International Conference on Service-Learning in Teacher Education

Meeting of the Service-Learning in Teacher Education International Research Affinity Group

Brussels, Belgium
July 6, 2007

Background

Members of the Service-Learning in Teacher Education International Research Affinity Group (hereafter referred to as Affinity Group) met at the international conference.

This meeting was a follow up on the Affinity Group’s first meeting at the International Conference on Service-Learning Research, held in Portland, Oregon in October 2006.

At that first meeting, the discussion focused on unpacking the key research issues and questions to be addressed in the field. This discussion resulted in the development of a research agenda to advance service-learning in teacher education. The research agenda included several action steps to be taken over the course of the year to advance the research in the field.

Over the course of the year, the research agenda been disseminated and discussed at various service-learning-related conferences for comment and review, including the U.S. National Service-Learning Conference and the National Australian Service-Learning Conference.

During the Affinity Group meeting in Brussels, the group members met to review updates on the research agenda, to offer further comments, and to make revisions to the agenda’s key component areas. The meeting ended with the articulation of the next set of action steps to be implemented.

Affinity Group Meeting Goals

1) To continue cultivating a network of scholars, researchers, and practitioners interested in the study of service-learning in teacher education.

2) To advance the quantity and quality of research in the field by strengthening the research agenda in the field.

3) To identify action steps that engage members of the Affinity Group in activities that can advance the research and practice of service-learning in teacher education.

4) To identify venues and opportunities for meetings, networking, collaborative research, and scholar support.
Report from the Chair

The meeting was facilitated by Affinity Group Chair, Andy Furco of the University of California, Berkeley. The meeting began with a welcome from the Chair and introductions (name and affiliation) of members present.

The Chair provided an update report based on action steps identified at the Portland meeting in October 2006. For the benefit of new members, the report included background on the formation of the Affinity Group at the Portland International Conference on Service-Learning Research, the development of research agenda, a review of the initial action steps, and discussions that have been had over the course of the year regarding the work of the Affinity Group and development of the research agenda.

Specifically, Andy reported the following:

• **Research Agenda Development.** In Portland, sixteen individuals attended the first meeting of the Affinity Group. The group identified a set of key research questions for the field. The research questions were organized by five areas: (1) questions about impact; (2) questions about implementation; (3) questions about institutionalization; (4) a question about theoretical frameworks; and (5) questions about methodological issues. The group also identified ten action steps that would guide the initial work of the affinity group, potential venues for the group to continue it networking and work development, and three work teams that would jumpstart the initial work of the Affinity Group by completing three key tasks of the agenda.

• **Agenda Dissemination.** The research agenda was distributed at the Global Service Network Meeting, which took place at the March 2007 National Service-Learning Conference in Albuquerque, NM. The Network Meeting involved service-learning practitioners and researchers from various countries. Don Hill, Marty Duckenfield, and Nancy Dunlap made presentations about the Brussels conference and Andy Furco presented the research agenda and invited individuals to join the Affinity Group. Six persons attending the Global Service Network were added to the Affinity Group list. Discussions about the research agenda were also held at the Australian National Service-Learning Conference in April 2007 in Collaroy, Australia. Lastly, the research agenda was sent out to more than a dozen researchers interested in service-learning and/or teacher education who were not able to attend any of the conferences, but who are interested in networking with members or the Affinity Group.

• **Agenda Task Update.** Andy reported that some progress has been made on two of the three tasks of the agenda. Jeffrey Anderson reported that he has begun work on the first task — the development of a common set of questions that can be applied universally — as part of a research project he is leading. He is replicating one of the national studies of service-learning in teacher education and expanding it to include international perspectives. Andy agreed to work with Jeffrey in expanding this work further. The second task — to identify and explore potential approaches to and sources for funding research — continues to be an ongoing activity. Andy reported that the
International Center for Research on Civic Engagement and Service-Learning at UC Berkeley will become the official research arm of the International Center for Service-Learning in Teacher Education (at Clemson University) and that the center will work to build international collaboratives on various issues pertaining to service-learning (including teacher education) and it will look to establish research collaboratives for funding multi-institutional (multi-researcher) studies that can advance the research agenda. The third task of the agenda — to disseminate the research agenda to other interested scholars for feedback and input — has been underway as was described earlier.

Member Discussion

Subsequent to Chair’s report, the floor was opened for members to share their perspectives, opinions, and comments for advancing the work of the Affinity Group.

Several general ideas and suggestions that were raised in previous meetings were put on the table. These ideas and suggestions included: (1) producing a book or volume on service-learning research for teacher education; (2) finding ways to build stronger connections between research and practice; (3) tapping into the now robust well of existing data on service-learning and mining it in ways that can advance the research agenda; and (4) exploring new projects or expanding existing projects in which current members are involved.

The following is a summary of the key comments that were offered and conclusions that resulted:

1) Ensure a broad scope of focus. A discussion was held regarding whether the work of the group should focus broadly on all issues pertaining to service-learning in teacher development (pre-service education, in-service education, continuing teacher professional development, administrative leadership and development, etc.) or just on formal teacher education programs (mostly pre-service) in higher education.

Conclusion: The Affinity Group’s work should be broadly defined to include all levels of professional training and practice concerning schooling. This includes, but is not limited to, a focus on both pre-service and in-service teacher education, administrator credentialing and continuing education, specialist education (reading specialist, counselor, etc.), district and county office of education issues, and faculty educators (faculty who teach in teacher education programs).

2) Advance the international presence of the Affinity Group. Members expressed concerns that the work of the group is too U.S. centric and needs to ensure that as an international research consortium, there should be equity across nations and cultures that are representative of the service-learning and teacher education fields. Issues of schooling, for example, should not just be focused on the primary, secondary, and higher education systems of the U.S. or other western countries.
Conclusions: (a) Build stronger connections and partnerships with the International Baccalaureate programs and use them as sites for research; (b) connect the work of the Affinity Group with other international organizations (CLAYSS, ESLA, etc.) focus on the advancement of service-learning in teacher education.

3) Ensure a broad definition of diversity. Several members suggested that in the group’s efforts to build intercultural competence and global citizenship through service-learning, the issues of diversity get relegated to race and class issues, often excluding issues pertaining to other groups that comprise diversity (e.g., persons with disabilities, religious minorities, indigenous persons, etc.).

Conclusion: Extend the reach of diversity to go beyond issues of race and class to include special populations, geographic regions, religious affiliations, sexual preferences, and non-western practices.

4) Bring greater clarity to key terms and practice. The term service-learning has different implications in different countries. Alternative terms are being used in some countries to help capture the service-learning concept more fully. In addition, vague terms such as “intercultural competence” and “global citizenship” need to be defined more clearly if advancements are to be made in studying these issues as potential service-learning outcomes.

Conclusion: (a) Conduct a global analysis of the definitions of service-learning and the terminology that is used; (b) conduct an analysis of the constructs that comprise the terms “intercultural competence” and “global citizenship”.

5) Conduct more studies on best practices and implementation issues. The group members agreed that while efforts should continue in studying the impacts of service-learning in students, faculty, institutions, and communities, that more emphasis needs to be given on understanding the elements of service-learning practice that promote the development of particular outcomes and impacts.

Conclusion: Develop a set of research questions and agenda items that focus on deepening our understanding of the practices in service-learning that contribute to service-learning outcomes for students, faculty, community members, and institutions.

6) Strengthen the theoretical basis for research on service-learning in teacher education. The service-learning field in general has been criticized for not making strong and direct links to theory. As a consortium focused on advancing research on service-learning, the group should work to make explicit and clear connections to the theoretical frameworks that undergird the research in the field.

Conclusion: The Affinity Group should form a task force that develops a matrix that examines and explains the various theoretical frameworks that support the study of service-learning in teacher education. The Task Force should work to examine the relationships among theories and identify gaps in knowledge in the field.
7) Identify and/or develop valid, more universally adaptable instruments for measuring key constructs that are key to the study of service-learning in international contexts. The general lack of good instrumentation hinders our ability to deepen our study of service-learning in teacher education and to move the research agenda forward.

Conclusions: (a) Explore ways to build a database of existing instruments in the study of service-learning in teacher education that are valid and reliable and that can be used to study similar issues across nations; (b) provide a venue for exploring a more universal way to measure the impacts and practices of reflection in service-learning; (c) identify self-assessment tools that can enhance administrators' buy-in and support for service-learning in teacher education; (d) develop standards or benchmarks for host organizations that facilitate international service-learning experiences (e.g., for Foreign Language teachers, etc.); (e) build measures for assessing successful strategies for community involvement and impacts of service-learning on community.

8) Conduct more studies and analyses on cross-national comparisons and international teacher education experiences. The group discussed the distinction between service-learning within individual nation’s teacher education programs and service-learning experiences that are conducted abroad. Also, in studying programs on a national level, special care must be taken to ensure that one program is not viewed as being the model or representative sample of all the programs in the nation.

Conclusions: The Affinity Group’s research work should focus on both of these issues while maintaining a distinction between the two forms. The research agenda should include contextual issues that inform the implementation of service-learning teacher education international contexts. Representatives from different countries should be invited to write up models of practices, successes, and models to begin to assess the differences and similarities in service-learning in teacher education practices across the globe.

9) Further the building of a community of scholars by understanding the areas of study interest among researchers in the field. Along with their general focus on service-learning in teacher education, many members of the group are interested in exploring specific issues within the field (e.g., teacher education practice in early childhood, in-service development of teachers, middle school education, science education, etc.).

Conclusions: The Affinity Group should develop a database that identifies the specific interests and areas of expertise of researchers and scholars. The group should seek to build research collaboratives and networks among scholars with similar interests and encourage each network to present issues and agenda items that will further knowledge and research in their focus area.
Action Steps

Each of the aforementioned issues will be addressed on an ongoing basis and action items and steps will be developed as the work of the Affinity Group progresses.

Based on the overall meeting discussion, five action steps were agreed upon as priority items to move forward the work of the Affinity Group.

Considering a two-year timeline, the members of the Affinity identified the following goals and action steps to be completed:

1) **Design and conduct a multi-site study of service-learning in teacher education.** The study would examine a set of particular program elements (perhaps best practices) across several teacher education programs to assess which elements contribute most to measured outcomes (to be determined)

   **PARTICIPATING MEMBERS:** Jeffrey Anderson, Noah Borrero, Penny Callihan, Andy Furco, Aileen Hale, Kathy March, Shirley O’Neill, Nadinne Petersen

2) **Conduct an analysis of the ways that different countries organize their educational systems and teacher education programs.** This would provide a means to compare the structures and focuses of educational systems and teacher education programs across the globe. (Explore the possibility of getting data from http://www.inca.org.)

   **PARTICIPATING MEMBERS:** Gerda Bender, Penny Callahan, Dave Donahue, Andy Furco, Shirley O’Neill, Diane Russell

3) **Identify a community of emerging scholars to build a mentorship program.** Conduct a session at the next conference that works on cultivating the work of emerging scholars, including junior faculty and graduate student researchers.

   **PARTICIPATING MEMBERS:** Andy Furco will connect with conference planning groups.

4) **Conduct a review of existing studies to establish standards of quality for research in the field.** Identify the most seminal research studies in the field and deconstruct them to determine their strengths and areas on which they can be improved.

   **PARTICIPATING MEMBERS:** To be determined.

5) **To replicate a study in the field to build on prior research and to assess the strength of previous findings.** Extend the findings of a national study to broader audiences by replicating a previous study in new contexts.

   **PARTICIPATING MEMBERS:** Jeffrey Anderson, Andy Furco
Research Sites

A couple of members mentioned upcoming sites and events for engaging in research activities related to the study of service-learning in teacher education.

*Kathy Sikes (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, USA)*: Twelve school districts in the U.S are engaged in service-learning are interested in examining the impacts of service-learning on teachers. The teachers are very heavily in the implementation phase. There will be opportunities next year to work with them to examine the incorporation of the ten essential elements of service-learning. There are likely to be five new studies next year.

*Dave Donahue (Mills College, California, USA)*: There is a faculty Fellows program in political engagement that is being facilitated by Campus Compact. Some of the participating faculty members are teacher educators. They will be meeting in an July/August institute and will be conducting research on their practice.

Report prepared and respectfully submitted by Andrew Furco, Affinity Group Chair
In Attendance: The following individuals attending the Affinity Group meeting on July 6, 2007

1. ANDERSON, Jeffrey
   Seattle University
   Seattle, Washington, USA
2. BENDER, Gerda
   University of Pretoria
   Pretoria, South Africa
3. BERCAW, Lynne
   Calif. State Univ., Chico
   Chico, California, USA
4. BORRERO, Noah
   University of San Francisco
   San Francisco, Calif., USA
5. CALLAHAN, Jane
   Providence College
   Providence, Rhode Island, USA
6. CAMBRIDGE, Jim
   Int'l Baccalaureate, Univ. of Bath
   Bath, U.K.
7. CEPELLO, Michelle
   Calif. State Univ., Chico
   Chico, California, USA
8. DANIELS, Doria
   University of Stellenbosch
   Stellenbosch, South Africa
9. DONAHUE, Dave
   Mills College
   Oakland, California, USA
10. FERREIRA, Ronel
    University of Pretoria
    Pretoria, South Africa
11. FURCO, Andy (Chair)
    University of California-Berkeley
    Berkeley, California, USA
12. GONZALEZ, Amber M.
    University of California, Santa Barbara
    Santa Barbara, California, USA
13. HALE, Aileen
    Boise State University
    Boise, Idaho, USA
14. KEANE, Elaine
    National Univ. of Ireland, Galway
    Galway, Ireland
15. MARCH, Kathleen
    University of Maine
    Orono, Maine, USA
16. NEAL, Marybeth
    National Youth Leadership Council
    Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
17. O’NEILL, Shirley
    University of So. Queensland
    Queensland, Australia
18. PETERSEN, Nadinne
    University of Johannesburg
    Johannesburg, South Africa
19. POWELL, Patti
    Trinity Christian College
    Palos Heights, Illinois, USA
20. RUSSELL, Diane
    Int’l School of Luxembourg
    Geesseknäppchen, Luxembourg
21. SEIDLER-YARAR, Lilly
    University of Kassel
    Kassel, Germany
22. SIKES, Kathy
    University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
    Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA