NEW BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT

Service Learning and Community Engagement

Cognitive Developmental Long-Term Social Concern

Andrew Stelljes

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Description

In recent years, there has been a virtual explosion of interest in service-learning. Impact studies have demonstrated a wide range of interpersonal outcomes including a sense of efficacy, connection to community, appreciation for diverse populations, and interest in course work to name a few. Yet critics have recently argued that the developmental outcomes of service-learning do not sufficiently examine cognitive development. Further, it is not clear whether interpersonal outcomes interact with the intellectual outcomes attributed to the courses affiliated with the service.

This groundbreaking book examines whether exposure to and immersion in a service-learning program is in any way related to cognitive development. The researcher identified traditionally-aged college students who were selected by service-learning faculty as demonstrating an exemplary commitment to, and engagement in, service-learning. This study utilized The Service Learning Model, developed by Delve, Mintz, and Stewart (1990), to examine, describe, and assess depth of engagement in service at two points in time. William Perry’s Scheme of Intellectual and Ethical Development (1970) was used to examine possible cognitive development. Results reveal a new pathway of deepening engagement in service.
Description (Continued)

The growing body of research on college student participation in service-learning has documented the generally small, positive effects of service-learning on student development. A casual observer may attribute this effort to be successful, however, a closer examination of service-learning begs the question: Is a small, positive effect the type of learning we expect and are we accomplishing the learning objectives of the academy, not to mention, meeting community needs?

The focus on what students are learning, rather than on how they learn best, leaves us with an unsettling uncertainty regarding the outcomes of service-learning. In order to focus on how students may learn best, this book focuses on an examination of individuals, as compared with groups, and of individuals that exhibit some of the outcomes that service-learning claims to promote. This book examines whether any students report that service-learning enriches their course of study resulting in the development of critical thinking skills (among other cognitive skills), in addition to interpersonal skills.

This book shows that direct service experience involving an emotional or psychological (affective) connection with a community member or members receiving services prompts an assessment of the participants’ place in society. In responding to these emotions, students participated in service more frequently and with deeper engagement. Exposure to and immersion in direct service experiences, along with subsequent reflection prior to involvement in a service-learning program, are the mediating factors for the preparation of exemplars to initiate the interest necessary to develop cognitive skills. This book shows that interpersonal, affective development is the precursor for participants’ readiness for cognitive development in a service-learning program. A developmental scheme of engagement, student development interactions, recommendations for faculty for optimal development in service-learning, and recommendations for future practice are presented in this book that will be a valuable addition for all collections in education.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments
Foreword
Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature
  Historical Foundations of Service-Learning
  Defining Service-Learning
  Review of Research: What is Known
Chapter 3: Design and Methods
  Setting
  Participants
  Data Collection
  Data Analysis
  Ethical Considerations
Chapter 4: The Exemplars
  Faith
  Marjorie
  Jessica
  Kenn
  Abbitt
  Jason
  Kristen
  Development of Commitment to Service
  Comparing and Contrasting Commitment to Service
Chapter 5: Comparing the Experiences
  High Achievers
  Previous Service Experience/Family Support
  Intensity of Experience: Connecting with Community Members
  Reflection on Personal Identity: Place in Society
  Sense of Efficacy
  Interaction of Direct Service Experiences and Cognitive Learning
  Motivation Shift
  Student Response to Instruction
  Student Response to Teaching Style
  A Development Sequence of Engagement
Chapter 6: Conclusions
  Research Questions
  Summary of Findings
  Implications for Practice
  Recommendations for Future Research
  Conclusion
Appendices
References
Index

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