Service-Learning's Ongoing Journey as a Method of Instruction: Implications for School-Based Agricultural Education

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Abstract

American education's journey has witnessed the rise and fall of various progressive education approaches, including service-learning. In many respects, however, service-learning is still undergoing formation and adoption as a teaching method, specifically in School-based, Agricultural Education (SBAE). For this reason, the interest existed to understand service-learning's origins and its evolution as a method of instruction. As such, this historical study sought to describe the events and philosophical underpinnings presaging service-learning's emergence as a method of instruction, and how this approach to learning has been incentivized and used in SBAE. Findings and implications from the study revealed that service-learning's deep philosophical roots can be traced to great thinkers, including Aristotle, Plato, Rousseau, Kant, and Dewey. Moreover, the researchers suggest the core principals of service-learning align with delivering SBAE's three-circle model in effective and powerful ways. Moving forward, scholars and practitioners of SBAE should ask themselves, "Is service-learning the teaching method of choice for conflating the components of SBAE's three-circle model such that the whole really is greater than the sum of its parts?"

Keywords: John Dewey; method of instruction; service-learning; three-circle model

Introduction

The long and winding road that is American education has involved many twists and turns, including continual attempts to repair, reform, and renew (Ball & Cohen, 1996). At times, policy reforms have detoured instructional practice away from progressive education approaches to emphasize more *tried and true,* or *proven* methods (Rocheleau, 2004). However, at the close of the 20th century, some decision makers perceived instruction *within the school* had again veered off course (Bowles & Gintis, 2013). This crossroads in education philosophy spurred the first Bush Administration, Congress, and select stakeholder groups, including educators, to construct a new pathway leading to what some observers labeled "the sleeping giant of school reform" (Nathan & Kielsmeier, 1991, p. 739), i.e., *service-learning as a method of instruction.*

During the past two decades, service-learning was cast as an increasingly popular teaching method (Campus Compact, 2012). In many respects, however, service-learning is still under formation (Barber & Battistoni, 1993), especially in School-based, Agricultural Education (SBAE) (O'Neil & Lima, 2003). Bringle and Hatcher (1995) described service-learning as

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course-based, credit bearing educational experiences in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility. (p. 38)

Robert Sigmon and William Ramsey coined the term *service-learning* in 1967 through a cooperative effort of the Southern Regional Education Board (Marks, 1973; Sigmon, 1990). The next 25 years of research in this field focused primarily on defining the phenomenon more precisely (Stanton, 1991). Even though service-learning as an instructional approach formed steadily over the years (Eyler & Giles, 1993), it also received criticism for simply being a social movement or a discipline of *fluff* because some observers regarded it as lacking academic rigor (Markus, Howard, & King, 1993). To the contrary, Giles and Eyler (1994) argued service-learning aligns closely with the principals and theories of John Dewey. "It is apparent to us that Dewey's educational and social philosophy, as we understand it, is a very good fit with the general understandings and claims of service-learning and with its potential to contribute to a theory of service-learning" (Giles & Eyler, 1994, p. 82). Moreover, Dewey (1957) opposed the concept of objective knowledge; instead, he maintained that knowledge guided an individual's decision making such that the person could better navigate through various situations in life by learning through real-life experience.

However, disagreements regarding the pedagogical worthiness of service-learning continue. For example, Franta (1994) stated:

> [S]ervice-learning is not a program of charitable endeavors, where one party is the giver and the other the taker. In service-learning, learning can be defined as the accomplishments of tasks which meet human need in combination with conscious educational growth. (p. 132)

For many, the concept and practice of community service and service-learning are understood and addressed as if the two are interchangeable. Community service is usually delivered through volunteerism; however, this action alone does not make it service-learning because it fails to include the synthesis of students learning course-related content in the context of their community actions, while also *reflecting* on those experiences (Franta, 1994). The most essential component of the experience and the aspect that resonates overtly with Dewey's philosophy of education is the reflection that occurs after the students' service-learning experiences (Giles & Eyler, 1994). Through reflection, students are empowered to contemplate and infer how and why their work made a difference. In addition, reflection allows students to reconsider and continue to work on a given issue in a community-based context using the content knowledge learned in their courses (Nachtrieb & Vore, 1999).

An important aim of service-learning is to develop citizens with the knowledge and experience needed to solve a community's problems and issues (McHue, 2000; Speck & Hoppe, 2004). To this end, American agriculture and its many practitioners – from farmers to scientists – have made innumerable service contributions to society throughout our nation's history (Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, 2011). Therefore, the integration of service-learning into the curriculum of SBAE would seem complementary; however, because of misconceptions surrounding the teaching method, it has not been diffused widely in the discipline (O'Neil & Lima, 2003). Despite this, agricultural educators and officials of the National FFA Organization have continued to press for the citizenship development of students and FFA members, which could involve service-learning as a method of instruction. Although service-learning in SBAE has had different labels over time – community service and

volunteerism, for example – the activities associated with its use seek to achieve a similar objective. Students use the knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed in courses to impact their communities in positive ways. Nevertheless, a review of the literature revealed no historical depiction of service-learning's path as a method of instruction in the context of SBAE.

Significance of the Study

Service-learning's philosophical underpinnings can be traced to the times of Aristotle and Plato. However, this progressive education approach has met opposition from various actors and forces. Despite these setbacks, a change in thinking about education during the late 20th century ushered in two pivotal U.S. legislative acts that propelled service-learning's adoption as a pedagogical approach (National and Community Service Trust Act, 1990, 1993). The robust utility of this method of instruction warrants the need for agricultural educators to understand its rich historical story. In addition, this historical investigation relates to Priority 6 of the American Association for Agricultural Education's National Research Agenda. That priority, "[v]ibrant, resilient communities" (Doerfert, 2011, p. 27), emphasizes the importance of civic engagement and strengthening the community. A key outcome of the priority is that "local communities will have effective leaders and engaged citizens who ensure high quality educational and career development opportunities for youth and adults and proactively sustain an environment conducive to positive community change" (Doerfert, 2011, p. 27).

Due to their ability to foster vital partnerships among students, teachers, and community members, schools have been acknowledged by sociologists as catalysts for enhancing the vitality of communities (Schafft & Harmon, 2011). Moreover, research focused on understanding the community's role in education has been a significant topic for the field of teaching and learning, especially as it relates to rural education (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean 2005; Budge 2006; London, Zimmerman, & Erbstein, 2003; Miller 1995; Theobald, 1997). This historical study sought to describe service-learning's emergence and evolution as a method of instruction, including its application in SBAE's three-circle model and potential for optimizing the model's impact on student learning and community development going forward.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the historical contexts and evolution of service-learning from its infancy to the present day. Three research questions guided this study: 1) What are the philosophical roots of service-learning as a method of instruction? 2) What significant historical contexts and events led to the adoption of service-learning as a method of instruction?
3) How has service-learning been incentivized and used in SBAE?

Methods and Data Analysis

Historical research methods were employed in this study to answer its research questions. McDowell (2002) suggested that historical evidence was the only true way to understand our past. He stated: "[C]hange occurs on a constant basis and so we are unable to freeze reality, except perhaps when we look at historical evidence, such as written or photographic material" (p. 3). McDowell's (2002) position and related principals were followed to develop this manuscript.

We examined primary and secondary sources (see Table 1) ensuring data were collected from an array of databases (McDowell, 2002). Finding multiple references verified the credibility of sources by triangulating their validity (Tracy, 2010). Further, sources were exposed to internal and external criticism by the researchers (McDowell, 2002). A detailed outline was employed to

reveal the interconnectedness of data sources and their associations to the study's research questions (McDowell, 2002). By using this approach, a simultaneous process of analysis and synthesis occurred as data were collected (McDowell, 2002). After documenting significant concepts, sources (see Table 1) were placed into the outline and further scrutinized to understand how each helped illuminate an understanding of service-learning's historical foundation and course of development as a learning method. Further, the study's detailed outline served as a way to organize findings into a chronological sequence and ultimately extract an understanding of service-learning's journey in SBAE.

Table 1

Primary and Secondary Sources

Type	Sources
Primary	- Legislative acts - Congressional report - Photographs and captions obtained from the National FFA Organization Archives depicting service-learning in SBAE - The *Official FFA Student Handbook* - Magazines published by the National FFA Organization - The *Official FFA Manual*
Secondary	- Peer-refereed journal articles - Peer-reviewed magazine article - Books about well-known philosophers - Books about the history of the service-learning movement - Books about agricultural education - Books about citizenship development in the United States

Findings

Research Question #1 − What are the philosophical roots of service-learning as a method of instruction?

Educating students in the context of the community has controversial philosophical roots (Rocheleau, 2004). A clear dichotomy exists among philosophers on the subject of whether education should produce graduates capable of serving the needs of their communities or if it should be more theory-driven or abstract in its purpose and process (Rocheleau, 2004). Classical philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato agreed that the core precept of education was to develop individuals of high moral character who possessed the knowledge and capacity to take actions in the quest of positive ends for society (Aristotle, 1997a, 1997b; Plato, 1961).

Their views were echoed later by other intellectuals who emphasized the need for education to include training in character development and ethics. John Stuart Mill claimed education should prepare individuals for competent and reasonable civic engagement (Mill, 1997). Moreover, Immanuel Kant and John Locke pushed for education to produce individuals with the skills needed to serve their communities (Kant, 1997; Locke, 1997). In *Emile,* Jean-Jacques Rousseau went so far as to devise a plan for education such that students could work cooperatively with others to solve local issues and problems (Rousseau, 1979). These

transformational beliefs on education, as proposed by some philosophers of the Enlightenment period and, in the case of Mill, afterward, were also espoused by Thomas Jefferson (Rocheleau, 2004). For example, his Virginia-based boys program promoted a democratic education that emphasized citizenship with the goal of producing high-quality public servants (Jefferson, 1964).

These great thinkers promoted education that would yield citizens prepared to be productive and meaningful stewards of society. However, the infusion of curriculum-based learning opportunities intended to occur in the context of local communities has more contemporary origins (Rocheleau, 2004). For example, many traditional education programs are designed such that students apply knowledge to real-world problems *after* having received instruction; service-learning, however, challenges that approach by using acts of service in the community as a source *of* and venue *for* student learning (Speck & Hoppe, 2004). In other words, students *learn by doing* in a community setting if service-learning is the primary method of instruction (Speck & Hoppe, 2004).

Some scholars (Ash & Clayton, 2004; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Rocheleau, 2004) associate service-learning, as we recognize it today, as stemming from the ideas proposed by John Dewey. Giles and Eyler (1994) explained:

> . . . . [The] reason for probing Dewey is that it appears that service-learning reflects, either consciously or unconsciously, *a Deweyian influence* [emphasis added]. Making that influence explicit can help determine if the theory is truly relevant and useful. Also, because neo-Deweyians such as David Kolb exert an influence on service-learning as one form of experiential learning, knowing about Dewey's theory on experience and education also seems important. (p. 78)

Although no artifacts were found in this historical inquiry directly linking Dewey's (1902, 1933, 1938) philosophical views on education to service-learning, his texts *School as Social Center*, *How We Think*, and *Experience and Education* have been fundamental in providing a conceptual framework for service-learning (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Rocheleau, 2004). For instance, Dewey postulated that learning is grounded deeply in experience, but experiences must be impactful and well-constructed (Dewey, 1938). He explained:

> The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. An experience may be such as to engender callousness; it may produce lack of sensitivity and responsiveness. Then the possibilities of having richer experience[s] in the future are restricted. (Dewey, 1938, pp. 25-26)

Dewey also sought reform in the way education was delivered (Dewey, 1957, 1960). He was roundly critical of education that typically occurred through a teacher-centered approach where facts were committed to memory through repetition and merely regurgitated by the learner thereafter (Hutchins, 1953). Moreover, Dewey opined that reflection was an essential component of the learning process as it directed learners to deeper understanding of their experiences. Dewey (1946) further maintained the community was also an integral actor and even went so far as to label it a *human instinct*. According to Dewey (1946), "association itself is physical and organic, while communal life is moral; this is emotionally, intellectually, [and] consciously sustained" (p. 151). This *sui generis* worldview exemplified his premise that learning should occur in social environments and even bear resemblance to a "miniature community" (Dewey, 1916, p. 418). Further, Dewey (1902) contended that a metamorphosis of the concept of citizenship was occurring during his time and advocated for its acknowledgement:

> The isolation between state and society, between the government and institutions of family, business life, etc., is breaking down. We realize the thin and artificial character of the separation. We begin to see that we are dealing with a complicated interaction of varied and vital forces, only a few of which can be pigeon-holed as governmental. The

content of the term 'citizenship' is broadening; it is coming to mean all the relationships of all sorts that are involved in membership in a community. (p. 76)

Through a synthesis of Dewey's works, it can be postulated a kind of *symmetry* should exist between educational institutions and the society and that learning is to occur *in* the community as students grapple with problems and issues *inherent to* their community. When juxtaposing the essence of the relationship between the school and the community, Dewey (1902) expanded on this concept:

. . . . [There is] a sense of something absent in the existing type of education, something defective in the service rendered by the school. Change the image of what constitutes citizenship, and you change the image of what the purpose of school is. Change this, and you change the picture of what school should be doing and of how it should be doing it. (p. 76)

Even though Dewey never sketched a formal plan for service-learning in his published works (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999), the epistemological precepts of service-learning align with his principals and theories on learning. In fact, a well-known protégé of Dewey, William Kilpatrick, who is credited by many with introducing the *project method* approach to education, was cited as its primary influence in *Youth Serves the Community* (Hanna, 1936). This attribution, however, is controversial due to Moore's (1988) stance that "[m]any people erroneously believe[d] William Heard Kilpatrick of Teachers College (Columbia University) was the originator of the project method" (p. 52). Moore (1988) concluded "[t]here is no doubt that [Rufus W.] Stimson was the father of the project method of teaching" (p. 53). Nevertheless, Hanna's (1936) book may be the first formal proposal of service-learning because it described combining what is now known as inquiry-based instruction with the project method to resolve a variety of societal problems and ills. Through this conceptual lens, Hanna (1936) pushed for a pedagogical shift where instructors would focus courses around solving community-based problems, such as the preservation of natural resources, communal safety, aesthetic enhancement, and a variety of other concerns expressed by citizens. These ideas presaged the instructional approaches used today by many practitioners of service-learning.

Research Question #2 – What significant historical contexts and events led to the adoption of service-learning as a method of instruction?

Scholars generally accept the notion that service to the community is rooted deeply in Judeo-Christian and Hindu beliefs and doctrine (Dass & Bush, 1992). However, if analyzing the specific events that led to service-learning emerging as a method of instruction in the United States, we must look to the Great Depression. During this period, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was impressed by the work a group of social workers did regarding youth and employment in the Chicago area (Tyack, Lowe, & Hansford, 1984). Mrs. Roosevelt was inspired to convince her husband, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, of the need for a nationwide jobs program targeting American youth (Reiman, 1992). Because of Mrs. Roosevelt's deep personal interest, the Roosevelt Administration created the National Youth Administration (NYA) (Reiman, 1992; Tyack et al. 1984). Through this initiative, "more than 700,000 youth from 16 to 25 years old" (Speck & Hoppe, 2004, p. 16) attained paying jobs. As a consequence, this program introduced a generation of Depression-era youth to the principals of service-learning.

After observing the success of the NYA, officials of his administration urged President Roosevelt to develop another program with similar objectives. As a result, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was created (Black, 1996). The CCC was modeled closely after the NYA, and both programs aspired to remove youth from unstable home situations and place them in jobs where they could engage in activities designed to help local communities (Watkins, 1990). During the Great Depression, these early service-learning programs had a combined impact of aiding more than 1.4 million youth and young adults (Black, 1996; Watkins, 1990).

Though often overshadowed by the NYA and the CCC, social work also has deep ties to service-learning's beginnings during the Great Depression (Black, 1996). As a profession, social workers realized the need to participate vigorously in helping citizens in that time of economic and social hardship (Fellin, 1995). They developed an intervention approach that largely served as a conceptual basis for the service-learning model used thereafter (Sosin & Caulum, 1983). For instance, localities began to improve economically by following purposely designed curriculum and outreach programs focused on community organizing (Okpych & L-H Yu, 2014; Rivera & Erlich, 1992). Those principals still can be observed in the mission statement of the National Association of Social Workers (Fellin, 1995). Their mission is to "promote, develop and protect the practice of social work and social workers; and seek to enhance the effective functioning and well-being of individuals, families, and communities through its work and through its advocacy" (National Association of Social Workers, 2013, para. 4).

Even though the 1950s are not typically associated with *Progressivism*, as it involved education, Kraft (1996) asserted this period was when service-learning gained steam as a teaching method. Thereafter, the Citizen Education Project (CEP) established multiple dynamic and social-based learning approaches that became popular in the 1970s (Kraft, 1996). During this time, the appeal of progressive education approaches was bolstered by several innovative programs even though they were somewhat thwarted by emerging counter trends (Kraft, 1996). Kraft (1996) explained:

> The Panel on Youth of the President's Science Advisory Committee, the National Committee on Secondary Education's *American Youth in the Mid-Seventies* [report], the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, Coleman's *Youth: Transition to Adulthood* [report], the National Panel on High School and Adolescent Education, and Martin's *The Education of Adolescents* [report] made a host of proposals on a range of topics: service programs; experience-based learning; job preparation; service graduation requirements; real and meaningful tasks; interaction with a greater range of people; reintegration of the young into the community. Little in the way of broad reform, however, was started until the publication of [the report] *A Nation at Risk* [in 1983], and by then the pendulum had swung away from the 'progressive' aspects of the 1970s reports and had turned to a focus on the basics [of education]. (p. 134)

Despite this obstacle, service-learning began receiving substantial federal support in the late 1980s. Specifically, in 1989, the first Bush Administration funded the Points of Light Foundation (Points of Light, 2013). The following year Congress passed the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1990, which approved grants for service-oriented projects through Learn and Serve America (National and Community Service Trust Act, 1990). This legislation "redefined federally supported national service by including school-based service-learning along with funding for full-time service" (Kielsmeier, 2000, p. 653). The next crucial step occurred in 1993 when the Clinton administration brought forth the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. This legislation created the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) as well as AmeriCorps (National and Community Service Trust Act, 1993). Its primary objective was to create more opportunities for citizens to give back to their communities. These changes also promoted the growth of service-learning in secondary education (CNCS, 2013). In explaining the legislation, Senator David Durenberger of Minnesota stated: "[The] ultimate purpose of this bill is to make every community in America a classroom, and an environment in which the talents and energies of the youngest citizens can be fully engaged and fully appreciated" (United States Senate Report, 1993, p. 6).

Perceiving the value of these legislative acts, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation also became a major player in the advancement of service-learning by giving millions of dollars to support service-related initiatives. McHue (2000) explained: "As the Corporation for National and Community Service took shape, the Kellogg Foundation refocused its grant making on developing leadership and excellence in the service-learning field; enriching it, and building

momentum for adoption, implementation, and sustainability" (p. 3). The Kellogg Foundation discovered so much value in this experience that it initiated *Learning in Deed*, a program designed to inspire more youth to serve their communities while also enhancing the academic learning (McHue, 2000).

Beginning primarily in the 1930s, service-learning played a fundamental role in helping communities and assisting individuals in learning how to solve everyday problems using concepts acquired through the school curricula and tested in the real-world (Hanna, 1936). Although service-learning faced challenges, it was eventually embraced by and operationalized through multiple national initiatives that created lasting impacts on millions of citizens (National and Community Service Trust Act, 1990, 1993).

Research Question #3 − How has service-learning been incentivized and used in SBAE?

Many SBAE programs have a long-standing tradition of providing service to their communities. Although different terms have been used interchangeably to describe service-learning as a method of instruction, artifacts of its influence on SBAE are evident. In 1945, the first issue of *FFA in Action*, predecessor to *The Future Farmer Magazine*, which later became *FFA New Horizons*, highlighted service-learning activities occurring throughout the United States (National FFA Organization, 1945). Despite being labeled *community service,* agricultural education teachers used their communities to enhance student learning of the curriculum.

Against the recent backdrop of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression, conservation practices and enhancement of agricultural production were top priorities in the 1940s. Therefore, SBAE students were involved in conserving forestland resulting in "millions of seedlings [being] planted each year by Future Farmers of America" (National FFA Organization, 1945, p. 20). Other programs emphasized the need for agricultural research. Students conducted experiments testing "seed for farmers in their community" (National FFA Organization, 1945, p. 20). Through these types of programs, students were able to help reduce the effects of inferior seeds and enhance the yields for an array of crops (National FFA Organization, 1945).

Community-based learning by agricultural education students continued in the 1950s. In 1956, the Georgia FFA Association promoted a statewide initiative where 293 SBAE programs provided training in the construction of mailbox stands (National FFA Organization, 1956). Students used their agricultural mechanics skills to "cast concrete posts" (National FFA Organization, 1956, p. 27) to support the placement of mailboxes. This initiative also led to opportunities for adult education in some communities. Former Douglas County FFA Advisor F. G. Cloer explained: ". . . seventy farmers came to the vocational agriculture shop for evening classes in which they made a post for themselves. It's one of the best ways to teach the use of concrete that I've ever seen" (National FFA Organization, 1956, p. 27).

Service-learning continued to be exercised in SBAE for instructional purposes during the 1960s. For instance, members of the Shelton FFA Chapter of Nebraska recognized a need in their community for a "dehorning chute and portable livestock scale" (National FFA Organization, 1965, p. 57). Students implemented the cooperative project such that local farmers could better evaluate the weight gain of their livestock and enhance safe animal handling practices. The FFA members accomplished this through an innovative investment program:

> To start the enterprise, the Shelton Chapter sold stock for $10.00 per share. Enough shares were sold to purchase a scale platform and material to build a catch pen and other requirements. Each share entitles the owner-member to use the unit four times without cost. After four uses the shareholder pays a $1.00 trip fee and $.05 per animal. The 5 cents will maintain the equipment and the dollar goes into a capital improvement fund to purchase additional equipment. (National FFA Organization, 1965, p. 57)

Moreover, a nationwide push for service-oriented programs occurred in 1971 when the National FFA Organization endorsed a new opportunity for FFA members and advisors that encouraged them to implement the Building Our American Communities (BOAC) program (Reese, 2003). According to Israel and Hoover (1996), "[t]his initiative sparked national attention after it received the National Volunteer Action Award in 1982, 1983, and 1984" (p. 1). The National FFA Organization further emphasized the importance of community involvement by integrating BOAC into the National Chapter Award Program (National FFA Organization, 1995). Through this change, the National FFA Organization (1995) stressed five foci, including "(d) *[c]itizenship activities* conducted to encourage members to become involved in their school, community and country" (p. 4).

Another milestone integral to service-learning's use in SBAE occurred at the 80th National FFA Convention when voting delegates requested the National FFA Board of Directors change the organization's approach to service. Slavkin and Sebastian (2013) explained:

> Through the youth governance model of the FFA delegate process, youth representatives from across the country stated that although the FFA model of traditional service was beneficial to the community, the impacts to the participants, beneficiaries, and the community were not as deep or meaningful. Thus the FFA youth delegates put forth a request of the National FFA Board of Directors to put in place the move from a *model of service* to a *model of service-learning* [emphasis added]. (p. 14)

The United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Youth Development Program was also instrumental in supporting the concept of service-learning through SBAE by providing grant opportunities to the National FFA Organization for a service-learning initiative (Henness, Ball, & Moncheski, 2011). This change enabled the National FFA Organization to develop resources and curriculum to assist SBAE teachers in facilitating service-learning projects that would encourage increased civic engagement by their students (Henness et al., 2011). "The official acceptance of the programmatic shift was announced during the 2007 National FFA Convention" (Slavkin & Sebastian, 2013, p. 14).

Beginning in 2007, the National FFA Organization has worked to empower SBAE teachers to use service-learning in their classrooms through three funding opportunities: "the Rural Youth Development Grant Program, FFA: Food For All Grant Program and Living to Serve: Environmental Grant Program" (Slavkin & Sebastian, 2013, p. 14). These grants provided incentives for teachers to combine coursework with service action projects to improve student achievement, attitudes, and motivation (National FFA Organization, 2013).

Further, in 2014, the National FFA Organization urged its members to incorporate service into all three components of SBAE's three-circle model, a concept called Three-Circle Service, or 3CS (National FFA Organization, 2014a; S. Donaldson, personal communication, August 27, 2014). To illustrate the utility of 3CS, a new SAE was also introduced – the *Agricultural Service-Learning SAE* (National FFA Organization, 2014b). Agricultural Service-Learning SAEs can span a broad range of agricultural career pathways; however, at the core of this project-based method is the opportunity for students to gain "valuable experience and earn credit for their SAE while helping others" (National FFA Organization, 2014b, para. 4). Many opportunities exist for students to expand their knowledge and proficiency in agricultural fields while also giving back to their local communities. For example, (a) using agricultural mechanics skills to help build playground materials, (b) implementing horticultural skills to coordinate community beautification endeavors, and (c) utilizing proficiency attained through agricultural communications coursework to provide marketing and technical support to local agribusinesses (National FFA Organization, 2014b). This initiative demonstrates a commitment to incorporate service-learning into the SAE component of SBAE's three-circle model.

Conclusions

Service-learning has the potential to guide students as they seek to understand and address issues found in their local communities, as Dewey, Kilpatrick, and Hanna outlined in their early conceptualizations of the method (Dewey, 1916, 1933, 1938; Hanna, 1936). In the last few decades, numerous interconnected trends in education philosophy and American culture have renewed interest in progressive approaches to student learning, including service-learning. This has also drawn attention to many of the ideas proposed by Dewey in the early decades of the 20th century (Ash & Clayton, 2004; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Rocheleau, 2004) in which he sketched the outline of a community-based approach to education that presaged service-learning. Dewey's thinking cast light on the social nature of learning as well as the basis for a teaching approach intended to empower learners to work cooperatively to solve problems facing their communities, including problems complementing the prescribed school curriculum (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995; Dewey, 1933, 1938; Hanna, 1936). In addition, service-learning augmented youth development and employment initiatives, as championed by Eleanor Roosevelt and other social reformers, during the depths of the Great Depression (Reiman, 1992; Speck & Hoppe, 2004; Tyack et al. 1984).

Service-learning, although sometimes identified by a variety names, has been integral to SBAE since its formative years (National FFA Organization, 1945, 1956, 1965). For instance, the actions of FFA members have been instrumental in solving local problems and helping to rejuvenate a sense of community (National FFA Organization, 1965). FFA members even used their knowledge and skills acquired through the SBAE curriculum to aid in America's economic and civic recovery after the Great Depression (National FFA Organization, 1945). The National FFA Organization celebrated the unique ways its members were impacting their communities by creating the BOAC program in 1971 (National FFA Organization, 1995), which achieved widespread success in the 1980s and was incorporated into the National Chapter Award Program (Israel & Hoover, 1996). Moreover, the National FFA Organization recently promoted service through its 3CS initiative, which called for members to infuse service in all three dimensions of SBAE's three-circle model (National FFA Organization, 2014a). As a complement, creation of the Agricultural Education Service-Learning SAE soon followed (National FFA Organization, 2014b). These events demonstrated the National FFA Organization's commitment to promote service-learning as a powerful pedagogical tool for use by students and teachers in SBAE.

Recommendations for Practice

SBAE teachers should use service-learning to augment student learning in their courses and throughout their programs. When planning for instruction, teachers should identify opportunities where service-learning could be used purposefully such that students apply their learning in meaningful, curriculum-based projects which stand to benefit local communities. For example, if viewed through the lens of a horticulture course, students could grow and harvest vegetables as a curriculum-based, service-learning project and donate their crop to a local food bank. Using this method of instruction increases the likelihood of content knowledge and concepts coming alive and holding more relevance for students while also creating opportunities for authentic assessment and citizenship development. Despite these benefits, additional work is needed to move service-learning forward in SBAE. More emphasis, therefore, should be placed on presenting service-learning as a method of instruction in agriculture teacher preparation programs. In addition, we suggest providing professional development for in-service teachers to promote the effective use of service-learning in SBAE. This may also require a concerted effort by teacher educators to invest themselves in the theoretical underpinnings of service-learning and to feature the method as an important part of their teaching methods courses. Special Interest Groups involving teacher educators and SBAE teachers could be forums by which to achieve

these aims. Finally, SBAE teachers should encourage their students to undertake learning experiences involving a community focus through the newly established Agricultural Service-Learning SAE (National FFA Organization, 2014b). Thereby, students would be encouraged to seek out learning opportunities in which their agricultural interests and experiences are used to make positive service contributions in their communities.

Recommendations for Additional Research

As service-learning and SBAE intersect more, further investigation about this phenomenon is needed. For example, research should be conducted to gauge the learning value associated with service-learning experiences in SBAE, including comparisons with other methods of instruction. In addition, studies should be conducted to understand the impacts of the National FFA Organization's service-learning opportunities for participants in the Washington Leadership Conference (WLC) and the National FFA Days of Service program. Future studies should also explore whether these service-learning experiences have increased the use of this teaching method by the students' instructors in their local programs. Finally, research should be performed to understand the impacts SBAE programs have made in their local communities by teachers using service-learning as a method of instruction.

Implications and Discussion

Service-learning is shaping SBAE, especially its FFA and SAE components. The National FFA Days of Service and WLC's service component resulted from the resurgence of progressive education approaches in SBAE (Stedman, Rutherford, Rosser, & Elbert, 2009). Because of this renewed optimism regarding the method's utility, new funding opportunities emerged supporting agricultural educators' attempts to conduct service-learning activities (Slavkin & Sebastian, 2013). This may have been unlikely if not for service-learning's powerful philosophical underpinnings that highlight it as a useful approach in student learning. To this end, remarkable consistency exists between contemporary scholars' views regarding service-learning as a method of instruction (Giles & Eyler, 1994) and the goals for student learning through SBAE.

Agricultural educators recognize widely the integrated, three-circle model as SBAE's foundational basis for developing and delivering programs that best meet students' learning needs (Talbert, Vaughn, & Croom, 2006). This model depicts a balance of classroom and laboratory instruction, SAE, and FFA. Croom (2008) offered clarification on the model's origins: "The integrated model for agricultural education seems to describe the philosophical thought surrounding agricultural education in the early twentieth century, and as such, became the guide for what agricultural education was to be or become" (p. 117). Croom (2008) also called for agricultural educators to examine and further refine the model. His recommendation holds importance for ensuring the progression of SBAE in the 21st century and beyond; service-learning *can* support this aim.

The principals of service-learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995; Franta, 1994; Nachtrieb & Vore, 1999), as described in this historical inquiry, align well with delivering SBAE's three-circle model. By serving as a way to integrate the model's constituent parts, service-learning could provide additional opportunities for students to acquire and apply their learning contextually (Roberts & Ball, 2009) through and between its programmatic dimensions with the prospect of more and deeper student reflection being achieved (Ash & Clayton, 2004; Giles & Eyler, 1994). In other words, service-learning may offer instructors a teaching method by which to deliver a more comprehensive SBAE experience for their students. Moving forward, agricultural educators should ask themselves, "Is service-learning the teaching method of choice for conflating the components of SBAE's three-circle model such that *the whole really is greater than the sum of its*

parts?" As service-learning's journey continues, it is apparent this instructional method must still travel far to reach full adoption by all agricultural educators; nevertheless, tracing its journey is well-worth documenting and understanding.

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