Reviews /
Comptes rendus

Research on Service Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Assessment, Volume 2B

Edited by Patti H. Clayton, Robert G. Bringle, and Julie A. Hatcher
(Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2013, 338 pages)

Service learning in the United States and Canada is a well-established thread in the fabric of primary, secondary, and postsecondary education. The goal of service learning is for students to discover their place in the community and the world through civic engagement. *Research on Service Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Assessment* is a two-volume set in a series on service learning produced by the University of Indiana–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). Both volumes focus on theories, models, and frameworks for service learning in higher education. While the first focuses on research related to students and faculty, the second—the book reviewed here—focuses on community organizations (community outcomes and organizational capacity); educational institutions (organizational change, departments, and leadership); and partnerships (community/educational organizations, leadership, and students). The repeat publication of chapters 1 and 2 allows them to be read independently. Chapter 1 is an introduction to research on service learning; Chapter 2 offers a primer on research methods for quality research in service learning.

The primary audience for this volume is educational leaders and teachers planning for service learning opportunities and research on service learning. Others from community organizations, university administrations, and departments interested in service learning will also benefit from reading specific chapters, if not the entire volume. The first two chapters lay the foundation for common principles, practices, and communication about service learning and are therefore an important resource for all readers. Additional chapters targeting community organizations, university administrators, and departments can be highly recommended as well. For example, chapter 4.2, entitled, "Examining Service Learning from the Perspective of Community Organization Capacity," is an important chapter for leaders of community organizations in which volunteer management is part of the organization's mandate. In this chapter, authors Laura Littlepage and Beth Gazely explore the Volunteer Management Capacity research framework that examines the costs and benefits of service learning for the organization, university, and students.

The volume also provides a systematic approach to research on service learning, guided by a working definition, a model for research, and a template for discussion of issues in each chapter. Readers gain an appreciation for each of these elements as the foreground to the

volume's structure. Each chapter is comprised of sections on (a) identifying the topic and how it is addressed in the chapter, (b) key theories and frameworks, (c) critical evaluation of the literature on theory and practice, (d) critical assessment of evaluation tools and approaches, (e) practice implications, (f) future research needed, (g) a summary and conclusion, and (h) recommended readings. Following the chapter template, authors identify and integrate the important theories, contexts, and research pertaining to the topics on service learning.

The authors and editors contributing to this volume are recognized names in the field of service learning. Andrew Furco and Barbara Holland bring their expertise on organizational change to their discussion on the institutionalization of service learning. Lorilee Sandmann and William Plater's treatment of institutional leadership in service learning is supported by their decades of experience in institutional leadership and their 2009 study on the leadership of engaged institutions. While the authors follow the prescribed chapter format, they also enliven each topic with knowledge and experience acquired over years of teaching, research, public service, and development in service learning. Readers can thus be assured that these are indeed experts in the field.

The chapter that most sparks my interest is Barbara Jacoby's "Student Partnerships in Service Learning," in which she contrasts participation in service learning with partnerships in service learning. Jacoby explains that although participation involves little more than attending, partnership involves far more, including responsibility for learning and service. Civic engagement is, in fact, less about participation and more about partnerships, and, therefore, as Jacoby suggests, advancing the theory on student partnerships in service learning is an important part of the service learning research agenda.

While much of this book is both positive and useful, the editors identify a number of limitations. Important topics not addressed include (a) service learning and graduate students, (b) theory on adult learning, professional socialization, mentoring, and identity formation, and (c) work with primary and secondary school programs. Concerns of a broader nature are also identified as limitations, including (a) the limited use of the SOFAR Model (Students, staff of Organizations in the Community, Faculty, Administrators on the campus, and Residents in the community) for theory development on partnerships, (b) the limited integration of theories and models to enhance interdisciplinary research and knowledge, and (c) the continued emphasis on normative-based research methods and the corresponding absence of other epistemologies.

Unfortunately, the volume excludes discussion of service learning that is mediated by distance or online learning. The challenges of partnerships with non-local groups and transdisciplinary learning over a distance in multiple settings present another layer of complexity and opportunity for learning that are not addressed within the suggested conceptual frameworks. Leadership, partnership development, and organizational capacity development in multiple-site service-learning opportunities at a distance are avenues for further research, theory building, and inclusion in the service learning research agenda.

Research on Service Learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Assessment is a valuable resource for scholarship of service learning because it provides a foundation for systematic study and theory building for service learning. Volume 2B's focus on community organizations, educational institutions, and partnerships is an important contribution to the literature on service learning. The overviews and insights provided by the authors and editors reflect their experience and scholarship. Each chapter is well organized and clearly written, and, as a result, the volume is accessible to a broad audience. In sum, this volume, in combination with Volume 1A, is a well-edited handbook for service learning research.

Reviewed by Lorraine Mercer, Huntington University