

SERVICE-LEARNING: ENHANCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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EDUCATION VOLUME 12

SERVICE-LEARNING: ENHANCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Glenda Cain, Ph.D., is a senior lecturer at the University of Notre Dame Australia in the Bachelor of Education degree and postgraduate courses. Her PhD thesis was entitled *Service-learning as a way of developing pre-service teachers' knowledge, perception and cultural awareness of Aboriginal Education*. She has presented her doctoral studies at the International Association for Research on Service-learning and Social Engagement, a conference in the United States. Her interest in Aboriginal education and service-learning has seen partnerships develop with Clontarf Aboriginal College, the Tjuntjuntjara School and community, and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Community. She has worked with the Western Australian Government Department of Child Protection and Family Support to assist in the development of a program of support for children in care, who has faced trauma. This program is named the "Whale of a Tale" Reading Mentor program. It is a unique service-learning partnership between pre-service teachers and children in care.

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John Richards has been the Director of Christian Service-Learning, Aquinas College, since 1997. He was National Chairman of the Youth and Education Advisory Committee for the Australian Red Cross, 1996–1999. From 2000 to 2004 he developed and facilitated 'Love in Action Workshops' for secondary teachers on the subject of Christian Service-Learning and has presented workshops across Australia, New Zealand, Philippines and most recently, the Asia Pacific Christian Service Learning Conference, Surabaya, Indonesia. He is the recipient of numerous awards including Service and Distinguished Service Medals from Australian Red Cross, Service Award (Perth Rotary, 1999), Western Australian Government 25 Year Volunteer Badge (2016) and a finalist for the Premier's Active Citizenship Award (2014–2015) and Australia Day Awards (2016). He is married and has two daughters and continues to be active in parish life at the Parish of Saints John and Paul, Willetton.

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Paige Warner is a secondary school teacher from Perth, Western Australia. She spends most of her days teaching English Literature. Her involvement in the Beagle Bay Immersion Program originated out of a desire to immerse students in cultures different from their own. She firmly believes that reconciliation begins at home, and to embrace and celebrate the strengths of multiculturalism, we must strive to understand the frameworks with which others view the world. Only then can we truly value the richness that comes from embracing diversity in our own society.

FOREWORD

In the Executive Summary of one of the Australian Values Education Program reports, we find the words ‘Service learning is a pedagogy that aids the development of young people as they learn to engage in the worlds of others and then participate in civic service. It is a form of experiential learning which is integrally related to values education, and helps young people to empathise, engage and take their place as civic-minded, responsible, caring and empowered citizens in our community’ (DEEWR, 2008, p. 34). These words capture persistent worldwide findings about the effects of carefully planned and implemented service-learning programs and their potential impact on holistic learning and development. The intentions and ambit of service-learning appear to fit well with updated findings in the field of neuroscience wherein the role of sociality as an essential feature of human development, and therefore learning, has been highlighted. As such, service-learning should not be seen as an optional extra in the business of learning but, rather, as an inextricable element in it. In other words, the affective benefits that are most apparent should not be seen as separable from the cognition associated with successful learning, including that related to academic achievement.

Service-learning can and does take many forms but the high quality and most effective programs are characterized by a pedagogy that combines community service with reflection on action. The service component makes for vital connections with the world outside the school or academy, with the student experiencing a sense of agency in being able to help, support or advocate for a worthy community-based cause. This in itself can be transformative for student growth in confidence, self-esteem and sense of usefulness in their community; it also has capacity to inform and enrich their understanding of the wider world in which they live and are preparing to play an active part. The reflection component ensures that maximal attention is given to these experiences through recalling, pondering on and discussing them afterwards and in preparation for ongoing service, hence ensuring optimal learning potential.

Research into the effects of service-learning has uncovered additional, specific benefits attached to a range of developmental features, including the formation of social, personal and civic responsibility, communicative competence and meaningful relationships with adults, as well as growth in the kind of awareness that extends to empathic understanding and altruism. Furthermore, involvement in service-learning has been shown to incline students to broadening their career aspirations and grasping opportunities, stimulate enhanced civic

involvement and leadership, and generally impel the maturation process. The capacity of service-learning to break down cultural barriers and form positive relationships with people beyond one's usual social reach is attested to in multiple studies. In similar fashion, undertaking service-learning has been shown to be associated with attitudinal change towards people with disabilities and to instil depth of appreciation of the elderly. In a word, service-learning would appear to constitute one of the most effective holistic learning tools available to schools and other learning institutions. While its capacities in this regard are clearly the subject of growing appreciation, it would be true to say that service-learning still remains an under-utilized element in too many education settings. Hence, the importance of books such as this one, edited by Shane Lavery, Dianne Chambers and Glenda Cain.

This collection, covering service-learning in a range of educational settings from primary school through secondary and onto pre-service teacher education, offers the reader an array of updated research in the field. Dianne Chambers and Shane Lavery begin with an introduction that summarizes the field, introduces the idea of inclusivity in education and then proceeds to illustrate the important role that service-learning can play in this regard. Suzanne Carrington and Megan Kimber combine consideration of Kiely's (2004) notion of 'transforming forms' with reflection on the logs and experiential journals of six pre-service teachers completing an international service-learning exercise. Hannah Nickels takes up the theme of inclusivity in reflecting on her experiences of volunteering in the service-learning component of her own teacher training. Sandra Lynch also focuses on the notion of inclusivity and the particular role that the reflective component of service-learning can play in developing attitudes of inclusiveness.

Shelley H. Billig, an especially prominent international exponent and researcher of service-learning, summarizes much of this research in elementary settings, offering guidance on practical ways to maximise the effects of a service-learning program in the ways it is structured. Glenda Cain explores the effects of a particular service-learning exercise, the *Whale of a Tale* Reader Mentorship Program, designed to reach out to primary aged children on the margins in order to enhance their inclusion. John Richards describes a particular service-learning program attached to the Religious Education curriculum in the primary school program of his school.

The collection continues with Cathryn Berger Kaye and Maureen Connolly summarizing the effects of a 'Dynamic Service Learning Approach' that offers differentiation in the program in order to heighten its relevance to secondary students and so maximize the learning effect. Damien Price offers another high school case study, illustrating how the service-learning program worked to strengthen the school's inclusive culture. Marta Vernet reflects on the impact that service-learning in her International School in Barcelona had on participating institutions as well as on the school, working to strengthen ties and enhance the school's reputation in its community. Patrick Devlin and Paige Warner

speak to a Christian service-learning program designed to provide opportunities for secondary students to experience the cultural diversity to be found in remote Aboriginal communities of Western Australia.

In one of the later chapters, Dianne Chambers reprises the theme of inclusivity as a key goal and component of service-learning, showing how Azjen's (2002) *Theory of Planned Behaviour* can be utilized in setting up a program with the best parameters for impelling inclusivity with pre-service teachers. Connie Snyder Mick and James M. Frabutt move to a higher education setting in showing how understanding of poverty and mental health issues can be strengthened through a service-learning program. Finally, Shane Lavery, Anne Coffey and Sandro Sandri draw the collection to a conclusion with a chapter that summarizes findings from an evaluation of a service-learning program in the context of a teacher education program, findings that confirm the beneficial effects postulated throughout the collection.

As suggested, this book adds substantially to the growing volumes of published research about service-learning as a particularly powerful tool in the business of holistic education at all levels of learning. It is characterized by an unusual blend of theoretical and practical dimensions, often to be found in the same chapter but certainly across the collection. This renders the book as a useful addition to readers of various sorts, from academics to those engaged in higher education training and through to classroom teachers, parents and volunteers in school settings. The collection adds considerable weight to proferring that service-learning should be seen as a component of learning far too valuable to be left to chance or the enthusiast. Granted the high order of goals imposed on the outcomes of modern learning institutions, service-learning should be regarded as a *sine qua non* in such settings. Along with an increasing body of other research, this book shows why this is the case!

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SERIES INTRODUCTION

The adoption internationally of inclusive practice as the most equitable and all-encompassing approach to education and its relation to compliance with various international Declarations and Conventions underpins the importance of this series for people working at all levels of education and schooling in both developed and less developed countries. There is little doubt that inclusive education is complex and diverse and that there are enormous disparities in understanding and application at both inter- and intra-country levels. A broad perspective on inclusive education throughout this series is taken, encompassing a wide range of contemporary viewpoints, ideas and research for enabling the development of more inclusive schools, education systems and communities.

Volumes in this series on *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* contribute to the academic and professional discourse by providing a collection of philosophies and practices that can be reviewed in light of local contextual and cultural situations in order to assist educators, peripatetic staffs and other professionals to provide the best education for all children. Each volume in the series focuses on a key aspect of inclusive education and provides critical chapters by contributing leaders in the field who discuss theoretical positions, quality research and impacts on school and classroom practice. Different volumes address issues relating to the diversity of student need within heterogeneous classrooms and the preparation of teachers and other staffs to work in inclusive schools. Systemic changes and practice in schools encompass a wide perspective of learners to provide ideas on reframing education to ensure that it is inclusive of all. Evidence-based research practices underpin a plethora of suggestions for decision-makers and practitioners, incorporating current ways of thinking about and implementing inclusive education.

While many barriers have been identified that may potentially inhibit the implementation of effective inclusive practices, this series intends to identify such key concerns and offer practical and best practice approaches to overcoming them. Adopting a thematic approach for each volume, readers will be able to quickly locate a collection of research and practice related to a topic of interest. By transforming schools into inclusive communities of practice all children should have the opportunity to access and participate in quality education to enable them to obtain the skills to become contributory global citizens. This series, therefore, is highly recommended to support education decision-makers, practitioners, researchers and academics, who have a professional interest in

the inclusion of children and youth who are marginalized in inclusive schools and classrooms.

Volume 12 in this series *Service Learning: Enhancing Inclusive Education* is focused on an approach to improving attitudes towards and perceptions about diverse populations through service-learning practices. Increasingly, the use of service-learning at all levels, from primary through to tertiary, provides students with practical experiences through engagement with people with diverse needs and is an excellent foundation for enhancing inclusive education. By combining community engagement with structured reflective practices, those participating in service-learning have been found to demonstrate enormous growth in understanding and empathy towards others. Simultaneously, the recipients in the process have experienced vast satisfaction in being able to engage in opportunities that otherwise may have not been available to them. It is evident from the writings of the highly experienced authors in this book that the process for undertaking service-learning varies considerably depending upon the age of the participants and the context in which they find themselves. This book, therefore, is invaluable as it explores a wide range of models of service-learning, with the authors providing detailed information about how to further inclusive practices through these various approaches, while accommodating the diversity of need to be found across regions and countries. These examples deliver many prospects for the reader to select a specific model or to take an eclectic approach to establishing their own service-learning practices. Decisions regarding the models are evidence-based and supported by research. As a teaching methodology, the authors in this book clearly demonstrate that service-learning has enormous potential for supporting inclusive educational practices. They explore in detail how service-learning can be embedded within curricula at all levels to provide a worthwhile and invigorating learning experience for all involved. This book is an essential reference guide for all stakeholders working towards enhanced inclusive practices using service-learning both within schools and in the wider community and I highly recommend it to you.