

Service- Learning

The Essence of the Pedagogy



EDITED BY
ANDREW FURCO & SHELLEY H. BILLIG

A VOLUME IN ADVANCES IN
SERVICE-LEARNING RESEARCH



Service-Learning: The Essence of the Pedagogy

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and
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INTRODUCTION

The recent groundswell of service-learning activity in K-12 and higher education has sparked much interest among practitioners, policy makers, and researchers in gaining a better understanding of the nature of service-learning practice and its effects on students, teachers, institutions, and communities. For the most part, the findings that have emerged from studies of service-learning have shown promising results regarding service-learning's impact on improved student learning, enhanced community development, and school improvement.

However, despite a growing number of research studies in the field, the research on service-learning remains scant. Indeed, much of the existing research has only begun to scratch the surface regarding the important issues that surround service-learning. For example, while we know what the effects of service-learning might be on students, we know very little about *how* service-learning affects students. While we know that service-learning has the potential to change the civic culture of a school, we do not know what conditions need to be present or what kinds of service-learning activities need to be promoted in order for a school culture to change. How is service-learning best implemented and sustained? For whom is service-learning most beneficial? How do we best go about studying service-learning? These are the types of questions that the service-learning field needs to have researched. These questions can only be answered fully through the completion of well-designed, comprehensive, and sophisticated research studies. In this regard, the call is not only for *more* service-learning research, but also for *better* research.

The *Advances in Service-Learning Research* book series was established to initiate the publication of a set of comprehensive research volumes that would present and discuss a wide range of issues in this broad field called service-learning. Service-learning is a multifaceted pedagogy that crosses

all levels of schooling, has potential relevance to all academic and professional disciplines, is connected to a range of dynamic social issues, and operates within a broad range of community contexts. In terms of research, there is much terrain to cover before a full understanding of service-learning can be achieved. This volume, the first in the annual book series, explores various themes, issues, and answers that bring us one step closer to understanding the essence of service-learning.

The chapters of this volume focus on a broad range of topics that address a variety of research issues on service-learning in K-12 education, teacher education, and higher education. Through a wide-scoped research lens, the volume explores definitional foundations of service-learning, theoretical issues regarding service-learning, the impacts of service-learning, and methodological approaches to studying service-learning. Collectively, the chapters of the book provide varying and, at times, opposing perspectives on some of the critical issues regarding service-learning research and practice.

The volume is divided into four sections. The first section, *Defining the Essence of Service-Learning*, explores the variations in the definition of service-learning and the implications the varying definitions have on the study and practice of service-learning. In the first chapter of this section, *Community Service and Service-Learning in America: The State of the Art*, Ivor Pritchard explores the growth of service programs in K-12 education and discusses the challenges in identifying a common definition for service-learning. In the subsequent chapter, Andrew Furco considers the various definitions of different types of school-sponsored service programs in, *Is Service-Learning Really Better than Community Service? A Study of High School Service Program Outcomes*. He presents the findings of an investigation of the effects of community service, service-learning, and service-based internship programs on high school students' academic, social, personal, ethical, civic, and career development. These chapters discuss the amorphous nature of service-learning, both in terms of its definition and practice and provide the context for identifying the various theoretical lenses through which service-learning might be viewed.

The second section, *Theoretical Approaches to Understanding Service-Learning*, begins with a chapter by James Toole entitled, *Civil Society, Social Trust, and the Implementation of Service-Learning*. In this chapter, Toole explores social trust theory and its importance in service-learning partnership development. In the following chapter, *An Application of Developmental-Contextualism to Service-Learning*, Elizabeth Hill Warter and Jennifer Grossman explore the ways in which the theory of development-contextualism has relevance to service-learning in higher education. This chapter is followed by, *Using Program Theory to Build and Evaluate Service-Learning Programs*, in which Donald Yarbrough and Rahima Wade present a framework using program theory as a means to assess the quality and outcomes of service-learning programs. The second section ends with a look at how service-

learning can be used as an approach to conduct action research with a chapter by Jean Schensul, Marlene Berg, and Monica Brase entitled, *Theories Guiding Outcomes for Action Research for Service-Learning*.

The third section of the volume, *Methodological Approaches to Studying Service-Learning*, begins by highlighting the need for the employment of more appropriate methodologies in the study of service-learning. In *Beyond Surveys: Using the Problem Solving Interview to Assess the Impact of Service-Learning on Understanding and Critical Thinking*, Janet Eyler and Dwight E. Giles Jr. articulate the importance of utilizing more appropriate measures that can more fully capture the cognitive development of students engaged in service-learning. The last two chapters in this section, *Methodological Challenges and Potential Solutions for the Incorporation of Sound Community-Based Research into Service-Learning* by Luciana Lagana' and Maureen S. Rubin and *Service-Learning as Qualitative Research: Creating Curriculum from Inquiry* by Robert Shumer, present models for using service-learning as a methodology for conducting research. These two chapters explore how the engagement of students in K-12 and higher education service-learning activities, respectively, provide students with opportunities to develop and practice research skills.

The last section of the volume, *Impacts of Service-Learning*, presents discussions on a variety of service-learning outcomes for K-12 students, pre-service teacher education students, and K-12 schools. In the chapter, *Impact of Service-Learning on Civic Attitudes and Behaviors of Middle and High School Youth: Findings from Three National Evaluations*, Alan Melchior and Lawrence Bailis discuss the findings from three major evaluations of national service-learning initiatives and the value of service-learning as a tool for the civic development of young people. In the next chapter, Susan Root, Jane Callahan, and Jungsywan Sepanski present the findings from their multi-site study of students in teacher education programs. In this chapter, entitled *Service-Learning in Teacher Education: A Consideration of Qualitative and Quantitative Outcomes*, the authors provide a discussion on the effects of service-learning on the pre-service teachers' teaching efficacy, commitment to teaching, service ethic of teaching, acceptance of diversity, and their intent to use service-learning in their own classrooms. The section on service-learning impacts concludes with a chapter by Shelley Billig, which presents the findings from a multi-site study that explored dimensions of K-12 service-learning initiation and sustainability. The chapter, *Adoption, Implementation, and Sustainability of K-12 Service-Learning*, presents a discussion on the factors that play the greatest role in sustaining service-learning in K-12 schools over time.

Concluding the volume is an Epilogue by Shelley Billig and Andre Furco that looks to the future and the areas of service-learning that need to be explored further, especially in the area of K-12 service-learning. *Research Agenda for K-12 Service-Learning: A Proposal to the Field*, provides list of the research questions that can be used to guide future studies of service-learning.

The chapters of this volume present multiple perspectives on the ways service-learning might be practiced and studied. While the chapters help answer some important questions about service-learning, they reveal that much about service-learning remains unknown. By having future research efforts build on the ideas, findings, and recommendations presented in this volume, we can begin to move one step closer to more fully understanding the essence of service-learning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We wish to express our deep appreciation to all the individuals who made important and substantial contributions to this volume. We especially thank all of the authors for their valuable contributions to the book and to all the peer reviewers who selected the chapters for this monograph.

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We wish to thank the members of our respective staffs, whose assistance in the development and completion of this volume was invaluable. We thank the members of UC Berkeley's Service-Learning Research & Development Center staff and the members of the Service-Learning Team at RMC Research Corporation. We wish to express deep appreciation and special thanks to Mary Ann Strassner of RMC Research for providing us with unparalleled editing expertise and untiring assistance.

Finally, we wish to thank and acknowledge George Johnson of Information Age Publishing for making this volume and the entire *Advances in Service-Learning Research* book series possible.

—Andrew Furco and Shelley H. Billig

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CHAPTER 1

COMMUNITY SERVICE AND SERVICE-LEARNING IN AMERICA:

THE STATE OF THE ART¹

Ivor A. Pritchard

INTRODUCTION

Many American students participate in school-based service activities designed to benefit both the community and the students. Some of these activities are called *community service*; some are called *service-learning*. While some people use the terms interchangeably, others insist that the two are quite distinct. Researchers and practitioners are divided, both among themselves and between each other, about what is community service, what is service-learning, and whether there is any difference between them.

What is the significance of the dispute about these labels? Is it merely a disagreement about words, definitions, and professional posturing? Or does it reflect important disagreements about good educational practice? Who is doing community service or service-learning? What are they doing? Why are educators supporting these activities? Where do these activities stand in relation to current standards-based reform? What options might

practitioners consider for improving the quality of their practice? How can research contribute to those efforts?

Fortunately, recent national level research studies provide illuminating data about these questions. The data enable us to look at the magnitude of the issues, and to compare the issues raised in academic debates with the current state of practice in American education. And they also provide a starting point for the consideration of how the qualities of community service and service-learning activities may influence how well these activities fare in the current climate of standards-based education reform. Hopefully, the exploration of these questions will draw attention to important use-inspired research issues in this area.

THE SERVICE MOVEMENT

The United States has a tradition of people organizing efforts to serve public interests. In his famous nineteenth century study of American society, de Tocqueville noted Americans' habit of forming voluntary associations to advance their own and the community's interests. DeTocqueville suggested that such associations were crucial to the vitality of American society, pointing out that their activities served to shape the participants' recognition of the coincidence of personal and public interest, which he called "the principle of interest rightly understood" (de Tocqueville, 1961).

Many of these voluntary associations did what we might now call *community service*. The twentieth century saw many large-scale efforts to enlist young people in public service. In the 1930s, the California Conservation Corps was a New Deal effort to improve both the quality of the environment and the quality of the three million young men who did the improving (Janowitz, 1983). In later decades, the Peace Corps and VISTA programs similarly sought to benefit volunteers who were willing to work for the benefit of others in communities throughout the United States and abroad. Religious institutions and countless other youth and community organizations also sponsored and directed activities that were both personally rewarding to the young people doing them and beneficial to the public.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, several national-scale initiatives were launched that reflected renewed interest in service. The 1989 Charlottesville Summit of the President and the Governors led to a set of National Education Goals including a goal directed toward Student Achievement and Citizenship. The goal included as an objective that

All students will be involved in activities that promote and demonstrate good citizenship, community service, and personal responsibility. (U.S. Department of Education, 1990)

Other federal support for service activities has been reflected in policy initiatives including the *National and Community Service Act of 1990*, the *Serve America Program* and the *National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993*, and the *Learn and Serve America Program*. States and private sector organizations have also demonstrated interest in supporting such activities. For example, in 1999 the W. K. Kellogg Foundation committed \$13 million to *Learning in Deed*, a four-year initiative designed to increase support for service-learning in American schools.² Many service activities receive outside sponsorship, but it is also true that a large majority of schools currently administer their community service or service-learning activities with their own resources. The 1999 *National Student Service-Learning and Community Service Survey (S&CS)* found that 84 percent of school administrators whose schools had community service or service-learning activities reported no outside funding to support their activities (Skinner & Chapman, 1999).

With or without external support, K-12 school offerings in community service and service-learning are growing in popularity and now represent a sizable majority of school programs in the United States. According to the 1999 *S&CS Survey* (which looked at public schools) and the 1998 *Service Learning Survey (SLS)* (which looked at private schools), 68 percent of all public schools and 88 percent of all private schools in the United States reported participation by at least some of their students in community service or service-learning (Genzer, 1998; Skinner & Chapman, 1999). The S&CS Survey showed that participation is progressively greater in the later grades. Among public schools, 55 percent of elementary schools, 77 percent of middle schools, and 83 percent of high schools reported student involvement in community service.

The proportion of *schools* offering community service or service-learning can also be compared to the proportion of *students* participating in these activities. The prevalence of participation by individual students in community service and service-learning is provided by parallel student-level data from the 1999 *National Household Education Survey (NHES)*. This national survey found that student participation in community service activities has grown to include at least half of 6th through 12th grade public school students and that an even larger percentage of private school students participate. Furthermore, the NHES Survey found that half of the students who reported participating in community service participated in service-learning.

Table 1. Percentage of Students in Grades 6–12 Participating in Community Service and Service-Learning in U.S. Public and Private Schools (1999)³

	<i>Student Participation in Community Service as a Percentage of the Total Student Population</i>	<i>Student Participation in Service-Learning as a Percentage of Students Participating in Community Service</i>
Public Schools	50%	56%
Private Schools	71%	66%

Note: Private school figures calculated by combining church-related and not church-related figures. Figures for service-learning were calculated by Kleiner and Chapman on the basis of the number of students who reported that they had participated in a community service activity within the last year, who reported having talked about their community service activity in class, kept a journal or wrote about the service activity, or received a grade based on the service activity. *Source:* Kleiner and Chapman (1999).

Taken together, the data show widespread involvement at both the school and student levels in community service, service-learning, or both. In some of the cited surveys respondents were allowed to self-identify their activities as ‘community service’ or ‘service-learning,’ while in other surveys the researchers defined or stipulated their own criteria for each of the two terms. Given that so many people have a stake in these activities, it is important to ask what kind of activities these labels actually refer to, and whether what people call *community service* differs from what they call *service-learning* in genuinely important ways.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE OR SERVICE-LEARNING:
WHAT’S IN A NAME?**

Educators, researchers, and policymakers have carried out a protracted debate about the meaning and definition of *community service* and *service-learning*. *Community service* is used more widely than *service-learning*, both in the sense that more people are familiar with *community service* and in the sense that it is typically applied to a wider range of activities. Researchers often seek to define their terms carefully, because their work involves making claims about what the evidence shows about something, and the accuracy of their statements depends on the exact meaning of their terms. Ultimately the decision about which term to use may be arbitrary, so long as the meaning is clear, but the public debate about these terms may also reveal other interests people have about how service opportunities should be experienced by students. The airing of various ideas about the meaning of service and the terms used to describe it may shape the development of both research and practice, in so far as researchers’ and practitioners’ con-

ceptions of what they are doing shapes the design of research projects and educational initiatives. By looking at how the two terms are contrasted with each other in some public discussions, and then looking at the data about current educational practices, a clearer picture may emerge of what people are thinking and doing about service.

When seeking to distinguish the two terms, service-learning advocates frequently offer several reasons for resisting *community service* for describing what they support. First, they associate *community service* with an elitist notion of social obligation that implies the moral superiority of those performing the service. Second, service-learning proponents dislike *community service* because they associate it with the other end of the social spectrum, that is, the context of convicts whose sentence includes performing some task which benefits society but may well be personally embarrassing or distasteful to the performer. Third, and perhaps most frequently, they associate *community service* with purely altruistic or charitable activities in which the personal benefits of the service consist of a positive impact on the souls of those who perform the service, without their really *learning* anything significant in the process. From this perspective, community service may be right for counts, convicts, and converts, but it does not measure up to the requirements of service-learning.

Service-learning also has detractors. Some community service supporters complain that the general public does not recognize the term and see no reason to introduce it when a perfectly suitable and widely understood term already exists. Some people claim that educators who use *service-learning* to describe what they do often have a particular ideological ax to grind, namely, *service-learning* is considered to be the favored term of progressive reformers who want service activities to promote a partisan political view of how American society, social institutions, and citizens should be reformed. Finally, some people argue that advocates of *service-learning* focus too heavily on promoting the development of students' cognitive thinking skills, giving relatively short shrift to both the development of students' moral dispositions and the realization of community benefit.

Beside these differences, service-learning advocates typically propose a more rigorous and complex set of criteria for what constitutes genuine service-learning. There is no real dispute about the basic criterion of a service experience that is both personally meaningful and beneficial to the community. Beyond this criterion, which is shared by everyone, service-learning advocates often distinguish service-learning from community service by calling for some or all of the following:

- Clearly identified learning objectives;
- Student involvement in selecting or designing the service activity;
- A theoretical base;