Service-Learning as a new approach to teaching and learning in South Africa

The 4th Asia–Pacific Regional Conference on Service-Learning

Service-Learning as a Bridge from Local to Global: Connected World, Connected Future

Lingnan University, Hong Kong (5-6 June)
Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, MC (7 June 2013)
Contents of the Presentation

1. Where?
2. What?
3. Why?
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Service Learning

Where?
History and Background

- Centuries of colonial rule in South Africa
- Decades of freedom struggle against brutal minority rule (Apartheid regime)
- 1994 – First democratic elections (end of oppression?)
- Transformation required of every sector of society
Transformation in Higher Education meant:

- broadening democratic participation;
- responsiveness to societal challenges; and
- partnership-building.

Policy documents referred to Community Service (later to be named Community Engagement) and Service Learning as transformative mechanisms.

Community Engagement, integrated with research and teaching–learning, regarded by some as a primary vehicle for increasing universities’ “social responsibility”.

Community-integrated pedagogical tool of Service-Learning “imported” from USA since 1999 through the CHESP initiative.

Hailed as a curricular form of community engagement aimed at equipping students with a sense of social responsibility, and other graduate attributes relevant for living and working in the “new” South Africa.

Linked to Generic or Critical Cross-field Outcomes.
New Directions for Universities in South Africa since 1994

- National policy documents refer to “social responsibility” of universities and students
- Community Engagement and Service Learning
- Paradigm shift required
- Grounded in local and indigenous knowledge
Interactive Relationships of Teaching & Learning, Community Engagement and Research
The university has two fundamental roles – T/L and research. CE is a fundamental idea and perspective which must inform and animate and be integrated with most of the university’s T/L and research activities.
The university has three roles, and there is acknowledgement of some intersection between them. Where there is innovation it innovates Service Learning (SL), while outreach and volunteerism continue as separate activities. (Bender 2008)
Service Learning

What?
Community Engagement defined for the South African context

Employing the scholarly expertise and resources of the university to render mutually beneficial services to communities within a context of reciprocal engagement and collaborative partnerships.
Interactive Relationships among Higher Education Institutions, Communities, the Services & Corporate Sectors
Service-Learning defined for the South African context

➢ Educational approach
  ▪ Experiential
  ▪ Action and
  ▪ Community-based learning

➢ Curriculum-based, credit-bearing

➢ Well-structured service activity (identified service need of community)
Service-Learning defined for the South African context (cont.)

Students reflect on service experience:

- Linking curriculum content and community dynamics
- Personal growth
- Civic learning and social responsibility

Partnership in balance — mutuality and reciprocity
Partnership Model for Service Learning
Key questions about Service-Learning

- To what extent does Service-Learning in South Africa correspond to its American roots? (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013)
- What are its unique features and why? (Hatcher & Erasmus, 2008)
- What is its current state in SA? (SAHECEF)
- What role does it play in connecting South African students, HE staff and external constituencies – locally and globally?
Service Learning
The importance of Service-Learning for South Africa

- Painful contradictions become apparent when current conditions in South Africa are measured against the high standards of conduct set out in the Constitution
- Pitfalls of a “developing country” (misgivings)
- Between utopia and chaos
- Interregnum – morbid symptoms (Gramsci)
- The current state of affairs in SA calls for urgent measures to be taken
- More appropriate value set to be acquired by students as leaders of the future
South Africa in 2013

- Current Gini coefficient = 0.7. Gap between rich and poor is the largest worldwide
- High levels of unemployment
- Poverty, corruption
- Violent crime
- Worsening service delivery
- HIV/AIDS and TB
- Labour unrest
- Undermines the governing party’s promise of “A better life for all!”
CHAPTER 1: FOUNDING PROVISIONS

Citizenship

3(2) All citizens are –

(a) equally entitled to the rights, privileges and benefits of citizenship; and

(b) equally subject to the duties and responsibilities of citizenship.
Intended Outcomes for Students, Communities, Staff and HEIs

• Unintended outcomes also valuable!
• Knowledge, skills, attitudes and values
• A pedagogy of hope (Paulo Freire)
• Reflective and reflexive practice
• Learning to love (Ng)
• Transformative learning (Kiely)
• Compassionate imagining (Nussbaum)
• Social justice / social change
• Higher education managers? Other priorities
Service Learning — How?
Enabling Service-Learning

- Resources: human and financial
- Management structure
- Capacity-building for staff (HES717 module)
- Support for “champions”
- Promotion criteria
- Focus on research (engaged scholarship)
- Quality management (ethical imperative)
- Partnership-building

- Link with larger purpose in society
Call for Active Citizenship

- ‘Subject’ status of citizens undermines freedom
- Pathway towards the society of our dreams
- Building unity in diversity
- Interconnected global community
- ‘Being’ versus ‘having’
- ‘Being’ and ‘becoming’ define us as human
- Service-Learning can contribute to active citizenship
Circles of Healing

- Helplessness
- Dependency
- Supplication
- Woundedness
- Letsema Circle
- Dignity
  - Accountability
  - Initiative-taking, work
  - Self-sufficiency
  - Wellbeing
  - Positive citizens
Service Learning

With Whom?
Our external partners

Placement sites for Service-Learning students

Non-Profit Organisations
- Crèches
- Old-Age Homes
- Youth Centres
- Schools
- Children’s Homes (‘Orphanages’)
- Safe Houses
- Facilities for Persons with Disabilities
- SMMEs
A service at Towers of Hope
Street children living under a bridge
Closer view
The Drop-in Centre from nearby: Fadzayi Matongo explains
Showers for the kids at the Police Station
Mr Michael van Heerden
Street worker of Kidz Care Trust (former street child)
Life history interview (20/11/2012)

Ms Fadzayi Matongo, Ms Magda Barnard and
Ms Merlene Esau during the NRF research project
baseline study interview
The caregivers at the shelter: Mrs Martha Mzizi and Ms Emily Finger

Kidz Care Trust’s Mission

To re-unite streetchildren with their parents or communities as soon as possible. To provide appropriate residential facilities until this is achieved, or where it is not possible until they are accepted by the appropriate service provider.
Boys playing at the shelter
Lebone Village
(cares for OVCs, especially children affected by and infected with HIV/Aids)
Employment opportunities for parents and other care-givers
Vegetable garden at Lebone Village
Multi-purpose workshop at Lebone Village
List of references


List of references (cont.)


Note: Articles and other resources are available at [www.ufs.ac.za/servicelearning](http://www.ufs.ac.za/servicelearning)
Thank you!