency. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 32*(3), 180-191.

Celio, C. I., Durlak, J., & Dymnicki, A. (2011). A meta-analysis of the impact of service-learning on students. *Journal of Experiential Education*, *34*(2), 164-181.

Cinotti, D. (2014). Competing professional identity models in school counseling: A historical perspective and commentary. *The Professional Counselor, 4*, 417–425.

Compare, C., & Albanesi, C. (2022). Belief, attitude and critical understanding. A systematic review of social justice in Service-Learning experiences. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2639

Conway, J. M., Amel, E. L., & Gerwien, D. P. (2009). Teaching and learning in the social context: A meta-analysis of service learning's effects on academic, personal, social, and citizenship outcomes. *Teaching of Psychology*, *36*(4), 233-245.

Culic, L., & Pavelea, A. (2022, April 20-22). What's in it for me? Integrating Service-Learning into Higher Education curricula (conference session). A Focus on Pedagogy: Teaching, Learning and Research in the Modern Academy. University of Kassel, Ball State University, Beaconhouse National University and the University of Pretoria with AMPS. https://architecturemps.com/focus-pedagogy/

Curry, J. R., Sulentic Dowell, M. M., Saal, L. K., & Meidl, T. D. (2019). Secondary School Counselors' Perceptions of Service-Learning: Gaps between State Policy, Counselors' Knowledge, and Implementation. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*, *15*(13), n13.

Dawes, N. P., & Larson, R. (2011). How youth get engaged: grounded-theory research on motivational development in organized youth programs. *Developmental Psychology*, *47*(1), 259.

Dodd, H. F., Fitz-Gibbon, L., Watson, B. E., & Nesbit, R. J. (2021). Children's Play and Independent Mobility in 2020: Results from the British Children's Play Survey. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(8), 4334. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18084334.

Drugas, M. (2022). Screenagers or" Screamagers"? Current Perspectives on Generation Alpha. *Psychological Thought*, *15*(1), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.37708/psyct.v15i1.732

Enea, V. (2019). *Intervenţii psihologice în şcoala. Manualul consilierului şcolar*. Polirom.

Ericsson, K. A. (2006). The influence of experience and deliberate practice on the development of superior expert performance. *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*, *38*(685-705), 2-2.

Eyler, J. (2002). Reflection: Linking service and learning—Linking students and communities. *Journal of Social Issues*, *58*(3), 517-534.

Furco, A. (1996). A balanced approach to experiential education. *Expanding Boundaries: Service and Learning*. Corporation for National Service.

Furr, S. R., & Carroll, J. J. (2003). Critical incidents in student counselor development. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 81*, 483-489.

Guarino, C. M., Santibanez, L., & Daley, G. A. (2006). Teacher recruitment and retention: A review of the recent empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research*, *76*(2), 173–208.

Hann-Morrison, D. (2011). The varied roles of school counselors in rural settings. *Georgia School Counselors Association Journal, 18*(1), 16–22.

He, S. E. (2019). Finding home: Developing a sense of belonging through service-learning. *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, *7*(1), 11483.

Hébert, T. P., & Schreiber, C. A. (2010). An examination of selective achievement in gifted males. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, *33*(4), 570-605.

Hugg, R., & Wurdinger, S. (2007). A practical and progressive pedagogy for project-based service learning. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 19*, 191–204.

Hutton, J. S., Dudley, J., Horowitz-Kraus, T., DeWitt, T., & Holland, S. K. (2020). Associations between screen-based media use and brain white matter integrity in preschool-aged children. *JAMA Pediatrics*, *174*(1), e193869-e193869.

Ingersoll, R. (2017). Misdiagnosing America's teacher quality problem. In G. K. LeTendre & M. Akiba (Eds.), *International Handbook of Teacher Quality and Policy* (pp. 79–96). Routledge.

Jett, S. T., & Delgado-Romero, E. A. (2009). Prepracticum service-learning in counselor education: A qualitative case study. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *49*(2), 106-121.

Jones, S. R., & Abes, E. S. (2004). Enduring influences of service-learning on college students' identity development. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(2), 149-166.

Keller-Dupree, E. A., Little, M. L., Hagman, A. G., & Deckert, J. J. (2014). Collaborative learning: The effects of service learning on personal and professional development for school counselors-in-training. *VISTAS Online*, *7*, 1-12.

Kenworthy-U'Ren, A. L. (2008). A decade of service-learning: A review of the field ten years after JOBE's seminal special issue. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *81*(4), 811-822.

Kupersmidt, J., Stelter, R., Karcher, M., Garringer, M., & Shane, J. (2020). Peer mentoring supplement to Elements of effective practice for mentoring [TM]: Research-informed and practitioner-approved best practices for creating and sustaining impactful mentoring relationships and strong program services. MENTOR: National Mentoring Partnership.

Larson, R., Walker, K., & Pearce, N. (2005). A comparison of youth-driven and adult-driven youth programs: Balancing inputs from youth and adults. *Journal of Community Psychology, 33*, 57–74.

Lee, K. A., & Kelley-Petersen, D. J. (2018). Service Learning in Human Development: Promoting Social Justice Perspectives in Counseling. *Professional Counselor*, *8*(2), 146-158.

Lee, S. W. (2005). *Encyclopedia of School Psychology*. Sage Publications.

Leuwerke, W. C., Walker, J., & Shi, Q. (2009). Informing principals: The impact of different types of information on principals' perceptions of professional school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, *12*(4), 2156759X0901200404.

Luke, M., & Goodrich, K. M. (2015). Working with family, friends, and allies of LBGT youth. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling & Psychology*, *7*(1), 63-83.

McCrindle, M., & Wolfinger, E. (2009). *The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the global generations*. UNSW Press.

McKay, V. C., & Estrella, J. (2008). First-generation student success: The role of faculty interaction in service-learning courses. *Communication Education*, *57*(3), 356-372.

McKay, V. C., & Rozee, P. D. (2004). Characteristics of faculty who adopt service-learning pedagogy. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 10*, 2133.

Meidl, T. D., Saal, L. K., & Dowell, M. M. S. (2018). A typology of conscious decision making for service-learning field experiences: Labeling practice and identifying praxis. In *Handbook of research on service-learning initiatives in teacher education programs* (pp. 504-513). IGI Global.

Miller, A. L., Rocconi, L. M., & Dumford, A. D. (2018). Focus on the finish line: does high-impact practice participation influence career plans and early job attainment? *Higher Education*, *75*(3), 489-506.

Moely, B. E., Furco, A., & Reed, J. (2008). Charity and social change: The impact of individual preferences on service-learning outcomes. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, *15*(1), 37-48.

Pak, C.-S. (2018). Linking Service-Learning with Sense of Belonging: A Culturally Relevant Pedagogy for Heritage Students of Spanish. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *17*(1), 76–95.

Parker-Gwin, R., & Mabry, J. B. (1998). Service-learning as pedagogy and civic education: Comparing outcomes for three models. *Teaching Sociology, 26*, 276–291. https://doi.org/10.2307/1318768

Pavelea, A., & Culic, L. I. (2022). Challenges and benefits of service-learning. A Communication science students' perspective. In I. Jadrić, & I. Bilić (eds.), *Proceedings of the 1st International Scientific and Professional Conference on Service-Learning "Community-Engaged University"*, May 20, 2022, Split, Croatia. (pp. 87-98). University of Split, The European University of the Seas (SEA-EU) Alliance.

Pavelea, A., Culic, L. I., & Chiorean, C. (2022, June 24-25). Who is winning in service-learning? Teachers' role in serving communities and positive youth development, *ERD 2022 Education Reflection, Development, Proceedings of the 10th International Conference Education, Reflection, Development*, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Petersen, N., Dunbar-Krige, H., & Fritz, E. (2008). Chronicling a Faculty of Education's journey into community engagement through service learning. *Education as Change, 12*(2), 123–135.

Rodideal, A. (2018). School counseling – Promoting digital competences and minimizing internet risks. In E. A. Jansen & A. Szilagyi (eds.). *Counselors' role in the local and global community* (pp. 121-132), Editura Universitară.

Salam, M., Awang Iskandar, D. N., Ibrahim, D. H. A., & Farooq, M. S. (2019). Service learning in higher education: A systematic literature review. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, *20*(4), 573-593.

Saltmarsh, J., Hartley, M., & Clayton, P. (2009). Democratic engagement white paper. *New England Resource Center for Higher Education*, Retrieved from https://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs/274.

Schön, D. A. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action.* Basic.

Sheffield, E. C. (2005). Service in service-learning education: The need for philosophical understanding. *The High School Journal, 89*(1), 46-53.

Sigmon, L. R. (1994). Serving to learn, learning to serve. *Linking service with learning*. Council for Independent Colleges Report.

Smith, L., Davis, K., & Bhomik, M. (2010). Youth participatory action research groups as school counseling interventions. *Professional School Counseling, 14*, 174–182.

Sosa Rolon, J. A. (2020). *Resourcebook for the development of Service-Learning projects.* CLAYSS.

Tapia, M. N. (2006). Aprendizaje y servicio solidario: em el sistema educativo y las organizaciones juveniles [Solidarity Service-

Learning in the educational system and youth organizations]. Ciudad Nueva.

Turner-Essel, L. (2022, November 5th). Învățăm împreună Conference – international panel *The importance of belonging in schools*. *Create a culture of belongin*g, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Waldner, L. S., Widener, M. C., & McGorry, S. Y. (2012). E-service learning: The evolution of service-learning to engage a growing online student population. *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, *16*(2), 123-150.

Weiler, L., Haddock, S., Zimmerman, T. S., Krafchick, J., Henry, K., & Rudisill, S. (2013). Benefits derived by college students from mentoring at-risk youth in a service-learning course. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 52*(3), 236-248.

Yorio, P. L., & Ye, F. (2012). A meta-analysis on the effects of service-learning on the social, personal, and cognitive outcomes of learning. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *11*(1), 9-27.

York, T. T., & Fernandez, F. (2018). The positive effects of service-learning on transfer students' sense of belonging: A multi-institutional analysis. *Journal of College Student Development*, *59*(5), 579-597.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice, 40*(3), 197–214.

Ziatdinov, R., & Cilliers, J. (2022). Generation Alpha: Understanding the next cohort of university students. *European Journal of Contemporary Education, 10*(3), 783-789. https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2202.01422.

https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/_fi%C8%99iere/Invatamant-Preuniversitar/2016/retea%20scolara/conexe/OM_5555_2011_ROF_centre_jud_resurse_%C5%9Fi_asisten%C5%A3%C4%83_educa%C5%A3ional%C4%83_CJRAE.pdf.