

The State of Service-Learning in Australia

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Abstract

This article provides an overview of the present status of service-learning in Australia. It explores the evidence for service-learning in Australia through published literature and a desktop audit that identified service-learning units/courses publicly available on university websites. Authorship of the article has provided a wider perspective to ensure the accuracy of its substance and conclusions. Service-learning is a relatively new curriculum approach in Australia in all but small pockets within universities and in faith-based institutions. However, in recent years, interest in civic learning outcomes for students has been behind efforts to include it more broadly in higher education approaches to engendering citizenship and social awareness as well as to expand the range of approaches to work-integrated learning. To capture this growing interest, an Australian service-learning network and summit is planned for November 2019.

Keywords: service-learning, Australia, work-integrated learning, higher education, community engagement



Although experiential education, more broadly known as work-integrated learning (WIL), has a high profile in Australian higher education, service-learning represents an underappreciated pedagogy when compared with other parts of the world, including North America. In Australia, WIL has achieved widespread acceptance and encompasses concepts such as curriculum-based work experience, practice-based education, experiential education, and cooperative education. In contrast, service-learning is employed in just a few institutions in Australia, and it has only recently begun to gain ground as a curriculum option, usually falling within a broad range of WIL options. WIL and like experiences were largely developed to improve graduate outcomes in terms of work-readiness and engagement with theory. The growth of WIL in Australia was along a somewhat similar timeline to the growth of service-learning in North America, albeit in Australia it was the North American model of cooperative education that was being adopted.

Work-integrated learning in Australia is at a critical juncture. It has been 10 years since the publication of *The WIL Report* (Patrick et al., 2009), a seminal publication and the first large-scale national scoping study of WIL in Australia. At the time of publication, *The WIL Report* made a systematic case for the challenges and benefits of WIL for students, universities, and stakeholders. Service-learning was referred to as one form of WIL as it was enacted in Australia, falling under the description of WIL given in the *Report* as an “umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum” (Patrick et al., 2009, p. iv). Service-learning and community engagement in Australia have been increasing in popularity over the last decade, with more institutions considering service-learning either as a WIL option or for its own value in terms of students’ professional and personal development and understanding of their role in the community and as global citizens. The drivers for this increase were in place even before

Langworthy (2007) questioned the viability of an American model of service-learning being applicable in the Australian context.

In 2002 a major discussion paper was produced by the Australian Government, *Higher Education at the Crossroads* (Nelson, 2002). In it, several opportunities were presented to which a response by the sector of inclusion of community engagement (service-learning) approaches would have met with a positive response by the government. The Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) held its first conference in 2006 to provide a venue for WIL practitioners to talk about their practice and research. In 2012, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (Packham 2009) proposed an “army” of university students and graduates who would be able to pay off their education loans through community service.

More recent interest in service-learning builds on longer standing, mature approaches to service-learning programs within faith-based higher education institutions and service-learning enacted in small pockets elsewhere. It has grown in an environment where not-for-profit organizations are experiencing decreasing government funding and requiring alternative approaches to fulfill client and organizational needs. Some 600,000 social enterprises are registered in Australia for a population of 22 million, and over 30% of Australians volunteer in some way in their community. Although service-learning remains somewhat overshadowed by more traditional forms of WIL, there is considerable growing interest across the sector in the outcomes such a curriculum can achieve for students in terms of professional and personal development, as well as their engagement with, and contributions to, the community.

This article reflects on the present status of credit-bearing service-learning in Australia by reviewing recent literature on service-learning in Australia, conducting a desktop audit to examine evidence for service-learning curriculum in Australian universities, and including, through authorship, perspectives from those few institutions with larger scale approaches to service-learning, namely Notre Dame University, Macquarie University, and Griffith University. We thereby identify the range of service-learning occurring in the Australian context. Evidence points to two origins for the adoption of service-learning

in Australia: (1) direct course/unit requirements for placement experience that suits service-learning curriculum approaches and (2) approaches that break away from the purely course/unit-based experiences that support specific discipline-based learning goals to service-learning opportunities but, although not specifically discipline related, nevertheless enhance a wide range of academic skills, personal and professional development, and awareness of social justice and civic engagement.

Literature Review

This review begins by contextualizing service-learning as an approach to transformative education before exploring the literature surrounding service-learning programs in Australian universities over the past 10 years. Emphasis was placed on frequently cited work and recent research, with this corpus of literature examined for similarities, differences, and trends. Based on this process, three notable themes emerged from the literature: first, the disciplines that appear most inclined to experiment with service-learning programs in Australia; second, the prominent reasons for implementing service-learning programs; and finally, the lack of clarity and consensus around service-learning definitions and nomenclature.

Service-learning is based on the premise that university education can and should be about more than classroom and discipline-based learning. Service-learning represents transformational educational experiences that serve to develop students as “citizens” with “important human qualities” (Bok, 2009, p. 66). As David Scobey (2010, pp. 185–186) explains:

No one is born a citizen. Citizens have to be made. We become not merely rights-bearing humans but public selves through a complex socialization that endows us with the knowledge, capacities, values, and habits that we need for the reflective practice of democratic life. . . . there is no citizenship without education for citizenship.

Indeed, Hutchings and Huber argue that educating “citizens” represents one of the oldest aims of learning in the Western tradition, but they admit that it does not always align with the other goals of modern

higher education (2010, p. xi). Simply producing trained workers takes a narrow view of the role of higher education; instead, universities should foster human qualities in their students, such as honesty, racial tolerance, and good citizenship (Bok, 2009). Participation in service-learning has been found to positively affect students' engagement with their communities and improve their social values, as well as contributing to leadership skills, self-confidence, critical thinking, and conflict resolution (Pickus & Reuben, 2010; Sax, Astin, & Avalos, 1999).

Although use of service-learning in Australia is relatively small and underdeveloped as compared to that in the United States and other parts of the world, Australian practitioners broadly agree on the theoretical underpinnings of service-learning as an approach to education. Taking a holistic view, service-learning seeks to produce graduates with a strong sense of civic values and responsibility, alongside academic and professional skills (Mabry, 1998). To facilitate the development of these civic values, service-learning programs must be designed so that equal emphasis is placed on learning and on service provision, so that the providers and recipients of the service benefit equally (Furco, 1996). This equality can be achieved through careful integration of service and learning, rather than the simple addition of service to an existing curriculum (Howard, 1998). Service-learning generally involves students' spending a certain number of hours in the community and then reflecting on their contributions either in writing or in discussion with their advisors or peers (Butin, 2010). The benefits of service-learning are well documented: Participation in service-learning contributes to improved graduate employability, increased cultural competence, and a stronger sense of civic responsibility (Cress, Burack, Giles, Elkins, & Stevens, 2010; Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001). Indeed, the work of Eyler et al. (2001), in their far-reaching and extensive review of literature on service-learning in the United States, was a critical juncture in demonstrating the undeniable value of service-learning.

Although Eyler et al. (2001) demonstrated the critical mass that had accumulated around service-learning theory and practice in the United States, service-learning in Australia has yet to reach a similar level of maturity. Service-learning still represents a relatively new approach and, although

the work that has taken place in the United States and elsewhere around the world has provided a valuable base, no systemic case for service-learning in Australia considers the various approaches and interpretations employed across the country. In 2007, Langworthy (2007) made the observation that Australia's political drivers, competitive context, and lack of history have previously limited the extent to which service-learning has been embraced, as compared to U.S. practice. Langworthy identified a variety of differences between the North American and Australian contexts in relation to any potential for service-learning to grow in Australia, specifically questioning whether American service-learning could "be transplanted to the Australian context where a culture of education for democracy and citizenship is at odds with a culture of education for private benefit and vocational outcomes" (p. 1) that was increasingly driving the policy agenda in Australian higher education. At the same time as Langworthy's paper was written, WIL was growing in the sector. The driving force for increasing WIL curriculum approaches was indeed the demand for employability skills. Given that it is 10 years since *The WIL Report* (Patrick et al., 2009) made the first systematic review of, and argument for, WIL in Australia, the time is ripe for further explorations of how service-learning has gained momentum in Australia in those intervening years.

The foremost trend in the literature surrounding service-learning in Australia is that it seems to focus on several key disciplines. According to the literature review, despite the widespread support of WIL across a range of fields (see Orrell, 2011), service-learning appears to be far more predominant in education than in other degrees, although it is known that there is considerable practice in the health sciences. Education degrees, in particular, seem to offer semiregular service-learning programs, with a significant body of literature focusing on the experiences of preservice teachers (Carrington & Saggars, 2008; Carrington & Selva, 2010; Chambers & Lavery, 2012; Coffey & Lavery, 2015; Salter & Halbert, 2018). This emphasis could be due to the value of service-learning in advancing literacy, numeracy, and other educational support in disadvantaged environments, which is how service-learning is often used in North America. Furthermore, discussions in education literature have

turned to topics of agency, fostering critical reflection among students, and integrating service-learning with later practicums. In contrast, service-learning in other disciplines is either still in initial scoping phases—the work of Evans and Sawyer (2009) on internet usage and small businesses, for example—or grappling with the logistics of ensuring equal commitment from all stakeholders, such as the challenges faced by the Carlton Tripartite Partnership in attempting to balance the somewhat incongruent needs of the institution with those of the local community (Warr & Williams, 2016). Education, by far, represents the most advanced corpus of literature identified for this article in terms of how service-learning is understood and employed in Australia.

The next major area for discussion involved the reasons for introducing service-learning. One of the primary reasons for introducing service-learning programs appears to be increasing intercultural understanding and competence among students. This approach is seen in a large body of literature across disciplines as diverse as teaching (Carrington & Sagers, 2008; Carrington & Selva, 2010) and health (Jones et al., 2015; Long, 2014). In one of the very few examples of service-learning mentioned in the literature outside health and education, the Change Makers project (Downman & Murray, 2017) saw journalism students volunteer in a participatory journalism project with students at an ethnically diverse high school, with the aim of combating stereotypes and racism. Students did not receive academic credit for their participation in this project but overwhelmingly reported that it increased their cultural awareness. Similarly, the “Patches” program explored how service-learning can be applied to develop intercultural competency and encourage fostering inclusive education among preservice teachers (Tangen, Mercer, Spooner-Lane, & Hepple, 2011). The authors argue that there was a distinct change in mind-set, as the domestic students went into the experience with the mind-set that they were mentors providing a service and emerged realizing that they were “being of service” in an equal partnership of cultural exchange and learning. In both cases, students and supervisors observed higher levels of intercultural competence resulting from the service-learning initiatives.

Service-learning has also been employed to

increase intercultural competence among Australian students closer to home. There is a corpus of literature that explores various service-learning projects that have focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as beneficiaries of student service (see Bartleet, Bennett, Marsh, Power, & Sunderland, 2014; Bartleet, Bennett, Power, & Sunderland, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, Singh, Kolopenuk, Robinson, & Walter, 2012). A noteworthy example is the work of Lavery, Cain, and Hampton (2018). Following the experiences of preservice teachers in a remote Aboriginal school, Lavery et al. collected data over a 4-year period and found that experiential learning is essential in allowing preservice teachers to engage with Aboriginal students and provide appropriate teaching. They found that immersion as an approach to service-learning offers a sustained, hands-on learning experience. Preservice teachers overwhelmingly reported an increased understanding of Aboriginal culture and the realities of teaching in a remote location. Similarly, the school valued the experience: They appreciated the service work that took place and the ongoing relationship established with the university. This ongoing partnership between this very remote school community and the university has been sustained for 7 years and is likely to continue. A further cross-institutional, collaborative project focused on preservice teachers engaging in “arts-based service-learning” with Aboriginal communities (Power & Bennett, 2015). There was a firm focus on reciprocal engagement with the community in this program, which saw pre-service teachers developing their professional identity through transformational learning experiences and increased cultural knowledge (Power, 2012). Service-learning represents a key methodology for increasing the cultural competence of students in terms of understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

Service-learning also features within units of study for credit without being formally identified as service-learning. In one example, a series of case studies embedded within capstone journalism courses, Project Safe Space and Project Open Doors, describe a wise practice framework that facilitates journalism students working with communities affected by serious social issues such as domestic violence and disability. As with service-learning, wise practice seeks “collaborations, participation, empower-

ment and transformative change” (Petrucka et al., 2016, p. 181). Transformation most often occurs through student engagement with the community. Wise practice employs a variety of approaches aimed at “incorporating a contextually-relevant learning environment that still accommodates different learning styles with the widest application focusing on inclusion and acceptance” (Valencia-Forrester & Backhaus, 2018, p. 95).

Finally, there seems to be little agreement among the Australian literature on a firm definition of service-learning. This is best illustrated in the work of Downman and van Etten (2012), who bounce between terms including “WIL,” “service learning,” and “environmental volunteering.” They debate the various terms that could be applied to their program, working through WIL and volunteering literature. Indeed, their model, the Natural Science Practicum, perhaps blurs the lines by including two practical placements throughout the degree: 5 days of volunteer work in the first year, and a more formal 10-day work experience in students’ third year. Although the student testimonials were largely positive, the authors recognized the anecdotal nature of the data and discussed plans for more formal evaluations of the practicum. Although this model was clearly integrated throughout the degrees, the Change Makers (Downman & Murray, 2017) program that was discussed earlier raises questions about whether students should gain academic credit for their service-learning work, and the implications of this decision for how service-learning is integrated into the curriculum. The lack of clarity here is further explored through the desktop audit of policies and how service-learning is employed across several Australian universities.

Based on this review, there are several themes running throughout the recent service-learning literature in Australia: the relative scarcity of service-learning literature outside the field of education; the use of service-learning as a tool to increase intercultural competence; and the lack of clarity over defining service-learning. These findings demonstrate that there is significant scope for expansion of service-learning programs and an understanding of service-learning across Australia. Although service-learning in education seems to be moving toward refining approaches to critical reflection and evaluation, other

areas where service-learning is relatively new are still grappling with logistical issues. There have been many notable examples of successful programs that hint at further application across disciplines and locations, though little in the literature implies such expansions are taking place.

Methodology

This study employed a multiple-method descriptive research approach in order to establish a broad impression of the service-learning landscape in Australia. Primarily exploratory in nature, this research utilized three key approaches to ensuring the accuracy of this article. The first two approaches were a literature review of academic work and a desktop audit. Following the literature review and desktop audit, the article and its findings were sent to authors in Notre Dame and Macquarie Universities with an invitation to edit and augment the content of the article. This last approach, although unusual in terms of a methodology, was intentional in terms of ensuring that this article is truly representative of service-learning in Australia.

Literature Review

A literature review was conducted to develop an understanding of the academic work taking place in the service-learning space. The focus of the literature review was on publications about service-learning in Australia published within the past 10 years. Rather than simply engaging in a systematic review of the literature surrounding service-learning in Australia, this narrative review explored key pieces of research in this developing field that have specific contemporary relevance and offer pathways for future practice and research. A literature review of this nature serves to provide a snapshot of the service-learning projects that have taken place in Australian institutions over the past 10 years, with specific reference to several key iterations. Key pieces of literature were identified based on the number of citations on Google Scholar and links to seminal service-learning pieces. Emphasis was also placed on more recent work in order to understand how the conversations surrounding service-learning have developed over the past decade.

Desktop Audit

The literature review was complemented by

a desktop audit that further elaborated on the quantum of service-learning occurring in Australia. The desktop audit provided a comprehensive overview of all institutions implementing service-learning and the degree to which they are committed to supporting or growing the curriculum. The desktop audit employed Bringle and Hatcher's (1995) commonly cited definition:

Service-learning [is] a course-based, credit-bearing, educational experience in which students a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and b) 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 civic responsibility. (p. 112)

Based on this definition, a list of key terms was developed in order to conduct first a general web search and then a more specific search of institutional websites. The key terms that were used to conduct the searches were "service learning," "community engagement," "community internship," "skilled volunteering," and "civic engagement." To conduct the audit, the 42 higher education institutions in Australia were identified. The service-learning search terms were used systematically in conjunction with each university's name. Then they were used again in the search tool on each university's own website. When the search returned matches to the key terms that revealed a possible service-learning subject/course, we then investigated the subject/course outline as available to the general public online. We looked specifically for the following:

1. Do students earn credit toward their degree by participation in service-learning?
2. Is the placement/service within a community service, charity, or not-for-profit organization?
3. Is there an element of structured self-reflection involved in the service-learning program?

The results of the audit were analyzed in terms of revealing trends and common approaches, as well as to develop an overall impression of the scope of service-learning

across the country.

Findings

The findings of the literature review are supplemented by the results of a desktop audit into service-learning approaches across several Australian universities. This aims to paint a more complete picture of the state of service-learning in Australia as a whole, as compared to the promising snapshot offered by the literature. The results of this audit were sent to all universities for them to comment on the findings or amend as appropriate. Service-learning was recognized at an institutional level at just over half of the 42 universities involved in the desktop audit, with over 200 identified contacts e-mailed; however, many of the respondents were only able to comment on service-learning subjects within their specific faculty. Upon closer inspection, despite the lack of institutional recognition, only four universities did not offer any form of service-learning units. Of those four, one did offer an award for community engagement and another ran a separate community engagement program outside classes. Based on this, it is clear to see that service-learning is reasonably, albeit thinly, widespread across Australian universities even if it is not recognized at an institutional level. It is worth noting here that the desktop audit did not extend to extracurricular service-learning but focused instead on service-learning embedded within the curriculum.

There was one area in which the findings of the desktop audit stood in stark contrast to those of the literature review. Based on the literature review alone, one might assume that education students represent the majority of service-learning participants. The desktop audit, however, revealed that this is not necessarily the case. International service-learning, or programs where students are given the opportunity to travel overseas to complete their service, are very popular in Australia, with many universities offering such programs in a range of countries, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. There are also a high number of interdisciplinary or student-led service-learning units on offer where students can nominate partner organizations or arrange their own placements, as shown in Figure 1.

Related to the limited institutional recognition of service-learning, as well as the popularity of interdisciplinary or flexible

Service-learning units by discipline

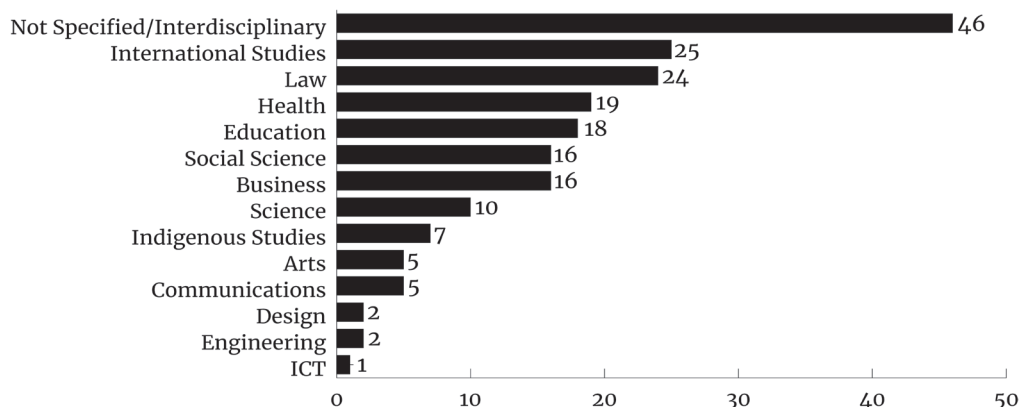


Figure 1. Service-Learning Units Where Students Can Arrange Their Own Placements

service-learning units, is a lack of clarity surrounding a definition of service-learning that suits the Australian context. As evidenced in the literature through the Change Makers project (Downman & Murray, 2017) and the environmental volunteering (Scott & van Etten, 2012), there is little consensus about what exactly constitutes a service-learning program within a university. This was further confirmed through the desktop audit, which revealed that some courses at several universities may not offer academic credit for participation in service-learning. Although receiving academic credit for service is widely accepted to represent a key tenet of service-learning, the way credit was applied to the service-learning courses that were audited was inconsistent, with some courses receiving credit, others not, and others “subject to negotiation.” Further, the lines between WIL and service-learning seemed to be blurred, with some universities offering “service” courses that have the option of placements with businesses or government organizations, which more accurately would be defined as WIL rather than service-learning. Despite this apparent confusion, there are well-developed examples of how service-learning can be integrated within a broader WIL curriculum.

The desktop search identified that UTS has a well-established cross-disciplinary community-university engagement program: UTS Shopfront. Their aim is to build strong and sustainable communities through research, education, and practice. The main program is curricular, with Shopfront facilitating community projects and internships for final year undergraduate and

postgraduate students across all disciplines, for over 800 non-profit organizations. When reading about the program, the term “service-learning” is notably absent. This is indicative of the state of service-learning in Australia; there is a lack of clarity on what constitutes service-learning, and furthermore, there is discussion about whether service-learning is the most appropriate description. Other descriptions were commonly found during the desktop audit: community coursework projects, disciplinary coursework for non-profit organizations, community-engaged research, and community-engaged scholarship.

Macquarie University’s Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) program represents another well-developed service-learning program, where relationships with all stakeholders are highly valued and require careful nurturing to ensure that involvement in PACE is truly mutually beneficial. Although the scope of PACE as currently practiced at Macquarie University extends beyond service-learning to also encompass other forms of community-engaged and work-integrated learning, each of the four key constituencies—institution, faculty, students, and community—identified by Bringle and Hatcher (1996) as the focus of activity for implementing a service-learning program in higher education plays a central role in the program. According to a recent analysis of the PACE program (Bringle & Plater, 2017), service-learning is unique among the types of experiential education in general and in PACE because of its emphasis on civic learning outcomes. Therefore, the prominence of service-learning in PACE is

an important indicator for institutionalizing community engagement.

This unique approach to service-learning in Australia, whereby emphasis is placed on civic learning outcomes, is further evidenced through Griffith University's Community Internship, which places around 600 students per year in well-defined, definition-compliant service-learning placements with a concomitant service-learning curriculum intentionally designed to provide students with opportunities to transform their understanding of the need for civic engagement. This approach is notable in that, according to research, community partners indicate 60% of students continue to engage as volunteers in their organizations. The University of Notre Dame and Australian Catholic University, as is common for many faith-based institutions, have historically had a strong approach to service-intentional goals across the whole curriculum of ensuring students realize their obligations as citizens.

Discussion

The results of the literature review, desktop audit, and shared authorship go some way toward describing the service-learning landscape in Australia. Service-learning in Australia is enacted under a broader umbrella of WIL, in contrast to U.S. practice, where cooperative education and service-learning are treated as, more or less, separate entities. Against this backdrop, the research revealed two key themes: inclusive education and relationships with community stakeholders.

Inclusive Education

Based on the review of key pieces of literature, the desktop audit, and broadening of the article's authorship, a number of themes emerged as areas for further discussion. The foremost was the need to develop service-learning programs that offer inclusive education. Interestingly, this was also observed in WIL more broadly at the time of *The WIL Report* (Patrick et al., 2009). Even though service-learning has been used to facilitate teaching inclusive education to early career teachers (Carrington & Saggars, 2008), designing curriculum to include the diversity of the broader student body represents a key challenge in service-learning (Harrison & Ip, 2013; Tangen et al., 2011). Similarly, as discussed earlier, Australian

literature suggests that service-learning represents a key tool in fostering intercultural understanding. Nine of the universities audited offered units that gave students the opportunity to undertake service in Indigenous communities or working with Indigenous people, with only a few identified as focusing on supporting opportunities for Indigenous students. One example is Victoria University's Aurora Internship Project, which offers a program specifically focused on facilitating internships for Indigenous students. Though there have been recent successes in encouraging more inclusive education through service-learning (Downman & Murray, 2017; Lavery et al., 2018), given the increasing recognition of the diversity of the student body, more research needs to be undertaken into the experiences of students with disabilities, students from remote and rural areas, international students, Indigenous students, and students facing financial difficulties. Exploring how these students have been able to engage with service-learning will contribute to designing more inclusive curriculum to give all students the opportunity to participate in meaningful, relevant service-learning experiences.

Community Stakeholders

A further key area of interest that has emerged from a review of service-learning literature in Australia is the challenge of balancing the needs of students and community stakeholders. Although the benefits to students of such engagement are relatively well documented in the literature (Eyler et al., 2001), little empirical research supports claims that programs and partnerships result in reciprocal learning and engagement opportunities, especially from the perspective of community partners. For example, work by Hammersley (2012, 2017) challenges the unidimensional understanding of the mutuality of programs that fail to challenge dominant power relations embedded in traditionally uneven partnerships that tend to dominate the sector. It remains problematic to engage with service-learning without considering neo-colonialist ideologies underpinning the ways community service and volunteering are defined and practiced.

The focus of service-learning programs, therefore, should not be restricted to the learning outcomes of students. It is essential that service-learning be designed to provide

reciprocal benefits to all, not only students but also the providers and recipients of the service (Furco, 1996). Striking this balance is of the utmost importance within service-learning and represents a distinct challenge (Scott & van Etten, 2012). Given the number of stakeholders involved in service-learning, resourcing also emerged as an issue. Service-learning, and WIL more broadly, are generally considered to be “resource-intensive” (Harris, Jones, & Coutts, 2010). The roles and responsibilities of academic advisors and support staff, particularly how they balance the needs of students with those of community stakeholders, represent a distinctly under researched area in service-learning in Australia in terms of being able to advance this curriculum further.

Interestingly, some of the areas for future development and discussion in service-learning echo the findings of *The WIL Report* (Patrick et al., 2009) in terms of the major challenges. *The WIL Report* identified five major challenges to engaging with WIL: “ensuring equity and access,” “managing expectations and competing demands,” “improving communication and coordination,” “ensuring worthwhile WIL placement experiences,” and “adequately resourcing WIL.” Several of these challenges, most notably “ensuring equity and access” and “managing expectations and competing demands,” have also been identified through the course of this research into service-learning. Perhaps service-learning in Australia is facing the same critical juncture that WIL was 10 years ago. If so, then the trajectory of WIL in Australia may provide potential pathways forward for service-learning. Although the challenges faced by service-learning are, of course, different from those faced by WIL more broadly, exploring how WIL programs were developed to suit the diversity of the student body, or how the stakeholders in WIL projects have balanced their different needs and expectations, may provide important insight into how service-learning can begin to address these challenges, whether service-learning is seen as a standalone curriculum or part of the broader WIL approach.

Conclusion

The findings of this review go some way toward illustrating the state of service-learning practice and research in Australia. It is clear that service-learning as a transformational pedagogy has yet to reach the

widely accepted and implemented status that it holds in other parts of the world. Foremost, the lack of clarity around the definition of service-learning, both across Australian institutions and across courses within the same universities, needs to be addressed. When compared to how service-learning is interpreted and enacted elsewhere in the world, Australian literature and practice offer a mixed bag of definitions of service-learning, most notably in terms of where service takes place and if it is granted academic credit. Research that explores the value of these two core aspects of a working definition of service-learning would represent a valuable contribution to the field.

Further, there is evidence to suggest that existing predominant approaches to service-learning in Australia may not cater to the diversity of needs of the student body (Downman & Murray, 2017; Harrison & Ip, 2013; Lavery et al., 2018; Tangen et al., 2011). A more flexible, tailored approach is required to ensure that inclusive service-learning education can be offered to all students. This prompts the exploration of alternative approaches to course design, such as employing a wise practice framework. Wise practice places emphasis on participation and collaboration between stakeholders in order to facilitate empowerment and transformative change for all those involved (Petrucka et al., 2016). Inclusive education requires the proactive recognition of the diversity of the student body; rather than “integrating” diverse needs into a static curriculum, inclusion must be designed from inception (Harrison & Ip, 2013). Time-poor educators and the needs of different stakeholders complicate designing service-learning programs. Wise practice argues that “best practice” is not necessarily the “best option,” particularly considering “the variety of unique [access], identity, cultural and situational environments” (Thoms, 2007, p. 8). Often the predominant approach to WIL and service-learning can be to value the feedback of students and community partners about the placement experiences, rather than for educators to focus on what students learn about themselves and their personal transformation of values (Wilson, 1989). Wise practice in service-learning acts to remove educational hierarchies and positions students, educators, and community partners as collaborators, working together to realize “the common good” (Sternberg, 2009). Students are thus empowered to take

a lead role in their own education (Petrucka et al., 2016). Doing so creates space for inclusion and transformation at the center of the learning experience, an approach that aligns closely with the transformative ethos of service-learning.

The predictions of Langworthy (2007) that “to be successfully adapted to the Australian university environment, programs must be strongly linked to vocational outcomes and graduate attributes” (p. 8) have proven to be true.

In addition to highlighting emerging areas of interest within the field, this review also points to issues requiring further research and investigation. In 2015, the Australian Government accepted the recommendations of a report on university funding and engagement. One of the key accepted recommendations was to “provide incentives to universities to increase and improve engagement and collaboration with business and other end-users” (Watt, 2015, p. i). Similarly, the Australian Government committed to \$28 million over 4 years to expand Ph.D. internship programs to improve postgraduate employability (Department of Education and Training, 2017). There is a clear commitment to encouraging greater engagement with industry and the community, as well as to the role of WIL in the form of internships. Where does this leave service-learning?

The significant interest in service-learning among higher education institutions clearly demonstrates widespread recognition that this pedagogy has value. Innovative

service-learning projects are taking place in universities across the country, work that was nationally recognized in 2017, when two university programs received the Australian Government Department of Education’s prestigious Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT). Griffith University’s Community Internship program was recognized with the AAUT Award for Programs That Enhance Learning, in the category Student Experiences and Services Supporting Learning, Development and Growth in Higher Education. Macquarie University’s PACE was also recognized with the AAUT Award for Programs That Enhance Learning, in the category Educational Partnerships and Collaborations With Other Organisations. However, little to no work exists that provides an overview of the research available on the topic in the Australian context in order to make a systematic case for the relevance and value of service-learning. Given the increasing prominence of WIL and increasing interest in service-learning as part of the WIL approach within education policy spheres, this review offers a timely first step toward demonstrating the value of service-learning in Australia. Consequent to the work completed for this article, a national network of service-learning practitioners held a service-learning summit in November, 2019, responding to the desktop audit which showed that 84% of respondents agreed they would like a network approach, with 95% indicating that they see room for the growth of service-learning in their discipline or institution.



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