Bibliometric review of service learning on civic education

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A R T I C L E I N F O

A B S T R A C T

The aim of service learning is to give students a learning experience that is connected to real-world situations and progresses over time while also helping the community. Service learning is a way of teaching that connects what students learn in lectures and theories from the classroom to the community's needs and situation. This study plans to look at and summarize the growing number of studies on using service learning in teaching about civic duties to bring new ideas into civic education. The study uses the VOSviewer tool for a bibliometric analysis, which is a way to study information on service learning in civic education using data. The data was gathered from the Scopus database using keywords like "service-learning," "citizenship," "civic," and "education." The search found 90 articles related to the topic, published between 1997 and 2023. The findings indicate that research on service learning in civic education started in 1997, with significant increases in 2010 and 2022. The early research was more about expressing ideas and theories. The study suggests that service learning can be a creative way to teach civic education.

1. Introduction

Service Learning is defined as experience-based education in which students participate in organized service activities to meet identified community needs and reflect on these service activities to gain a further understanding of learning content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an increased sense of civic responsibility (Bringle and Hatcher, 1995; Mishal et al., 2022). Various studies discuss the relationship between service learning and the learning objectives of civic education (Bringle and Clayton, 2021) as well as developing socio-educational commitment (Asenjo et al., 2021), personal, professional, and university social responsibility (Coelho and Menezes, 2021), citizen awareness (Mtawa and Nkhoma, 2020), even science achievement, citizen engagement, and social skills (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2021).

The service learning framework illustrates that service learning goals usually vary but can be broadly categorized into three main categories: to be, involve, and do (Britt, 2012). Being a goal can be explained as enhancing a student's self-concept, linking self-esteem deeply with society. Engaging can be explained as increasing social awareness and equity. Doing can be explained as doing practice centered on activity and reflection (Britt, 2012; Kennedy, 2019; Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008; Yorio and Ye, 2012). The similarities emerge from the classic work of Godfrey and Grasso (2000) and Kolenko et al. (1996), which has identified three basic elements known as 3R Service learning:

- Reality,
- Reflection, and
- Reciprocity.

Reality enhances academic content concerning real-world experiences, and a deeper understanding of social issues reflection helps students understand how they have changed by experiencing and thinking deeply.

Reciprocity motivates individuals to participate in exchanges that are open and beneficial for all parties involved (Flannery and Pragman, 2008). The concepts of civics learning and civics goals are fundamental in implementing and examining civics education and service learning. Several terms describe learning goals focused on benefiting others or the community, which are commonly discussed in service-learning contexts. These goals include fostering social responsibility, understanding democratic principles, clarifying personal values,

promoting moral development, addressing public needs, developing democratic citizenship skills, building a sense of community and humanity, enhancing commitment to social justice, forming a civic identity, embracing global and cosmopolitan perspectives, finding life's purpose, and achieving global citizenship (Bringle and Clayton, 2021). Therefore, the purpose of service learning extends beyond immediate educational outcomes to support broader objectives of engaging citizens in various activities. Service learning offers a significant educational strategy that not only enriches academic learning and personal development but also emphasizes the role of citizenship education in higher education. This approach aids in cultivating the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors for fostering democracy, advancing justice, preparing for future careers, finding meaning in life, and contributing to world peace. It can thus act as an exemplar for adopting democratic engagement practices across other academic endeavors (Saltmarsh et al., 2009).

One method for analyzing the patterns in research on published themes is bibliometric analysis. Bibliometric analysis is a sort of research that identifies patterns in published works based on themes or subjects brought up by academics (Donthu et al., 2021). Bibliometric analysis is applied across a range of published topics, particularly in the area of education, such as strategies for successful blended learning (Abuhassna et al., 2022), virtual simulation experiment platform (Zhu et al., 2023), lesson study and learning study (Liao and Wu, 2022), immersive university model (Artyukhov et al., 2023) and many other.

This research examines the connection between service learning, an innovative approach, and civic education. Service learning's goals match the fundamental aim of civic education, which is to develop citizens who are actively involved in community life. The findings of this study review a range of scholarly articles to provide detailed insights into how service learning can be effectively incorporated into civic education. This will demonstrate its potential benefits for future applications.

2. Methodology

This study collects information from articles found in journals listed in the Scopus database. We looked for articles by searching their titles, abstracts, and keywords for terms related to "service-learning" and "civic and citizenship education." We gathered information from articles published between 1997 and 2023. Only journal articles in English were considered. From this process, 90 articles were identified that matched our search criteria, and their details were saved in the *ris file format. Following this, we used the VOSviewer software to create a bibliometric map that visually represents trends within this data. The mapping of article information from our database included three formats: network,

density, and overlay maps. Moreover, we selected specific terms to include in the VOSviewer network mapping for visualization.

3. Result and discussion

3.1. Citation analysis

One way to assess the quality of a scientific publication is to count the number of times other researchers have cited the work. Quoting a scientific work means having the article have an impact on science. From the results of searching the Scopus database for articles that discuss service learning in civics education in the 1997-2023 range, there are 1833 citations.

Based on Table 1, data obtained relating to the themes of service learning and citizenship education shows that the topics most discussed are related to learning, democracy, active citizenship, and political involvement. This shows that the service learning model can provide a positive contribution to civic education by increasing the active participation of citizens in democratic life. As Annette (2005) explained, service learning provides experiential learning opportunities for students in higher education to develop civic virtue through civic engagement. This component is the main goal of democratic education. Meanwhile, the proponents of democratic purposes in education are personal responsibility, participatory citizenship, and justice-oriented citizens (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). Service learning must play a greater role in improving social cohesion. The combination of service learning and citizenship education can foster new civic responsibilities among the younger generation, namely civic culture, such as community action, social solidarity, and volunteering (Birdwell et al., 2013).

Table 1: Articles with the most citations

No.	Reference	Cited by
1	Westheimer and Kahne (2004)	1151
2	Kahne et al. (2013)	90
3	Annette (2005)	52
4	Lin (2015)	44
5	Guthrie and McCracken (2010)	42
6	Birdwell et al. (2013)	26
7	Tejada (2013)	22
8	Barrington and Duffy (2010)	21
9	Middaugh and Kahne (2013)	19
10	Weber and Englehart (2011)	18

3.2. Subject area analysis

Referring to Fig. 1, the analysis shows that the three predominant subject areas covered in the Scopus database are as follows: Social Studies, representing the largest portion with 65.5% or 78 documents; followed by Arts and Humanities, accounting for 6.7% or eight documents; and Business, Management, and Accounting, with seven documents being indexed in Scopus.

Social science research on service learning has been extensively conducted. This is due to the fact

that service learning involves conducting various types of community service, such as public service, and then fusing such encounters with significant and worthwhile academic elements, such as in-depth study, coursework, reflection, and discussion. The integration of more public service-based programs (education, health care, social services, public libraries, park districts, etc.) should be the main focus of service learning courses, as the goal is to motivate students to return to their home communities after completing their post-secondary education and give back to the community (Conway, 2013; Lemieux and Allen, 2007). Given that social work programs are based on the idea of client empowerment, which promotes ideas like capacity building, social support, strengths perspective, self-help, and anti-oppressive behavior, this makes intuitive sense.
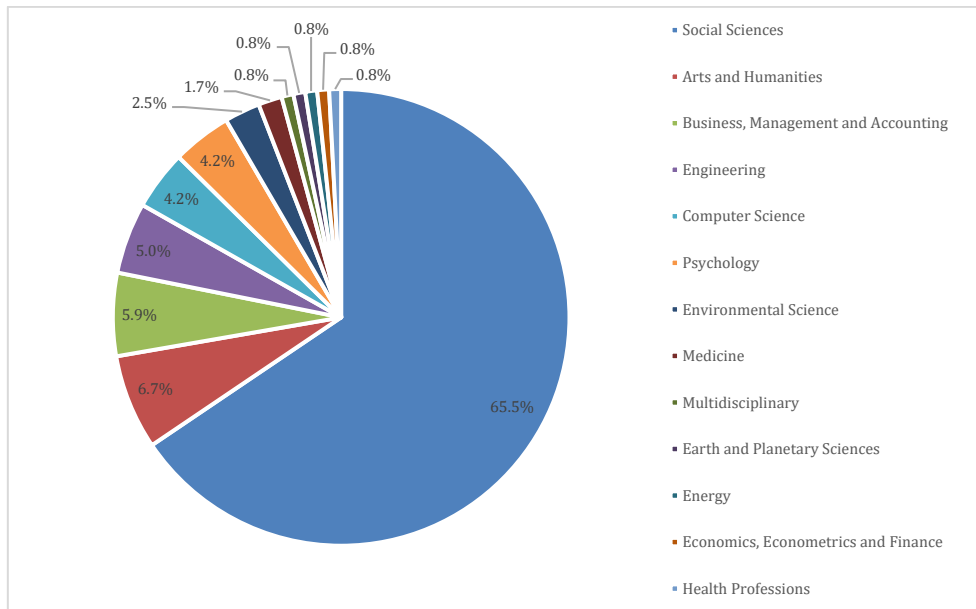

Fig. 1: Documents by subject area

Fig. 2 shows the growth curve or development of service learning research in civic education from 1997 to 2023. Based on Fig. 2, the beginning service-learning research in civic education was first conducted in 1997, in 2000 with 1 article, in 2004 with 1 article, in 2005 it increased to 3 articles, in 2006 there were two articles, in 2007 there was 1 article, in 2008 there was 1 article, in 2009 there was 1 article. In 2010, there was an increase in attention to service learning in civics education, with as many as 14 articles; if you look at the trend from the research titles, service learning programs are used for community strengthening. In 2011, six articles; in 2012, six articles; in 2013, eight articles; in 2014, three articles; in 2015, three articles; in 2016, eight articles; in 2017, two articles; in 2018, two articles; in 2019, four articles, and six articles in 2020, four articles in 2021, 11 articles in 2022 this year has increased due to community strengthening due to the covid-19 pandemic, and two articles in 2023.
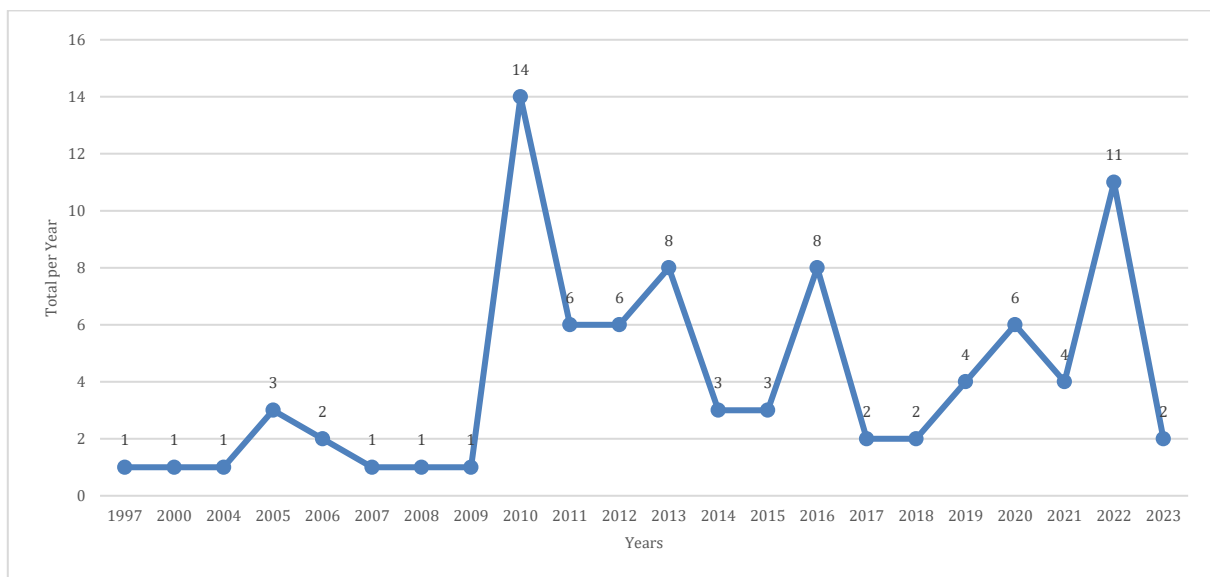

Fig. 2: Level of development of research service learning in civic education

3.3. Network visualization

Research related to service learning in civics education based on visualization mapping analysis is divided into 3 clusters, namely:

1. Cluster 1 (red color) has 13 items: service learning, civic engagement, community, community service, article, context, education, field, interest, process, role, sense, and way.
2. Cluster 2 (green) has 12 items: citizenship education, data, development, global citizenship, knowledge, literature, project, relationship, research, student, study, and teacher.
3. Cluster 3 (blue) has nine items: approach, citizenship, higher education, learning, paper, practice, service, university, and work.

In Fig. 3, we can see that research on service learning in citizenship education is still rarely conducted but still has a very close relationship. As a learning model for the application of service learning in citizenship education learning based on experiential learning, which can be seen in Cluster 1, there are the words "context," "field," "process," and "role," which indicate that service learning is not only carried out in the classroom but also "project" (Cluster 2) and "practice" (Cluster 3). Another thing we can analyze from Fig. 3 is that this kind of learning is suitable to be carried out at the "university" or "higher education" level because, through this model, students are required to be able to collaborate with the "community" (cluster 1).

3.4. Overlay visualization

Fig. 4 shows the shape of the overlay visualization. This type of visualization shows what year service learning research in civics education is often conducted. Fig. 4 shows that the service-learning keyword in civics education was extensively researched at the end of 2020 and early 2021. This shows that researchers are starting to be interested in applying the service learning model to civic education. This opens up huge opportunities for researchers to develop citizenship education learning innovations, both in terms of process and learning evaluation.

3.5. Density visualization

Fig. 5 shows the shape of the density visualization. This visualization shows how often or rarely used keywords such as "service-learning" and "civic education" are examined. The indicator that determines how often the keyword is researched is the color contained in the term. The darker or lighter the color, the more frequently the term is studied, and the dimmer the color, the less frequently the term is studied.

Based on Fig. 5, we can see that research on service learning has been carried out a lot, but if it is applied to citizenship education learning, it tends to be rarely done. Research that is often carried out is the service learning approach to learning and development. However, we see that there are several themes that are rarely researched in a wider scope, such as community services and global citizenship, which would be new if research were carried out. So, this data can be used to determine future research themes.

4. Conclusion

This study aims to analyze research using the keywords service-learning and civic education, using the Scopus database for data collection and assisted by VOSviewer software to obtain visualization as material for analysis. We found 90 relevant articles published from 1997 to 2023, which means research in this area is still rare.
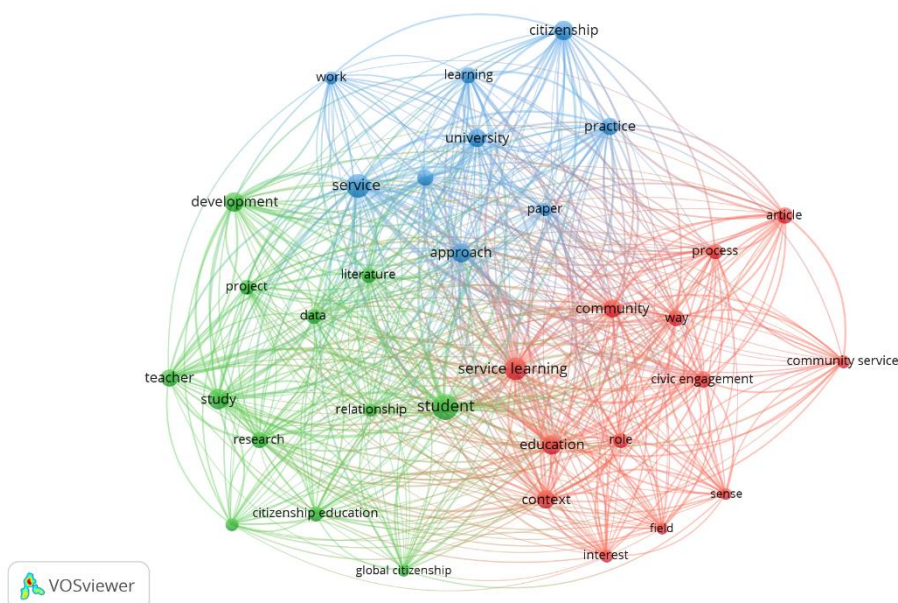

Fig. 3: Mapping type network visualization to service learning in civic education

Fig. 4: Overlay visualization of service learning in civic education

Fig. 5: Density visualization of service learning in civic education

The results of this study are that the number of articles published from 1997-2023 has fluctuated, but several significant increases occurred in 2010 and 2021. Research is dominated by social sciences, with several articles cited by hundreds or even thousands of studies. By using the keywords service-learning and civic and citizenship education, 3 clusters are obtained, with each cluster having a different number of items. Then, it was concluded that service learning research in civics education was widely researched at the end of 2020 and early 2021. The most frequently discussed subjects are learning, democracy, active citizenship, and political involvement, according to citation analysis of data pertaining to the themes of service learning and citizenship education. This demonstrates that by encouraging citizens to participate more actively in democratic life, the service learning approach can enhance civic education. While analyzing subject areas, a large body of social science research has been done on service learning. The reason for this is that service learning incorporates a variety of community service activities, such as public service, with important and valuable academic components like in-depth research, coursework, reflection, and discussion. We may observe from density visualization that service learning research has been conducted. This study's limitation is that it doesn't explain the inclusion and exclusion criteria used to choose articles from the Scopus database, nor does it provide specifics on the techniques that were followed in the analysis. Additionally, there is a restriction on the terms that were employed in this study. In order to get more thorough results, the analysis for the upcoming study must be developed using more keywords and other exploration databases.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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