



2016

International Service-Learning and Community Engagement

Brian Ó Donnchadha

Carol Ma

This article was originally published at:

<https://journals.sfu.ca/iarslce/index.php/journal/article/view/260/163>

Recommended Citation

Donnchadha, B. O., & Ma, C. (2016). International service-learning and community engagement. *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, 4(1), 137-138.

International Service-Learning and Community Engagement

Brian Ó Donnchadha
Carol Ma

Section Co-Editors

There has been a rapid development of the field of service-learning and community engagement (SLCE) around the world in the last decade, as evidenced by the establishment of organizations like the Taillores Network, an international association of higher education institutions committed to civic engagement and social responsibility, and Europe Engage, a regional network that now links 12 European countries in which SLCE is emergent. This growth is also being recognized by IARSLCE in its decision to host its 2017 annual conference in Ireland, on the heels of a successful regional conference in Bologna, Italy, in May 2016. Likewise, Asia Engage has members in 20 countries and held its third regional conference in November 2016, while the Service-Learning Asia Network, with over 30 member institutions, organizes biannual regional conference on service-learning to share and exchange practices and research. Furthermore, campus-community partnerships are very well-embedded in higher education in Australia and New Zealand, where influential research has been produced for a number of years. Service-learning and community engagement research and practice have also become widely established in Latin America, both in local universities as well as through the activities of Centro Latinoamericano de Aprendizaje y Servicio Solidario (CLAYSS), an international network that seeks to further service-learning across Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula.

Disseminating research on the progress and impacts of these international SLCE movements is critical to the field. This journal seeks to provide a space in which international scholars can share their work, raise questions, examine practices, and add their findings to the accumulating evidence related to SLCE. It is through the sharing of knowledge and the identification of similarities and differences that we can better understand effective research practices and models of SLCE in different cultural, political, economic and pedagogical contexts.

In this International Service-Learning and Community Engagement section of the journal, four articles highlight scholarly engaged work in Mexico, Pakistan, Australia and Chile. The contents of the articles are very diverse, reflective and rigorous, and have implications for service-learning as it is practiced across the globe.

In the first article, “Partnering with *Parteras*: Multi-Collaborator International Service-Learning Project Impacts on Traditional Birth Attendants in Mexico,” the authors evaluate the impact of a global service-learning project on traditional birth attendants (*parteras*) in southern Mexico. The project partnered with local health officials, and the results showed an increase in participants’ and students’ health knowledge and skill through a train-the-trainer model. The authors detail innovative techniques for administering a survey to participants who, in most case, had limited literacy and numeracy skills. The piece emphasizes that, for successful outcomes in the host community, there must be a long-term collaboration between the local community partner that is hosting visiting foreign students and the home university where they are studying.

In “At a Crossroads: Pakistani College Students’ Perspectives on Service,” Morrison gives voice to Pakistani university students who discuss a tension between what their education system is like now and what it could be like if it prepared them for greater community involvement as well as for productive careers. Examining students’ perceptions of service-learning and what “service” means in a Pakistani context, the research found that students wanted to engage in “service that matters” and were willing to face the risks associated with that service.

The third article in this section—“Community-Based Service-Learning: A Rural Australian Perspective on Student and Academic Outcomes of Participation”—discusses how occupational therapy and speech pathology students addressed the unmet developmental needs of children residing in rural New South Wales, Australia, and how the service impacted the students and the community. The study adopted a pragmatic qualitative approach in which the phenomenon being examined guides the research design. It focused on the factors that influenced participants’ motivations to engage with the service-learning project and the impact on participants in a rural setting. The authors offer a definition of “community literacy” and its role in developing best practice in campus-community partnerships. This project has implications for how higher education institutions engage with rural communities in a manner that responds appropriately to the context and needs of the population living there.

The final article, “Aprendizaje y servicio: como promotor del desarrollo de la competencia de responsabilidad social en una facultad de economía y negocios,” which returns us to South America, specifically Chile, represents the first article in IJRSLCE to be presented in two languages: its original Spanish and the English translation. The methodological approach of service-learning has been used since 2009 by the Department of Economics and Business at the University of Chile to promote, on the one hand, vocational training for students facing problematic and real environmental challenges, and, on the other hand, to develop students’ social responsibility competence. This article compares the results of an initial survey (pretest) and final survey (posttest) of students participating in courses containing service-learning regarding their perceptions of their expected and actual achievement of social responsibility-related competencies.

References

- Morrison, E. (2015). How the I shapes the eye: The imperative of reflexivity in global service-learning qualitative research. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 22(1), 52-67.