Book Review

Robert Shumer, Editor (2017) *Where's the Wisdom in Service Learning?.* **Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing**

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Where's the Wisdom in Service-Learning? is Rob Shumer's collection of reflections from 10 leaders representing decades of experience. The volume is a valuable addition to the canon of knowledge about the history and development of service-learning. Additionally, by reflecting on the current state of the field and giving suggestions for a path forward, Shumer, John Duley, William Ramsay, Bob Sigmon, Timothy Stanton, Jane Szutu Permaul, James Kielsmeier, Terry Pickeral, Cathryn Berger Kaye, and Bobby Hackett offer helpful wisdom to current and emerging practitioners, scholars, and partners with the potential to advance and strengthen the field. Most notably, the book calls the field back to some of the early intentions of the leaders to transform higher education and promote social justice, asking whether the movement has "lost a bit of its edge" (Stanton, 1999, p. 90).

The book begins with an historic and theoretical overview of service-learning framed by the premise that the three pillars of service-learning are the commons, civil society, and experiential learning. The authors examine key precursors to service-learning such as John Dewey's (1938) learning by doing philosophy of education and explore the complexity and multiple definitions and descriptions of the term. However, the bulk of the chapter focuses on the development of the field through the lens of four distinctive periods: origin/incubation (1970s), taking root (1980s), growth (1990s), and moving toward adulthood/mainstream (2000-2007). It is noteworthy that Tim Stanton and Dwight Giles, who contributed to this chapter with Shumer, previously co-authored with Nadine Cruz, *Service-Learning: A Movement's Pioneers Reflect on Its Origins, Practice, and Future* (1999), which explored the history of the service-learning field 18 years ago. The 2017 volume's 28-page chapter could serve as a stand-alone chronicle of the movement for emerging and existing practitioners, scholars, participants, and partners.

While chapter authors Duley, Shumer, Permaul, Ramsay, Sigmon, and Stanton are well-known pioneers in the service-learning field, *Where's the Wisdom in Service Learning?* includes four new voices that expand the historical narrative beyond a post-secondary focus. Bobby Hackett has contributed to the movement from his early role with the COOL Conference and later with the Bonner Foundation, co-creating and sustaining the Bonner Scholars Program at institutions nationwide. Cathryn Berger Kaye and James Kielsmeier are featured as well and are known for their work in helping to build service-learning within the K-12 arena. Finally, Terry Pickeral has devoted his work to building bridges between K-12 and post-secondary education. We are reminded that the post-secondary and K-12 pioneers built the movement together and often created and united within many of the same alliances and networks. The inclusion of K-12 in this volume highlights the limited, but growing shared spaces within service-learning where K-12, higher education, partner organizations, and funders come together.

Each of the 10 contributors explores their roles in the service-learning movement in distinct chapters where they share their perspectives. This allows space for them to fill in details about known pieces of service-learning history. For example, while other publications and timelines have noted that the term "service-learning" first surfaced in the publications of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), in this book, Bill Ramsay tells the story of the actual meeting in 1967 when he, Bob Sigmon, and Wendell Russell coined the phrase to better describe the community-based internships they facilitated at the SREB. Ramsay reveals the intentionality with which the term "service" was chosen. Unlike other forms of experiential learning, they recognized that "service" denotes a "value dimension" which includes elements of usefulness or contribution (p. 52). Ramsey further discusses the importance they placed on including the hyphen as it suggests a "two way flow of communication" between the service and the learning (p. 56). Keeping the two elements linked, says Ramsey, "avoids the experience from being patronizing, self-righteous, or exploitive" (p. 56). Berger Kaye shares in her chapter, her counter arguments for rejecting the hyphen, including concerns about its necessity and grammatical correctness. Further, she says the hyphen could suggest service "minus"

learning (p. 150). These historical tidbits are indispensable to understanding the motives behind choices these leaders made, many which have stood the test of time.

One theme echoed throughout all the stories is the isolation, and sometimes hostility, these early leaders endured, especially from folks within the academy. Bob Sigmon's chapter is titled "Reflections of a Mobiocentric Service-Learning Pioneer," so named because someone once told him that he would "push the edges too hard and have to be mobile" (p. 68). Deemed "dangerous" and "rocking the boat," these pioneers lost jobs and faced opposition from those who believed colleges were just for education, not community development (p. 69). Some faced resistance from other faculty who believed that service-learning was placing students in situations where neither they nor their institutions maintained control. All the chapter authors highlighted the importance of the networks, organizations, conferences, and alliances created to gain and give support to each other. Today, it is easy for us to take such networks for granted. The authors also expressed worry that, with fewer challenges today, the opportunities for the movement to self-critique and engage in critical reflection are diminishing.

Many of these leaders express their ambiguity about the state of the field today, as evidenced by the title of Tim Stanton's chapter "Half-Full or Half-Empty…. Who Knows? Reflections on Forty-Five Years in Service-learning's Trenches." Some fear that as service-learning has become more and more institutionalized, it has lost the original focus on prioritizing community needs and building meaningful, reciprocal, partnerships, a view echoed by service-learning colleague Randy Stoecker in his book *Liberating Service Learning and the Rest of Higher Education Civic Engagement* (2016). Sigmon even expressed regret that he and some of the early leaders contributed to this "imbalance" (p. 77). Many of the chapter authors also acknowledge that neither the radical transformation of higher education, nor the sustainable social change they had hoped to create have occurred. This tension is best summed up in Stanton's question, "Is an important, critical perspective on both the institution and community lost when one moves from the margin to the mainstream of an institution?" (p. 90).

There are additional places of alignment in the wisdom shared by the contributors including concerns about the pressure to demonstrate how service-learning contributes to academic learning and cognitive development and/or skills and career readiness. They worry that such a focus diminishes the importance of service-

learning to develop compassionate, conscientious change agents committed to social justice, or what chapter author John Duley describes as learning that moves into the "affective domain," such as value clarification and personal and character development (p. 34). He centers service-learning experiences within the taxonomy of the affective domain, as developed by Dr. Lee Shulman in his article, "Making Differences: A Table of Learning" (2002).

Several authors encourage continued focus on the scholarship of engagement and evaluation. Still, many express disappointment that most of the assessment has developed around classroom-based instruction and student learning outcomes. There is less focus on faculty, practitioner, and especially community development/community partner goals and outcomes.

In addition to many shared concerns, there are unique reflections shared in this volume. For example, Bob Sigmon shares his regrets and hopes that the service-learning movement will pay greater attention to the environment and natural systems. Bobby Hackett urges the field to move beyond direct service alone to include organizational capacity building and advocacy. Permaul, Kielsmeier, Pickeral, and Shumer emphasize the need for increased public policies and funding to support and sustain service-learning, especially with the demise of Learn and Serve America (see https://www.nationalservice.gov/about/budget).

In all, *Where's the Wisdom in Service-Learning?* updates and extends information originally offered in previous publications about the development of the service-learning field, and deepens our understanding of the field which some even categorize as a movement. These contributors provide encouragement and invaluable critiques for today's leaders. The book also serves as a powerful reminder that many individuals toiled in difficult soil to plant the seeds that have blossomed and flourished today. This book should empower today's service-learning advocates and participants to live up to Rob Shumer's hope that "the stories and wisdom shared in this book will provide others with the inspiration, the insight, and the energy to continue the work of making the world a better place" (p. 178).

References

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