

Saltmarsh, J., & Zlotkowski, E. (2011). *Higher Education and Democracy: Essays on Service-Learning and Civic Engagement*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Review by Patty Wharton-Michael

The missions and curricula of colleges and universities in the United States have been debated since their founding. Missions have ranged from the training of ministers, to developing educated citizens, to preparing a workforce for agriculture and the mechanical arts. The University of Virginia, founded by Thomas Jefferson, encouraged both practical and liberal ideals as forces that worked jointly to educate a citizenry for participation in a democracy (Geiger, 2000). Jefferson believed the success of a democratic society was inextricably linked to education. Alexander Meiklejohn, a philosopher and educator, also recognized the necessity for knowledgeable citizens within a self-democracy. He noted that

[T]he voters, therefore, must be made as wise as possible. The welfare of the community requires that those who decide issues shall understand them. They must know what they are voting about. . . . As the self-governing community seeks, by the method of voting, to gain wisdom in action, it can find it only in the minds of its individual citizens. If they fail, it fails. (Meiklejohn, 1948, p. 26)

Educators and administrators have continued to acknowledge the connection between education and democratic capacity, and have called upon higher education institutions to recognize and fulfill their civic responsibility (Cohen & Eberly, 2005; Ehrlich, 2000; Mathews, 2006). Although such arguments intuitively make sense, colleges and universities have struggled to provide institutional support for scholarship that considers civic engagement a necessary component of the educational process.

Higher Education and Democracy: Essays on Service-Learning and Civic Engagement reiterates the need for institutions to serve the common good by building democratic capacity. The book contains 22 essays written primarily by two authors, John Saltmarsh and Edward Zlotkowski, who have each encouraged universities to embrace their civic missions. Specifically, the book is a collection of collaborative works by the authors with several associates, focused

on the United States civic engagement and service-learning movements between 1996 and 2006. It is organized in eight sections: (1) the need for civic engagement in contemporary higher education; (2) the historical roots of civic engagement; (3) service-learning as a pedagogy; (4) service-learning and the first-year experience; (5) service-learning in the disciplines; (6) the engaged department; (7) the engaged campus; and (8) future trends in civic engagement (p. 7).

The first section begins with an essay by Zlotkowski providing the essential arguments regarding the need for civic engagement in higher education through his perceptions of academics' responses to the events of September 11, 2001. Zlotkowski expresses disappointment in the common decisions among academics to share personal feelings of 9/11 yet omit any discussion that might frame the event and its causes within professional and academic communities. He states, "the academic response to that September morning simply demonstrated how far we had come in distancing academic priorities from public concerns" (p. 14).

Zlotkowski argues that the academy must focus not only on discipline and professional knowledge, but also on "socially responsive knowledge," which acknowledges the need to serve the public good. He encourages academics to avoid the positivist epistemology that suggests they, as faculty members, can be objective experts separated from the public they serve. Rather, he proposes the adoption of an epistemology aligned with Ernest Boyer's (1990) notion of the scholarship of engagement that encourages members of the academy to interact, serve, and situate learning within a larger public context. Zlotkowski concludes the book's first chapter by identifying obstacles facing many civic engagement initiatives, and outlines the need (1) to recognize non-research-intensive institutions; (2) to overcome the fragmentation of the academy (which militates against natural structures to bridge interdisciplinary engaged scholarship); (3) to develop new forms of support (specifically, "centralized efforts" such as administrative offices); and (4) to include community members in discussions around the "table of higher education" (p. 25).

Section 1 concludes with an essay by Saltmarsh on the civic promise of service-learning. Saltmarsh defines "civic learning" as the socially responsive aspect of discipline knowledge, which must be academic based yet recognize the civic dimension of education. He notes a major shortcoming of service-learning pedagogy is its tendency to focus on learning skills and performing community service. Saltmarsh argues that civic learning outcomes (i.e., civic

knowledge, civic skills, and civic values) must be present in the curriculum and measured to ensure that civic learning has taken place. He argues that traditional strategies can be adopted for measuring course-based (e.g., papers, examinations, presentations) and field-based (e.g., reflective portfolio) experiences.

Section 2 provides a historical context for the evolution of service-learning in the U.S. classroom. The authors focus on theorists (i.e., John Dewey, Jane Addams, Dorothy Day) who ushered in the 20th century with a concentration on communities and democratic implications. A great deal of focus is placed on Dewey's foundational arguments for the indissoluble relationship between democracy and education. Saltmarsh argues that Dewey's work supports service-learning through its emphasis on linking education to experience; democratic community; social service; reflective inquiry; and education for social transformation.

After providing a context for the emergence of service-learning in Section 2, the authors explain in Section 3 how the concept of service-learning serves as a form of pedagogy. Chapter 6 provides a conceptualization of service-learning using a matrix consisting of "a horizontal axis spanning academic expertise and a concern for the common good, and a vertical axis that links the traditional domain of the student—that is, classroom activities" (p. 100). The matrix addresses the needs of each stakeholder (e.g., faculty members, students, higher education institutions, and community members) in the service-learning process. Nestled within Chapter 6 are threats to the survival of service-learning. Zlotkowski addresses these threats by calling on universities to be "engaged" by encouraging their faculty to "buy-in" to the legitimacy of service-learning as scholarship; to acknowledge service-learning's legitimacy through recognition within the faculty reward systems; and to adopt other strategies to promote civic engagement.

Section 4 examines the correlation between first-year course goals that introduce students to specific disciplines and the goals of service-learning. Zlotkowski charges faculty members who teach introductory courses to include civic learning as an outcome that will promote interest in civic knowledge and values, and make relevant connections for students to the curriculum, while fulfilling the university's civic purpose. Sections 5–7 illustrate through case studies the institutional change that must occur for civic engagement in higher education institutions to move from a few faculty members being interested in scholarship for the public good to entire departments, disciplines, and universities embracing the scholarship of engagement. The authors also examine assessment

practices for service-learning and associated limitations (e.g., identifying measurable and appropriate outcomes, skills, and informational sources).

One of the most philosophically compelling essays is presented in Section 8. Saltmarsh provides a suggestion for overcoming one of the main obstacles to adoption of service-learning and civic engagement. As the legitimacy and rigor of such practices have historically been questioned, Saltmarsh argues that a democratic or “engaged” epistemology must be accepted—in contrast to standard positivism—to guide academics in understanding their ways of knowing. He posits that this shift will change “institutional structures, policies, and cultures” (p. 352). He suggests that a grasp of epistemology will help us understand academic culture by “interrogating deep epistemological questions about how knowledge is generated in the academy, [and asking] what is legitimate knowledge, and what are the political implications of the dominant epistemology of the research culture of higher education” (p. 355). Section 8 concludes with Saltmarsh and Zlotkowski’s perceptions of where the civic engagement movement must proceed in order to flourish.

The complete work serves as a useful tool for academics, administrators, and staff members to understand the historical roots of the service-learning movement. The authors’ experiences presented in this collection elucidate the persistent obstacles confronting those who seek to fulfill higher education’s civic mission through the scholarship of engagement. The work provides tangible suggestions for overcoming those obstacles through a plethora of examples; however, its strongest contribution is its argument for the development of a new engaged epistemology that parallels Ernest Boyer’s (1996) scholarship of engagement. This engaged epistemology could substantially aid in the adoption of higher education practices that could bring about engaged, enlightened faculty scholarship performed alongside students and community members to serve the public good. Donna Killian Duffy describes the authors’ book in the introduction of Section 3, “Service-Learning Pedagogy,” as an essential guidebook. She states,

We now have a guidebook built on the collective wisdom of diverse professors over the past twenty years and can employ the [scholarship of teaching and learning] approach to help us sketch maps for the journey ahead. With guidebook and map in hand we are better equipped to learn more from the new terrain we will travel.

With students and community partners as traveling companions we can reach a destination that supports engaged communities focused on the common good. (p. 78)

The book serves as a valuable resource for those faculty, staff, and administrators interested in developing an academic environment that promotes civic engagement using service-learning as the bridge “between institutional rhetoric and institutional action, between professed values and actual practice” (p. 118).

One shortcoming of the text, as acknowledged by the authors, is the imperfect definition of complex terms like *civic engagement*. Although the work is straightforward in its intention to describe the *service-learning* movement within the United States, it also acknowledges the limitations of the term service-learning, which can refer to service, philanthropy, or community service in ways that are not tied to a curriculum. Although characteristics and indicators of civic engagement are discussed throughout the work, the collection of essays would benefit from a chapter dedicated to a more thorough explication of civic engagement and public scholarship. In the introduction to Chapter 20, the authors acknowledge the importance of a focus that goes beyond service-learning. Discussing the climate at Campus Compact, Saltmarsh notes,

We were focusing attention not on improving service-learning as pedagogical practice per se but on reforming American higher education because the model of an epistemology of technical rationality, teaching through lecture, research that serves the ends of promoting faculty and purpose defined by private gains in the economic marketplace was . . . devaluing the civic mission of higher education. (pp. 318–319)

A detailed explication would allow greater recognition of and alignment with current practices employed by many faculty members, departments, disciplines, colleges, and universities that may use different terminology to describe engaged practices (e.g., public scholarship, civic practices, and public engagement).

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Acknowledgment

The *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement's* associate editor for book reviews, Ted Alter (professor of Agricultural, Regional, and Environmental Economics at The Pennsylvania State University), and editor, Trish Kalivoda (senior associate vice president for public service and outreach at the University of Georgia) thank Temple University Press for providing complimentary copies of the book for this review.