CREATING FUTURE-FIT LEADERS: TOWARDS FORMALISING SERVICE LEARNING IN UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMES

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ABSTRACT

Service learning as a form of experiential learning has become a more common component in higher education in South Africa. The aims of service learning (SL) may be briefly stated as engendering a sense of civic responsibility in students prior to their entering the world of employment. SL is, by definition, a mutually beneficial arrangement, during which both parties derive benefit and contribute to the exchange of learning. SL is a formal component of qualifications and, as such requires that suitable SL placements in community settings are identified. This necessitates that partnering agreements are concluded, that both the student and community hosts are prepared for the SL and that assessment and feedback occurs.

The Faculty of Management at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa prides itself on educating future-fit leaders. This is accomplished by excellent academic programme offerings, many of which have work integrated learning components that allow students to complement the classroom theory learnt with authentic supervised and assessed workplace experience.

The focus of SL, however, is to ensure that students understand the society that they will be working in and entrenching a sense of civic mindedness. As SL sites are not always readily available and as the universities need to ensure placement opportunities for all students in a programme with a formal SL component, this paper will propose that a phased-in approach to SL in the Faculty is pursued, exploring the notion of working via the international association ENACTUS (the acronym derived from Entrepreneurial, ACtion and US) to establish linkages that would lead to formalisation of partnership arrangements. ENACTUS describes itself as 'a community of student, academic and business leaders committed to using the power of entrepreneurial action to transform lives and shape a better more sustainable world.' Participation in ENACTUS is voluntary and is not linked to any formal academic programme credit.

It is anticipated that such an approach will result in a win-win situation both for the ENACTUS students at the University of Johannesburg and then the Faculty of Management specifically as it builds a potential SL partner base. The Faculty offers a wide range of programmes, including Hospitality Management, Tourism, Information Technology, Human Resource Management, various Management programmes, as well as Entrepreneurship. These programmes are well-suited to support the ENACTUS project as it enables students from across disciplines to work and learn together - and make a difference to the lives of others.

An ENACTUS-UJ and Faculty of Management partnership will thus be mutually beneficial, serving as a springboard for the introduction of SL in the various academic programmes, thus making this a formal and credit-bearing study component in the Faculty. Communities that benefit from ENACTUS programmes will then have sustained support and move from being recipients of service to partners in the learning process of student.

The paper will explain the concepts community engagement and community service, contrasting these with an overview of the theory of experiential education of which SL is a form. Taking the approach of community engagement, specifically via ENACTUS is proposed as a springboard to more sustained SL in the Faculty of Management at the University of Johannesburg, with mutual reciprocity and benefit to the university, its students and the community.

Keywords: Service learning, community engagement, experiential education, pedagogic innovation

INTRODUCTION

Service learning (SL) and work integrated learning (WIL) are both acknowledged as forms of experiential education.   The Faculty of Management at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in South

Africa prides itself on educating future-fit leaders. This is accomplished by excellent academic programme offerings, many of which have work integrated learning components. These allow students to complement the classroom theory learnt with authentic supervised and assessed workplace experience, deepening their knowledge in their chosen field of study. The advent of service learning, with its focus of engendering a sense of civic responsibility in students prior to their entering the world of employment, enables the Faculty of Management to add another valuable dimension to its graduates: civic mindedness and an increased understanding of their chosen world of work .

SL is a formal component of qualifications and requires suitable SL placements in community settings. This necessitates concluding partnering agreements that both students and community hosts are prepared for their roles and that student assessment and feedback will occur. The critical issue is that *all* students would require placement for such a SL component as it is a formal, credit-bearing activity. The question thus arose: how is this best achieved?

The Faculty of Management has taken the approach of introducing SL gradually; working from the premise that formalised SL will evolve from initial community engagement and community service-type interactions, whether initiated by the university, Faculty, staff or students. The Faculty's involvement with the international ENACTUS programme (the acronym derived from Entrepreneurial, ACtion and US) has presented an opportunity seen as mutually beneficial to both parties. The Faculty is able to ensure that the students are involved with community initiatives by supporting ENACTUS. These opportunities may then grow into formal, sustainable programmes, which enable students to have SL opportunities and communities to have a sustained interaction, contributing to the learning of students. This aspect of reciprocity and mutual benefit is a cornerstone of the SL pedagogy.

This paper will explain the concepts of community engagement (CE) and community service, contrasting these specifically with the notion of SL, a form of experiential education. Taking the approach of community engagement, specifically via ENACTUS, is proposed as a springboard to more sustained SL in the Faculty of Management, with mutual reciprocity and benefit to the university, its students and the community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: AN OVERVIEW

Internationally the term 'community engagement' is commonly used to describe the mechanism through which teaching and research is integrated into a university's engagement with and in society [1]. At UJ, the definition as approved in the Policy on Community Engagement [2] is:

> 'Initiatives and processes that employ the knowledge capital and resources of a higher education institution in the creation of partnerships (be they structured within an academic programme or not) between the institution and communities that address the development needs of such interest groups. Such initiatives and processes are made available by the institution to the interest groups for no financial consideration.'

Since 1995, several South African policy directives have shaped the current view of community engagement [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8], [9] that paved the way for a national qualifications framework. The White Paper [5] made it evident that higher education institutions would be required to review their societal purpose and to develop strategic thrusts to give effect to the changing national imperatives. These policies have led to an academic focus on service learning. CE occurs across a broad spectrum, from a focus on service to the community on the one side (with the community being the greatest beneficiary) to service learning (where an equitable benefit accrues to both the community and the student), as depicted in Figure 1.

Service   **Service Learning**

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(Projects)   **(In programmes/qualifications)**
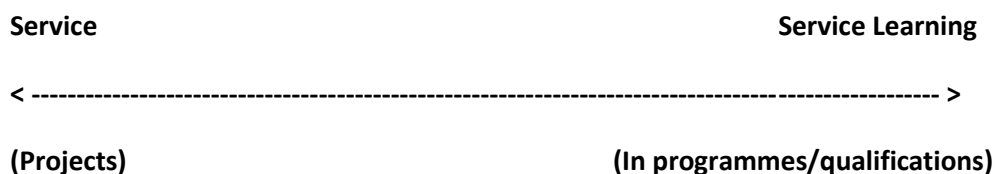
Figure 1: Broad spectrum of Community Engagement [10]

South Africa's Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) is committed to a quality driven higher education system that contributes to socio-economic development, social justice and innovative scholarship in South Africa [11]. Through its mandate that service learning, where identified as a mode of delivery, would be required to meet the same minimum quality requirements as other modes of delivery in higher education institutions. With the legislative foundations laid, higher education institutions were now required to give effect to this with policy, guidelines, capacity building, implementation and monitoring. The Faculty of Management has this firmly in its sights as an added incentive in introducing SL into its programmes.

As further background to the establishment of SL, higher education surveys of CE in South Africa resulted in a July 2000 meeting of Vice-Chancellors to explore the direction of CE in the country. One of the key issues identified was that the purpose of higher education should not overemphasise 'education for the marketplace', but should revisit the notion of engendering civic responsibility through its teaching, research and service programmes.

Since the White Paper [5], there has been a shift in not only the perceptions of CE, but also of the terminology used. Higher education institutions have moved away from the view of CE as a free-standing silo, to one where CE is integrated into the teaching and research activities of the institution. This will have mutual benefit accruing to all the parties involved, the benefit varying according to the intention and format of the engagement. A study into the terminology of CE and related terminology used by various South African universities [1] reveals the range of terminology used: community service, community engagement, community development, community involvement, community interaction and community outreach being some. Ernest Boyer's [12] concept towards a 'scholarship of engagement', presented another shift, with a move to view CE as a scholarly activity in the context of higher education. An instance of this would be specifically that of SL being a curriculated form of community engagement that is credit-bearing.

EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION WITH A FOCUS ON SERVICE LEARNING

Service Learning (SL) is a specific pedagogy, tracing its development from the conceptual and overarching experiential education framework that is its pedagogical foundation [13]. Various theories/theoretical frameworks have evolved, concepts have been formulated and various terms have been coined in this field. The best known are those contributions being of Dewey, with his formula: Experience plus Reflection equals Learning [14]; Kolb [15], with the experiential learning cycle; Lewin's action research model [16] and reflective enquiry as proposed by Dewey, Boud and Schön [17]. Experiential education serves as the theoretical framework, from which the conceptual framework for SL developed, with SL activities aimed at providing opportunities for real (concrete) experiences.

Dewey's point about justice (not charity) when considering SL links to Sigmon's 1979 definition of SL as an experiential learning approach premised on 'reciprocal learning': for those who provide the service and those who receive it and 'learn' from the experience [18]. Based on Sigmon's 1994 typology, service and learning goals of equal weight are allocated [19]. Furco places SL in the centre, as an academic activity being more focused on the student and learning as the beneficiary (e.g. a credit-bearing formal module as part of an academic programme) as depicted in diagrammatic form [13].

Community ⟵————— BENEFICIARY —————⟶ Student

Service ⟵————— GOAL —————⟶ Learning

Service-Learning

Community Outreach | Co-operative Education
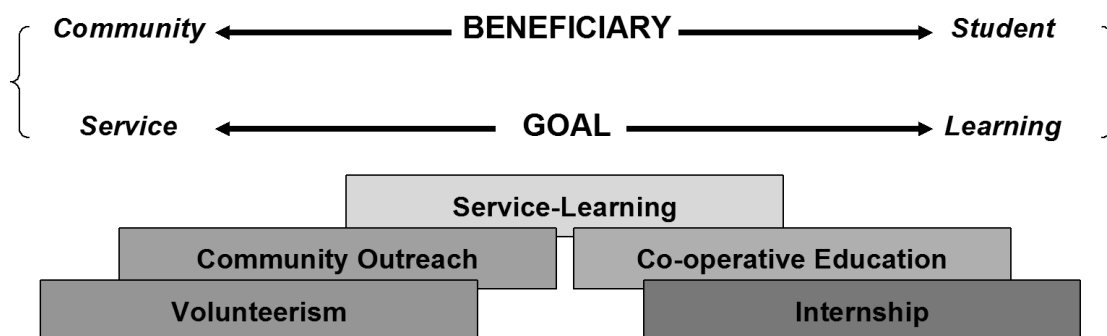
Volunteerism | Internship

Figure 2: Distinctions among student community engagement programmes (Adapted from Furco 1996) [13]

Whilst many definitions of service learning may be found the following is considered to be most relevant in the context of this paper: A course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community goals; reflect on said 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 [20].

The four essential criteria for identified for SL [21], [22], viz. relevant and meaningful service with the community; enhanced academic learning; purposeful civic learning and structured opportunities for reflection would need to be considered when developing SL modules in programmes. So, too, would the matter of partnerships, which are a key aspect for successful SL implementation. By its very nature, SL involves at least three parties: the SL partner organisation (with its participants), the higher education institution and the students. As such, the SL takes place at a partner site, and this arrangement - the partnership - has to be negotiated and agreed. The Community-Higher Education-Service Partnerships (CHESP) model has been used to initiate and facilitate the development of the partnership indicated, with higher education (and its students), the service sector and the community member being the partners. According to Lazarus [23] the purpose of the tripartite partnership is community empowerment and development, transformation of the higher education system in relation to community needs and enhancing service delivery to previously disadvantaged communities. The partnership described in the topic mirrors the description of Gelmon and Holland [24] as it is intended as a knowledge-based collaboration in which the partners all have things to teach each other, things to learn from each other and also things that they will learn together.

With the background to CE and SL sketched, the ENACTUS model requires outlining so that the concept proposed in the paper may be clarified.

ENACTUS: A MODEL OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE SERVICE LEARNING

The tagline of ENACTUS (previously Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE)) is: Enabling progress through entrepreneurial action. ENACTUS identifies itself as 'a community of student, academic and business leaders committed to using the power of entrepreneurial action to transform lives and shape a better, more sustainable world [25]. The acronym ENACTUS is derived from: ENtrepreneurial (having the perspective to see an opportunity and the talent to create value from that opportunity); ACtion (the willingness to do something and the commitment to see it through even when the outcome is not guaranteed) and US (a group of people who see themselves connected in some important way; individuals that are part of a greater whole).

ENACTUS is more than a student organisation as it involves member universities, corporate partners and establishes student programmes on university campuses around the world. Each university has Faculty Advisors with a local business advisory board that support and encourage the students as they apply business concepts to develop community outreach projects. In doing so, the quality of life and the standard of living of community members are improved. ENACTUS hosts an annual National Championship, where the results of the national community projects are presented to a team of business leaders for evaluation. Winning teams in the various national categories then compete at a World Cup event.

The current global ENACTUS team consists of 57 000 student, each making a commitment to the ENACTUS vision. The University of Johannesburg is an active participant, with projects managed by Ms Joyce Sibeko from the Department of Business Management in the Faculty of Management. Ms Sibeko, who serves as the UJ Advisor, was awarded with the Faculty's Future-fit Teaching and Learning Award in 2013. The ENACTUS programme at UJ has grown 2000 members in 2013. The Faculty's Executive Dean: Management, Prof Daneel van Lill, finds the level of interest from UJ students is most encouraging; from 200 UJ student members at the inception of ENACTUS (then SIFE) to almost 2000 students who volunteer their time. The Faculty now has 15 projects through ENACTUS that support micro-enterprise development [25]. The achievements and awards of the UJ ENACTUS group in 2013 are worthy of mention:

- First place in the ABSA (a banking group) Capacity Building through effective empowerment Award;
- First place in the NEDBANK (a banking group) Triple Bottom Line, Sustainability Award;
- Second place in the HARMONY (a gold mine) Business Solutions for Community Development category;
- First Place for the Administrator of the Year Award, and
- Fifth overall, out of 27 competing universities in South Africa.

Through ENACTUS, university students have an opportunity to make a meaningful difference in their local communities, whilst themselves gaining valuable experience and skills. All work done is voluntarily and without any remuneration. ENACTUS students are profiled as being talented, hardworking, value-driven leaders that blend a competitive spirit and desire to succeed with a sense of integrity and desire to give something back. [26]. The ENACTUS programme was designed to promote teamwork and be an extension of classroom learning. This allows the students to identify and address real problems provide real solutions, whilst motivating students and providing them with a sense of purpose. One of the advantages of the ENACTUS project is that it provides a tool for building relationships between the local community and the university. These may then be concretised into more formal partnership agreements necessary for sustained SL.

TOWARDS FORMALISING SERVICE LEARNING IN UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMES

One of UJ's strategic objectives is to have ten percent of its programmes with a SL component by 2020. A UJ Work Integrated and Service Learning Forum is being constituted to support this objective. Currently, some of the academic programmes include a mix of CE and SL-type activities, with few of these formally integrated into the curriculum as credit-bearing aspects.

The UJ has nine Faculties and is based on four-campuses, with a total student population of 50 000 students. The Faculty of Management has been an active participant in the ENACTUS programme in the last five years and is committed to entrenching SL into its curriculum. The Faculty offers a wide range of programmes, including Hospitality Management, Tourism Management, Information Technology, Human Resource Management, various other Management programmes, as well as Entrepreneurship. These programmes are well-suited to support the ENACTUS project as it enables students from across disciplines to work and learn together, with the learning and programme specific skills contributing to the projects. The Faculty's Entrepreneurship programme has introduced SL into the curriculum and has conducted research into the challenges and benefits for students who engage in what they term community SL in the Entrepreneurship Curriculum [27]. The findings of such research will be useful should the proposed conceptual model be rolled out.

The University is involved in various other community-based projects, which include staff and students to varying degrees, and which could also be used as models to grow SL. Two examples include the annual Reading project that involves distributing books collected from UJ staff members and students to schools, hospitals and other community organisations, and the 67-minutes for Mandela project where staff and students at UJ get involved with community projects on 18 July every year. Projects such as these could also be converted into SL opportunities by including the academic elements of reciprocity and assessment. An added benefit to participation in a programme such as ENACTUS is enhanced marketing of the University and its programmes, reaching community members that may not have heard about the university and the programmes it offers.

The strong support that the ENACTUS project has internationally and the valuable contribution the many projects make to communities were the catalyst for the conceptual model of using existing CE projects as a springboard for more formalised SL projects. Projects such as ENACTUS can also benefit from any established SL initiatives. Consideration could be given to the addition of a SL component to the ENACTUS projects. Community members are then able to 'teach' incoming SL students about the projects, how they were developed from initial concept to current state and share future plans for project scenarios. This then adds to completing the SL circle, bringing in a stronger reciprocity and the mutual understanding and learning from each other, one of the principles of SL. Further engagement with stakeholders such as ENACTUS and other projects that operate in the CE/ corporate social investment space will need to occur. Ideally, partnership agreements would be concluded that would prove to be of value to all the participating stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

CE initiatives play an important part in addressing the needs of underdeveloped communities. The transformational challenges faced by higher education since the promulgation of the White Paper (1997) have resulted in a move away from CE and community service initiatives to the more formal and academic focus on SL. The UJ supports this, as evidenced by the strategic objective regarding inclusion of SL in its programmes. In its endeavour to create future-fit leaders, the UJ's Faculty of Management includes both WIL and SL in its programmes. Understanding the complexity of curriculating sustainable SL opportunities for each student in a programme has resulted in various options being explored. The purpose of this is to initiate and develop sustainable partnerships that will address the full spectrum of requirements for a SL programme. These are a system of respectful, mutually beneficial and sustainable partnerships, rather than a focus on philanthropic service.

The concept of building on an established project such as ENACTUS sparked the concept that this paper has outlined. Further refinement, the implementation of a pilot project in an academic department and evaluating it for continuity would be the next steps. A key consideration is that of sustainability, bearing in mind that once SL becomes a formal part of an academic programme each student would need to complete this successfully before being able to graduate.

A programme such as ENACTUS, an international programme that all public higher education institutions in South Africa participate in on a voluntary basis may be considered a launching pad for SL initiatives.

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