

Book Review

Service-Learning Essentials. Questions, Answers, and Lessons Learned.

Barbara Jacoby. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2015. 322 pp. ISBN-13: 978-1118627945. Paperback, \$35.

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Service-Learning Essentials is a manuscript authored by one of the most influential scholars in the field of community engagement, Barbara Jacoby. Jacoby's contributions to this scholarly field range from a breadth of research and publications to presentations, speeches, and teaching. As Jeffrey Howard acknowledges in the foreword to the manuscript: "She is one of the icons in the service-learning movement... [and] has had a panoramic and on-the-ground view of our work" (p. xiii). The importance of the volume is underscored by its publisher, Campus Compact, a national organization "dedicated solely to campus-based civic engagement."

Jacoby clearly decided to focus on only one aspect of engagement scholarship, the pedagogy of service-learning, rather than more broadly on what she calls "civic learning" (i.e., active citizenship or public service). She sees the "tremendous potential of service-learning to prepare our students to be active participants in our democracy and our work on behalf of social change" (p. xvii).

Operating from that perspective, Jacoby's goal is a thorough explanation of the tenets of the pedagogy for the purpose of intentional and thoughtful use in the academic context. Her own intentionality comes through in the innovative format of the book. Rather than using narratives, she opted for a Q&A format with added references for further reading.

As the title suggests, the book addresses the most fundamental aspects of the pedagogy of service-learning across a continuum. Consisting of nine chapters, Jacoby's text moves from introducing the pillars of the pedagogy to far more complex themes, such as assessment and the role of service-learning in higher education. As a theorist and practitioner of service-learning, Jacoby thoroughly addresses each of the questions comprising separate and independent chapters.

After providing the reader with theoretical foundations in Chapter One, Jacoby presents best practices of critical reflection in Chapter Two, providing a context for both curricular and co-curricular settings. In Chapters Three and Four, she delves deeper into the curriculum, this time looking at community partnerships and multidisciplinary aspects of the pedagogy.

The role of assessment is presented mainly in Chapter Six. (However, Chapter Nine also includes an important discussion of the significance of research and assessment.) Quoting Furco and Holland, Jacoby acknowledges that

service-learning "requires *evidence above passion* [emphasis added]." Her methods reach beyond the traditional approach to include assessment, research, and evaluation as necessary parts of scholarship. To stress the validity and significance of an evidence-based approach, Jacoby argues that assessment of the pedagogy is "essential to secure its future" (p. 254).

Jacoby presents various methods for assessing service-learning. She is careful not to advocate for any specific approach and instead presents considerations for choosing one particular method. What is refreshing about this chapter is the inclusion of the community partners' perspective. It is worth noting that Jacoby includes the question of the value of service-learning for the community—a topic often less emphasized by service-learning scholars—as well its impact on systems and partnerships. At the core of service-learning, community partners play the role of co-educators and should equally benefit from the partnership with the university.

Chapter Six is an overview of the assessment of service-learning. Jacoby does not focus on details; her purpose is a broad introduction to the topic. This approach would benefit an audience less familiar with assessment, practitioners interested in analyzing the impact of their work, and new adapters of the pedagogy.

Jacoby's text also emphasizes the institutionalization and complexities of service-learning. The last two chapters introduce the problematic aspects of incorporating service into the curriculum such as considering issues of diversity, understanding systems of power, students' resistance to the idea of service learning requirements, or recognition for faculty in academia. As a veteran of the field, Jacoby is clearly aware of the shortcomings of the pedagogy, pointing out the need for critical reflection, better engagement with K-12 education, and greater efforts to standardize service-learning pedagogy (for instance, by the Carnegie Foundation).

The strength of this book lies in its usability. It has the potential to benefit beginning scholars as well as seasoned pedagogues, trainers, and graduate students. The structure of each chapter allows the reader to select parts of higher interest and identify additional sources listed in each subsection. Jacoby takes a balanced approach: She provides a panoramic view of the pedagogy from various standpoints, covering the fundamentals as well as the latest developments and examples. The value of *Service-Learning Essentials* is in its practicality and clarity.

References

- Jacoby, B. (2015). *Service-learning essentials. Questions, answers, and lessons learned*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.